

Background

In 2025, the Gunnar J. Bigley issued a grant to the Newton Police Department to support their drone program. The grant helped make a transformative investment in their Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) program, and the results have exceeded their expectations.

The Newton Police Department has invested in building a UAS program that gives us a meaningful tactical and operational advantage. Drones allow them to support search and rescue operations, assist with crime scene documentation, enhance officer safety during high-risk calls, and provide aerial perspectives in situations where a ground-level response alone may not be sufficient.

The Foundation's grant funded the purchase and installation of a Truckvault unit in the trunk area of the dedicated Chevy Tahoe, and that investment has paid dividends every time the UAS program has been activated. The difference it has made is real and immediate.

Before the Truckvault, their equipment was distributed across multiple Pelican cases that had to be loaded into the vehicle before each deployment alongside all other gear. Getting ready to respond was a logistical undertaking: time-consuming, cumbersome, and dependent on everything being staged correctly. The Truckvault changed that entirely. Their drone, batteries, power cords, and all associated equipment are now organized and secured in the unit's purpose-built drawers, ready to go at a moment's notice. When a call comes in, personnel are not delayed by packing and loading equipment; the vehicle is already equipped and ready to respond.

DRONE CENTRAL COMMAND

Be ready at a moment's notice with our Drone Responder Line. These units are specially designed to house integrated drone technology while on the go and transform into a fully-functioning drone command center upon arrival at a scene. With 7 options boasting various levels of storage, power and remote viewing, you're sure to find the perfect solution for your agency or department.



VIEW MORE
DETAILS



DRONE RESPONDER 1
SUV - Drone Responder Line



DRONE RESPONDER 2
SUV - Drone Responder Line



DRONE RESPONDER 3
SUV - Drone Responder Line



DRONE RESPONDER 4
SUV - Drone Responder Line



DRONE RESPONDER 5
SUV - Drone Responder Line



DRONE RESPONDER 6
SUV - Drone Responder Line



DRONE RESPONDER 7
SUV - Drone Responder Line

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Instagram: [gunnar_j_bigley_foundation](#)
Facebook Group: [Gunnar J. Bigley Foundation](#)

Future Plans

Sargent Dan Finkle states:

We are genuinely proud of what this program has become and grateful for the Foundation's role in getting us here. The Truckvault has made us faster, more capable, and better organized. Now we want to go further.

How to improve the program:

The Tahoe that houses the Truckvault is not configured for routine patrol use, which means it is not assigned to regular shifts. There are hours in every day when our drone capability is sitting in a bay rather than moving through our coverage area. Every hour the vehicle is not in the field is an hour of availability we are leaving on the table.

The solution we are proposing is to place a fully drone-equipped vehicle into regular patrol rotation by equipping a new patrol vehicle, currently in production, with full UAS capability alongside its standard patrol equipment.

Vehicle upgrades include:

- Truckvault
- custom storage
- power inverter
- charging system
- DJI Matrice 4 Thermal ("M4T") drone and required accessories

2026 Grant

\$25,326 donated for vehicle upgrades (scan QR for full article)



Truckvault: provide the same organized, secure, ready-to-deploy equipment storage that has proven so effective in the current UAS Tahoe.

- Custom storage box : A custom-built storage solution to keep patrol gear organized and accessible, working in harmony with the Truckvault.
 - A high-capacity inverter to power the Truckvault's electrical systems, the flat panel monitor, and other UAS-related equipment while in the field.
 - Battery charging system: An integrated system for charging UAS batteries and maintaining all battery-powered equipment in the vehicle, includes a shoreline power cord that connects to a standard wall outlet, allowing the vehicle to be plugged in whenever it is parked for an extended period. Without it, batteries in the UAS equipment, portable radios, and other devices would slowly drain while the vehicle sits. With it, everything stays topped off and ready to deploy without the delay or uncertainty of discovering drained equipment at the start of a shift.
- DJI Matrice 4 Thermal ("M4T") drone and required accessories:
The DJI M4T is a thermal and visual imaging platform built for public safety applications, capable of providing live color video and thermal imaging from the air, including additional flight batteries and a field charger, to support sustained and reliable UAS operations.

Help Support!

How can you support?

