CASE STUDY

Australian Customs and Border Protection Service

Photo: Customs and Border Protection

"...our ability to collect data is enormously dependent on reliable tags that can withstand the rigors of daily use in extreme conditions. That's why we rely on HID. Their tags perform."

Paul Bennett
Managing Director
Relegen

Solutions from HID Global and Relegen deliver real-time armory tracking capabilities for the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service

The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service is responsible for the protection of the Australian community, while supporting legitimate trade and travel.

At a time of unprecedented threat levels – illicit drug trafficking, terrorism, people smuggling – Customs and Border Protection manages the security and integrity of Australia's borders, working closely with other government and international agencies, to detect and deter unlawful movement of goods and people across the border.

Concurrently, they are responsible for protecting Australian economic interests during an era of rapid growth in international commerce and travel. By enforcing trade regulations and collecting tariffs, Customs and Border Protection helps Australia compete in a global economy.

"Customs and Border Protection plays a vital role in national security, derived from its broader responsibilities at the border and the extensive powers, expertise and technology it brings to bear," said Michael Carmody, Chief Executive Officer, of Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. "Modernization of customs organizations will remain imperative, with the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service motivated by continuing pressure for more sophisticated and integrated processes."

Challenges

Border protection responsibility lies in the capable hands of over 5500 Customs and Border Protection employees in over 50 locations around Australia and overseas, and is managed from the Central Office in Canberra.

The Customs and Border Protection Strategic Outlook (2007) projects that by 2015, these employees will assume responsibility for the annual oversight and management of:

- 34.1 million international passengers
- 3.7 million import sea containers
- 2.7 million export sea containers
- 17.5 million air cargo consignments
- 220 million postal articles
- 22,865 arriving ships

Protecting the Australian community demands sophisticated intelligence, targeting high-risk aircraft, vessels, cargo, postal items and travellers. It

Photo: Customs and Border Protection

also requires sophisticated tools, including thousands of items of weaponry, protective gear, specialized equipment and vehicles. Furthermore, effective deployment and management of these tools is vital to assure the safety and security of Customs and Border Protection's officers, and the 22.6 million Australian citizens they serve and protect.

Prior to 2011, Customs and Border Protection maintained a system of separate spreadsheets to track and manage this considerable arsenal. More importantly, the view from Central Office in Canberra lacked immediacy. Lags in reporting times could lead to delays in repairing or replacing critical equipment, or in identifying a missing or stolen weapon.

What Customs and Border Protection sought was a fast and easy way to correlate information about the location and status of arms and bulletproof vests with the officers to which they had been assigned. As staff across different locations kept their own spreadsheets, Customs and Border Protection needed a solution that could easily deliver accurate and up to date views to Central Office.

Solution

Under Michael Carmody's imperative for more efficient, integrated processes, the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service issued a global tender for an asset tracking system. They discovered a partnership between Relegen and HID Global best fit their needs.

Relegen specialises in the development and delivery of asset intelligence solutions. The Australian Defence Force [ADF] has employed Relegen's technology – assetDNA™ – to manage critical assets for over a decade. The similarities between the ADF's and Customs and Border Protection's asset management needs, combined with the flexibility of the assetDNA solution, made Relegen the clear choice around which to build Customs and Border Protection's new system.

The Relegen solution is enhanced by their assetDNA software technology, which enables users to assign a globally unique identity to each asset. In this case, Customs and Border Protection have opted to use the assets' serial number. This identifier is then carried by Relegen's proprietary assetDNA tagging solution. A third layer of security is added through DataTraceDNA®, a covert security technology from DataDot Technology Ltd. This means that even in the event that the assetDNA tag is removed or destroyed, Customs and Border Protection can still identify the asset as one of their own.

