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Wellesley Police Department Secures Boston Marathon with Dronetag RIDER

Enhancing On-the-Ground Situational
Awareness with Real-Time Drone Detection

Case Study Overview

-  **Customer:**
Wellesley Police Department
-  **Location:**
Wellesley, Massachusetts, USA
-  **Industry:**
Public Safety / Law Enforcement
-  **Product Used:**
Dronetag RIDER, Dronetag App
-  **Use Case:**
Event security, mobile drone detection during high-risk public events

Challenge

Following the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, drone-related threats have become a growing concern - especially given the rise in low-cost commercial UAVs. With limited federal drone detection support in 2025, Wellesley PD needed a tool they could control locally during one of the largest public events in the U.S.

Solution

The department deployed two Dronetag RIDER units, operated by mobile teams during the Boston Marathon. The devices enabled real-time drone and pilot tracking without relying on State and Federal agencies for support, spotters, or updates based on what someone saw or heard.

Results

- ▶ 4 drone detections at distance of up to 2 km (1.2 mi)
- ▶ DJI Mavic 3, DJI M3T and DJI M30T among detected drones
- ▶ Improved autonomy and decision-making at street level
- ▶ Seamless use of the Dronetag RIDER with minimal training
- ▶ Increased response speed and confidence during high-risk events

The Challenge

The Wellesley Police Department is responsible for securing part of the Boston Marathon route - an event that draws hundreds of thousands of spectators. After the tragic events in 2013, the focus shifted sharply toward proactive security and threat detection.

In recent years, the widespread availability of consumer drones has introduced a new risk. While state and federal partners previously supported drone detection, in 2025 Wellesley was informed that those assets would not be available.

With no Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR) over their section of the route, Wellesley needed its own way to detect drones - and more importantly, find the pilot quickly and independently.

“Security is an ever-evolving topic. With low-cost drones becoming more capable, it’s entirely possible someone could use one with a dangerous payload.” - Scott Whittemore, Chief of Wellesley Police Department

The Solution: Dronetag RIDER

After researching options, Wellesley PD reached out to Dronetag just one week before the marathon. The response was immediate - two RIDER units were delivered and ready for deployment in time for the event.

The setup was fast and intuitive. Both experienced drone pilots and non-technical officers were able to operate the RIDER effectively with minimal instruction. The Dronetag App was easy to connect and use on mobile devices, and the system provided real-time position data for both drones and their pilots.

Officers used RIDER in mobile response teams, scanning in real time and keeping track of law enforcement drones flying over the course.



"We were able to easily set the devices up and figure out how to use them. Within an hour, our officers were detecting and tracking drones confidently." - Scott Whittemore, Chief of Wellesley Police Department

The Results

1

Autonomous Detection & Tracking

RIDER gave officers a direct view of where drones and pilots were located - reducing delays, confusion, and reliance on third-party instructions.

2

Minimal Training Required

Within an hour of setup, both technical and non-technical users could operate the devices confidently.

3

Efficient Deployment

Two RIDER units covered the entire Wellesley section of the marathon. In the future, deploying three units (east, central, west) is seen as ideal.

4

No Incidents Reported

There were no unauthorized drone incursions. Officers successfully tracked all law enforcement drones operating in the area.

