



Shots Fired ... Again

PART 2 OF CAMPBELL PD CASE STUDY

A peaceful neighborhood at risk

Campbell Police Captain Joe Cefalu had reason to be troubled. Shots were reported once again near a local family park, smack in the heart of Silicon Valley. Apparently, the shooters using a nearby dumpster for target practice had returned. And that presented a high level of danger.

“We had armed shooters coming in, and they could have killed somebody,” he said. “In addition, shooting behind the dumpster like that, all they had to do is miss or ricochet, and they could kill somebody with the freeway being right there. So it is an extremely dangerous situation.”

Captain Cefalu knew the perils involved in tracking and apprehending the felons in this quiet neighborhood of elderly retirees and young children. “There’s only one way into or out of the park. The suspects were armed and dangerous. From the casings left behind, we were able to link one of the guns used to an attempted murder — a drive-by shooting in a nearby city.” Plus, with evidence of a second gun involved, he suspected he had at least two dangerous people to apprehend.

Industry:
Law Enforcement

Location:
Campbell, California

Application:
Real-time video surveillance
and license-plate tracking

Products:
V5 License Plate Reader, V5
Portable Security Unit

(Read more in [Part 1 of this Case Study](#))

After deploying the portable technology the shooters seemed to have disappeared. Thankful, the captain had the V5 PSU-GSL units removed. However, after 10 weeks of peace he received calls from residents. Shots fired.

The two dangerous felons had returned to their favorite shooting grounds last night.

Cefalu had strongly suspected that sooner or later, the shooters would reappear. This time, he was grimly determined that they would not be terrorizing his town again. His patient strategy was about to pay dividends.

Now, he had a second chance to close the law enforcement net around them. He called V5 Systems' team of retired police officers and decided to add portable V5 License Plate Readers (V5 LPR) to his arsenal. Since there was only one entry point into the park, this would help their investigation once the suspects came back. The units were up within 6 days from the time he reached out.

Challenge: Move Fast and Minimize Risk – Simultaneously

Cefalu had few options. Traditional protocols for a stakeout had their own set of all-too familiar problems – and expensive solutions. The City of Campbell's budget was already stretched thin.

"Safely, we would need four officers sitting out there at any one time," Captain Cefalu described. "And then it's just a game, waiting to see whether the suspect shows. Countless hours in surveillance. Overtime costs alone are extreme. It's a shot in the dark to have officers there."

Yet he worried about more than just the confrontation alone. He feared an unpredictable aftermath of the all-too familiar resistance which accompanies an arrest.

"When you have officers on standby in tactical gear to confront armed guys, odds of getting into a gunfight are very high. Plus, once you put someone in a car, you don't know what the outcome might be, no matter who is on the road ... who they might crash into." He added, "That's a huge, huge risk."

Solution: Rapid, Calculated Action When and Where It Counts

"We knew the shooters would be coming back. But shooting at a dumpster allowed us to handle these guys differently than we would need to handle a gang shooting at people – that kind of immediate situation might outweigh the protection of an officer," Captain Cefalu said.

The Campbell PD worked quickly. They deployed the lightweight portable technology in under 30 minutes per unit, positioned to strategically capture evidence surrounding the dumpster. Solar-powered, these units didn't require a fixed-power source, giving them ultimate flexibility. Soon, the platform's real-time video monitoring and communications gave them virtual "eyes" without putting any officers in harm's way.

Cefalu knew the V5 Portable Security Units would provide detailed information about the perpetrators and their specific behavior. This allowed him to create a safer plan because the PD could arrest the suspects on their terms instead of in the heat of the moment, which could lead to a violent confrontation.

"Controlling the environment is the best tactic to use to keep everyone safe, even the suspects."

— Captain Joe Cefalu
Campbell Police
Department

“Controlling the environment is the best tactic to use to keep everyone safe, even the suspects,” said the veteran captain.

With time and technology on their side, they could afford to watch and wait. The V5 PSUs captured the shooters driving into the neighborhood over multiple nights and recorded them shooting at the dumpster.

Bingo! The V5 License Plate Reader took a high-resolution picture of the driver’s face. Hoping the felons would return one more night, the detectives repositioned the technology to attempt to take the passenger’s picture. However, with the angle of the windshield, it was difficult to get a clear photo.

“We got such a great photo of the driver we were able to figure it out,” Captain Cefalu said.

“Investigatively, that’s what you need to crack the case. Between the V5 PSU posted at the shooting site and the V5 LPR, we got pictures of them pulling in and pulling out, and a picture of the guy driving, dead to rights.”

But it was more than just pictures. By capturing the license plate number, his team was able to map out the best way to make an arrest. Using old-fashioned police work, Campbell detectives were able to:

- Locate the suspect’s car and recover that vehicle, which led to a search warrant at a residence associated with one of the suspects.
- In cooperation with San Jose Police Department’s MERGE Unit (Mobile Emergency Response Group and Equipment), search the house and find the 9mm gun used in the Campbell shootings.
- Confirm that gun was also tied to multiple shootings in nearby Sunnyvale, and match the partial license plate number and vehicle description to the Sunnyvale Police Department records for a similar shooting spree.

