

Real Crime All The Time

Drones, Data, and Decision-Making

Mindy: [00:00:00] Welcome to Analyst Talk with Jason Elder. It's like coffee with an analyst, or it could be whiskey with an analyst reading a spreadsheet, linking crime events, identifying a series, and getting the latest scoop on association news and training. So please don't beat that analyst and join us as we define the law enforcement analysis profession.

One episode at a time.

Jason: How we doing? Analyst, Jason Elder here with another LE, a podcast Deep Dive, real Crime all the time with Nikki North. Nikki, how we doing?

Nikki: Doing good, Jason, how are you doing?

Jason: I am doing well. I take it that your holidays and the new year and everything else have gone.

Nikki: Yes. Trucking along.

Jason: Yeah. So , for the listeners, this is the series where we talk about all things real time crime center. As we were talking about in the, prep call, it just amazes me how much. Responsibilities keep getting added to the real time crime center. And I think today's topic is another good example of [00:01:00] that.

'cause we're gonna be talking about drones.

Nikki: Yeah, absolutely. Definitely. What keeps it fresh and exciting though, for sure.

Jason: Yeah. Yeah. So I'll, I'll just, give you the floor , talk about realtime crime centers and drones and where we're headed.

Nikki: Yeah. So I'm just kind of starting to dip my feet into the topic myself here too.

So that's why I thought it'd be a good one. 'cause I think it's kind of a realtime crime centers where the hot button, hot button topic. I think drones as a first responder program are kind of that next up and coming thing.

Mindy: Mm-hmm.

Nikki: A lot of larger agencies especially are already starting to really get into that.

I know there's quite a few out in California that are some really great examples of setting up their DFR programs. So kudos to them for kind of paving the way to make it easier from some others. But, just to kind of touch on what a drone as a first responder is for anyone that doesn't know, it's essentially being able to launch drones directly from your crime center, typically from like an Xbox controller or something along those lines.

Jason: So I, I think, is it, and I, maybe I'm making it too simple, but is it. I mean, would all the same rules [00:02:00] apply in terms of what a realtime crime center may have with cameras? I mean, it seems to me like the drone would just be a movable mobile camera.

Nikki: Yeah. Essentially in summary, that's pretty much what it is.

Of course, there's federal aviation regulations that play in, you know mm-hmm. No fly zones and stuff like that, where you have to have that level of knowledge battery monitoring to make sure your battery's not gonna die, since it's not necessarily like a. Plugged in camera to be able to land it and swap out batteries.

But essentially, yeah, it gives you a mobile camera to give you an extra set of eyes.

Jason: What are some of the real time crime center considerations? Is there something unique? I mean, you mentioned the, the no fly zone and that that gets something that you don't necessarily have with the, the standard cameras or the street cameras.

But what are some of the other things that are in play. . So,

Nikki: yeah, so liabilities is definitely another big one. A lot of that does go into getting the proper training and certifications.

Jason: Mm-hmm.

Nikki: So that's one of the first and foremost factors is making sure you get [00:03:00] the training to properly be able to pilot a drone.

Mm-hmm. That includes night flight hours, something to consider of making sure you have your personnel available at night to get that training hours and that they need on that note, staffing specifically is a big piece to consider if you're gonna add it as another piece.

It's not necessarily just an extra camera. It's not like, oh, instead of watching the traffic cameras, lemme watch the drone feed. Instead you, you've gotta factor in that no, it's an extra set. You still wanna keep monitoring everything you normally would, but now you have that extra piece. So considering how many people you have being able to get over the radio, if you're actively flying the drone considering stuff like foot pedals, like dispatch has to be able to go over the radio and not sitting there trying to have one hand on the controller, one hand on your radio stuff like that, for example.

Another good piece would be considering what kind of calls you're going to respond to if you're going to be strictly proactive, reactive, you know how you're gonna respond if you're only gonna do high priority calls, if you're gonna go a step further and say. Hey, all of my officers are tied up.

There's a solicitor on the screen. Lemme see if I can actually find them. So that way when someone is available. I know exactly [00:04:00] where to send them. So kind of also having that distinction of what you will and won't respond to might be a little different. For example, like right now I know where all my city traffic cameras are.

Jason: Mm-hmm.

Nikki: This gives you the perspective to be able to go beyond where you would normally be able to go. So for example, if it was in a neighborhood. Right now I'm kind of dead in the water adding that drone feed. Okay. Now I actually have a camera to look at that I wouldn't have otherwise had a camera to look at without it.

Jason: Yeah. And yeah. And at your agency, this is not yet established, is that correct?

Nikki: So we have an actual, like drone UAS team currently, which is mm-hmm. Fully on patrol. And some of them just have drones that they're able to launch from the ground as they're on scene for a call that they have the training.

Mm-hmm. But from the actual crime center itself, with civilian staffing, that's what we're working towards next.

