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**Editor's Corner**

with PoliceOne Senior Editor Doug Wyllie

**Tech Q&A: James Sim of Drakontas**

The DragonForce 'situation awareness software framework' provides a flexible technology architecture on which incident commanders and first responders can share tactical information updated in real time

Since the company's founding in 2004, Drakontas engineers and researchers have been working to create wireless communications solutions and collaboration tools for an alphabet soup of federal customers such as DOD, DOJ, DHS, and DOT. At the same time, they've also been working — through DragonForce, the company's "situation awareness software framework" — to support state and local law enforcement agencies around the country. DragonForce provides a flexible and robust architecture on which incident commanders can easily update the set of standard text messages and icons used by their agency. In addition, incident commanders can control the rate of GPS update, provision new users, and create customized after-action reports.



DragonForce — which currently runs on Windows Mobile ruggedized "smartphones" and on standard web browsers — can use any IP network, including commercial data wireless networks, enterprise WiFi and WiMax networks, and even mobile mesh 802.11 networks.

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DragonForce — which currently runs on Windows Mobile ruggedized "smartphones" such as the Intermec CN50 and the Motorola MC75A and on standard web browsers including Firefox and Chrome — can use any IP network, including commercial data wireless networks (such as ATT, Verizon, and Sprint), enterprise WiFi and WiMax networks, and even mobile mesh 802.11 networks. The company is now developing a DragonForce client for the Android platform.

I recently caught up with Drakontas President and Chief Operating Officer James Sim to get a clearer picture of what his technology developers are working on in the effort to help law enforcers and other public safety professionals. What follows is a summary of that exchange.

**PoliceOne: What does Drakontas collaboration software do to help law enforcement efforts?**

**James Sim:** Drakontas' DragonForce software allows teams of users to collaborate more quickly and effectively by providing a suite of shared information tools that already operate on familiar computing platforms, namely web browsers and "smartphones." These tools allow team

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tactical commander can transmit a photograph and description of a suspect and a hostage to snipers embedded in the field without having to dispatch a "runner" carrying a hardcopy photograph. Or, a breach team member can take a photo of a suspected IED that they encounter as they are sweeping a building. This photo can be shared with the bomb squad leader and incident commander simultaneously giving them "eyes on target" regardless of their staging location.

#### **P1: When did Drakontas first begin serving the law enforcement market, and what agencies are presently customers?**

**Sim:** Drakontas was founded in 2004 to transition DoD technology to the public safety space. From 2007-2010 Drakontas administered the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) Communications Technologies Center of Excellence, a Program of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs' National Institute of Justice (NIJ). Our work with NIJ gave us tremendous access to law enforcement agencies around the county. Our technical team has had the opportunity to embed with teams on dozens training exercises where we have captured operational scenarios and requirements directly from subject matter experts. This information drove the design of our DragonForce software, which was brought to market in 2009. DragonForce is currently deployed with the York County Pennsylvania Quick Response Team (QRT) and we are currently working with Gloucester County New Jersey on a deployment for Summer 2011.

We also have a collaborative software product for forensic laboratories — LabFx — that is in use by the Palm Beach County Florida Sheriff's Office and will be deployed by the Northern Louisiana Criminalistics Lab in July 2011.

#### **P1: What can Drakontas do to help improve officer safety on the streets?**

**Sim:** DragonForce's situation awareness tools give the patrol officer and his teammates a common operating picture where they can exchange a variety of information elements. One of the most beneficial from an officer safety point of view is shared position location. DragonForce provides real-time tracking of all users both on the handheld or the laptop/workstation browser. .

Through our work with NIJ, we recently completed a major study working with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department investigating the safety benefits of position location information during high risk officer-initiated

members to track one another on maps, send one-to-one or group text messages, exchange photographs imported from the web or captured in real-time on smartphones and, subsequently use these photographs as shared whiteboards where they can draw or place icons.

These collaboration tools help solve the "where are you now?" problem that arises in almost every team operation. People need to know where their team members are and this question is best addressed with a visual tool that lets them see the current location of team members on maps or floor plans. Our experience has shown that law enforcement personnel tend to be very "visually oriented" so providing them with a "virtual chessboard" where they can actually see where all the chess pieces (friendly, hostile and undetermined) are and collaboratively make plans for how they would like to move in the future is a tremendous benefit.

Getting the right information to the right person at the right time is essential for success in law enforcement operations. DragonForce allows teams to collect and project information at a distance virtually and instantaneously. For example, a

events.

**P1: What can Drakontas do to help enhance officer success and/or operational efficiency?**

**Sim:** Law enforcement agencies have invested heavily in systems that have allowed them to collect vast quantities of useful information: outstanding arrest warrants, gang/drug task force data, regional fusion centers, etc. DragonForce allows users to put this information to work out at the edge where the patrol officer, dispatch operator and task force analysts can share a collaborative common operating picture. Any information element — such as photos, diagrams, location information, or situation reports — can be shared among the users that need it. We believe that a team fights more effectively than an individual. The radio and CAD/RMS systems are both examples of collaborative tools already in use by law enforcement.

The DragonForce tools are evolutionary enhancements to this approach made possible by leveraging the explosive growth of new technologies – namely ubiquitous and inexpensive wireless networks, powerful handheld computers (“smartphones”) and “Web 2.0” enhanced browser capabilities. Average consumers are reaping the rewards of these market forces; there is no reason that public safety personnel should not benefit as well.

**P1: When you say that “the average citizen will soon be equipped with hardware and software services that will outclass what the police have” what do you mean? What are the implications of that?**

**Sim:** The iPhone, along with the inexorable smart phone revolution that it started, has changed everything. The average citizen now has easy, affordable access to a high power networked computer and thousands of applications and services allow him or her to access and share text, photos, videos, voice, and location information from services like Twitter, Facebook, Skype, and others.

These tools provide new capabilities that enhance tactical operations, whether that operation is a group of friends planning and then converging on a restaurant (communicating with and tracking one another along the way) or planning and executing a Mumbai style attack. When opponents meet in battle, the one who can Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act faster and more frequently will have a distinct advantage.

Our mission at Drakontas is to make sure that public safety personnel have access to the tools and technology to maintain their edge in this fast moving environment.

**PoliceOne: Thanks James, for taking some time to give us an update. Keep us posted, of course, on future developments.**

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**About the author**

Doug Wyllie is editor of PoliceOne, responsible for setting the editorial direction of the website and managing the planned editorial features by our roster of expert writers. In addition to his editorial and managerial responsibilities, Doug has authored more than 250 feature articles and tactical tips on a wide range of topics and trends that affect the law enforcement community. Doug is a member of the California Peace Officers' Association and is active in his support for the law enforcement community, contributing his time and talents toward police-related charitable events as well as participating in force-on-force training, search-and-rescue training, and other scenario-based training designed to prepare cops for the fight they face every day on the street.

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