

CASE STUDY

Choctaw Nation Installs State-of-the-Art Security Systems at Stringtown, McAlester and Grant, Oklahoma Properties

The Choctaw Nation, which owns a large number of gaming casinos in Southeastern Oklahoma, recently completed a substantial security system installation at its Stringtown, McAlester and Grant casinos. Over 1,000 cameras and 120 access readers were installed at the three casinos making this one of the largest video surveillance projects in Oklahoma. This was part of a larger security system installation that included a storage solution, networking software and new IP cameras.

The Choctaw Nation is the third largest Indian nation in the U.S. and is comprised of over 175,000 Choctaws with their tribal complex located in Durant, Oklahoma. The Choctaw are a sovereign nation that maintains a special relationship with the U.S. and Oklahoma. The casinos provide jobs, healthcare, educational programs, and community assistance to its tribal members.

The Choctaw casinos began to upgrade its overall security in 2006, moving from analog cameras, direct link monitors and manual video tape recording to the latest in high-resolution cameras, IP video networks and automated storage. This allowed the casinos to better protect their assets, customers and employees from theft, fraud and unfounded insurance claims.

The Choctaw Nation formed an internal committee to decide on a reliable and cost-effective storage, software and video surveillance solution. The goal was to provide the latest in high definition megapixel cameras and the most advanced storage technologies to reduce the green footprint of the systems.

The committee also wanted an open platform system that would allow for easy system integration and low-cost future expansion. Another requirement was that the cameras meet Tribal Internal Control Standards of 20 fps in money areas.



Choctaw Casino Resort in Grant, Oklahoma.



Route 69 Casino in Stringtown, Oklahoma.

Later the committee elected to implement an even higher rate of 30 fps.

ConnectionsIT was awarded the bid to handle the overall coordination and system installation at the Stringtown, McAlester and Grant casinos. ConnectionsIT has a long history of working with Native American casinos such as the Comanche, Muscogee Creek, Choctaw, Paiute, and several Pomo Bands.

The Choctaw Nation selected Axis PTZ and fixed network cameras as well as Genetec's fully integrated IP video management and access control solutions, Omnicast and Synergis. In addition, IQinvision was selected to provide IP cameras at select locations within the casinos and Pivot3 was chosen to handle the storage solution.

The Axis network cameras were chosen because they react quickly to extreme variations in light level typically found in a casino environment without compromising image quality. Since Axis network cameras support highly efficient MJPEG and MPEG4 compression, the casinos can afford to maintain 14 days of archival footage. And with their support for Power-over-Ethernet, the casinos save infrastructure and installation costs by using a single cable to power the network cameras, send control commands and transmit the video and audio over the network instead of running a coax bundle all the way to a head end.

"We knew this was going to be a very challenging project and would require a lot of communications and cooperation among the various product vendors and integrators," said Paula Penz, Gaming Commissioner for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. "We were interested in securing the best technology possible to accomplish our

goals, and to allow for future growth and expansion.”

“We had worked with many of the vendors and integrators previously, so we were familiar with their product and solution capabilities,” said Jason Pritchard, integrations manager with Onsite Solutions for Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. “This is an important project and we felt we had secured the very best in the industry to handle our needs.”

Grant is the largest of the three casinos with some 68,235 sq. ft. of gaming space. Stringtown has over 14,000 sq. ft. and McAlester has some 30,500 sq. ft. of gaming facility. The Grant Casino recently opened a new hotel resort area that is expected to double casino traffic by 2010. The Choctaw security surveillance project included the installation of some 150 IP cameras at Stringtown, 270 IP cameras at McAlester, and 670 IP cameras in the Grant Casino.

The Choctaw security upgrade illustrates the current industry trend for integrated IP video and access control. The Choctaw Casinos are leveraging both Genetec’s Omnicast and Synergis, for their IP video and access control needs, in a unified security interface.

“We are very excited over our recent IP camera conversion and we can already see the results in the resolution of the camera video and in the ease of use of the entire video surveillance system,” said Jason Pritchard. “Video surveillance and the proper storage of that video is an important part of our daily operation. It provides a permanent record of our casino activities and protects all of us from theft, fraud and unforeseen events and emergencies.”

“Axis network cameras provide the backbone for the IP camera network in the casinos,” said Fredrik Nilsson, general manager of Axis Communications, Inc. “Operating at 30 frames per second in MJPEG and MPEG4, they are easy to maintain and provide excellent surveillance coverage. We have a long history of working with the Choctaw Nation and we are excited to be part of any future planned expansion.”

In addition, IQinVision megapixel cameras were specified to protect the gaming floor areas for the Choctaw Nation Casinos in Stringtown, McAlester and Grant. The Choctaw use a mix of IQinVision cameras including the IQeye 711, Alliance Dome, and Sentinel to best meet the specific needs of each surveillance location.

“Initially, Choctaw management thought their video surveillance would be an effective tool to combat cheating and related threats,” said Paul Bodell, IQinVision’s Chief Marketing Officer. “They have now seen that the IQeye’s forensic-level image detail has been just as effective in controlling inside employee misdeeds, such as dealers pocketing chips and dealer-player collusion. Employee theft seriously impacts the bottom line, and soon after system



Choctaw Casino Resort in McAlester, Oklahoma.

deployment casino security directors have been able to go back to their governing councils to show measurable return on investment from their video surveillance system.”

Another major challenge was to create a seamless integration between the performance of the camera network and the increased amount of storage needed for all monitored and recorded information. By deploying virtual network video recorders (NVRs) on the Pivot3 Serverless Computing platform in place of physical servers, the Choctaw casinos stripped out approximately 90 Dell servers from the project. In addition to the green benefits of nearly 70 kilowatts saved, the casino saved more than \$300,000 in lower acquisition costs, lower surveillance data center build-out costs, and reduced power and cooling.

“With serverless computing, the Choctaw casinos have access to a combined storage and server platform with significant green benefits and high scalability for future growth. This open-system solution allows them to preserve existing investments while significantly reducing their support and maintenance costs,” said Lee Caswell, Co-founder and CMO at Pivot3.

“The Choctaw project presented some unique challenges in the way of the migration to IP cameras, seamless security system integration, and large amounts of storage at all three different casinos. These items, along with operating on a very tight deadline, made this a very interesting and exciting project,” said Brody Carlson, President of ConnectionsIT.

Brody added that the various security suppliers and vendors that participated in creating the surveillance and access control solution for the Choctaw casinos are the best in the business and worked together to deliver an open security solution that handled the needs of today and allows for future casino growth and expansion. ♣

For more information about Choctaw Casinos, visit www.choctawcasinos.com. For more information about ConnectionsIT, visit www.connectionsit.com

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