Jason: In terms of what's established now,, what's the threshold that must be met in order to do the, drones or is this something that you're seeing they're, using daily or is this just really the, high end cases.

It's

Nikki: kinda limited [00:05:00] right now to having a limited number of pilots that it's more of like an interest based program at this point. Mm-hmm. And not necessarily like an actual established unit, if you will. Like right now it's people doing it 'cause they enjoy it and they're not actually getting any like specialty teams pay or anything quite yet.

Nikki: So a lot of it comes down to their availability more than anything right now. So it typically is the really, truly higher type situations right now. And then if they need like some mapping stuff done or anything like that, when they have the time to, but not to the extent of every, like a serious crash something like that.

A domestic disturbance, whatever it may be. . It's gotta be like some high level stuff. Like, hey, there's someone taken off in the woods, can we get a drone up?

Jason: As a realtime crime center manager. Obviously you got to manage the team I could envision that it would be hard to get off the ground 'cause it seems a little niche and not really knowing how often you're going to use it.

But when you need it, you need it. But you, have to manage the personnel accordingly. So the, same person that's might be flying the drone might be also. A an [00:06:00] expert or the, the person and part of another important part of the realtime crime center at the same time.

Nikki: Yeah. I think that's the biggest piece of concerning how you present it, when you are gonna keep adding this new technology.

Mm-hmm. If you make it fun that's what makes it more enjoyable. So if you're like, Hey, you're literally gonna be basically in a video game, obviously it's a little more serious than that, but if you present it like, Hey, I know I have some

people that enjoy gaming in my crime center, here's the perfect way to present it.

It's like a video game for you.

Jason: Yeah, well, I can see where they would wanna do it. Mm-hmm. I just in terms of managers and people trying to make sure that everything in the real time crime center is functioning during critical incidents, that's where I think it could be, a little rough.

Nikki: Yeah.

At least from the manager perspective. Right now, the sergeant and commander that are over the drone unit at this time have been phenomenal to work with, and at least mm-hmm. Loop me in on all their meetings that they've been in on and stuff like that. So that's what makes it easier. From the manager side is at least having those people that know what they're doing already.

Jason: Yeah. Yeah. And I, I mean obviously too, I, I [00:07:00] don't know very much about drones. I do know when I go to Universal and they have the nighttime show that if there's any kind of weather, there's no drone show. So I'm guessing that we're also, another fact has to be in play is, is the weather.

Nikki: Yep. So wind speeds storming, that kind of stuff, if it's gonna mess with your flight path, all those things are definitely things to factor.

So that's another kind of. Unique thing from the first responder perspective to launching them from the ground is if you're launching it, you're physically in that area to assess the weather. If you're in the crime center, it could be horing sitting in the crime center and on the other side of town it's sunny as could be for your typical Florida example.

Jason: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Nikki: So you might think you can't fly, but it's actually sunny as could be where you're trying to launch.

Jason: Now you do you mentioned some California. Agencies, do you know of any realtime crime centers that have this capability in, in play right now?

Nikki: There's quite a few out there.

Trying to think off the top of my head, drawing a blank on the one that I really wanted to [00:08:00] mention.

So I know there's quite a good bit of agencies out in California that are doing DFR. I know Arizona's another one. A lot of people are able to work with a lot of the platforms they're already using too. Like I know for example, just to give two of 'em. Mm-hmm.

Axons integrated with Skydio as well as their own. Programs as well. So they've got a couple going there and then mm-hmm. So like for example, here we're using Skydio, which is through Axon as we have a lot of Axon products. I know Flock has their own, and then there's a few other companies out there.

Nikki: Something to consider on that note is also counter drone surveillance. I know that stuff comes at some price points, but stuff like D Drone and stuff like that can tell you if there's other drones flying in area you're trying to fly, or being able to counterbalance them and land them if they're in your path, or it shouldn't be up in the first place.

Are some of their big things with products to consider along the way too?

Jason: Yeah, I mean, I, you, you, you kinda hit. Hit this point before, but just, just thinking about it more. I, I would imagine there's, there's obviously a big difference between flying a drone where you're on site mm-hmm. [00:09:00] And like flying a kite versus you can see, you physically see it, you're out there versus like, I'm in a building maybe miles away.

And, and just strictly relying on the cameras that are on the drone for, sight.

Nikki: Yeah. Especially in more narrow spaces too. Like luckily here at least stuff is decently spaced out, so we don't have like alleyways or anything like that. But that's something to consider is if you have some really closed buildings, like you can't necessarily see that, like you're relying on the camera footage at that point.

'cause you don't have a line of sight. Which is also a special level clearance you need too, is originally, typically you will start with flying them from the ground and then you can add the clearance for not needing a line of sight anymore too.

Jason: Yeah, yeah. And I'm curious the, the range on, on these, what is.

