



**STATEMENT OF KAZ DAUGHTRY AND JOHN CHELL
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NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**HEARING ON “Unmanned Aerial Systems and Emergency Response: The Impact of
Drones and Other Emerging Technology on U.S. Law Enforcement”**

**BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY**

**The Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology and the Subcommittee on
Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence**

**Thursday, May 16, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.
310 Cannon House Office Building.**



Good morning Chairs D’Esposito and Pfluger, Ranking Members Carter and Magaziner, and members of the subcommittee. I am Kaz Daughtry, Deputy Commissioner of Operations for the New York City Police Department (“NYPD”). On behalf of Police Commissioner Edward Caban and Mayor Eric Adams, I am pleased to testify before your subcommittee today to discuss the importance of emerging technology in policing and how vital our federal partnerships are to the NYPD’s public safety mandate.

With 8.8 million residents and 62.2 million visitors from every corner of the globe, New York City remains a city of possibility. Our police officers proudly patrol the city’s 6,300 miles of streets and highways, 472 subway stations, and 274 public housing developments. In a city constantly on the move, our police department must continually look forward and adapt. I am proud to have spearheaded a number of strategies to better position our department in our crime fighting efforts and make New York City the safest big city in America. This call to action requires that we embrace technology.

I am proud to point to some of our success stories today. This is a showcase of some of our most exciting technology, and highlights the work of our Technical Assistance and Response Unit (TARU). They provide expertise in audio/visual technology, operate our Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), commonly known as drones, and provide our officers a crucial advantage in emergency management. We are also focused on the importance of securing our ability to mitigate hostile drones over critical infrastructure and mass gatherings such as those in Times Square.

Our most prolific technology-based innovation has been the Department’s use of drones. The NYPD has 85 drones. In 2023, our drone usage increased 419.8% compared to 2022. There are, of course, limited circumstances in which a drone can be used. We have self-imposed policies that place limitations and restrictions on our use of drones. Under these policies, drones are not used for warrantless surveillance, routine patrol, traffic enforcement or immobilizing vehicles of suspects. Drones are not used as weapons, and cannot be equipped with weapons of any kind.

But they can be used to preserve life: On Friday, April 5, 2024, after a 4.8 magnitude earthquake was felt throughout the Tri-State area, our department ordered our drones be deployed to examine the structural integrity of our bridges and buildings. If we detected an infrastructure flaw, we had the ability to share this information with the Department of Buildings in real time. Drone technology allows us to work closer with our partners, ensuring the community’s safety.

Safety and security is always a priority, and our drones have played a vital role in those endeavors. Each year, hundreds of thousands converge on Times Square, the “Crossroads of the World,” to ring in the New Year. This year, we utilized our drone technology to give a bird’s eye view to our incident commanders, in order to prevent overcrowding.

As another example, on Sunday, September 3, 2023- 10,000 people rushed the entrance of the Electric Zoo concert, creating a dangerous situation. Due to safety concerns, NYPD leadership considered canceling the event entirely. To gain better situational awareness, we ordered TARU to deploy our drone truck. We put our tethered drone up, and the live footage showed us that the crowd was massed at the entrance but there were no dangers to life or safety. Using this



information, we gathered our resources, and we made the decision to allow the show to go on. Likewise, the possibility that hostile actors may use drones in a malicious manner at such a mass gathering is always at the forefront of our concerns.

In an effort to support innovation in public safety, five precincts have been selected for the Drone as First Responder Program, more commonly referred to as DFR. Chosen based on recent crime-trends, these precincts will each be outfitted to support two drone platforms affixed to their rooftops. Three of these precincts are in Brooklyn, with one precinct in the Bronx, and one at the Central Park Precinct in Manhattan. The plan, to be rolled out in the coming months, is to deploy these drones in response to certain 911 calls for service. The pilot however, will be remotely positioned in the Joint Operations Center, at Police Headquarters, rather than on scene. The information provided by DFR will be shared with responding officers. DFR will enhance officers' situational awareness as they arrive on scene, promote officer safety, and help us deploy resources more effectively.

In an effort to find technology-based solutions to reduce the number of vehicle pursuits, as well as reduce the risk to the public, the Department implemented a pilot program utilizing specialized GPS tracking equipment, known as StarChase. By attaching a GPS-enabled device to a vehicle, which can be tracked remotely, this technology permits us to pursue vehicles, while avoiding high speed chases that endanger the community and our officers. Since April of 2023, this limited pilot program has helped us recover 42 vehicles and make 58 arrests. This technology has saved valuable manpower hours while reducing the risks associated with vehicle pursuits.

To speak more broadly, our ability to adapt as a department is supported by critical federal funding assistance. The funding the city and the Department receive from the federal government, as well as our collaboration with federal partners, such as the FBI and ATF, have been key components in thwarting numerous attacks over the years. By responsibly leveraging technology, we are able to promote public safety in our city, and we appreciate your calling attention to this important issue through today's hearing.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.