



**REMOTE CONTROLLED ROBOTS:
“TACTICAL”
IMPACT AND USE POLICY**

UPDATED: FEBRUARY 4, 2026

REMOTE CONTROLLED ROBOTS: “TACTICAL” REVISION

Date of Revision	Description of Revision
February 4, 2026	This impact and use policy was revised to comply with the recently passed amendment to the POST Act, Local Law 56 of 2025. While previously categorized under the situational awareness cameras impact and use policy, due to the differing functionality of tactical remote-controlled robots like “Digidog,” “PackBot,” and “Avatar,” this separate impact and use policy has been drafted.

ABSTRACT

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) utilizes a variety of unmanned ground vehicles to enable NYPD personnel to safely and remotely access potentially dangerous situations, such as search-and-rescue operations, evidence searches at inaccessible locations, incidents involving hostages, barricaded suspects, or hazardous material, and counterterrorism situations.

These devices often face some limitations, including difficulty navigating complex terrains, becoming entangled in debris, restricted camera angles, inadequate illumination, and video/image transmission issues. To address some of these deficiencies, the NYPD has acquired Tactical Remote Controlled Robots (“Tactical Robots”) including “Digidog,” “PackBot 525,” and “AVATAR.”

Digidog is an industrial grade remote controlled tactical robotic canine, manufactured by Boston Dynamics. For ease of reference in this impact and use policy, this technology will be referred to as “Digidog,” the name colloquially adopted by the NYPD.

PackBot 525 is an industrial grade remote controlled tactical ground robot, manufactured by Teledyne FLIR Defense. For ease of reference in this impact and use policy, this technology will be referred to as “PackBot.”

AVATAR is an industrial grade, remote controlled tactical ground robot manufactured by RoboteX Inc. For ease of reference in this impact and use policy, this technology will be referred to as “Avatar.”

The NYPD produced this impact and use policy because Tactical Robots are capable of processing live video images and acoustic data, and transmitting to remote controllers that are operated by trained NYPD personnel.

CAPABILITIES OF THE TECHNOLOGY

Background Information: Tactical Robots are industrial grade unmanned ground vehicles operated by trained NYPD personnel to enhance situational awareness, reduce risk and exposure to hazardous environments, facilitate communication with subjects, preserve human life, and assist in the safe resolution of incidents. Tactical Robots’ key capabilities include transmitting live video images and acoustic data, enabling two-way communication between NYPD personnel and any individual near the device, and navigating complex terrain with advanced maneuverability. Tactical Robots are particularly effective for search-and-rescue operations, evidence searches at inaccessible locations, incidents involving hostages, barricaded suspects, or hazardous material, and counterterrorism situations.

Physical Description: Tactical Robots vary in size, weight, and configuration depending on platform type and attached equipment. Each system consists of a central body or chassis housing onboard computers, cameras, sensors, power systems, and communications equipment.

Digidog is a quadrupedal robotic canine, measuring approximately two feet tall and four feet long, and weighing approximately 70 pounds. Digidog is comprised of an oblong rectangular box body which houses computers, cameras, and other components. Digidog moves at a maximum speed of

3.5 miles per hour and operates in various movement modes including walk, crawl, quick-step, and stairs.

PackBot is a remote controlled tactical ground robot, measuring approximately three feet in length, and weighing approximately 58 pounds. PackBot is comprised of a low-profile tracked chassis, housing onboard computers, cameras, sensors, communications equipment, and a multi-axis manipulator arm. The system is designed to deploy rapidly and to navigate hazardous environments, including climbing stairs, traversing uneven terrain, and maneuvering through narrow passages, while transmitting real-time video, audio, and sensor data to the operator. PackBot operates at speeds of up to approximately 5.8 miles per hour and supports lift-and-carry capabilities of up to 44 pounds with its manipulator arm.

Avatar is a remote controlled tactical ground robot measuring approximately 24 inches in length, 15 inches in width, and 6 inches in height, and weighing approximately 25 pounds. Avatar is comprised of a compact tracked body, housing onboard cameras, communications equipment, batteries, and other operational components designed to support remote inspection. Avatar is capable of navigating varied terrain, climbing stairs and obstacles, and operating in confined indoor and outdoor environments, while providing real-time visual and audio information to the operator. Avatar has an operational range of up to approximately 300 meters.

Operation: Tactical Robots are controlled and supervised manually through a trained operator who is responsible for verifying surrounding conditions and directing the robot’s movement and functions. Operators’ direct movement and functions through an application on a remote controller, typically consisting of a ruggedized tablet with joystick or hand-controller input. Operators remain present at the deployment scene and maintain continuous control throughout use.

