



As a former law enforcement pilot with 30 years of experience operating fixed wing aircraft, I have witnessed first-hand how modern technology can transform an air support program.

# Investing in Change

## An Air Bear White Paper

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*Your Airborne Law Enforcement Partner*

## Investing In Change

I recently had the opportunity to fly on a long cross-country flight in one of our new Airvan 8 platforms. An Air Bear business partner and I had departed Southern California on our way to Colorado to deliver the Airvan to Paravion Technology, one of our ISR integrator partners. This aircraft will be outfitted with the most advanced ISR technology availed to domestic airborne law enforcement.

Both Gary and I have been piloting fixed wing airplanes for over 30 years, so we are from the old school steam six-pack gauge era. But today we are fully enjoying a modern Garmin dual GTN touch screen radio stack and a G-500 panel, along with our connected iPads interactively managing our flight plans and receiving ADS-B weather and traffic as backup.

I think we both sat in pure amazement watching the synthetic vision display match the mountains and valley floor as the never ending panorama passed by outside our cockpit. We had ADS-B and TAS air traffic displayed, along with satellite weather along our flight path and could electronically query weather data from stations further along our route of flight. The list of in-flight information went on and on, and we discussed how hard it would be to actually get lost with all this technology.

This particular Airvan is slated for delivery to a progressive law enforcement agency within the San Francisco Bay Area. It will be providing pro-active air support to numerous police, sheriff and state agencies, becoming a highly effective tool for law enforcement to utilize in helping to protect millions of Californians.

As a former law enforcement pilot with 30 years of experience operating fixed wing aircraft, I have witnessed first-hand how modern technology can transform an air support program. It's a fast moving environment, and a solid long-term investment for any police air support program.

Historically, I've learned that most government agencies are slow to embrace new technology, and even more reluctant to change. This has led to a decline in Airborne Law Enforcement support around the nation. There are fewer aircraft and a dramatic decline in flight hours flown today than when the last official study was conducted in 2007. The answer is clear, tightening budgets do not allow for expensive, cost prohibitive operations and when coupled with ineffective tactics the statistics don't prove out that the flight departments are effective. The programs then tend to disappear which is exactly what we've seen occur over time.

Let me ask you a straightforward question. If police air support were a company, would you invest in its stock? Would that be a wise investment? Is your air support unit open to change? Would this company transform itself to meet technology changes that will and are occurring over the next five years?

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Imagine you're the CEO of this company, spending your own money to invest in the future growth of building a valued program. Would you follow the path of successful fortune 100 companies? Technology leaders such as Apple, HP, Google, Intel, Oracle, and Facebook. These are companies that use innovative technology to change our lives and influence what we purchase, and how we communicate.

These innovative organizations are constantly moving forward, improving technology and their ability to embrace change ultimately leads to the prosperity of its stock value. These are growth industries, and if you have studied, followed, and invested in their stock, you have made a solid financial decision.

Airborne Law Enforcement is currently a helicopter centric based business. With shrinking budgets, it is not a growth industry. It's in decline as public service agencies are reluctant to change, and slow to embrace new ISR technology.

Conversely, there are agencies that fully understand the confluence of factors technology brings to the table. The aircraft we are delivering to the San Francisco Bay area is destined for one of those agencies. Is it a coincidence that all the tech companies listed above are based in this region?

What type of air support business would I invest in? I would investigate its day-to-day operations. Does it gather knowledge and performance statistics to continually analyze how to provide pro-active support and smart policing in assisting its ground units? Does it strive to continually improve? Does it employ proven tactics, and evolve to take advantage of the ever increasing technology available?

These are requirements today for any agency to understand if their operation is to be both effective and efficient.

It doesn't take outside the box imagination to understand operational tactics that work, and those that set you up for failure. For example, air support units that respond to priority one calls from the hangar are statistically set up for failure. Airborne aircraft have the advantage of a timely response. Ground response has been proven ineffective, and negates the ability to provide time sensitive information. More often than not, ground based dispatch results in the aircraft arriving well after the incident has concluded. As a result, statistics tell the story of a cost ineffective discipline. A major contributing factor in the decline of air operations.

Let me share with you some of the factors of successful airborne surveillance operations that I've learned along the way:

- Invest in the highest level of ISR technology you can afford
- Deploy it every shift, every day on a purpose built low cost utility fixed wing airplane
- Focus on the response, and to provide timely, highly valued tactical information
- Be accountable to your customers (ground support)

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- Take advantage of operating from a high altitude, which allows a field of view of ten miles in all directions, and a level of stealth during perimeter searches
- Focus on improving flight time, or what I term actively hunting from a position of advantage.
- Employ proven tactics which yield **results**.

When you do this, you will be amazed at how effective your air support unit has become. It happened in my unit, every time we employed new tactics and technology. You'll see the improvements as well. Our goal is to assist your agency embrace change. I guarantee the above tactics will dramatically improve your air support program.

Here are statistical facts obtained in one year of fixed wing airborne support by **ONE AIRCRAFT**:

- 600 camera search/ locate arrests
- 200 pursuit assists
- 1,500 hours of pro-active airborne patrol

A single ISR law enforcement airplane accomplished these stats by employing advanced technology and proven tactics while providing air support to a Northern California Region. These are factual annual arrest statistics, backed up by video evidence and accomplished at a fraction of the cost of hourly rotor wing operations.

The statistics don't lie. Fixed wing surveillance with the proper mission equipment and tactics allows you to employ the correct solution and realize a dramatic increase in airborne support success. Rotor wing operations have their place, primarily in vertical lift missions, and will continue to be an integral part of air operations. Utilizing a combination of the right tools however, which includes cost effective fixed wing technology, will improve your arrest statistics and lower your flight department costs dramatically.

Now I ask you, which company would you invest in? A status quo unit operating with high budgets and low flight hours, or a progressive agency fielding the right tools to keep pace with the ever changing needs of airborne law enforcement?

My friends, I was a part of this program for 30 years. Success is sharing what you've learned along the way. Change comes slowly to law enforcement however it is time to embrace technology and be willing to change how you provide information from above.

*John*

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