CATCHING ON

A surveillance system powered by the 3 network is helping the Italian Police Force ensure that crime doesn't pay.

By Mark Caldwell

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Hooligans, gangsters, scoundrels, thugs, thieves, traffic violators and other miscreants in the picturesque Italian town of Pero have all been dealt a severe blow thanks to the introduction of an advanced new monitoring system called *VideoPatrol*, which allows the police to access live streaming video of crime hotspots while on the move.

The urban security system, jointly designed by 3 Italy and AP Systems (APS), is another example of the innovative developments being brought about by UMTS (3G) technology.

Situated in the province of Milan, Pero could hardly be described as a haven for criminals. In fact, it's a law-abiding town in which there is only one cop for every 3,000 inhabitants. Nevertheless the local police force had been under pressure to satisfy the dual requirements of manning the police headquarters as well as providing a visible presence to the public.

Launched in April, *VideoPatrol* came about when the Pero Police Department approached APS, a systems integrator company, to help find a way to alleviate their staff-shortage difficulties. The problem was that the video monitoring centre at police HQ had to be manned at all times, effectively handcuffing valuable officers to their desks.

Realising that the solution lay in mobility, APS in turn approached 3 Italy to help design and implement a system that would deliver real-time video information in a mobile environment.

APS was already a partner of 3 Italy, involved in the mobile video company's *3 for Business* programme, which provides innovative communications solutions for professionals on the move.

"We have worked in Public Administration services since 1986 and our customers have often asked us for this kind of service, but we never found the right technology to match their needs," said Renzo Bassetto, CEO of APS. "With UMTS we finally found real high-speed mobile services. 3 Italy helped us both in developing the service and in delivering the product to the customer."

Previously, police stayed in touch with headquarters via radio. But with *VideoPatrol* they have effectively transformed their patrol cars into mini-HQs, with the same access to information as they would get at head office.

"We have only ten policemen in a city of 30,000," says Renato Forte, head of the Pero Police. "We had difficulties in managing this city with such a small force and we needed to improve efficiency because Pero will host the Milan Fair [Europe's biggest trade fair] in 2005. With *VideoPatrol*, no one has to stay in

the office and every policeman can be in the field."

The solution came in the form of a touch screen monitor linked to a rugged Windows 2000 PC and powered by a Fast Mobile Card (Pcmcia).

The devices can be installed on the dashboard of the passenger side of patrol vehicles and are linked to head office via 3 Italy's UMTS network.

Every patrol consists of two policemen, one driving, the second keeping an eye on the monitor.

With a simple touch of the monitor the PC starts up and, in a few seconds,

ing permits, identify the immigration status of an individual and access whatever information is available on the data banks.

Before the introduction of VideoPatrol, officers were effectively handcuffed to their desks

Wrongdoers who think they can operate under cover of darkness are also in for an unpleasant surprise. The cameras are equipped with advanced technology first developed by the mil-

Italy and beyond.

Not only is *VideoPatrol* a godsend for the police, but the new service also represents a great business opportunity for APS and 3 Italy with the potential to become a significant new revenue source. There are thousands of police patrol cars in Italy and APS is committed to selling at least 5,000 *VideoPatrol* units by 2005.

"The *VideoPatrol* service has helped us demonstrate the real business usage potential of a 3G network," says Ezio Peri, Sales Business Director of 3 Italy.

the monitor starts showing real-time video images provided by a network of cameras at special hotspots around the city, such as high-traffic junctions, central pedestrian areas, parks and schools. The cameras are linked to a streaming server, which in turn is linked to *VideoPatrol*. When *VideoPatrol* is on, a policeman can choose between different cameras and manipulate the received images for better viewing. The operator can zoom in, control the camera movements (up, down, right, left), improve the quality of the image, create a still image and even print it in the car.

When alerted by unusual movements, the patrol can make an immediate decision and quickly decide to go to the spot to intervene.

What's more, a keyboard and printer allow this integrated system to access the city database, making it possible to, for example, verify build-

itary that allows the cameras to "see" at night.

To keep the system secure from unscrupulous hackers, it is recommended that customers develop *VideoPatrol* over an "InAzienda" secure Data VPN Solution (Cisco Ipsec). In this way, no one but authorised personnel can access the information.

Pero is the first city in Italy to deploy the system, but other cities will soon follow. In time, it is expected that *VideoPatrol* will become a standard tool in law enforcement across

"This service increases our network usage at night and grants us high ARPU [average revenue per user]. *VideoPatrol* has even helped us in deploying our network. The city of Dorgali, for example, originally denied us permission to install a radio base transmitter needed to further improve our services. Then they saw the advantages of *VideoPatrol* and asked us to implement the system, so they also agreed to let us install a new radio base station. Everybody is happy about *VideoPatrol* – everybody, that is, except the lawbreakers!"