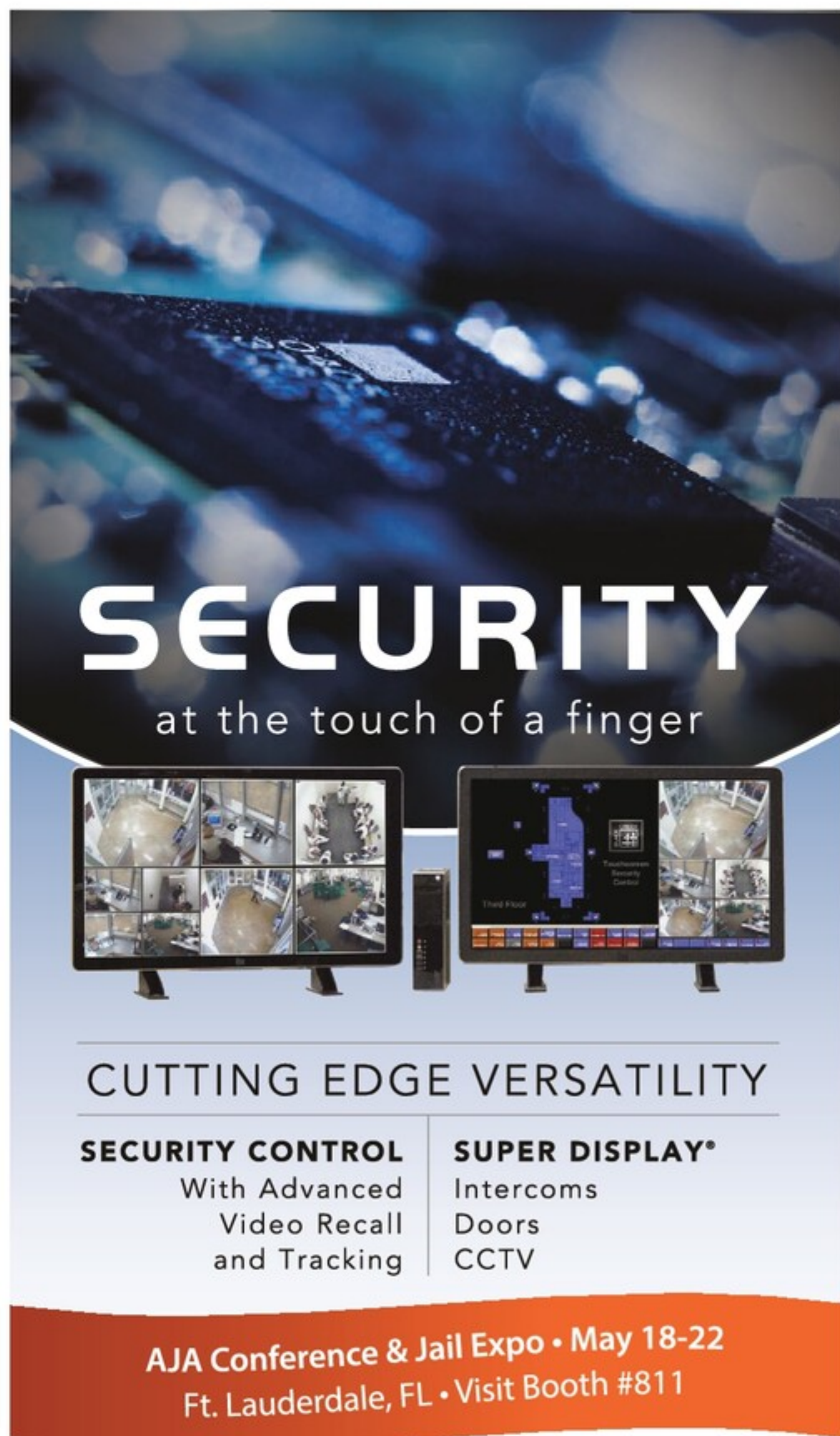


# Techie Trio

## 2024 SEC Forum Taps Into Three Expert Minds

By Zach Chouteau

For this year's roundtable on expert security electronic insights and opinions, CN turned to Barry Johnson, President and CEO, STVS; Andrew Lewis, Director of Product at HomeWAV; and Seth Mercer, CSSI, CAT, a Sales Engineer with Black Creek Integrated Systems.



