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## **CITY OF KEARNEY** **PRESS RELEASE** ***For Immediate Release***

Issued Date: Wednesday, March 26, 2025

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### **Kearney Police Utilize Drone Technology to Apprehend Suspects Following Vandalism and Vehicle Theft**

On Saturday, March 22, 2025, at approximately 5:00 a.m., Kearney Police Department (KPD) officers were dispatched to the 1000 block of West 39th Street in response to a report of vandalism to a residence and vehicle. The victim reported seeing the suspects fleeing the scene in a pickup truck, which was reportedly being driven recklessly.

A few minutes later, KPD officers located the suspect vehicle near 4400 Parkwood Road and attempted a traffic stop. Three occupants exited the car and ran from the scene. The pickup continued until it crashed into a vehicle parked on the side of the road. In response, a KPD officer and certified drone pilot deployed a drone equipped with thermal imaging technology. The drone was instrumental in locating two of the fleeing suspects as they attempted to evade officers through residential backyards. A 17-year-old female and a 16-year-old male were apprehended while hiding under a deck behind a house.

A third suspect, another 16-year-old male, was later identified as having fled from the stolen pickup as well. He subsequently stole another car near the area to evade law enforcement. That stolen vehicle was later located by officers in the area of 27<sup>th</sup> Street and Avenue G. Further investigation determined that the pickup truck involved in the initial incident had been stolen earlier that morning from the area of 28th Street and Avenue G. Thanks to the swift action of the community, who reported the incident, and the tireless efforts of our officers, the suspects were successfully located and apprehended.

A juvenile petition is being requested on the 17-year-old female for Minor in Possession of Alcohol (misdemeanor), Possession of Stolen Property over \$5000 (felony), and Obstruction of a Peace Officer (misdemeanor). This request is part of the legal process to bring charges against a juvenile in a court of law.

A juvenile petition is being requested for one 16-year-old male for Flight to Avoid Arrest (felony), Possession of Stolen Property over \$5000 (felony), Tampering with a Witness (felony), Obstructing a Peace Officer (misdemeanor), Minor in Possession of Alcohol (misdemeanor), Driving Under Suspension (misdemeanor), leaving the scene of a property damage accident, (misdemeanor) and Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor (misdemeanor).

A juvenile petition is being requested for the second 16-year-old male for two counts of Possession of Stolen Property over \$5000 (felony), Obstructing a Peace Officer

(misdemeanor), Criminal Mischief (misdemeanor), Disturbing the Peace (misdemeanor), Trespassing (misdemeanor) and Minor in Possession of Alcohol (misdemeanor).

A juvenile petition is a formal request to the court to initiate legal proceedings against a minor. It is part of the legal process to ensure that all individuals, regardless of age, are held accountable for their actions.

All of the youths involved were released to a parent or guardian. All three youths are currently under the supervision of juvenile probation for previous criminal behavior. These incidents are still under investigation, including the recovery of the stolen property and the identification of any other potential suspects. The investigation is focusing on the recovery of the stolen property and the identification of any other potential suspects. Additional juvenile petitions will be requested as necessary.

The successful use of drone technology in this case is a testament to the ongoing commitment of KPD to integrating advanced tools in law enforcement operations. This commitment is unwavering and aimed at protecting the community and ensuring the swift apprehension of suspects, recovery of property, and many other functions that ultimately enhance public safety. You can rest assured that we are dedicated to keeping Kearney safe.

The Kearney Police Department has a specialized drone team consisting of twelve (12) FAA Part 107 certified drone pilots. These officers are highly trained and dedicated to using drone technology to enhance public safety. Each officer undergoes extensive training and testing to receive certification. KPD currently operates 11 drones capable of both indoor and outdoor applications. These drones provide real-time video streaming and location data to officers, enhancing both public and officer safety during critical incidents.

I am incredibly proud of the response from members of the Kearney Police Uniform Patrol Bureau and the responsible use of technology in locating and arresting these subjects while also recovering stolen property within minutes of the theft. The patrol-led deployment of the drone is an innovative approach and represents the commitment at KPD to acquire and responsibly deploy technology toward public safety, crime prevention, and crime solving; this is yet another example.” – Chief Bryan D. Waugh

As a final note, KPD would like to remind everyone of the importance of vehicle security. Please keep valuables out of sight, take your keys with you, and always remember to lock your vehicle doors. These simple precautions can go a long way in preventing such incidents. By staying vigilant and following these guidelines, you can play a significant role in keeping our community safe.

**Check out our web site at [www.cityofkearney.org](http://www.cityofkearney.org).**

*We are sending this News Release as a service to the news media and citizens of Kearney.*