In the early 1990s, the Westchester County Department of Correction (DOC) in Valhalla, N.Y., was hardly a model of efficient security. The complex access control system hampered security efforts and the proprietary system forced security officials to use only cards and equipment from one particular vendor.

The costly, four-building Westchester DOC system consisted of four buildings: the maximum-security penitentiary of 365 beds, the jail for those awaiting trial, DOC headquarters, and the DOC annex for an overflow prison population.

“We saw how effective the solution was in the county executive building and knew it was a very powerful system . . . we wanted to mimic the solution in our facilities, and it has definitely paid off.”

Sgt. Don Smith
Technical Services Director
Westchester DOC
“Problems just plagued the system,” said Sgt. Don Smith, technical services director for the Westchester County Department of Correction. “Door readers weren’t working, cards weren’t working, and we needed to look for a new system.”

Then, about four years ago, prison officials requested money to change the outdated and ineffective system. In the end, county officials chose security products from Software House and American Dynamics, both part of Tyco Fire & Security’s Access Control and Video Systems business unit. So far, nearly 200 card readers tied to Software House’s C·CURE access control system and more than 200 CCTV cameras and 23 Intellex digital video recorders from American Dynamics.

Security officials selected the system largely because of the effectiveness and reliability of the Software House and American Dynamics products that were previously installed at the nearby Westchester County executive building.

“We saw how effective the solution was in the county building and knew it was a very powerful system,” noted Smith. “We wanted to mimic the solution in our facilities, and it has definitely paid off.”

Implementing a solution with C·CURE 800 and Intellex

During the course of this year Antar-Com Inc., a company in White Plains, N.Y., that is a part of the Diebold Enterprise Security Systems group that provides integrated security and communications solutions, installed the C·CURE 800 and Intellex security solution. Since initial installation the integrated solution has worked seamlessly. The equipment is installed in four different building complexes to form a totally integrated system.

The DOC penitentiary went on-line with new security measures in April 2004. The C-CURE 800 access control system manages all of the sliding doors leading into corridors of the penitentiary, and enables security personnel to link specific events to video generated by any of the 14 integrated Intellex digital video recorders.

Specifically, the 200 card readers interact with a programmable logic controller, which locks and unlocks corridor doors, exit doors, housing entrances, and sliding doors that lead to cell blocks.

In addition, security officials created an intercom system integrated with American Dynamics’ 1024 matrix switcher and more than 200 CCTV cameras. As a result, when an officer pushes a button for the intercom, the camera will concentrate on the intercom area, allowing the officer to view the person with whom they are speaking.

There are two levels of security. The first level features a security officer who has a membrane control panel in front of him that includes a map of his area of responsibility. That officer can unlock doors directly from this panel. The other level allows officers to take command of the membrane in emergency situations, and enables the control center officer to oversee the entire area without any other officer intervention.

In the event that an officer is under assault, another officer sitting nearby in a 10-foot by 10-foot glassed-in “control bubble” can aid
or override local security officers in case of
danger. Software House systems control
all of the doors leading to the “bubble.”

In addition to the penitentiary, the jail was
outfitted with the C-CURE system in the
summer of 2004. Male and female prisoners
are housed in different parts of the facility.
The security for the fourth floor, which houses
women, can be programmed to decline
elevator access to those workers who do
not have work privileges on that floor, and
can provide corroborating digital video if
necessary. The jail also has four Intellix DVRs.

The new security implementation extended
to the 22-person DOC headquarters as
well. The headquarters house the deputy
commissioners’ offices, payroll, special
investigation units and all IT servers. “The
headquarters had no access control
at all,” noted Sgt. Smith. “Our entirely
key-driven system spelled problems if
the keys fell into the wrong hands.”

Smith said it is vital to have an access control
system for the headquarters. The reader-
controlled doors signal when workers enter
and exit the building and whether someone
is inside during work hours or after hours. “If
someone comes in after hours or early in the
morning or late at night, an e-mail will be sent
to my Blackberry to tell me who’s coming in
and out of the building,” he said, adding that
the headquarters has one Intellix DVR.

Finally, the DOC annex, which holds 52
additional inmates, has CCURE 800 and
Intellix systems. Front doors also contain
card readers in addition to two gates within
the building. The building also has four DVRs
that will record motion and video 24 hours
a day, seven days a week in the annex,
allowing for complete security of the facility.

“We’ve created an annex profile that
recognizes certain people and allows them to
come in and out of the building,” said Smith.

Swift installation, helpful training
Despite the outwardly challenging installation
in four separate buildings, Antar-Com and
its president, Isac Tabib, were ready for
the task. “Antar-Com really came through
for us,” said Smith. “We really needed to
have the access control system installed in
the women’s unit right away. I called Isac
on a Friday and by the following Tuesday,
the whole project was completed.”

The DOC had other challenges as well.
The inadequate ID system was merely a
picture on a card that failed to provide the
security the DOC needed. Now, more than
900 proximity cards will be programmed
by Software House, and half of the cards
have been programmed to date.

Additionally, training for the new system
helped. Smith attended an access control
training course at Tyco’s office in Boca Raton,
Fla. “The training expands our knowledge
in terms of being able to do things such
as design reports and understand lockout
procedures,” he said, adding that the weeklong
training classes enabled him to become
better versed on general security measures.

Cost control is another benefit to using the
integrated Software House and American
Dynamics system. DOC security personnel,
Smith noted, can purchase many off-the-
shelf components. “We can go to a supply
store that has readers,” said Smith. “We
don’t have to buy proprietary readers. We don’t have to stock equipment, so cost-wise, it’s easier to manage and saves time. Saving me time is saving me money.”

**Impressive returns**

A primary return on investment, said Smith, is the increased ease in assisting 850 corrections officers and supervisors who need access privileges. He can manage access to the buildings remotely or at headquarters.

For example, he received a call recently because of a disabled transmitter in one of the facilities. Instead of making the 39-mile ride from his home to unlock the door leading to the transmitter, Smith booted up his laptop at home, logged onto the VPN, and highlighted the door in question. He then clicked a button that opened the door and allowed the officer to escort the technician to the faulty transmitter. “With the old system I couldn’t manage it remotely,” noted Smith.

Smith pointed to another recent incident in which the warden called him and told him that he needed officers to gain access into a stairwell into the penitentiary. Smith, again at his home an hour away, simply designated a particular door to the officers’ access profiles. The officers then gained access to the stairwell.

“There is nothing worse than standing out in the rain and pushing your card into the reader and it doesn’t work,” he said. “I don’t get those calls anymore. The system is always up and running.” Another benefit, Smith said, lies in the ability to disable a card that is lost or stolen.

Smith also praised Antar-Com for its efforts. “One portion of the job that Antar-Com made easy for me is the ability to do my job here in my office or remotely,” said Smith. “It’s a huge benefit to be able to manage the system.”

In the end, the highly integrated Software House and American Dynamics security systems benefit the four-building Department of Correction system and give it a measure of stability and functionality previously unseen.

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**System Summary**

**Project:** Westchester County Department of Correction  
**Location:** Valhalla, New York  
**Domes/Cameras:** 200+ Cameras  
**DVRs:** 23 Intellex DVMS units  
**Card Readers:** 200+  
**Buildings:** 4