"Our ten plus years experience at a mission-critical level with the Australian Defence Force prepared us well to deliver the comprehensive asset tracking solution Customs and Border Protection requires," reports Paul Bennett, Managing Director, Relegen. "The combination of our assetDNA software and multi-layer, intelligent tagging solution enables Customs and Border Protection to track each asset uniquely. Even if a tag is separated from a weapon, Customs and Border Protection can still identify the asset through DataTraceDNA."

The ability of assetDNA to track each asset uniquely, and in real-time, is made possible by radio frequency identification technology from HID Global. A world leader in the development and production of innovative identification tags and readers, HID provides innovative asset tags and technical support vital to the Customs and Border Protection solution.

Before HID could recommend tagging solutions, a thorough assessment of each asset was required: How is the asset used, by whom is it used, and under what conditions? For Customs and Border Protection, each tag must withstand the rigors of daily use under potentially hazardous conditions. HID manufactures asset tags that adhere and function under extreme conditions, resisting impact and vibration, and exposure to saltwater and chemicals.

HID IN Tag transponders are proven effective for tagging ballistic vests and protective garments.

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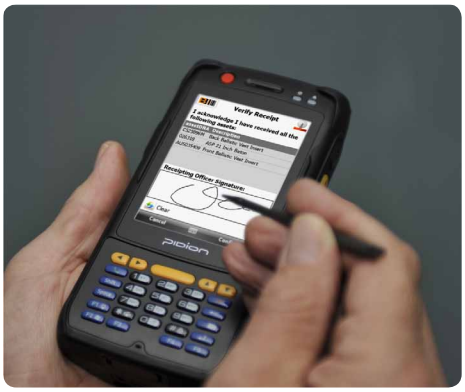

According to Relegen's MD, Paul Bennett, "assetDNA is a powerful asset intelligence system. However, our ability to collect data is enormously dependent on reliable tags that can withstand the rigors of daily use in extreme conditions. That's why we rely on HID. Their tags perform."

"All Customs and Border Protection assets were analysed in terms of materials of construction and conditions of use," says Tony Hilder, Sales Director, Industry and Logistics for Asia Pacific HID Global. "Then, we were able to match a HID tag to deliver the necessary level of reliable performance over the life of each asset."

HID was able to provide Customs and Border Protection with a customized compilation of RFID tagging solutions that will:

- **Withstand impact and vibration** – on an assault rifle, or in a physical confrontation
- **Resist exposure to harmful elements** – including saltwater, or chemical agents
- **Install covertly and inconspicuously** – to prevent detection or tampering
- **Maintain data integrity and performance** – assuring systemic veracity

The HID Logi Tag® Family is being applied where mechanical, chemical and temperature resistance is imperative, with the HID IN Tag Family providing ruggedized tag solutions for severe environs.

Benefits

Relegen and HID are working together to help implement the sophisticated asset tracking system across all Customs and Border Protection locations. This includes the tagging of each of the armaments and critical assets in each agency, as well as training for all Customs and Border Protection personnel.

The result will be a comprehensive system that gives Customs and Border Protection a real-time view of all assets deployed and in inventory, empowering the Central Office to make critical decisions based on the latest information at-hand. It will also mean greater safety and security for Customs and Border Protection officers. Officers can perform their duties, confident they have been issued the correct equipment, and assured that it is in proper working order. In addition, the new system further minimizes the risk that weapons may be stolen or remanufactured.

The new system will also enable optimization of asset use. Customs and Border Protection can now identify each asset's progress through its lifecycle, and identify specific assets in need of immediate repair or replacement.

Customs and Border Protection will recognize significant productivity enhancements in staff time spent mustering their formidable arsenal.

Going forward, the Customs and Border Protection asset-tracking system provides a model for any organization managing operation-critical assets, in routine or emergency response situations.

Worldwide, police forces, fire departments, emergency medical teams, hospitals, and other organizations are employing solutions from Relegen and HID Global to respond quickly and comprehensively in emergencies, provide better safety for their employees, and drive the performance of their mission-critical assets more effectively.

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