Donations
Spreading the word
Investing in the improvement plan
Sponsoring the foundation

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Thank You !
FOR YOUR SUPPORT



Annual Sponsorships

Gold Sponsorship Level- Over \$250

Gunnar J. Bigley Foundation T-Shirt
Verbal shout out at our events
Business Logo or Name included on all event postings
Business Logo or Name included on our website and yearly brochure
Business Logo or Name included on Event Posters at events
Business Logo or Name included in our event programs
Shout out on our social media accounts

Silver Sponsorship Level- \$100-\$250

Business Logo or Name included on all event postings
Business Logo or Name included on our website and yearly brochure
Business Logo or Name included on Event Posters at events
Business Logo or Name included in our event programs
Shout out on our social media accounts

Bronze Sponsorship Level- \$25-\$100

Business Logo or Name included on our website and yearly brochure
Business Logo or Name included on Event Posters at events
Business Logo or Name included in our event programs
Shout out on our social media accounts

Gift Card or Food Donation- (event specific)

Business Logo or Name included on Event Posters at events
Business Logo or Name included in our event programs
Shout out on our social media accounts

Amazon List Donation-

Business Logo or Name included in our event programs
Shout out on our social media accounts

Future Plans continued

This investment gives our community the benefit of two equipped units, the flexibility to deploy them independently based on the nature of each mission, and a level of UAS availability that very few departments of our size can offer.

The existing UAS Tahoe would remain in service as our designated UAS vehicle for investigative operations, deployments with long operational periods, and out of town responses, while the new unit would be a fully patrol-ready vehicle also capable of independent drone operations. Both vehicles would be in regular rotation, and both would carry everything needed to launch a drone deployment without relying on the other.

- The practical impact of having two equipped units extends beyond the obvious benefit of simultaneous deployments. Just as valuable is the operational flexibility it creates in situations where committing a marked patrol vehicle is not ideal. Many of our UAS operations are best suited for a vehicle that does not need to remain in active patrol rotation. Investigative operations, for example, may require a UAS presence that is better handled discreetly and without pulling a patrol officer from street coverage for an extended period.

Out-of-town responses present a similar dynamic, as does any prolonged operation such as a missing person search, extended crime scene documentation, or a structure fire where UAS support may be needed for hours at a time.

In those situations, it is far more effective to assign a detective, an administrative officer, or another available non-patrol personnel to the existing UAS Tahoe, leaving the patrol-ready vehicle free to remain in service on the street.

With this grant, we would have exactly that choice available to us. Having two equipped units also dramatically reduces the risk of a coverage gap when one vehicle is already committed to a call and a second UAS need arises. This level of redundancy and flexibility represents a meaningful step forward in how we deliver drone capabilities to our community.

The downstream benefits of this investment extend well beyond departmental efficiency. Faster drone deployment means faster response to missing persons searches, where time is often the most critical factor. It means better situational awareness during active incidents, which improves decision-making and officer safety. It means more thorough aerial coverage for crime scene documentation, which supports prosecutorial outcomes and public accountability.

A drone that is available is a drone that can be used and a drone that is used is one that makes officers more effective and our community safer. The Truckvault made them ready. This investment doubles the ability to keep UAS capability in the field and gives them the flexibility to deploy each unit in the way that best fits the mission.

Thank You!

The Newton Police Department would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the Gunnar Bigley Foundation for their incredibly generous donation of \$25,326.00 in support of our Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Program.

This contribution represents far more than financial support; it is an investment in public safety, innovation, and our community. Through their continued commitment to our department, the Gunnar Bigley Foundation has played a pivotal role in helping us build and expand a program that enhances our ability to locate missing persons, respond to critical incidents, document crime scenes, support search and rescue operations, and provide valuable real-time intelligence to responding officers.

Many of the advancements we've made within our UAS program would not have been possible without community partners who believe in our mission. The Gunnar Bigley Foundation has consistently demonstrated that belief, and their support continues to help us bring cutting-edge technology and capabilities to the residents we proudly serve.

On behalf of every member of the Newton Police Department, thank you to the Gunnar Bigley Foundation for your generosity, your partnership, and your unwavering commitment to making our community safer. We are truly honored by your support and look forward to continuing this relationship for years to come.

Drone In Use Article

