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NEW GUNS,
NEW AMMO,
NEW GEAR:
**A SNEAK PEEK AT
SHOT SHOW 2015**

HOW BIOMETRIC
TOOLS TEAR
AWAY THE BAD
GUYS' ALIASES

DEALING WITH
ANARCHISTS

PLUS SHOOTING THE
BERETTA
ARX-100 RIFLE

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RYAN MASON

OPENING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Mutualink's hardware/software interoperability solution lets multiple public safety agencies communicate with ease.

Any officer who has attempted to communicate with a neighboring agency during an operation only to find that agency is on an incompatible radio network has felt the frustration of waiting for messages to be relayed back and forth by dispatchers over the phone to the other agency. This lack of interoperable communications often overcomplicates a minor incident, and it can be tragic during a critical incident. This is why over the last decade or so a number of companies have developed hardware and software that can solve this problem or at least mitigate its effects.

One of the most elegant and versatile interoperable communications solutions that I have seen is Mutualink.

Produced by a company with the same name, Mutualink software has the potential to solve many radio interoperability problems. In addition, Mutualink has gone a step further and introduced technology that not only integrates radio communications, but also phone, video, and data. The software even enables data sharing in real time.

Mutualink provides something that many other similar products have failed to give law enforcement users to date.

It's easy to use, and was created with the

street cop in mind as the end user, so the practical application of the software is simple.

"We wanted to make the Mutualink product easy for the cop on the street to use and make it as functional as possible while keeping its operation simple. So there is no steep learning curve just to learn how to get the right results," says Joe Boucher, Mutualink's chief technology officer.

Mutualink took a multifaceted approach to developing the entire product, according to Boucher. From business plan forward, Mutualink's development team, headed by company president Colin McWay, worked to give the hardware a smaller footprint and make the software easier to use.

In fact, the hardware is so simple to install and so small that most users can install it themselves. The hardware consists of a box that is no bigger than the average cable company DVR unit.

The software is equally easy to use and install. Plus, officers in the field have access to the very user-friendly Mutualink Edge app, which runs on handheld data devices like smartphones and tablets. The apps enable instant access to the same technology in the field for officers.

HOW IT WORKS

Mutualink's proprietary technology gives the requesting agency, when granted permission through the mutual acceptance of each party, the ability to patch directly into a predetermined channel on the network of the receiving agency. The requesting agency can also be assigned to any channel within the receiving network as needed.

Connecting the requesting agency with the receiving network can be accomplished in a matter of seconds due to the ease of design. The incoming agency can be placed into a district-wide or agency-wide talk channel if there is a need for deployment



Mutualink allows officers to overcome communication interoperability issues on land mobile radio and also share video and data in the field through a mobile app.

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Police Tech



Mutualink exhibited its communications interoperability technology at the 2014 International Association of Chiefs of Police show in Orlando.

during a major incident, sporting event, or investigation. Or it can connect to a private group where only stakeholders to the incident are able to communicate with each other.

The technology packed into the Mutualink Edge mobile application offers agencies the ability to turn each end-user's cellular device into a mobile streaming camera, radio, or data terminal that can be viewed by either a direct one-way communication or can be viewed in the field by an incident commander or incident response group on a mobile device. The Edge app running on a smartphone can also take the place of a handheld radio should the user not have access to a portable. It even has push-to-talk button capability, so it can be used in exactly the same manner as a land mobile radio handset. This can make the Edge app the perfect solution for officers called to an event without a chance to pick up their go bags.

DATA SECURITY

The proprietary Mutualink software is completely secure for use between agencies and does not require any form of legal permissions for use because of the encryption technology that secures the Mutualink network. This keeps all networks completely separate.

Each instance where communications are shared on this system is mutually agreed upon and granted on a

case-by-case basis. The need for formal agreements due to potential data breaches is nullified by this approach and the liability removed from the public safety agency, as it is no longer the party that ensures compatibility or needs to maintain the equipment that manages the interoperability equipment.

THE WOW FACTOR

During a demonstration of the technology, I was able to see that, in as little as a few hours, police departments, other public safety organizations, and critical infrastructure sites that are signed up to the Mutual Link Infrastructure, are instantly able to access the reciprocal communications of other consenting parties at the click of a button.

But the obvious road test for a product like Mutualink and its Edge app is major incident response or special event security.

In early 2014, Mutualink did just that by providing the technology to help multiple public safety agencies, various federal agencies, hospitals, and other critical infrastructure services in New York and New Jersey achieve joint communications for the Super Bowl. All of these agencies, facilities, and services, utilized Mutualink to network all their personnel and form a special public safety communications network for the event.

Implementing the Super Bowl network required no technology upgrades nor

physical protection of communications equipment, both of which would have been necessary in previous years. It also eliminated the need to lease thousands of portable radios, as is the case in some major events, to overcome the myriad different communications providers. Using Mutualink, all public safety and critical infrastructure services were able to use their existing networked radios to communicate directly.

During the Super Bowl, not only were law enforcement agencies given access to seamless radio, phone, and video feeds, which was previously impossible on a wide scale, but all critical infrastructure properties and services that were stakeholders in the event were looped into the communications network to all non-law enforcement communications channels or patched in as needed. That means that if all services had been needed in a mass casualty situation during the Super Bowl, all of the necessary service networks could have been managed simultaneously with a few keystrokes and mouse clicks.

HOW MUCH?

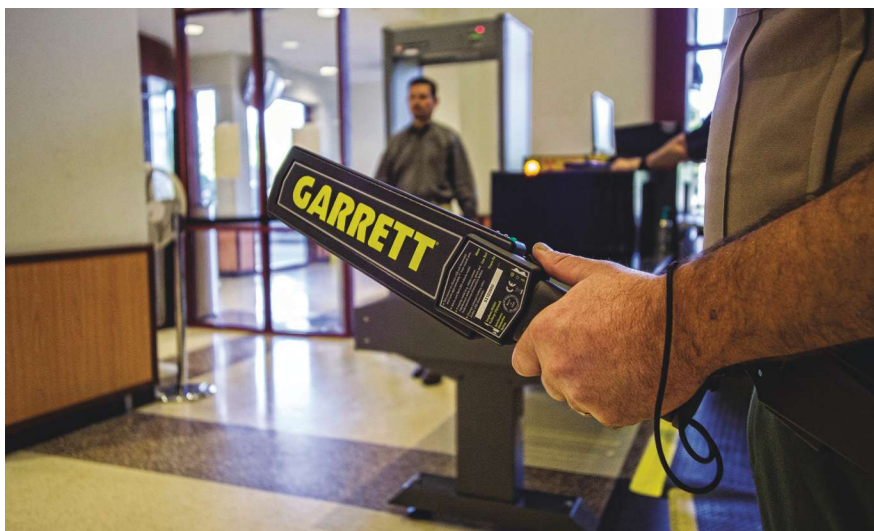
When department administrators hear about technology that can solve a problem that has plagued police departments for decades, there is often the "what's the cost" response.

The business model that was created when Mutualink was being developed allows for the product to be used by the smallest agencies and the largest. There is no huge initial outlay for a small department; the usage of the system is entirely based on what the department wants to get out of it and compartmentalized based on what modules the agency can use.

Also, the technology is deployed based on department need. A small town police chief who just wants to be able to talk to surrounding counties can request a single radio module for interoperability needs. If that small agency only needs to purchase a single license, it can utilize Mutualink for as little as \$8,000. ☎

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