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*What do you think is the key to success with Security Electronics Contracting within the justice and corrections industry in 2024?*

**Johnson:** The key to success is understanding not just what the customer needs and is asking for but giving them a roadmap to how the different technologies integrate to provide a complete system. Corrections and rehabilitation facilities deal with multiple challenges – from contraband to liability – so being able to discuss multiple technologies and systems to create a comprehensive security program is essential for success.

**Lewis:** There are a number of areas that help drive success with Security Electronics in the corrections industry. The first of these is support. We provide a service that impacts facility staff, inmates, and their friends and family, and to be successful in this industry long term you must provide high quality support to all of these groups. The next key is training. Facility staff need to be trained on security solutions so when an issue arises, they have the knowledge and tools to mitigate any potential threat. The third area is access control. As a staple in any highly secure environment, user account access must be constantly reassessed, monitored, and follow the principle of least privilege. The next is product reliability. Products that enter this industry should be specifically designed for the corrections space. The hardware and software must be secure, and work at all times without staff intervention. As a core principle for any technology company, the next area is constant adaptation to new technologies. Deploying new technologies like automation with IoT and AI can help all of us stay ahead and continue building more secure product. The last key can be overlooked but is still critical to success. Staying current with industry regulations and compliance measure is essential to Security Electronics within the justice and corrections industry.

**Mercer:** Building relationships. Whether it's building trust with the customer during the initial sales period or maintaining proactive communication and being responsive during the support stage, building and maintaining those relationships is truly what enables your company to build a reputation within the industry and carry that success into the future.

*How do you think the Security Electronics needs of correctional facilities have changed the most over the past decade and how has your firm responded to this shift?*

**Johnson:** Correctional facilities have taken steps to leverage technology to increase security and stop contraband from entering. This includes body scanners and X-ray systems as two of the most visible investments, however, they are just pieces of the puzzle. Over the past decade many facilities – of all sizes and locations – understand that while they may have a body scanner, they need other complimentary technologies to meet their security needs and growth projections. A body scanner is an important component, but what about scanning parcels and mail? Substance recovery? STVS has responded to this by evolving our business into a true technology and solutions warehouse for the industry – integrating technologies from different manufacturers to customize systems that achieve security and operational goals. Also, we are a company founded and operated by former corrections officials. That means when you call STVS, you speak to someone who has been in your shoes and understands the challenges and opportunities your facility faces.

**Lewis:** Over the past decade, the Security Electronics needs of correctional facilities have undergone significant change. One of the most notable shifts has been the increased focus on integrating advanced technologies to enhance security measures. Facilities now require more sophisticated systems that can effectively monitor and control access, detect unauthorized activities, and provide real-time alerts. Additionally, there has been



Johnson

Photo Credit: STVS



Lewis

Photo Credit: STVS



Mercer

Photo Credit: Black Creek ISC

“One of the most notable shifts has been the increased focus on integrating advanced technologies to enhance security measures.”

—Andrew Lewis,  
HomeWAV


share with the industry?

**Johnson:** One major evolution we are seeing is the focus on security and screening at the “front on the house” - employees, visitors, and material deliveries. Several of our recent installations include our new ES3 Millimeter-Wave Body Inspection System. Without emitting any ionizing radiation, ES3 completes

a whole-body scan in less than two seconds and accurately detects metallic/ non-metallic weapons, IEDs, liquids and narcotics concealed under clothing. With regulations varying by state and sometimes even county and city, technologies like Millimeter Wave are playing a growing role in security programs.

**Lewis:** HomeWAV has recently made

significant investments in developing new products tailored specifically for correctional facilities. These projects aim to improve the quality of life for correctional staff and provide a more secure and reliable platform for inmates, reducing the need for constant manual monitoring. One of our key initiatives over the last few years has been the deployment



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a growing emphasis on cybersecurity, as correctional facilities are increasingly targeted by cyber threats. Facilities now demand security electronics that not only provide physical security but also protect against digital threats. To respond to these changes, our firm has continually innovated and upgraded our security electronics offerings. We have integrated advanced technologies into our products to enhance their capabilities. Our systems now offer advanced analytics for threat detection, improved access control features, and robust cybersecurity measures. Furthermore, we have focused on providing customizable solutions that can be tailored to meet the specific needs of each correctional facility. This includes offering flexible deployment options, scalable solutions, and comprehensive support services. Overall, HomeWAV has responded to the changing Security Electronics needs of correctional facilities by prioritizing innovation, customization, and cybersecurity to provide cutting-edge solutions that meet the evolving security challenges faced by correctional facilities.