Technology Capabilities: Tactical Robots are equipped with multiple high-definition cameras, including wide-angle and pan-tilt-zoom camera systems, as well as thermal cameras,¹ and integrated lighting. Tactical Robots support two-way audio communication, allowing operators to transmit and receive sound remotely. Tactical Robots are capable of climbing stairs, navigating narrow passages, and traversing uneven terrain, including rubble and debris, enabling its use in complex indoor and outdoor environments such as barricaded locations, hazardous materials incidents, and search or inspection operations.

Tactical Robots can carry additional equipment (known as “payloads”) to enhance or expand their functionality, such as gas and radiation detection. The arm attachment enables Tactical Robots to interact with and manipulate objects from a safe distance through a maneuverable manipulator. The arm provides multiple degrees of freedom and terminates in a gripper capable of lifting approximately 24-44 pounds. The arm is operated manually through the controller, with the trained operator directing each movement based on live video feedback.

Together, these capabilities allow NYPD personnel to remotely assess potentially compromised locations from a safe standoff distance, gather critical information before entry, and support controlled and measured incident resolution while reducing risk to officers, subjects, and the

¹ For additional information on thermographic camera, please refer to the thermographic camera impact and use policy.

surrounding community.

Transmittal of Information: Tactical Robots transmit live video imagery, acoustic data, and, where applicable, mission-specific sensor data from onboard cameras and sensors to a controller operated by trained NYPD personnel who are present at or near the deployment scene. The controller is used to monitor transmissions in real time and to manually control the robot’s movement and operational functions through a secure application interface. Communications between Tactical Robots and the controllers are conducted through encrypted and secure wireless radio communications. In certain operational environments where radio-frequency signals may be degraded or unavailable, Tactical Robots may also support transmission through alternative secure communication methods, as appropriate for the deployment.

While Tactical Robots may have the technical capability to record video, audio, or sensor data depending on system configuration, the NYPD does not record, store, or retain any video imagery, acoustic data, or sensor data transmitted by Tactical Robots.

Autonomous Operation: Tactical Robots are operated manually by trained NYPD personnel, who are responsible for directing movement, verifying surrounding conditions, and supervise all deployments through a controller.

Battery Use: Tactical Robots are powered by a rechargeable and removable lithium-ion battery that allows for operation with runtime varying based on terrain, speed, and attached payloads.

RULES, PROCESSES & GUIDELINES RELATING TO USE OF THE TECHNOLOGY

NYPD’s Tactical Robots must be used in a manner consistent with the requirements and protection of the Constitution of the United States, the New York State Constitution, and applicable statutory authorities.

Request for Use: NYPD Tactical Robots may only be used by NYPD personnel for legitimate law enforcement purposes. Tactical Robots are only used by NYPD personnel who are trained on the technology’s appropriate use and application. The operator is responsible for ensuring safety surrounding the use of Tactical Robots. If necessary, NYPD personnel will request assistance from Emergency Services Unit (ESU) or Technical Assistance Response Unit (TARU). An ESU or TARU supervisor will determine if the use of Tactical Robots is appropriate.

Court Authorization: The NYPD does not seek court authorization before using Tactical Robots because they are only utilized during limited and exigent circumstances in emergency environments.

Restrictions in Use: NYPD policy specifically prohibits the use of Tactical Robots for surveillance, routine patrol with officers, traffic enforcement, crowd control, or immobilizing a vehicle or suspect. Additionally, the NYPD does not use facial recognition or any other biometric measuring technologies with Tactical Robots. Tactical Robots are not designed for or equipped with any weaponry, nor for offensive or enforcement actions.

Additional Guidelines: Tactical Robots are not used for investigating political activity. NYPD

investigations involving political activity are conducted by the Intelligence Division, which is the sole entity in the NYPD that may conduct investigations involving political activities pursuant to the Revised *Handschu* Guidelines.

As with all NYPD operations, no person will be the subject of police action because of actual or perceived race, color, religion or creed, age, national origin, alienage, citizenship status, gender (including gender identity), sexual orientation, disability, marital status, partnership status, military status, or political affiliation or beliefs.

The misuse of Tactical Robots will subject employees to administrative and potentially criminal penalties.

Addendum Obligation: In accordance with the Public Oversight of Surveillance Technology Act, an addendum to this impact and use policy will be prepared as necessary to describe any additional uses of Tactical Robots.

