

## Largest detention center in OK goes high-def

Self-installs new system because 'cameras were never in the right place at the right time'

By Leischen Stelter - 04.12.2010

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla.—Investing in 144 high-definition, megapixel cameras to monitor more than 2,700 inmates here at the 268,000-square-foot Oklahoma County Detention Center means the state can rely largely on video evidence to prosecute incidents involving prisoners.

That's a big change from what the prison had in place before. The previous camera system was automated on a roving guard tour of the facility, which meant inmates could avoid being caught. "The cameras were never in the right place at the right time," said Captain David Baisden of the technology service department at the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office. "The inmates would do their dirty work while the camera was pointed in another direction."

As a matter of fact, the old camera system, which had been installed in the mid-'90s, was so ineffective at capturing incidents that video evidence had never been used to prosecute a case, said Baisden. "Usually when there was an altercation, it was time consuming and would take investigators several days or weeks to get to the bottom of what happened and they had to obtain interview statements from witnesses and had to rely on inmates to tell you what happened."

Of course, relying on inmates for accurate information was not exactly ideal evidence. However, Baisden said in the first 30 days after installing the megapixel system from **Avigilon**, the sheriff's office took more than 30 cases to the district attorney for prosecution. "All of a sudden we had the ability to play back an incident and identify perpetrators and didn't even have to go talk to anybody," he said. "We literally just went and filed the charges and the interview portion of the investigation was gone."

However, changing over to a new system was not entirely of the department's own volition. During a review of the facility, the Department of Justice determined that the Sheriff's Office needed to upgrade its surveillance system. After researching various systems, Baisden said the department determined that megapixel was what was necessary, especially since video footage would be used to identify individuals.

However, the budget for the system was tight. In order to save money and be able to afford high-definition, mega-pixel cameras, Baisden said it was determined that their in-house technicians could design and install the surveillance system. The department conferred with a local integrator about the design, but the facility's technicians did the majority of the work. "We ran our own fiber and hung our network cabinets and installed switches and servers and storage – the whole bit," he said.

As far as storage, the facility installed 252 terabytes, giving it approximately 90 days worth of storage. Baisden said the system also allows the department to program individual cameras to record at different rates, providing more storage flexibility.

In addition to the 144 megapixel cameras, which are not all deployed yet, the facility also has another 200 analog cameras that could be integrated into the system in the future, he said. Baisden said being able to self-install the system allowed the department to invest in such high-quality cameras. "As they say, you get what you pay for and you can save money by doing the integration yourself, if you have a staff that's capable of the installation. In our case, we literally built it by ourselves," he said.