**Mercer:** Funding and staffing constraints have forced agencies across the country to find new ways to do more with less. As Security Electronics Contractors this translates to us finding new ways to enhance the capabilities of the systems that we provide. We accomplish this by providing solutions that incorporate new and emerging technologies that allow our customers to become more efficient and increases their capabilities.

*Do you have any recent company projects or other news/insights you'd like to*

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of artificial intelligence (AI) to address various needs within the corrections space. The approach we took with it has received positive feedback from our facility partners, highlighting the improvements in usability and security for our users, and paving the way for continued development. Additionally, we have developed and deployed new secure communication methods that have received positive feedback. These methods enhance facility security while still facilitating effective

communication between inmates and their families. We are proud and grateful to work with partners that provide direct feedback and help us continue to improve our products. This feedback motivates us to continue our commitment to innovation and excellence in serving the correctional industry. As we look to the future, HomeWAV remains dedicated to providing cutting-edge solutions that prioritize security, improve communication, and ultimately, contribute to the well-being of

both inmates and correctional staff.

**Mercer:** Black Creek has released the newest generation of our Real-time Locating System and Detainee Well-being Monitoring System. Black Creek has maintained its reputation of being an industry leader by continuing to find new and innovative ways to incorporate cutting-edge technologies into our products. We feel that the incorporation of real-time tracking and monitoring will change the way we run our correctional facilities, and

**“Make sure to ask your vendor about the different technologies they have and their experience integrating in a corrections/rehabilitation setting.”**

—Barry Johnson, STVS

allow agencies to operate in new ways that they have never thought possible.

*Is there a main piece of guidance you would give to a facility about to embark on an upgrade or overhaul of their Security Electronics?*

**Johnson:** Two main pieces of guidance:

Make sure to ask your vendor about the different technologies they have and their experience integrating in a corrections/rehabilitation setting. If anyone is trying to sell you a “silver bullet” that will fix all your problems... they are lying. Ask for specific examples.

Focus on service: Does my purchase include a warranty? Training? Installation? Does your vendor employ factory certified technicians or outsource to a third party? Ask the right questions and ensure you are working with someone who has long-term service programs that give you cost and operational certainty.

**Lewis:** For a facility about to make changes to their Security Electronics, consider the following guidance. Prioritize security and reliability over all else. While change can be challenging, even more-so in the corrections space, it is essential to think about these first. An incident can have

