Success Story

Eyes on the streets help clean up Baltimore's worst 'hoods

Challenge
The City of Baltimore has carried the ill-fated distinction of being one of the most dangerous cities in the U.S. The homicide ranking for Baltimore in 2005 was 6th in the nation, with 269 murders on record.[1] Rampant drug trafficking and associated violent crime has been blamed for the high crime rate.

Solution
As part of the City of Baltimore's on-going BELIEVE campaign begun in spring 2002 against drug trafficking, drug violence and drug use, the City has put teeth into its crime prevention program. In May 2005, the City of Baltimore began installing overt surveillance cameras in many of the City's toughest neighborhoods. RMS Technology Solutions was selected to implement their nationally acclaimed Portable Overt Digital Surveillance System (PODSS).

To date, the City of Baltimore has spent more than $2 million dollars on the freestanding PODSS surveillance cameras, with 110 units in operation. The high-resolution digital video is capable of recording criminal activity 24 hours a day that is fed to officers on the street for rapid response.

Results
In a news conference shortly after the deployment of the PODSS cameras, former Baltimore Mayor Martin OMalley stated, "In just the first month alone, we've seen more than a double-digit reduction of violent crime in the high crime areas of downtown."

> "In just the first month alone, we've seen more than a double-digit reduction of violent crime in the high crime areas of downtown."

In a CNN television interview, long-time Baltimore resident Betty Harris grimaces when asked about the condition of her neighborhood prior to PODSS, "Terrible, just terrible. Drugs were everywhere, anytime of day." When asked about what she thinks of her neighborhood after PODSS were installed, she smiles and replies, "Just look at it! Thank you, Jesus!"

PODSS has gained a lot of media attention in Chicago where a massive build-out of the City's wireless network by RMS has enabled coordinated, real-time PODSS video from the City's Operation Center. Yet, the effectiveness of the PODSS camera is not compromised by utilizing standalone units. RMS President Rick Rubenstein comments, "Significant crime reduction is still realized with the freestanding PODSS. Cities with limited resources can deploy the highly effective crime-fighting PODSS without incurring the expense of building a wireless network." Rubenstein adds, "The beauty of our system — along with our value added approach — is that we have can provide wireless networking capability as our clients' needs grow, without loss of their initial investment."

> "The beauty of our system — along with our value added approach — is that we have can provide wireless networking capability as our clients' needs grow, without loss of their initial investment."

Betty Harris, Baltimore resident, puts it best: "It's about saving of our neighborhood, not the 'hood."

[1] Source: Morgan Quitno Press, www.morganquitno.com/cit05r.pdf

Security Tech Update

Automated License Plate Recognition in pilot by CPD

RMS Technology Solutions is partnering with the Chicago police department to study the effectiveness of Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) systems. The ALPR systems are working in conjunction with the already successful Portable Overt Digital Surveillance Systems or PODSS.

The ALPR systems examine license plates by first using a series of image manipulation techniques to detect, normalize and enhance the image of the number plate. Then optical character recognition (OCR) software extracts alphanumeric data of the license plate. This data is then run against a database of known offenders. If a match is detected, an alarm will sound at an operations center and dispatchers can alert officers in the field.

Earlier ALPR units use closed circuit cameras that are known for grainy, poor resolution and low contrast images. Media reports of high error rates and misidentification of plates have raised concerns among citizens. By integrating ALPR systems with the advanced, high-resolution digital video capabilities of PODSS, plate recognition has become more accurate and reliable.

ALPR is remarkably efficient. ALPR systems are capable of scanning up to 6,000 license plates during a shift and instantly comparing data with multiple databases. By contrast, during an average shift, an officer can manually enter only 200 plates for database comparison.

The results from the Chicago ALPR pilot will be available in early fall and will examine the overall effectiveness of ALPR with the PODSS cameras.