

Tablets go on patrol

■ **Suffolk police officials** roll out \$2.25M in new tech

■ **Mobile data computers** to be replaced over 3 years

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The Suffolk County Police Department is equipping its patrol vehicles with new portable tablet computers, technology that will allow officers to take their own evidence photos and scan a driver's license outside of their cars.

The county has installed the tablets — replacing the stationary mobile data computers — in about 25 of its patrol cars and plans to outfit the 2,500-officer department's entire patrol fleet, over the next three years at a cost of about \$2.25 million. A total of about 450 police vehicles will be equipped with the tablets, police said.

“One of the things we're all very interested in is freeing the officers from the patrol car, letting them get out of their car,” said Chief of Department Stuart Cameron in an interview Monday. “In your private life, it's equivalent to going from a desktop, to a laptop and then to a tablet. You're no longer bound to your computer in your house.”

Cameron, who gave Newsday a look at the technology Monday at police headquarters in Yaphank, said the goal in installing the tablets was to make the job “more efficient and less burdensome” for cops on the street. They also dovetail with the installation of a new record management system.

Officers will be able to carry the devices with them during car stops and responses to 911 calls, giving them instant access to databases for warrant checks, driving records and other records officers had to previously access from inside their patrol cars or by radioing into dispatch.

The tablets also work as telephones — operating on air card 4G cellular technology — and will later be outfitted for video conferencing, similar to FaceTime on an iPhone. Cameron said the technology could allow patrol supervisors to oversee an incident without having to travel



Above, new tablet inside a police cruiser Monday. Below, Suffolk Police Chief Stuart Cameron with tablet at Yaphank headquarters.

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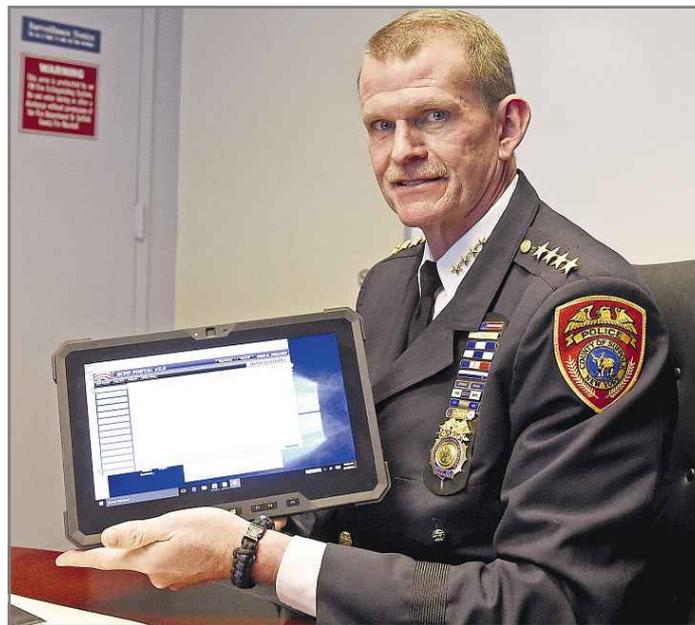
— Chief of Department
Stuart Cameron

to the scene.

Legis. Robert Trotta (R-Fort Salonga), a former Suffolk police officer, said he had some safety concerns about the devices. “I like to have a cop's hands empty as he's walking up to a house. I hope there's training to let the cops know their lives are more important than a tablet.”

Cameron said while safety is “definitely a concern,” he anticipates officers would leave the tablets in their cars until a situation has been stabilized.

“I think it has the opposite effect; I think it will actually im-



prove officer safety,” said Cameron. “They'll have access to information about prior conduct of people ... so they can take an appropriate security posture.”

The department first put computers in its patrol cars in May

2000. As Suffolk and other police departments stopped using the spacious Crown Victoria patrol cars and switched to the more sleek police Ford Interceptors, the bulkier laptops got in the way, Cameron said. The

tablets are the fourth generation of computer technology in the department's police cars, Cameron said.

The NYPD recently announced it would outfit all its 36,000-force with cellphones. Nassau police have in-car dashboard computers.

Joseph Giacalone, a retired NYPD sergeant and an adjunct professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Manhattan, said the department is smart to invest in technology he called “invaluable.”

“It gives the officers a leg up,” he said. “You don't have to have someone at the station house running things from the field. If you did a cost-benefit analysis, it will end up saving officers time in administrative work by just pressing a few buttons.”

The cost of the tablets, funded through the county's capital budget at \$750,000 annually through 2019, clocks in at about \$3,360 each with a \$500 installation fee versus about \$9,351 for the laptops currently being used, which came with a \$750 installation fee, officials said.