

The President, the Park Police and Axis: Inauguration Day 2013. United States Park Police focuses Axis network cameras on high-target areas to expand situational awareness.



Organization:
United States Park
Police

Location:
Washington, D.C., USA

Industry segment:
Government

Application:
Situational awareness,
safety and security

Mission

The 2013 Presidential Inauguration presented an extremely target-rich environment for anyone bent on disruption. Turnout was expected to exceed 800,000 attendees, including the President of the United States, the Vice President, cabinet members, Supreme Court justices, members of Congress and a host of visiting heads of state. To adequately protect such a large crowd with a comparatively small number of law enforcement personnel, the United States Park Police (USPP) turned to advanced HDTV-quality network cameras to deliver precision situation awareness throughout the day's activities.

Solution

The USPP deployed advanced AXIS Q6032-E PTZ Dome Network Cameras and 1080p HDTV-quality AXIS Q6035-E PTZ Dome Network Cameras to provide tactical surveillance of the Presidential Reviewing Stand and parade route. Streaming video was also shared live with more than 30 supporting public safety agencies involved in the day's events to augment their own surveillance efforts.

Result

The responsive and precise pan/tilt/zoom capabilities of the cameras and extended day/night resolution of the video provided the USPP with critical situation awareness from predawn hours through sunset when the festivities finally concluded. While close to one million people watched the President officially take office, the US Park Police watched their backs to ensure this major event stayed uneventful.



To protect and serve our national treasures

The United States Park Police has been on duty in U.S. national parks for more than 200 years. On Inauguration Day, the highly trained force provides protective services to the President of the United States, visiting dignitaries and other noted attendees as well as the general public participating in the festivities.

Since the 2013 Inauguration Committee anticipated a turnout exceeding 800,000, the USPP had to step up its efforts to monitor what was sure to be a high-threat event.

"It's a target-rich environment for anyone bent on disruption or harm," said Major David Mulholland, Commander of Technical Services for the United States Park Police. "To adequately protect such a large group of people with a relatively small number of law enforcement personnel, we needed to leverage surveillance technology as a force multiplier."

The USPP created a multi-tiered surveillance network designed to monitor the areas of greatest risk. To do this, they strategically deployed advanced and outdoor-ready AXIS Q6032-E PTZ Dome Network Cameras and 1080p HDTV-quality AXIS Q6035-E PTZ Dome Network Cameras on the National Mall and along the parade route.

"We leveraged a number of cameras from different locations [that were tied into one surveillance network]," explained Mulholland. "For general situational awareness, we used standard definition cameras. But for our highest tier of tactical surveillance, where we focused on protecting the President and a large assembly of important officials, there was a compelling need for really high-definition video. And that is the image quality we got from the cameras we deployed as part of this partnership effort."

For example, if someone reported a suspicious backpack left beside a trashcan, the Axis camera operator could use the 36x optical zoom of the AXIS Q6032-E PTZ and the 20x optical zoom of the AXIS Q6035-E PTZ to quickly zoom in and distinguish between innocuous loose threads of an old tattered backpack and ominous wires that would trigger further investigation.

A whole greater than the sum of its parts

More than 30 public safety agencies operated command centers throughout the capital on Inauguration Day, and dozens more waited on stand-by. To secure everyone's safety and security, sharing situational intelligence across agencies was paramount. Multiple wireless connectivity technologies allowed the USPP to stream video to a protected video server. Their IT security team then "pushed the video to our partner agencies through a highly secure government server," explained Mulholland.

"The USPP had a few forward command posts that were embedded inside the event where operational teams could view the video," said Mulholland. "But we also streamed real-time to other joint and emergency operations centers throughout the area. In addition, our own patrol personnel out in the field were able to pull up the video on their mobile devices." Because the video server is web-based, law enforcement personnel with the proper credentials could access the live camera feeds.



"Once the different agencies saw the exceptionally sharp image quality of the high-resolution cameras that the United States Park Police deployed, we got a lot of requests throughout the day to redirect the cameras to specific areas of interest," Mulholland said.

Mulholland especially appreciated the agile responsiveness of the cameras' pan/tilt/zoom capabilities. "In a fluid environment like the Inauguration, that's a really critical feature," stated Mulholland. "If you know that you have a person of interest or a foreign object in an area, you have to get on it pretty darn quick. In a situation like that, a three or four second delay could make the difference between averting a disaster and facing the aftermath."

Foresight that's 20/20 or better

Having learned from the record-setting 2009 Inauguration, the USPP was well positioned for the early arrival of people to the National Mall in the predawn hours. "People started streaming into the viewing area as early as 4:00 a.m. to get a good spot," recalled Mulholland.

Given the early hour, Mulholland was struck by the low-light capability of the Axis cameras. "It was critical [in low-light conditions] that we be able to maintain the same integrity of zooming in and taking look at a suspicious package or a suspicious person who had been identified to us." The low-light capabilities also aided the USPP when the Inaugural Parade ended in the evening.

Mulholland noted that the AXIS Q6035-E Network Cameras retained color integrity throughout the event even in the lowest of ambient light. "It was pretty impressive considering that some of the ambient light from street lights and traffic lights had been turned off along certain portions of Pennsylvania Avenue for security reasons."

Additionally, the Axis IP cameras were instrumental in monitoring foot traffic into the designated zones on the National Mall and helping the USPP anticipate when to redirect visitors to other areas once capacity had been reached.

"Because people have to queue up for entry into the area, we didn't want anyone stuck in the chute," explained Mulholland. "By positioning some of the Axis cameras high up, we could watch as areas filled up and calculate when to cut off the queue and send people to the next zone."

Keeping a major event uneventful

While dozens of agencies contributed to the safety and security of the 2013 Inauguration, Mulholland felt that the weeklong preparation with the Axis support team led by the local Field Sales Engineer prior to the event was critical to a successful deployment. Thanks to the engineer's help with the setup, installation and fine-tuning of the cameras, the USPP and its partner agencies were able to maintain strategic and tactical situational awareness throughout the day. "That level of support was crucial to our success," claimed Mulholland, "because a camera is only as good as it's engineered in the field."

The extensive effort and preparation from the Park Police resulted in a day that was as free from incident as it was historic. When the President headed back to work, the crowd made their way home safe, unharmed and with a positive experience to share for years to come.

"Leveraging the Axis cameras was just one of those no-brainer force multipliers. They not only gave us overall situational awareness, but we were able to surgically focus on specific areas of potential risk."

Major David Mulholland,
Commander of Technical Services
for the United States Park Police.



About Axis Communications

As the market leader in network video, Axis is leading the way to a smarter, safer, more secure world — driving the shift from analog to digital video surveillance. Offering network video solutions for professional installations, Axis' products and solutions are based on an innovative, open technology platform.

Axis has more than 1,000 dedicated employees in 40 locations around the world and cooperates with partners covering 179 countries. Founded in 1984, Axis is a Sweden-based IT company listed on NASDAQ OMX Stockholm under the ticker AXIS. For more information about Axis, please visit our website www.axis.com