Should law enforcement use robot dogs?

Police have started using robot dogs, but not everyone thinks that's a good idea.

What you need to know

- **US law enforcement agencies have used robots for decades, although robot dogs are a newer technology.**
- **The robot dog used by most police departments is called Spot, made by a company called Boston Dynamics.**
- **More than 60 police departments in Massachusetts, Texas, New York, Hawaii, and other US states have used or tested robot dogs.**
- **Countries including China, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates, and Canada have reportedly used them too.**

BUSY MACHINES
Robot dogs are also being used in factories, power plants, warehouses, and construction sites.

Law enforcement agencies in the US have been using robots since the 1980s. They have included units on wheels that defuse explosive devices and drones that fly over natural disasters. Then, when Boston Dynamics unleashed Spot in 2019, police, sheriff, bomb squad, and other departments began using the animal-like machines. With four legs, a strong arm, and a sturdy frame, the 75-pound robot is about the size of a German Shepherd and much more agile than robots that roll around. Some people say, though, that units like Spot don't belong in policing. What do you think? Should law enforcement use robot dogs?

Yes—they help keep people safe

Robot dogs like Spot can do things that human officers and K-9 police dogs can't. They have 360° cameras and heat sensing technology, which help find people who are trapped or hidden, and they never get tired or need a break. The units are built to be sturdy and can walk over uneven surfaces, climb stairs, open doors, and carry heavy loads. They're well suited to situations that are too dangerous for people or K-9s, like chemical spills and earthquakes. Robot dogs can also patrol public areas when human officers are unavailable. This is especially helpful for agencies in major cities that have a lot of people and places to protect.

No—machines aren't the way to go

Each robot dog can cost about $100,000 or more, which is money that would be put to better use hiring more officers or funding other services. And for that price, they can still break down, fall over, or bump into things. The machines also take away the important human connection in law enforcement. Officers should interact with members of the communities they protect so they get to know them and understand their concerns. A robot just doesn't care about people in the same way. And robot dogs can record audio, video, and pictures of people who may not realize that the quirky little machine is "watching" them. That's not right.

YES — **Three reasons law enforcement should use robot dogs**

1. With their advanced technology, they can do things that human officers and police dogs can't do.
2. Sending machines into very dangerous situations, like disaster zones, helps keep humans and K-9s safe.
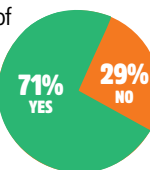3. When there aren't enough officers, robot dogs can help protect big cities.

NO — **Three reasons law enforcement should not use robot dogs**

1. The money spent on the machines could be put to much better use.
2. Robots can't replace police officers who interact with and get to know the people in their communities.
3. The high-tech dogs can record data about people without their knowledge, which is an invasion of privacy.

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if chewy cookies are better than crispy ones. When it comes to your cookies, most of you prefer soft ones: 71% said yes, and 29% said no.

71% YES **29% NO**

What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit **kids.theweekjunior.com/polls** so you can vote in our debate. Vote **YES** if you think law enforcement should use robot dogs or **NO** if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.