



Mock Prison Riot: Showcase for New Technologies

Using night-vision goggles, the Correctional Emergency Response Team officers search the facility's pitch-dark basement slowly, carefully, methodically. An inmate has ducked away from the rest of his exercise group, and officers believe he managed to hide in the basement, hoping to avoid capture and possibly escape the facility later. Eventually, they emerge from the basement, with the inmate in handcuffs. The officers and the inmate then crowd around a woman with a clipboard and begin talking about the event that just happened — at the annual Mock Prison Riot™ (MPR) at the former state penitentiary in Moundsville, W. Va.

The Mock Prison Riot, held in May each year, serves as a venue for technologists that want to showcase new or improved law enforcement- and corrections-specific products and seek valuable feedback from end users.

“Since the MPR and the suggestions made on the spot upon exit from the basement scenario, we have already made the following improvements: placed a cross-hair center for better target acquisition such as reaching for a door handle, [and placed] field-of-view rings at the 90- and 180-degree angle for greater orientation and situational awareness,” says Barry Bloomfield of InterScience, Inc., producer of the C-View Night Vision Goggle. “We have begun designing a lens cap. All of the above product advancements are a result of our experience at the MPR.”

The Office of Justice Programs' National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the West Virginia High Technology Consortium (WVHTC) Foundation host the annual event, using the buildings and grounds of the decommissioned penitentiary to evaluate the effectiveness of emerging and existing law enforcement and corrections technologies. Core components of the MPR include a technology showcase, tactical training scenarios, numerous free workshops (many of which result in certifications), a skills competition and virtually unlimited opportunities for networking and camaraderie. All areas of the prison and grounds are used for demonstrations, and end user participation and feedback are welcomed and encouraged.

“End users can take a technology from a table in the showcase area, walk a hundred yards and give it to an individual or a team to deploy in an actual cell block, chow hall or rec yard,” says Brad DeRoos, former vice president and chief technology officer of the WVHTC Foundation. “There's no other event in the law enforcement and corrections arena that combines the technologies with optimum conditions for deployment at the same location.”

Law enforcement and corrections practitioners from sheriffs' departments, police departments, prisons, jails, border patrols and the military come from all over the world to view new technologies, then design and execute training scenarios using them. Often, the technology developers stand nearby to watch their products in action.

“Our exhibitors and technologists tell us that the candid, immediate and direct feedback that they receive from the end users is critical to the development process,” DeRoos says. “By partnering and working together for just a few short days each year, the folks who come here are shaping the future of their industry on a global scale. It's tremendously exciting and rewarding to be a part of that.”

Although technologists say they benefit most from the unlimited, candid and informal feedback and end-user networking they receive, formal operational assessments also take place. Requests for formal technology assessments must be made in advance, preferably at the time of registration, as opportunities are limited.

New products introduced during the 2008 MPR included the following:

- Taser®'s XREP, a self-contained, wireless projectile fired from a standard 12-gauge shotgun that is said to deliver the same neuromuscular incapacitation as the handheld Taser® X26, but from a distance of up to 100 feet, and SHOCKWAVE, the first generation of the new Taser Remote Area Denial (TRAD) technology,

which integrates neuromuscular incapacitation into an antipersonnel area-target system capable of incapacitating individuals with reversible effects.

- InterScience, Inc.'s, C-View Night Vision Goggle, which takes commercial, off-the-shelf night vision goggles and integrates a hemispherical imaging field of view in place of the 40-degree field of view, and CRISSTL Ball, a 360-degree camera technology placed inside a 3.8-inch ruggedized, lightweight clear polycarbonate plastic ball that offers real-time panoramic views transmitted wirelessly up to 200 feet.

The next Mock Prison Riot is scheduled for May 3-6, 2009. For more information or to register, please go to <http://www.mockprisonriot.org>, or contact Cindy Barone or Sharon Goudy at (888) 306-5382.

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