Savannah, Georgia
Virtual eyes on crime

Photo credit: Averette

Customer highlights

Challenges
– Reduce rising crime rate and improve police efficiency

Solution
– IP video cameras installed in key locations throughout the city providing real-time visibility for crowd control and crimes in-process, reducing police response time
– Mobile police officer access to key centralized records enabling faster identification of potentially dangerous or wanted suspects
– Field officers' ability to file reports from the field keeps them in the community more of the time

Results
– Faster response time, more efficient and effective police department improving public safety within budget constraints
– Each camera is like having an extra officer on the street
– Video of crimes enabling faster, less expensive prosecution of cases

Systems and services
– Tropos 5210 outdoor mesh routers and Tropos 4210 mobile mesh routers
– Axis Communication: IP video cameras
– On-Net Surveillance Systems: Intelligent video monitoring

As one of the oldest – and some say the most beautiful – cities in America, Savannah, Georgia is home to more than 128,000 people. A rich history and riverfront location attract a strong tourist trade, drawing millions of visitors annually. There are 22 historic squares, and the city hosts the second largest Saint Patrick's Day Festival in the country. Unfortunately, an increasing crime rate was creating a threat to citizens, visitors, and the local economy. To reverse this trend, the Savannah Police Department decided to install a video surveillance system, enabling them to have "eyes in the sky," improving visibility and raising the efficiency of police services.

Challenge
The City of Savannah has experienced increasing crime in recent years. Budget shortfalls and a 100-officer shortage challenged the local police department to improve efficiencies and have greater visibility over community activities. The department needed a cost-effective way of increasing police visibility in key problem areas around the city without putting additional strain on the budget. In addition, officers needed a way to get faster access to information such as criminal and DMV records while in the field.

Results
The city evaluated several alternatives and decided to install a metro-scale wireless broadband network that could concurrently support video surveillance traffic as well as carry data communications between mobile police officers and centralized or Internet-based databases.

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Video surveillance helped provide a safer Saint Patrick's Day festival, but crowd control is a year-round challenge. "During the evening hours it became almost impossible to monitor or actually see a problem in the crowd. The cameras provided great flexibility to respond quickly to a specific area based on observers before problems occurred or in response to problems observed," said Captain Gerry Long of the Savannah Chatham Metropolitan Police Department.

IP video cameras have been installed and overlaid on the Tropos® mesh network in the Riverfront and historic squares, providing police officers with the capability to remotely view security surveillance videos from the field through laptops in their squad cars. When a record one million visitors came to celebrate the weekend event, police officers were able to view surveillance videos, as well as have access to key databases from their laptops in their patrol cars. This enabled the officers to deliver much greater protection for the festival than in years past. "...the surveillance cameras are making a big impact," said Brad Goodman, Network Manager for the City. "Many view the cameras as an extra officer. We have excellent videos of crimes being committed."

The network also provides mobile database access so that officers on the beat have immediate access to finger print information and DMV records right from their laptops allowing them to quickly identify potentially dangerous suspects, and enabling them to spend more time in the field.

Tropos Solution

After evaluating several alternative solutions, the city selected Tropos mesh routers for their versatility and flexibility. Tropos 5210 routers were mounted on city assets such as traffic and streetlights, forming a mesh network over the riverfront and adjacent side street areas. In addition, IP video cameras were installed in the front and rear of their Mobile Command Center, with connectivity provided by a Tropos 4210 mobile wireless router. The Mobile Command Center can also deploy portable tripod cameras anywhere in the network at a moments notice, providing additional crowd control capabilities.

"We chose the Tropos mesh solution because it clearly provided the highest performance for our video and data applications. Plus, it can easily be extended for additional public safety and city service applications, delivering more content to users in the field to be more efficient in their jobs everyday."

Brad Goodman
Network Manager
City of Savannah

Other solution components were provided by the following Tropos solutions partners:

– Axis Communications, the global market leader in IP network video solutions, was selected to deliver the IP cameras used in the network. Single units, or a combination of cameras, were deployed with each Tropos router allowing for a virtual increase of police presence on the streets without creating additional strain on police resources.

– On-Net Surveillance Systems, Inc. (OnSSI) provides sophisticated camera management, recording and archiving, and control-room video-wall management solutions based on open architecture, intelligent IP technology. ONSSI systems are used by a wide range of municipal, state and federal agencies, and commercial and education markets.

Future Applications

While the network was initially created for the police department to improve public safety and operational efficiencies, after successful use, the city is planning to leverage the network for additional municipal services.

– Automated utility meter reading – Automatic water, electric, and gas meter readers to reduce costs and improve customer service.

– Asset tracking – Tracking and location services for city-owned vehicles, improving productivity and response times by identifying the closest field workers when problems occur.

– Mobile municipal workforce – Applicable to multiple departments, handheld mobile devices to improve field worker productivity and accelerate paper processing, such as building inspections and building permits.

– Intelligent traffic management – Centralized management and monitoring of traffic signals to reduce congestion.

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