

# New York bins subway surveillance robot

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Credit: Charles Parker from Pexels

The New York City subway has pulled its controversial security robot out of service after little more than five months patrolling the busy Times Square station.

K-5, as the robot's call sign goes, has been retired to a storage lot, The

New York Times reported Friday.

Its short stint on the force was reportedly marked by frequent charging breaks, the need to be chaperoned by human officers, and an inability to tackle stairs.

"The Knightscope K-5 has completed its pilot deployment in the NYC subway system," a police spokesman told AFP of the device, which was introduced to much fanfare in September 2023.

The device, part-Star Wars, part-Smart Car in appearance, was equipped with several cameras as well as a help button for commuters at the city's busiest subway station that is also a major tourist hotspot.

"I said this was a trash can on wheels, but it looks like the wheels aren't even working at this point," said Albert Fox Cahn, the executive director of anti-spy-tech campaign group Surveillance Technology Oversight Project.

"With major crimes down and the mayor mandating budget cuts across city agencies, why are we spending so much money on these gadgets?"

New York Mayor Eric Adams—himself a former police officer—has put technology at the center of his crime-fighting strategy, enthusiastically extolling the virtues of drones, facial recognition cameras and robotics.

In April 2023 the New York Police Department re-introduced a \$74,000 robotic dog kitted out with cameras, a two-way communication system and lights to assist in emergency situations.

Officers have also adopted Starchase, a GPS location system allowing police to attach a tracker to fleeing vehicles eliminating the need for

risky car chases through New York's packed streets.

"When crime was rising nationwide, we were told surveillance was the solution. But now crime is plummeting across the country, including cities that banned these dystopian devices. If we don't have money to keep the library doors open, we definitely don't have cash for creepy robots," said Cahn.

Adams recently touted the city's declining [crime rate](#), according to official statistics, and credited technology for its part in the drop.

"We've also used technology and tools with (police department) Assistant Commissioner Kaz Daughtry scanning the entire country to find the right technology that's needed," Adams said last month.

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