IDAS™ and SWAT: The Right Combination for Mission Critical Mutual Aid

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Westshore Enforcement Bureau (WEB) is a mutual aid SWAT team made up of highly trained police officers and paramedics from several small communities outside of Cleveland, Ohio. In a training exercise last year, they discovered that officer radio transmissions from their analog system were showing up on scanners and broadcast on the Internet.

"Imagine being in an active shooter situation and the bad guys can monitor what SWAT is saying," said Bob Close, VP of Cleveland Communications.

That's when Pat Fiorilli, WEB SWAT Unit Commander, contacted John Williams, Icom RF Marketing Representative, and Williams referred the project to Close.

When most citizens think of a police Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team, they think of guns, helmets, and body armor. But ask any SWAT team member what's the most important piece of equipment they have, they'll tell you it's their radio communication system.

"Cleveland Communications is known for custom solutions and going out of our way to meet a customer's needs," said Close. "There can't be a more important need than mission critical communications for SWAT, public safety, and medical emergencies."

"We put together an Icom IDAS™ digital/analog system and showed the WEB SWAT team what happens on a scanner when you transmit digital," he said. "There was just a low level hum because of the voice scrambler. You couldn't hear a word. The team was so impressed they placed an order for repeaters, 4 digital IC-F6061D mobiles for their SWAT vehicles, and 25 digital IC-F4161D portables."

The various community police and fire departments, state police, and National Guard have different radio systems so the SWAT communications van carries an Incident Commanders' Radio Interface™ (ICRI) unit. It provides radio cross-band (VHF, UHF, 800MHz), cross platform (digital/analog, trunked/talk-around, AM/FM) capability for any possible mutual aid operations with any agency. The IDAS system integrates seamlessly with the ICRI.

The benefit of the Icom IDAS system and digital radios, is that they can talk and listen to both digital and analog radios from multiple departments that supply SWAT personnel, a unique feature that sets Icom apart.

"That way the departments that have old analog radios can communicate seamlessly in mixed mode with the Icom digital radios." said Close.

"We used a portable waterproof Pelican™ case to house the Icom IC-FR6000 repeater," he said. "They carry it in one of their vans for on-site communication and can move it from place to place on foot or traveling in a vehicle. That's a unique way to use a repeater but we set it up to make it work."

They modified the case to plug the repeater into the vehicle systems for power and roof antennas, or it can run self-contained.

"WEB SWAT has been testing their radios during training exercises and we continue to tweak the custom system for optimum performance." said Close. "The great thing about Icom and IDAS, it's an integrated system and easy to configure, program, install, and train users."

The team is so happy with the system and the ruggedness of the radios that they've added 2-3 additional mobiles and 25 more portables in the 2010 budget.

In addition, Close said, "The total IDAS solution, all-in with radios included, is about one-third less than other products. That's helping a lot with tight government budgets right now. Customers can do more for less."

"Cleveland Communication is continuing to attend SWAT training exercises and provide engineering support as they roll out the system," said Close. "Lives depend on it."