SAFEGUARD & SECURITY MEASURES AGAINST UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS

Physical Safeguard & Security Measures: Tactical Robots are securely stored within NYPD facilities when not in use, in locations inaccessible to the public. Additionally, a supervisor must periodically inspect and account for the devices. Specifically, Tactical Robots are regularly to test the device’s functionalities and ensure its batteries are charged. Supervisors of personnel utilizing Tactical Robots are responsible for security and proper utilization of the technology and associated equipment. Only authorized NYPD personnel have access Tactical Robots and the remote tablets that receive their transmissions and control their movements.

Access to Tactical Robots is limited to NYPD personnel with an articulable need to use the technology in furtherance of a lawful duty. Access to Tactical Robots is determined by an officer’s assignment and is rescinded when that officer’s assignment no longer requires its use.

Data Safeguard & Security Measures: Tactical Robots transmit live video imagery, acoustic data, and, where applicable, sensor data to a secure controller operated by trained NYPD personnel through encrypted communications.

While Tactical Robots have the technical capability to record video, audio, or sensor data depending on system configuration, the NYPD does not record, store, or retain any video imagery, acoustic data, or sensor data transmitted by Tactical Robots.

Software used to operate Tactical Robots functions within a closed, device-specific network and is used solely for system operation. Access to Tactical Robots and associated control software is restricted to authorized users and requires authentication credentials. Data transmitted between the Tactical Robots and the controller is encrypted in transit, consistent with NYPD information security policies.

Unauthorized access of any system will subject employees to administrative and potentially criminal penalties.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES RELATING TO RETENTION, ACCESS, & USE OF THE DATA

The NYPD does not record, store, or retain any of the video or acoustic data processed by Tactical Robots.

The NYPD retains and disposes of records pursuant to New York City Charter § 1133(f), (g) and (h). Pursuant to these provisions, the NYPD developed a retention schedule that was approved by the New York City Law Department and Department of Records and Information Services. This retention schedule governs the retention and disposition of NYPD records, and the NYPD retains and disposes of records pursuant to this schedule. The retention period of a “case investigation record” depends on its classification and is based on the final disposition of the case, i.e., what the arrestee is convicted of or pleads to. Further, case investigations are not considered closed unless they result in: prosecution and appeals are exhausted, a settlement, no arrest, or when restitution is no longer sought.

The misuse of any data will subject employees to administrative and potentially criminal penalties.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES RELATING TO PUBLIC ACCESS OR USE OF THE DATA

Members of the public may request information or data related to the NYPD’s use of Tactical Robots pursuant to the New York State Freedom of Information Law. However, the NYPD does not record, store, or retain video or acoustic data processed by Tactical Robots and would be unable to provide same.

EXTERNAL ENTITIES

Entities outside of the NYPD do not have direct access to the information or data collected by NYPD’s Tactical Robots. The NYPD does not record, store, or retain any of the video or acoustic data processed by situational awareness cameras.

Vendors & Contractors: The NYPD purchases Tactical Robots and associated equipment or software from approved vendors. The NYPD emphasizes the importance of and engages with vendors and contractors to maintain the confidentiality, availability, and integrity of NYPD technology systems.

Vendors and contractors may have access to Tactical Robots’ associated software in the performance of contractual duties to the NYPD. Such duties are typically technical or proprietary in nature (e.g., maintenance or failure mitigation). In providing vendors and contractors access to equipment and computer systems, the NYPD follows the principle of least privilege. Vendors and contractors are only allowed access on a “need to know basis” to fulfill contractual obligations and/or agreements.

Vendors and contractors providing equipment and services to the NYPD undergo vendor

responsibility determination and integrity reviews. Vendors and contractors providing sensitive equipment and services to the NYPD also undergo background checks. Vendors and contractors are legally obligated by contracts and/or agreements to maintain the confidentiality of NYPD data and information. Vendors and contractors are subject to criminal and civil penalties for unauthorized use or disclosure of NYPD data or information.

TRAINING

Only trained NYPD personnel can operate Tactical Robots. NYPD personnel utilizing Tactical Robots receive command-level training on the proper operation of Tactical Robots and the associated equipment. NYPD personnel must operate Tactical Robots in compliance with NYPD policies and training.

INTERNAL AUDIT & OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS

Only select personnel are specifically trained and authorized to use Tactical Robots in its appropriate application. Supervisors of personnel utilizing Tactical Robots are responsible for security and proper utilization of the technology and associated equipment.

NYPD personnel maintain a log of all equipment deployed at scenes when requested for assistance (including Tactical Robots) by date, time, location, purpose, operator, and authorizing member.

The misuse of Tactical Robots will subject employees to administrative and potentially criminal penalties.

