

Title: Eye in the Sky, Boots on the Ground: Inside the Youth Movement Sabotaging U.S. Border Surveillance

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Note: Besides Phil Letourneau, everyone has a false name due to issues of anonymity.

Adam Glanz sat down at his kitchen table and looked out the window. As he took a deep breath, the clock on the wall to his right showed 12:20. Sleepy-eyed with a bit of bed head, he had let me into his house in Derby, Vermont 15 minutes earlier. “I was out late last night... sorry I’m a bit tired,” he said as I waited for him to get comfortable. Unlike other 24-year-olds his age, “out late” did not mean he had been lounging in a bar. It meant that he had gone on a mission.

To the innocent ear, “Eye in the Sky” may sound like an astronomical society or meteorologist club. But if you live near Derby, you know it’s a group of scrappy young people who are slowly destroying the surveillance towers that the U.S. Border Control is quietly erecting along the northern border. Glanz, a co-founder of the organization, is doing what he described as “his part in combating conservative policies that harm citizens and non-citizens alike.”

Towering at 6’3” with a strong frame and a scruffy beard, at first glance, he would be easy to find intimidating. But once he starts talking about his daily meditation practice and love for fostering stray dogs, it’s apparent that he’s a gentle giant. A gentle giant that knows how to scale a 200-foot security tower and dismantle the giant camera at the top, all while dodging the police, that is.

Glanz and some of his high school friends started “Eye in the Sky” in October 2024 after seeing a surveillance tower appear in one of their neighbors' yards. I tracked down this neighbor at his home, a dairy farm two miles from the border. To hear Phil Letourneau talk about surveillance towers, you would think he was massively pro-government. On the contrary, he is a Trump-supporting anti-government conservative. Surrounding his property, he has signs telling the government to “beware” when entering his property. But, right in the center of a field outside his house, he has also let the government build one of these 200-foot towers. “The illegal aliens scare me more than the government,” he said, “so I want to help send them back to where they came from.”

Letourneau is not alone in this sentiment. Every single surveillance tower in Derby and the surrounding area is on private land, rented out by the federal government.

In opposition to the Letourneau-minded folk is Glanz and his friends.

The second time I met up with Glanz, it was 3:30 AM, and we were en route to a large field three miles from the border. The target was another 200-foot security tower, and the goal was to spray paint over the camera lens and leave a message for U.S. Border Control, “We will not stop until construction stops.” Each team carries a jammer, a small device that disrupts GPS communication, hurting the cameras' ability to send movement signals back to agents. Whether they are breaking the lens, spray painting the camera, destroying the circuiting, or gluing the locks of the control panel, they have about 20 minutes before ICE agents notice they are there. On this particular mission, my job was to accompany the getaway car driver, Annie Miller, as we sat quietly on the side of the road. Five minutes in, Annie turned to me and said, “You gotta come on the mission in a week. We’re planning to steal the solar panels from this tower and bring them to our friend Angie, who will make an art exhibit out of them.”

I accompanied them on that mission, and three more.

What I soon discovered during my month long embed with the group is that they are ballsy, and they aren’t planning on stopping anytime soon. Miller told me in an interview that she is hoping to one day make “Eye in the Sky,” a national underground organization. “The surveillance towers on the northern border don’t even compare to the ones in the South,” she told me. “My friend in Texas is trying to get a group together to start taking the towers down as we speak.”

The clash happening in Derby is not uncommon. As conservative politicians urge for less immigration and more border security, methods of resistance are on the rise.

I have compiled the story of “Eye in the Sky” into a 3,000-word feature about the power of young people when they decide to take action. As Glanz and Miller inspire people around the country to engage in scrappy acts of resistance, it is not a question of if, but when, major news outlets will start to report on these stories.

“Our generation isn’t going to sit idly by as the government surveils us and tries to instill fear,” Glanz explained to me that day at his kitchen table. “We’re going to resist, and we’re going to be hella creative while doing it.”