How far away from the realtime crime center can you go?

Nikki: So it's kind of dependent upon where you put your base stations. Mm-hmm. So it comes down to battery life flight times, that kind of stuff. . So depending what models you have and everything is a big [00:10:00] influence in there. . So typically what you'll do for like the true drone as a first responder program is like here we're starting with two.

Stationary platforms. . Based kind of on call volume is how we did ours. . So pretty much the two highest call volume areas are getting a base station there. That way the drones can go within such a range from there based on battery life, how long it takes to get there, that kind of stuff.

And then as we confirm successes and stuff like that, I'm sure we'll end up adding more base stations.

Jason: Oh, I see, I see. And I mean, I guess besides obviously sending it to be more like we mentioned before, a a mobile camera, is there other uses for sending out a drone?

Nikki: Yeah, so you can do it for stuff like just even like land assessment and that kind of thing.

Or if you're planning on going somewhere to get a scope of an overview. Like if somewhere floods all the time. You can get a good weather view of, okay, like what's damaged? What's flooded. So Florida perfect for hurricanes California great for fires whatever it may be.

That it's not just set to being crime driven. You can take that a step further and [00:11:00] use it for site assessments. Mm-hmm. Weather assessments, that kind of stuff too.

Jason: Yeah. Now, is there a speaker on the drones? ,

Nikki: I know there's all kinds of different features that some have. I mean, there have been talks of them even being able to add tasers to them eventually.

So that'll be interesting to see if it comes to fruition.

Jason: Man, I didn't even think about that. I was just thinking about if they had speakers. Like you're, you're just walking and you have somebody a drone

comes over your head and starts talking to you to get outta the area that, oh, how

Nikki: so There's definitely different features that can be added to depending what model you get in all that for.

Jason: And

Nikki: then also in interior versus exterior too is another consideration that interior is obviously a little harder to fly than exterior.

Jason: Oh, I see. Yeah. That's funny. Isn't that the The taser. The taser and then Yep. Then I, I've watched too much TV in my lifetime. I get like, like I am envisioning like the shooting the net out

Nikki: ti the future is [00:12:00] coming to be a reality.

Jason: How are we doing Analysts? January 30th is my

birthday and instead of cake, I'm asking for your feedback. Analyst talk now has passed 300 episodes and I want your thoughts on what. To keep what to rethink and what topics you want to cover next. The podcast listener feedback survey takes about 10 minutes to complete, and yes, this is your chance to tell me what you really think.

The survey is open now . Please see the link in the show notes to complete the survey. Thanks for helping

shape what comes next. .

Jason: That's obviously a lot of possibilities, more data sets for the analysts inside the real time crime center, and as we mentioned, expanding the, responsibility of the real time crime center [00:13:00] with the, with this new capability.

Nikki: Yeah, absolutely. And you never know what's next is what makes it fun though, for sure.

Jason: Yeah. And I guess any, anything else, anything else as you're, as you're looking to get this, any, any legal concerns, any real downsides that you're looking to overcome?

Nikki: I would say legal concern wise, just make sure, like if you do have a general counsel like we do, for example, that they're in the loop on such things.

You can get sued civilly if you do crash a drone, like depending on what you crashed into.

Nikki: So just stuff to be aware of that you don't necessarily get covered by the agency just because you're flying that, but you can also get sued civilly is just something to take into consideration.

Jason: Yeah.

Yeah. I wouldn't, I would think so. And then once the folks realize that they're out there and they'll probably start shooting at 'em.

Nikki: Right. Only a matter of time, I'm sure.

Jason: . All right, Nikki, and you got some big news professionally. As we switch gears and just wrap up this interview, you have a pretty big [00:14:00] announcement.

Nikki: I do. I have officially left law enforcement to join the corporate private sector. That I am now at a company called Iris Intel.

Jason: So for some of those you have joined the dark side.

Nikki: That's right.

Jason: I am fascinated when talking to analysts about career changes and transitions, and so just talk a little bit about what went into this decision.

Nikki: So starting out it's a relatively small company look kind of looking to expand.

Jason: Mm-hmm.

Nikki: So it's something I use in my daily routine here at when I was at Flagler personally. It's basically a request system. You can recreate all different kinds of templates and it's basically to help you track your stats essentially more than anything.

Nikki: So it's essentially a fully compliant suite all in one.

So you can do stats tracking. So for example, how we just talked about drones something like tracking your drone deployments to show how often it's getting utilized to help you justify your staffing when you need to. Showing those flight times, showing those flight logs. Stuff like criminal [00:15:00] histories I'm sure many analysts can relate to the headache of CJ net taking 47 years to load anything whatsoever to send criminal histories.

So it's a database where you can upload your criminal histories directly and you get notified email that they're available and then you can then go into the platform and view them yourself. Mm-hmm. So it definitely saves some time and headache compared to some of the more outdated platforms that we're still using these days.

