

Helping extend the long arm of the law. Network video keeps Dallas Police one step ahead of drug dealers.



Organization:
Dallas Police
Department

Location:
Dallas, USA

Industry segment:
Government

Application:
Covert surveillance

Axis partner:
Mobile ID Solutions

Mission

The Dallas Police Department needed a covert surveillance system that officers could easily deploy for gathering intelligence before and during drug raids. The system also needed to be completely mobile and manageable from a remote monitoring station without distance limitations.

Solution

The Dallas PD turned to Mobile ID Solutions, Inc., an Axis partner and the largest reseller of Junxion equipment, to create a system that enables Axis pan/tilt/zoom network cameras to send video wirelessly over the existing cellular broadband network.

The system uses 3G wireless technology to transport surveillance video from Axis network cameras that are hidden in the area of the possible drug raid.

Result

Using the solution that Mobile ID Solutions engineered, the Dallas PD can set up covert surveillance near any location in which a drug search warrant will be executed. Live images from the site can be monitored 24 hours a day by officers in the field, at headquarters, or at home by those who are off duty.

"Law enforcement has always liked wireless solutions for covert surveillance, but they have not been entirely practical before now, due to costs and technology limitations... The Axis cameras are so small and lightweight that we can hide them just about anywhere. Now our covert surveillance operations are limited only by our imagination, not by our technology."

Steve Ledbetter, detective assigned to the technical operations unit

A need to serve and protect

The Narcotics Division of the Dallas Police Department is charged with investigating offenses that are violations of the Texas Health and Safety Code. The Division actively seeks out narcotics traffickers at all levels and brings charges against them. For its investigations, the Narcotics Division is often in a position to use covert surveillance. The Dallas PD's Technical Operations Unit supports the division with audio and video surveillance, and other needs such as equipment research and upgrades.

Before switching to the wireless system, the Technical Operations Unit was struggling to find an effective way to handle covert surveillance. Officers either had to find an area with an existing Internet connection or set up a point-to-point microwave network, which was expensive and too visible. Pinhole and analog CCD cameras were also used, but the video viewing limitations were not adequate.

The unit began investigating other wireless options, such as wireless modem solutions and competitive Wireless Wide Area Network (WWAN) routers. However, these solutions did not meet Dallas PD's needs because of short video transmission restrictions. The officers also looked at other camera models from Axis competitors, but Mobile ID Solutions recommended Axis cameras based on size, weight, performance and reliability.

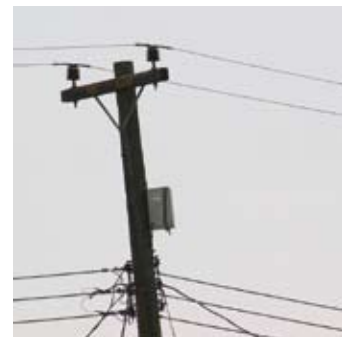
"The Technical Operations Unit supports between 300 and 500 operations a year, so we ultimately needed a system that would enable us to deploy and connect very quickly," said Steve Ledbetter, a Detective assigned to the Technical Operations Unit. "As a government agency, cost was another determining factor – we needed excellent resolution and functionality at an affordable cost."

Network video joins the force

By connecting Axis network cameras through the mobile Junxion Box, narcotics and SWAT officers can view live video streams 24 hours a day via the Internet. This assists with surveillance and with briefings, when officers can display video on LCD projectors to enhance the visual identification of suspects. Officers can also view the location live as they are en route from a laptop computer, which helps them shift tactics and maintain the safety of the operation should anything change on the scene. The system is ideal for viewing drug operations because the Axis network cameras are easily hidden inside 4"x 5" boxes, enclosures or under piles of clothes in undercover cars. The Junxion Boxes can be hung from places such as light poles and are discrete enough to go unnoticed.

The covert nature of the system has allowed narcotics officers to gather the intelligence needed to make drug-related arrests. Shortly after the Dallas PD implemented the technology, they used it to seize a very large amount of drugs in a single operation. The system has also been used to observe more than 500,000 demonstrators who rallied in downtown Dallas, and Detective Ledbetter said that the zoom capabilities on the Axis network cameras are so great he has been able to detect movement on rooftops two miles away.

Another benefit of the system is that there is little ongoing cost once the Axis network cameras and Junxion Box are purchased. The only monthly fee is from the wireless carrier's air cards, which are installed in the Junxion Boxes and in the mobile devices that allow officers to connect to the cellular broadband network.



"Law enforcement has always liked wireless solutions for covert surveillance, but they have not been entirely practical before now, due to costs and technology limitations," said Detective Ledbetter. "Mobile ID Solutions helped us develop this system, which is ideal because the Junxion Box eliminates any problems we had in finding an Internet connection for the cameras. The Axis cameras are so small and lightweight that we can hide them just about anywhere. Now our covert surveillance operations are limited only by our imagination, not by our technology".

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