

Mock Prison Riot 2000 — A Technology Showcase

By Diane Quinn

A fight has broken out in a prison dining room. Officers are called in. They enter with force, dispense oleoresin capsicum (OC) and order the inmates to the floor. The inmates are handcuffed and the situation is under control. Sound like a bad day at work? Not for the Office of Law Enforcement Technology Commercialization (OLETC). This scenario is part of the annual Mock Prison Riot held at the former West Virginia State Penitentiary in Moundsville, W.Va.

The Mock Prison Riot is a technology showcase designed to demonstrate new and emerging correctional and law enforcement technologies. Technologists and inventors are invited to display their products so attendees can witness firsthand the devices' capabilities. Groups from various correctional agencies are selected to participate in the event as tactical teams equipped with technologies that are demonstrated in the real-life scenarios of prison riots.

OLETC, the West Virginia Division of Corrections and the National Corrections and Law Enforcement Technology and Training Center (NCLETTC) sponsor the event every year. The Mock Prison Riot originated in 1997, when West Virginia invited the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction to participate in a training session at the prison. OLETC, a program of the National Institute of Justice, located at Wheeling Jesuit University in W.Va., heard about the event and offered various technologies to the prison for evaluation during the training exercise. The

gathering has grown from three teams and seven demonstrated technologies to 17 teams and more than 70 technologies expected this year. Spectators total more than 1,000 and include corrections officials from several countries. This year, the five-day event will be held April 29 through May 3.



One of the participating teams prepares to enter a housing unit.

The mock riot attracts more than 1,300 attendees each year, but only a few teams are selected to participate in the tactical scenarios. Last year, 176 officers participated in team exercises, representing state departments of correction, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and local jails. For the 2001 riot, more than 365 officers will make up the participating teams. They hail from correctional departments in Alabama, California, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and West Virginia; BOP prisons in Manchester, Ky., and Schuylkill, Pa.; and local jails from California, Georgia, Ohio, South Carolina and Virginia.

The teams will participate in real-life scenarios in several housing units, the north and south yards, dining room, outdoor recreation areas

and an office. Because each area presents different obstacles to inmate restraint and situation control, the locations offer a variety of venues for testing technologies. In preparation for the riot, teams assist with scenario development, ensuring that each exercise reflects situations encountered in daily operations.

Teams submit requests to OLETC to have specific technologies available during the scenarios so that officers can gauge the devices' effectiveness. Once the mock riot begins, the teams are videotaped during their assigned scenarios so other attendees may watch the action in real time on closed-circuit monitors throughout the prison.

Past scenarios have included inmates hiding in the chapel after services, fighting in the dining hall, refusing to return to their housing units and taking officers hostage after a football game. To complicate matters, medical emergencies are added to situations so officers witness the best approaches to handling injuries. These more complex situations force teams to work with medical personnel while taking appropriate actions. Whether the medical action is internal treatment, transportation to the local hospital or evacuation by helicopter to a distant hospital, correctional officers use the situation as practice in threat mitigation and technology assessment.

OLETC works with inventors of correctional and law enforcement technologies to help them commercialize their products. The riot serves as a review mechanism to measure the technologies' utilities. Each scenario presents opportunities for test-

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ing and assessment. Officers use the technologies and provide feedback about their effectiveness and potential.

The mock riot has assisted with the commercialization of several emerging technologies beneficial to the corrections community. Those highlighted at the 2000 Mock Prison Riot include:

- An invisible laser sensor that, when obstructed, alerts a monitoring post of movement. The sensor is unique because it is invisible even to night-vision technology.
- A system that mixes and dispenses cleaning solutions at a remote, secured location to inmate housing. Since cleaning solutions can be hazardous, the system keeps chemicals away from inmates.
- A cell door designed to prevent barricades. The locking mechanism is built into the door-frame and unique hinges allow the door to swing in either direction.
- A system that allows the officers to communicate at the same time. The technology's remote repeater allows the system to work inside a correctional facility.
- A metal clip designed by an El Reno, Okla., correctional officer to solve the problem of too many handcuffs hanging from officers' belts. The clip, which is attached to a leather holder that goes over utility belts, can carry 14 single or seven double cuffs at one time and is designed so that officers can remove and replace them without taking their eyes off inmates.
- A small metal detector that fits over the hand like a glove. If it

comes in contact with metal, it vibrates to alert the officer to a hidden item on the inmate. Because the vibration is slight and there is no sound, the inmate is not alerted.

- A glove that prevents punctures or cuts from needles, razors and other sharp objects officers might encounter while searching inmates or their living spaces.
- A noninvasive drug-testing device that uses the subject's pupillary response to test for the presence of illegal substances. The test subject looks into the binocular-like device and results are given in 30 seconds. Without disposal pieces to replace, the technology is cost-effective.
- A holster that holds an officer's gun locked in an unloaded position and automatically loads the weapon as the officer draws it.
- A disposable hood for transporting inmates that is secured at the top. The hood allows inmates to see and breathe but prevents them from spitting or working the hoods down their face.
- Stab- and slash-resistant body armor.
- A two-in-one portable crisis/hostage negotiation communication system. Built-in features include covert audio and video capabilities, infrared tracking and a cellular connection.

In addition to examining technologies, the 2000 Mock Prison Riot offered correctional officers the opportunity to learn more about specific topics of interest. Through focus workshops, participants benefited from classroom discussions on

current correctional issues. An hour-long workshop on OC delivery systems and formulations highlighted the use of foggers, streams and foam. Also discussed were misconceptions surrounding the available formulations and how to reduce liability by thoroughly investigating potential products.

Another of last year's workshops examined correctional facilities' vulnerabilities. The goal of the Vulnerability Analysis Methodology for corrections is to assist correctional staff in performing security-oriented assessments of their facilities. Topics included design information, security countermeasures, security deficiencies and upgrade considerations.

Other topics featured were: "What Causes Prison Riots – And Do Causes Really Matter?"; "Stab Armor Development for Corrections Officer Safety"; "Special Impact Munitions – Improving Success While Reducing Your Liability"; "Distraction Devices"; and "Team Dimensional Training Tutorial for Management."

The Mock Prison Riot offers one of the world's largest exercises and technology showcases for corrections professionals in the realistic setting of a former penitentiary. Everyone has the opportunity to learn from one another. Officers are exposed to the latest in correctional technology, while vendors showcase their products and receive input from end users.

For more information or to register for Mock Prison Riot 2001, contact OLETC at 1-888-306-5382; Web site: www.oletc.org. For information on other technologies, visit the JUSTNET Web site: www.nlectc.org.

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