“Our V5 LPR was able to connect it all, for sure,” the captain affirmed. “The V5 LPR broke the case open for us. Within two weeks we tracked this guy down.”

One Capture Led to Another

“We then developed information that led us to the second suspect,” Captain Cefalu recounted. His team was able to identify the passenger, who lived just down the street from the shootings.

Following standard protocol, the Campbell officers went to the passenger’s residence, and he fled the scene. A car chased ensued, and just as the veteran captain feared, he crashed into another vehicle. Bleeding and concealing his gun, the suspect was able to get a Good Samaritan to drive him away from the scene just as officers pulled up to the crash site.

A master of understatement, the veteran captain drily described it as a “very exciting day.” However, with the key surveillance data now in hand, they obtained a warrant for the passenger’s arrest and searched his residence, where they discovered evidence tying him to the second gun used in some of the incidents.

“He decided to turn himself in a few days later, confessed and wrapped up the whole case for us,” Captain Cefalu said. “After only a couple of weeks, now the case is closed.”

Both suspects were booked on multiple felonies spanning two cities – felon in possession of firearm, reckless discharge of a firearm, and a felon in possession of ammunition.

Results: Protecting a Community, Faster than Ever

Slam! The jail doors close behind two dangerous felons, finally off the street

Meeting the safety challenge of staying in control of the environment at all times was key, and that's where the V5 Systems platform capturing extremely accurate data 24/7 made the genuine difference.

"Better to get them in their home while they're asleep. I can control them sleeping in their house," the captain explained. "Then the odds of an officer being shot are low. We surround and call out. That's the safest scenario."

The speed and ease with which they used each element of the deployed V5 components allowed them to customize a solution for this particular situation at each specific time.

- The V5 PSU provides high-definition, real-time video that can be easily accessed on any smart device.
- The V5 LPR has onboard computing with built-in software that captures the license plate on any still or moving vehicle, comparing or adding it to a pre-defined list and sending real-time alerts to designated officers.
- In this case, the quality of the V5 LPR digital video footage even allowed undisputed identification of the driver through DMV photos.

And it wasn't just surveillance that can make a difference.

"If the V5 Acoustic Gunshot Sensor had been up there, too, we would have gotten instant notification of shots fired," he added. "For this case it wasn't as necessary, but having the option for that solution up there the whole time was wonderful."

Without the advanced self-powered platform offered as part of the V5 Systems solution, available to the city on an affordable short-term rental, Captain Cefalu admitted his options are limited – and expensive. "I don't have resources to have people out there 24/7."

Cefalu has always been an outside-of-the-box thinker, however. He helped his department pioneer bodycam adoption, and he is always on the lookout for technology that will help his officers keep the community safe. For Campbell, Cefalu and his team do the utmost to maintain the family-friendly feel with the latest, cutting-edge technology; it's a juxtaposition he is happy for.

He added, "V5 LPRs are priceless, I love them."

That kind of dedication to remove guns from the street so that they could never be used for crimes again? That's priceless, too.

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Summary

Organization:

The Campbell Police Department serves a small, peaceful community of 42,000 in the heart of Silicon Valley. Though it has a history of embracing new technology, the department has a slim budget and limited resources for new expenditures.

Challenge:

Swiftly responding to repeated night shooting incidents by suspected felons returning to their favorite spot, without endangering the citizens or officers and without assigning unnecessary and expensive overtime.

Solution:

Immediate re-deployment of innovative self-powered, portable units. The V5 Portable Security Unit with License Plate Reader (V5 PSU-LPR), enabled quick and easy security technology that captured incriminating information as the case unfolded. Securing this technology on a short-term rental allowed Campbell PD to add a layer of safety for their officers rapidly and cost-effectively.

Results:

Within two weeks, two felons were caught on the V5 PSU-LPR with perfect evidentiary surveillance detail to make the detectives' case in court. The suspect's car was identified and tracked via its license plate, leading to the arrest of both dangerous suspects, and closing not only this case in Campbell but a cold case in a neighboring town.

Summary Timeline:

- First shooting in summer 2017
- Four to five more shootings between July 2017 and January 2018
- Bullet casings match open felony case
- First deployment of V5 PSU and V5 GSL in March 2018
- Units in place for 4 weeks, no shooting activity, so taken down and moved elsewhere
- Shooting begins again in May 2018
- Redeploy V5 PSU in late May 2018, now with V5 LPR
- Within 10 days shooters return, video captures movements
- V5 LPR video perfectly captures both license plate and driver's face
- Reposition portable technology
- Obtain address from DMV, obtain warrant for driver, match to another case
- Track driver down and surround him, asleep at home
- Driver safely surrenders himself and gun used in previous shootings
- Go to passenger's house, who flees, causes accident, eludes immediate capture
- Search warrant leads to evidence of second gun
- Passenger turns himself in within a few days
- Within two weeks after capturing video evidence, both felons in custody
- Case is closed

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