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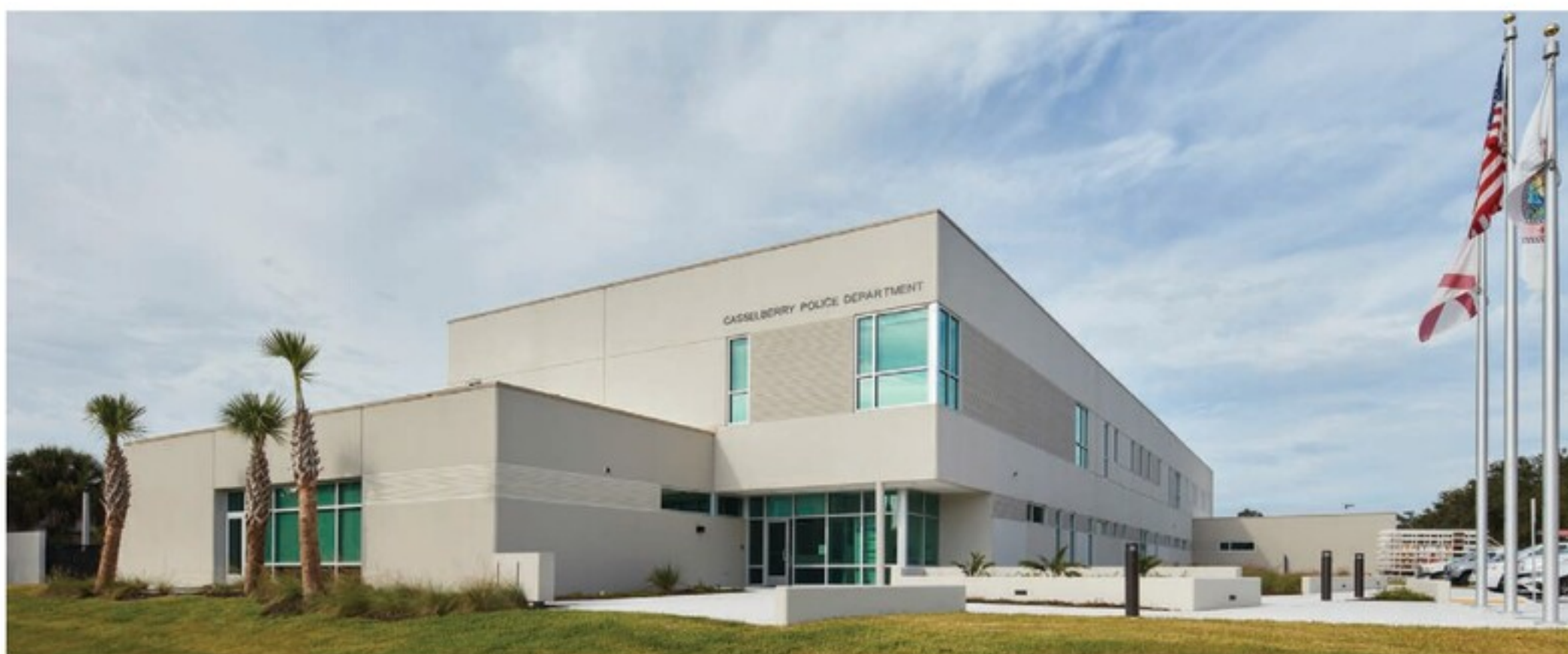
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significant consequences, impacting both the facility and their staff, the inmates, and their loved ones. By considering this first, facilities can protect themselves, minimize the potential risks of a less secure solution, and enhance overall safety for all included parties. To continue with that same thought, facilities should avoid the costs of cheaper products. Cost must always be a consideration when it comes to Security Electronics, opting for something cheaper can end up being more expensive in the long run. Invest in high-quality solutions to significantly reduce the risk of incidents and the large costs to remediate them. The last piece of guidance is to never stop evaluating these products. Regularly assess these solutions, from who has access to it, to the usability, and if this security solution is still working for your changing needs and environment.

**Mercer:** Do your due diligence. There are more and more Security Electronics Contractors in the market, with a wide variety of features and capabilities for their systems. Identify your immediate and future needs as an agency and acquire the system that gives you the ability to accomplish those goals.

*What do you think is the greatest challenge on the near horizon for the SEC industry and how does your firm intend to navigate or prepare for it?*

**Johnson:** Anytime an industry grows or evolves, there are challenges. Different vendors will have varying opinions on how to enhance security and what technologies are best to accomplish this. That is why it is important for vendors to offer clear, concise information on technology, service, and costs that are based on facts and experience. Unscrupulous vendors who do not adhere to this give the entire industry a black eye. That is why at STVS, we are committed to transparency – the price you see includes a warranty, installation, and training. No hidden expenses or fees.

**Lewis:** As we look ahead, one of the greatest challenges for the Security Electronics Contracting (SEC) industry is keeping pace with rapidly evolving technology while ensuring compliance with regulations and security best practices. At HomeWAV, we tackle this challenge by constantly reviewing and monitoring the latest change in the security space. This ensures that our solutions remain compliant and up to date with the most current security standards. Additionally, we utilize external security services and systems to provide an unbiased evaluation of our entire system. This helps us identify any potential vulnerabilities and proactively address them. HomeWAV also has invested in and built a multi-layered security system to minimize risks and enhance the overall security of our products. This approach allows us to navigate the challenges of the SEC industry and continue providing secure and reliable solutions to our clients.

**Mercer:** As many new players are getting into the Security Electronics

game, it's not enough to simply provide the same old solutions that are limited in their capabilities. We need to continue to innovate and be creative in how we apply emerging technologies into our products that enhance safety and security, while also remaining cost effective for our customers. Black Creek has always held a forward-

looking vision when it comes to rethinking security in a correctional setting. As we continue to invest in newer technologies, such as real-time tracking and monitoring, I see no indication that we intend to slow down when it comes to providing the most technologically advanced security systems available on the market.

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