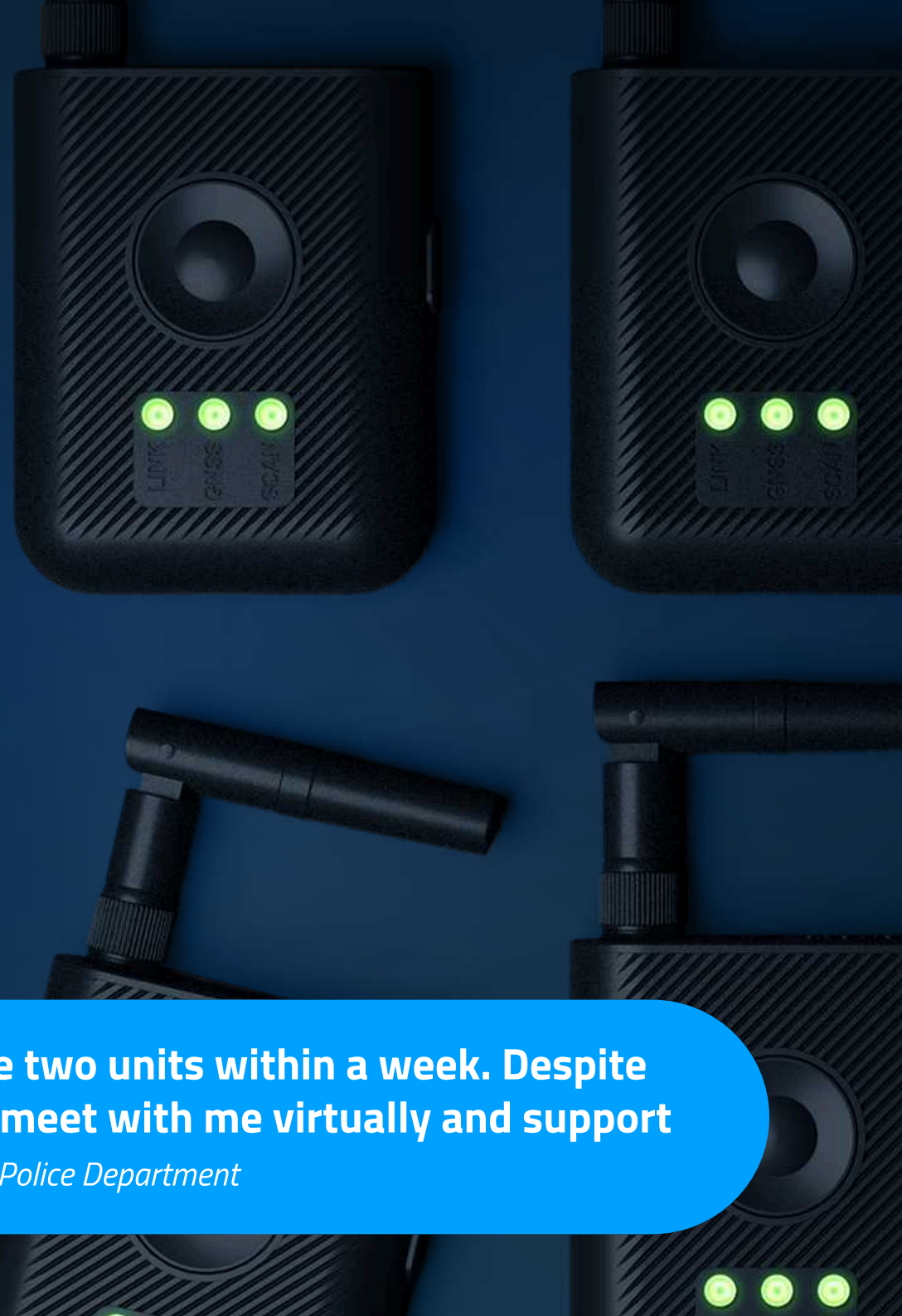
"The officer can literally see where he is on the map, and where the drone/pilot is. Not having to rely on someone else giving directions is a game changer." - Scott Whittemore, Chief of Wellesley Police Department

The Experience with Dronetag

After learning of the last-minute loss of federal drone detection support, Wellesley PD reached out to Dronetag in a hurry. Despite the time zone gap, Dronetag responded quickly, offering virtual support and shipping devices immediately.

This fast, responsive support - combined with a practical, easy-to-use device - gave the department a sense of control during one of the country's highest-profile public events.

"Dronetag did everything possible to get me two units within a week. Despite the time zone differences, he made time to meet with me virtually and support us in every way." - Scott Whittemore, Chief of Wellesley Police Department



Conclusion

For Wellesley PD, Dronetag RIDER filled a critical gap when it mattered most - providing direct, field-level drone detection during a major public event. With rapid deployment, easy operation, and accurate tracking, RIDER gave officers the autonomy to act fast, stay informed, and ensure public safety with confidence.





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