

Justice.

The act requires the Police Department to be more transparent about its surveillance and technology tools, including Digidog, something civil libertarians said had been lacking. Jay Stanley, a senior policy analyst with the American Civil Liberties Union, said empowering a robot to do police work could have implications for bias, mobile surveillance, hacking and privacy. There is also concern that the robot could be paired with other technology and be weaponized. "We do see a lot of police departments adopting powerful new surveillance and other technology without telling, let alone asking, the communities they serve," he said. "So openness and transparency is key." The New York Police Department did not respond to requests for comment about the civil liberty concerns.

A mobile device that can gather intelligence about a volatile

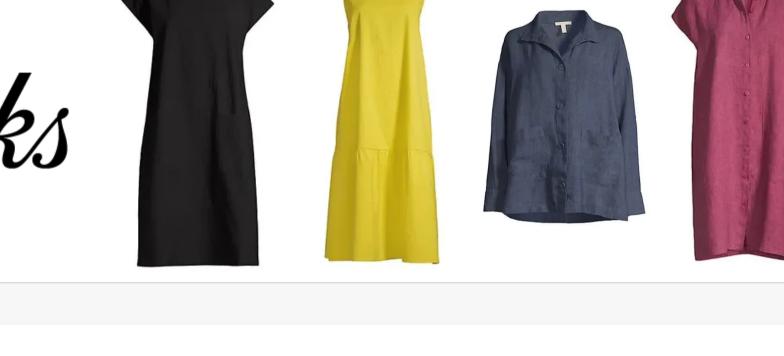
situation remotely has "tremendous potential" to limit injuries and

fatalities, said Keith Taylor, a former SWAT team sergeant at the

Police Department who teaches at John Jay College of Criminal

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"It's important to question police authority, however this appears

to be pretty straightforward," he said. "It is designed to help law

The New York Police Department is among three in the country

the tech company known for videos of its robots dancing and

that have the mechanical dog, which is built by Boston Dynamics,

The company, which calls the robot dog Spot, began selling it last

June. Most of the buyers have been utility and energy companies,

enforcement get the information they need without having a

deadly firefight, for instance."

jumping with eerie, humanlike fluidity.

47%

The robot has been used to inspect sites with hazardous material. Early in the pandemic, it was used by health care workers to communicate with potentially sick patients at hospital triage sites, Mr. Perry said. Most of the companies rename the robot after they buy it, giving it names like Bolt and Mac and Cheese, he said.

The Massachusetts State Police and the Honolulu Police

is discreet."

Department are also using the robotic dog, which has a 90-minute battery life and walks at a speed of three miles per hour. Other police departments have called the company to learn more about the device, which has a starting price of about \$74,000 and may cost more with extra features, Mr. Perry said. The robotic dog, which bears a resemblance to those featured in the 2017 "Metalhead" episode of "Black Mirror," was not designed to act as a covert tool of mass surveillance, Mr. Perry said.

"It's noisy and has flashing lights," he said. "It's not something that

The use of robots that can be deployed into dangerous situations to

keep police officers out of harm's way could become the norm.

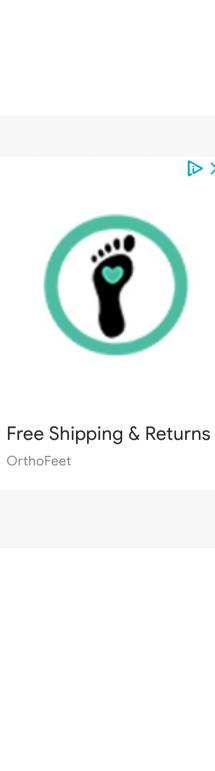
In Dallas in 2016, the police ended a standoff with a gunman sought in the killings of five officers by blowing him up using a robot.

In 2015, a man with a knife who threatened to jump off a bridge in San Jose, Calif., was taken into custody after the police had a robot bring him a cellphone and a pizza. The year before that, the Albuquerque police used a robot to

"deploy chemical munitions" in a motel room where a man had barricaded himself with a gun, a department report said. He surrendered. Maria Cramer is a breaking news reporter on the Express Desk. More about Maria <u>Cramer</u> **Christine Hauser** is a reporter, covering national and foreign news. Her previous jobs in the newsroom include stints in Business covering financial markets and on the Metro desk in the police bureau. More about Christine Hauser A version of this article appears in print on March 1, 2021, Section A, Page 17 of the New York edition with the

headline: Police Enlist Robotic Dog, and Skeptics Balk. Order Reprints | Today's Paper | Subscribe Give this article

as well as manufacturers and construction companies, which use it to get into spaces too dangerous for humans, said Michael Perry, vice president of business development at the company.



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