New Jersey, Pennsylvania officials highlight successful public-safety LTE use during papal visit

Urgent Communications By Donny Jackson

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As Pope Francis visited Philadelphia last weekend, law-enforcement personnel responsible for ensuring the pontiff's safety had unprecedented access to real-time video and other key applications, thanks to the use of deployable public-safety LTE units provided by the state of New Jersey's JerseyNet program.

During an *IWCE's Urgent Communications* webinar sponsored by InfoVista, Pennsylvania State Police Capt. William Williams yesterday said that the four-site deployable public-safety LTE network worked "extremely well" throughout the Pope Francis visit.

"One of the most significant accomplishments was the proof of concept that it worked and how it worked in an urban environment during an incident like this," Williams said during the webinar, which is available on demand at this link . "The fact [was] that we could stream high-definition video and that we had full connectivity the whole weekend, with no interruptions."

Fred Scalera—the public-safety broadband manager from New Jersey's Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness—echoed this sentiment, noting that the deployed system supported about 40 users throughout the Pope Francis visit, averaging about 4.5 GB per hour of total usage without ever reaching the network's maximum capacity.

"We got to do a lot of different things, and it worked very well," Scalera said during the webinar. "Sharing video went well. Overall, if this proves to be where our network is going, I'm very happy, and I think we'll have a successful deployment."

To support the Pope Francis visit to Philadelphia, two JerseyNet system-on-wheels (SOW) trailers were deployed in the upper levels of separate parking garage and were connected via microwave to a JerseyNet SOW in Camden, N.J., Scalera said. In case the microwave link was disrupted, the sites also have satellite connectivity, which provides less data throughput than the microwave link but would maintain some communications, including all voice

communications, he said.

In addition, two vehicles with deployable LTE gear were used in Pennsylvania to provide coverage when Pope Francis traveled outside of the Philadelphia coverage area, such as when he visited a prison, Scalera said.

Williams said that the statewide LMR system served as the primary means of communication for law enforcement during the papal visit, but LTE communications supplemented and interoperated with the LMR network.

“Because [JerseyNet LTE] was not our primary means of communication, it was not utilized extensively by a lot of people,” Williams said. “But those who did use it found that it worked very well. They had phone capabilities and video capabilities.”

Given the success of this deployment, Williams said he would like to expand the partnership with New Jersey next year to provide similar capabilities over a greater geographic area when Philadelphia host the Democratic National Convention next year.

Scalera said the Mutualink solution that is designed to support interoperability and seamless roaming as a user travels between the Band 14 public-safety network and commercial wireless coverage “worked perfectly” during the papal visit.

Scalera said that all sites in the JerseyNet system were completed by the Sept. 30 deadline mandated by law as part of the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) that funded the public-safety LTE system. Now that the papal visit is complete, JerseyNet officials will focus on testing and optimizing the network, with the hope of being able to begin running some applications on the system within a month, Scalera said.

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