So I think getting to utilize it in my day to day, I see the value in it and it's something I wanna help grow. As you've probably seen from talking to me of course I had the opportunity that if I would've stayed, I would've been able to help grow the drone program.

But, mm-hmm. I'm someone one that likes to constantly be building new things. So going from starting the crime center to helping be one of the founding members of the association to now kind of getting to. Start essentially from the ground up at a new company, I think is a good opportunity.

Jason: Do you have anything in particular that you are gonna focus on ?

Nikki: So, my official title is the Law Enforcement Solutions and Success Manager. So I'm kind of the liaison between analysts and our IT support [00:16:00] and the bigger figures at the company to kind of be able to get what analysts want in the program to make it like an all-inclusive program.

So like right now for the realtime side you have your fuss, your flock, and all those platforms.

For the analytical side, that would be my goal is to try to get this a lot more of a single pane of glass for the analytical side that you can potentially do link charting in there, you can make your bulletins in there, and it's all just in one nice housed area to keep track of everything for you.

Jason: Right. So you, we may be seeing you at a conference. Two.

Nikki: Yes, I'll still be around. I'll still be at IA for sure. Definitely FCIA. We'll see just kind of figuring out amongst our staffing, who's going to what. But N-R-T-C-C-A, of course still one of my babies that I'll be involved with, so definitely will still be around to hang out with all my favorite analysts.

Jason: Very good. And it's. Remote work or do you have to move?

Nikki: It is remote work. So that is a big piece is I'm still a part of my county, so trying to stay involved and keep [00:17:00] up to everything with our crime center because it's still my homeland.

Jason: Oh yeah, I, I say this a lot. The, the private industry really makes it tough for analysts to stay in the public sector really am embracing the remote work.

I think a lot of agencies are not,

Nikki: and I think a lot of it comes down to too with times changing in general with the economy, like you used to stay for the benefits and I think private companies are definitely starting to up the ante with some of the benefits and everything too, to really compete and make it harder.

Jason: Yeah. Yeah. And I think too, it's not as, it is not as cutthroat as I think the, the typical. Private industry used to have that stigma of it being super competitive and super cutthroat. And I think it has definitely been a, a nice, obviously a nice landing spot for, for analysts. 'cause it seems for me that it seems like almost every other month, I, it seems like somebody's going over to the private industry from the public sector.

Nikki: And, and that was like one of my personal reasons too, for picking the specific company that I did is. [00:18:00] My goal is to it's everyone's goal always, but my true goal is to be able to partner with all these companies mm-hmm. And not be a competition and get everyone to integrate together and try to really give the best platform that you can for an analyst to see success and help

them justify what they need to and make it easier for them with everything, the way it's always expanding.

The easier you can make a job, the better because the tasks are just ever growing.

Jason: Yeah. I mean, you, you named a lot of different. Tasks and tools that, that an analyst use, and it's always that classic one stop shop. Everybody's always trying to build. Mm-hmm.

Nikki: So I think that's the part I look the most forward to is getting to hopefully continue to work with a lot of the companies that I have in a completely different capacity, where they're not constantly trying to sell me stuff.

Jason: Yeah. And so, and then you are going to, as you mentioned, you're gonna stay with the regional real-time crime center association.

Nikki: Yeah. So I'll switch over to the corporate side and stay involved with the National Realtime Crime Center Association and then. Of course do a vendor at our state conference and all that and everything too.

Jason: Yeah, [00:19:00] that sounds funny. I am. You gotta transfer over to the corporate side.

Nikki: That's right.

Jason: I mean, I understand why, but it still sounds funny to me.

Nikki: Stick to the dark side.

Jason: Yeah. Yeah. Well, excellent. Good luck. Certainly a, exciting time and transition, it's, it's a lot, right? You've been at Flagler County Sheriff's Office for seven years.

And to make this transition and, lot of unknowns and that's what makes it scary, but it also makes it exciting 'cause there's so many potential opportunities to moving forward.

Nikki: Yes, very bittersweet, but a lot of unknowns for sure is definitely outside my comfort zone. So up for the challenge.

Jason: Very good, Wally, I'll give you the last word as we finish up this interview.

Congratulations. Good luck. I'm sure you'll do great and look forward to hearing more about your journey in the future.

Nikki: Yeah, I appreciate it. Yeah, just thank you everyone to taking the [00:20:00] time to listen. I, I like to hope that I covered pretty much every. Major real time topic. I'm sure in the future there'll be more topics to cover and hopefully I'm still involved to to help create the path though for a lot of those topics.

'cause it's definitely my passion to be involved with the real time in the crime analysis world for sure.

Jason: Alright, fantastic. Thank you so much and you be safe.

Nikki: Thank you.

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