CASE STUDY:

OREGON POLICE DEPARTMENT SELECTS VERITONE REDACT

Comprehensive evaluation demonstrated that Veritone's evidence redaction solution excels compared to other solutions on the market saving time and resources while enabling public transparency

Police agencies across the United States are being clamped in a vise—squeezed between legislative and public demand for greater transparency on one side, and concerns about privacy protection on the other side.

A series of new state laws recently passed are requiring police departments to release video footage of critical incidents to the public within a short time frame—sometimes as quickly as 45 days. In parallel, the country is experiencing growing uproar over unnecessary use of force by some police officers, intensifying public outcry for greater police transparency.

However, before the police can release such video, the content must be redacted to remove any private data—such as personally identifiable information (PII). Conventional approaches to redaction are labor- and time-intensive, placing overwhelming burdens on resource-constrained police departments.

This was the challenge faced by the Oregon Police Department in the City of Oregon, Ohio, as it endeavored to get ahead of demand for improved disclosure, while still accounting for legitimate concerns about privacy, all while minimizing labor, time and costs.

THE CHALLENGE

Located in a Toledo suburb, the Oregon Police Department has jurisdiction over a community populated by more than 20,000 citizens.

Under the command of Chief Michael J. Navarre, the department is taking a progressive and proactive approach to public and government demands for transparency. The department was among the first in the region to adopt body-worn cameras. Amid increasing discussions over whether body-worn camera videos should be regarded as public records, Chief Navarre chose to get ahead of the issue and adopt its own policy for release of video content.

However, the department quickly realized it had no solution to the challenge of video redaction other than manual redaction which would require valuable resources to literally spend hundreds of hours viewing video footage. In addition, the agency did not possess any software capable of editing video in this fashion.

THE SOLUTION

With the challenge defined, Sergeant Jason Druckenmiller—who is in charge of the department's digital evidence—went to work identifying a software solution capable of handling the organization's redaction needs. Druckenmiller chose to conduct a competitive bake off, testing and evaluating three distinct solutions: COBAN's Command Redact, WatchGuard's REDACTIVE and Veritone's Redact. The Sergeant viewed demonstrations of COBAN and WatchGuard's platform and found they used the same underlying engine and would provide a substantially similar experience. As a result, he chose to obtain a trial license of REDACTIVE in order to compare it to Veritone Redact.

To evaluate the two alternatives, Druckenmiller used both solutions to perform the same task: redacting a 10-minute body cam video depicting a traffic stop. The main parameter of the evaluation was the actual time it took to complete the redaction.

Using WatchGuard REDACTIVE, Druckenmiller reviewed the video and made changes manually—a process that took 1 hour and 20 minutes. In contrast, the review process in Veritone Redact required only 25 minutes to complete. With its demonstrated capability to cut redaction times by more than two-thirds, Veritone emerged as the clear winner of the competition.

Why the Oregon Police Department Chose Veritone Redact

In addition to accelerating the manual portion of the redaction process, Veritone Redact also distinguished itself from the competition in other regards, including:

Audio transcription— Druckenmiller cited Veritone Redact's audio transcription capabilities as a stand-out feature of the solution. With the audio transcription time correlated to the video evidence, the Sergeant was able to quickly search and locate a section of the traffic-stop video where the driver verbally discloses PII. He then was able to highlight the PII information in the system and redact it.

User defined region tracking (UDR)—With Veritone Redact, users can define objects that include PII and then track the objects forward in the video to redact all images. Sergeant Druckenmiller employed the UDR feature during his evaluation of Veritone Redact, using his mouse to select the part of the video he needed to redact and then playing the video forward to select and delete it. Druckenmiller said the UDR feature allowed him to significantly reduce the time spent redacting the video.

Ease of use—Druckenmiller also utilized Veritone Redact's automated head detection feature and its capability to automatically track manually selected sensitive imagery. Using these features, the Oregon Police Department will be able to tackle massive volumes of video content with incredible speed and efficiency.

Cloud-based SaaS application—Veritone Redact also has the advantage of being a software-as-service (SaaS) platform, a factor that played a key role in Druckenmiller's selection. Operating in the cloud, Redact eliminates the need for his department to purchase equipment or require the assistance of city IT staff. Moreover, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Redact affords Druckenmiller with the flexibility to use the Veritone Redact software application remotely, avoiding potential exposure at the police department.

"When selecting a solution that best fits the police department's needs, the biggest factor was the actual amount of time spent in front of the monitor performing the redaction," Druckenmiller said. "Veritone Redact dramatically reduces this time, making it practical to redact and release large volumes of video content. As demand for the public availability of police video intensifies, Veritone Redact will allow us to expand our release capability, while continuing to protect all types of PII."

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