HEALTH & SAFETY REPORTING

There are no known studies indicating that the use of Tactical Robots, when operated in accordance with manufacturer specifications and NYPD procedures, presents adverse health effects to members of the public or NYPD personnel. Tactical Robots are operated in accordance with applicable safety guidelines and training requirements. They are designed to be safe and effective when utilized under the criteria explained in the ‘Rules, Processes & Guidelines Relating to Use of the Technology’ section of this impact and use Policy. The NYPD only allows the operation of Tactical Robots by trained professionals.

Best Practices: Tactical Robots’ respective manufacturers recommend certain best practices to promote safe operation and prevent hazardous conditions for operators and others. Personnel should maintain a safe clearance from Tactical Robots during operation to avoid injury from moving components. Tactical Robots should be given the right of way during deployment and should not be touched, moved, powered on, or powered off by anyone other than trained operators. Personnel should not approach Tactical Robots while they are in motion or actively manipulating objects

Prohibitions: Tactical Robots should not be used in underwater and airborne applications; as a weapon; for transportation of persons, animals, hazardous materials, or substances; to intentionally cause harm with Tactical Robots or its attachments; for any illegal purpose; as a climbing aid; or interfering with Tactical Robots’ sensors to impair their functioning. Tactical Robots should also not be used for personal care, health care, or in routine home environments.

Operational Safety Risks: Injuries may be caused by collisions, falling over, or contact with pinch points. Misuse of Tactical Robots can potentially result in severe personal injuries, significant material hazards, or even death.

Collision/Fall Safety: Tactical Robots may fall due to stairs, inclines, signal loss, slippery surfaces, cords, or bright obstacles. People should not interrupt or attempt to physically control Tactical Robots. Unintended uses, like incorrect mounting of attachments, may cause loss of stability. Sudden falls or unexpected lateral movements only happen under rare circumstances. In the event of a sudden fall or loss of stability, Tactical Robots would remain mostly in the same location.

LED/Laser Safety: Tactical Robots includes lighting/illumination used to support imaging in low-light environments. Operators and nearby personnel should avoid staring directly into active lights at close range and should use appropriate precautions when operating in confined spaces. Laser components should not be tampered with or modified, and direct exposure to the laser should be avoided

Pinch Point Safety: Tactical Robots contain mechanical pinch points associated with its relevant parts that cannot be entirely eliminated without compromising mobility or operational stability. These pinch points are generally located in areas not typically contacted during normal deployment or operation. During handling, transport, maintenance, or loading and unloading, personnel may be exposed to pinch hazards. Even when powered off, articulated components may move under gravity or residual tension and can pinch fingers or other body parts, or entangle loose clothing, hair, or jewelry.

Battery Safety: Tactical Robots are powered by a removable lithium-ion battery pack. The NYPD only uses and charges Tactical Robots with manufacturer accessories to reduce the risk of fire or electric shock. The manufacturer also directs that Tactical Robots’ battery should not be short-circuited, burned, disassembled, submerged, punctured, crushed, dropped, or damaged. It is extremely unlikely that the battery would generate a fire under normal conditions of use.

DISPARATE IMPACTS OF THE TECHNOLOGY & IMPACT & USE POLICY

The NYPD has implemented significant safeguards to ensure that the Tactical Robots are used effectively and responsibly. The NYPD does not believe that this technology is being used in a manner that disparately impacts any protected groups as defined in the New York City Human Rights Law.

The safeguards and audit protocols built into this impact and use policy for Tactical Robots help to mitigate the risk of partial and biased law enforcement. Tactical Robots are a reactive technology that are used as tools to support de-escalation efforts without endangering officers, subjects of observation, or the general public. The NYPD explicitly does not use Tactical Robots for routine patrol or general surveillance of the public, nor is it equipped with any weaponry. Instead, Tactical Robots are strictly deployed in emergency situations, where their capabilities can enhance officer safety and operational effectiveness. Additionally, Tactical Robots do not record, store, or retain any video or acoustic data. Based on these safeguards, any theoretical risks of Tactical Robots are effectively mitigated and do not result in disparate impacts.

The NYPD is committed to the impartial enforcement of the law and to the protection of constitutional rights. The NYPD prohibits the use of racial and bias-based profiling in law enforcement actions, which must be based on standards required by the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution, Sections 11 and 12 of Article I of the New York State Constitution, Section 14-151 of the New York City Administrative Code, and other applicable laws.

Race, color, ethnicity, or national origin may not be used as a motivating factor for initiating police enforcement action. Should an officer initiate enforcement action against a person, motivated even in part by a person’s actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, or national origin, that enforcement action violates NYPD policy unless the officer’s decision is based on a specific and reliable suspect description that includes not only race, age, and gender, but other identifying characteristics or information.