



Hoover Public Safety Center

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When a population explosion and city jail overcrowding made it clear to the city of Hoover, AL, that the current facilities were not going to be enough, the city decided to upgrade its public safety facility two years ago. This meant big changes for all involved.

“We’re just a growing city,” says Robin Mangino, detention supervisor at the new Hoover Public Safety Center. “We had a population that went from 60,000 to 71,150 in a short time, and it continues to grow. We had outgrown our small municipal jail and we were experiencing overcrowding.”

The concept behind the new building was to merge the city jail, municipal courts, permits and engineering facilities, MIS and fire administration all under one large roof. All of these departments came to the new facility from individual buildings, with a move-in date of August 2004.

While each organization that would occupy the building came to the table with their own individual security needs, designers and planners were able to identify one system that could meet everyone’s video surveillance needs. That system was the Vicon Kollektor Pro series.

Putting It Together

Security for the Hoover Public Safety Center is divided into two separate systems. The detention center, because of its unique needs and higher security level, is one system, and the public administration portion is the other.

The task of installing the Vicon system and making it work for everyone involved was given to Ruffin Enterprises, Inc. (now named Enhanced Technical Construction), a local security company that routinely bids security control systems for new construction detention facilities. The system they implemented for Hoover includes Kollektor Pro DVRs, Vicon matrix switchers, keyboard controllers, 16-channel multiplexers and VFT pan-tilt-zoom dome cameras.

“Their need was to have security surveillance throughout the facility,” says Richard Sport, project engineer for Enhanced Technical Construction. “The public administration area has a control room and a CCTV surveillance system with 48 cameras, three DVRs and eight monitors. They are monitoring court rooms, corridors, entrances and the parking lot. The detention area (city jail) has over 100 cameras. They have the larger system, with seven DVRs. They monitor corridors, day rooms, booking, the whole facility.”

Richard Mattis, facilities director for the city of Hoover, is in charge of the public administration portion of the building. “Primarily, our greatest need is in the court area, which is where we have most or all of our cameras,” he says. “The other areas we watch

and record are the areas where we take money, such as the revenue department at the window, and building inspections.”

Probably the biggest difference between the detention portion of the building and the other areas is that Mattis’ portion primarily relies on the recorded history.

Mattis was concerned with having a video record of any incident that might occur. Areas of concern, such as the courtroom, have officers posted right there to deter any incident.

Detention’s needs were understandably different. “We are a 64-bed facility,” Mangino says. “We monitor around 120 cameras in the whole facility. We monitor all inmate movement, bookings, cell blocks, property rooms, the medical unit, everything that happens within the facility 24/7. We also have the capacity to go back and pull video if there are any incidents.”

These unique needs were met through the type of cameras used. “The biggest thing [detention] was concerned with was the coverage they would get in the area we were locating the cameras,” he says. “That required us to use more PTZs in several of their corridors so they could pan and tilt down both corridors. So instead of using fixed cameras at both ends in both directions, we used the PTZ cameras. It was a challenge, but we got very good coverage of the building,” Sport says.

Using the System



In practice, the Vicon system has provided many benefits for all parties involved. “What we had in the past only recorded when you told it to record,” Mattis says. “Now we are recording all the time. It writes over itself after a certain period of time. That’s the biggest difference right there.”

“Our system is pretty sophisticated,” Mattis adds. We have 40 cameras, switchers,

networks, DVRs. I have to say that the Vicon system has been very reliable.”

Mattis was already familiar with the Vicon product. “When I heard we were going to have that equipment I was relaxed, knowing that I was getting quality equipment,” he says. “Quality and reliability of the equipment is more important than anything to me, with the way I am using it.”

On the detention side, the new Vicon system was a big change – and a huge improvement. “We were really a small Mayberry-type facility before,” Mangino says. “We had cameras, and they did record, but they were time-lapsed. When we went to review, everyone looked like a robot. It was not an accurate perception when reviewing incidents.”

However, when using the Vicon system, they were able to identify incidents quickly, easily and efficiently. One example of this was what happened to a missing \$300 cash bond. The defendant was caught on camera picking it up and walking out with it. “It’s certainly better video quality,” Mangino adds. “There is also the capacity to go back and review video and send over email.”

Another issue Mangino faced in moving to the new facility was manpower. “We went from a 16-bed facility to a 64-bed facility. We couldn’t have handled this load without the Vicon system.”

One feature Mangino particularly liked was the touch-screen monitors. “It’s a simple way to monitor inmate movement without having to increase manpower. It gives us the ability to look at eight different camera views at one time. If we have court proceedings or visitation, we can set one camera to a specific event and assign just one officer to monitor those events. We don’t have to pull officers away from other duty posts.”

“Manpower has been reduced significantly, because we now have one tower officer who has master control of all the camera systems.” This has reduced personnel costs for Hoover Public safety.

For further information on Vicon Industries, please visit their website at www.vicon-cctv.com.