Brazil using drones to fight Zika

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The drones have a very sharp eye. In San Paulo they perform low-altitude flyovers to detect signs of the pest in gardens, on terraces and other places where it is known to breed. They then fumigate the colonies, Xinhua reports.

Brazil has almost met its target of inspecting 60 million residences across the country. This adds to other efforts, such as massive armed forced deployment, to stamp out the infection. Some 40 percent of targeted locations have already been dealt with.

The idea of using the drones was born out of necessity. Many households were difficult to get into - some did not allow inspectors in, others simply had no one inside at the time. Drones greatly improve access without having to disturb residents.

Aside from drones and manpower, the government is also looking at newer and quicker means of diagnosing the virus, Sao Paulo Health Secretary Alexandra Padilha said.
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While revolutionary in Brazil, the idea of using drones to combat Zika isn't new. A recent international show in the UAE – Drones for Good – dedicated to exploring the medical and life-saving potential of robotics and drones,

showcased a very ambitious project.

Amicably called ROMEO (Remotely Operated Mosquito Emission Operation), the drone will fire off sterilized mosquitos over affected areas. Once the Zika-spreading female mosquitos mate with the sterilized male ones, the problem is solved. Female mosquitos mate only once in a lifetime, so the approach shows great promise.

About 4,000 infants in Brazil have been born with microcephaly since October, whereas in 2014 there were fewer than 150 cases.

The virus has spread from Latin America to a number of US states, including Florida, Illinois, New Jersey and Texas.

Zika was highlighted as a global health emergency in early February by the WHO.