Real Time Networks

Armory Management for Law Enforcement Agencies and Correctional Facilities
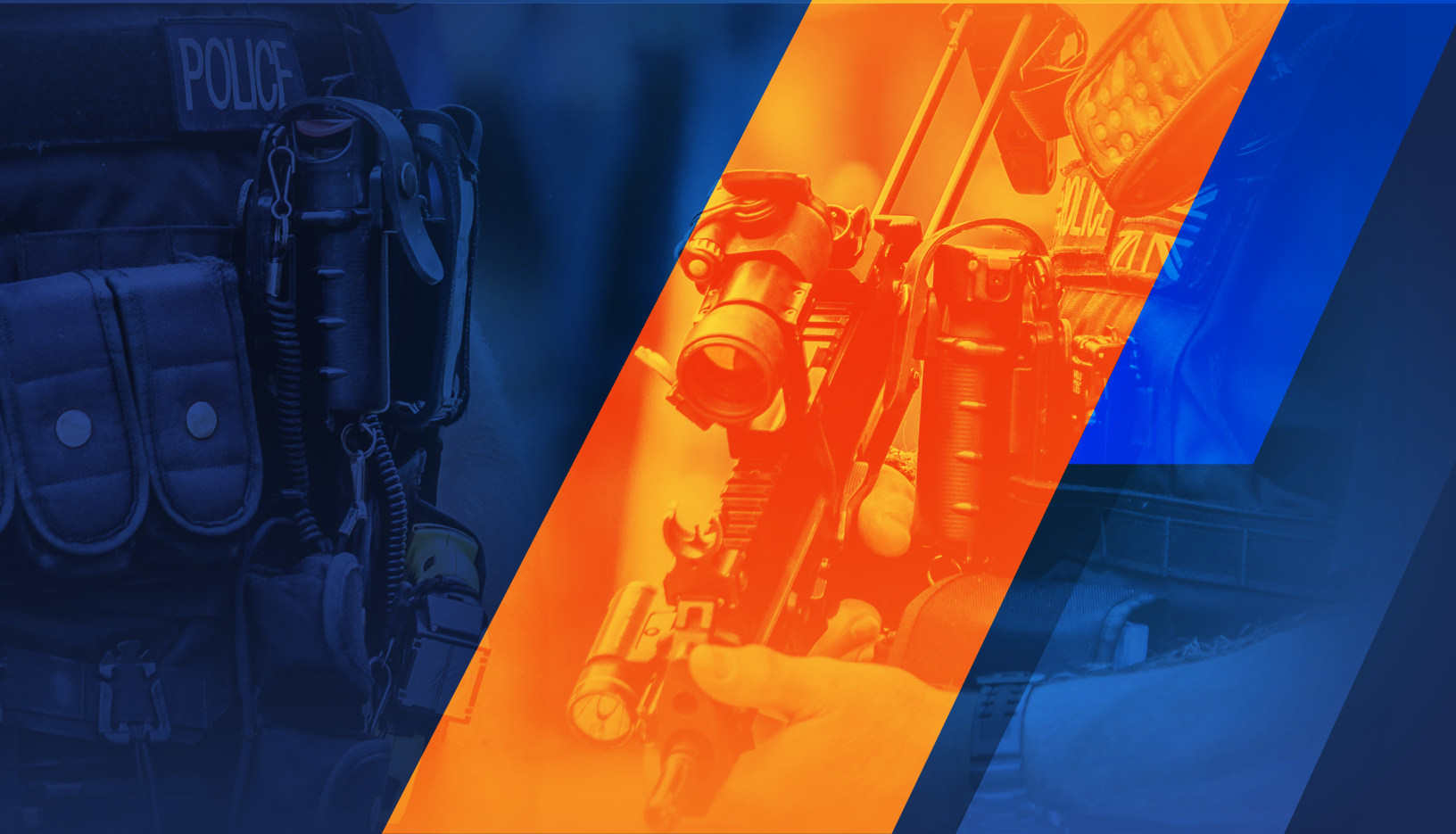
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Executive Summary

Law enforcement agencies (LEAs), correctional facilities, and other institutions within the justice system are under pressure from many directions. They're asked to keep costs down, serve the public as hands-on as possible, and hold their officers and other criminal justice personnel to the highest standards possible.

Law enforcement agencies face many challenges. Among them is equipping police officers, sheriffs, and correctional officers with the necessary tools to effectively manage and audit their armories. For example, who has access to weapons? How effectively are agencies tracking them? How fast can personnel get the equipment they need in emergencies? How about during routine operations?

Good armory management involves keeping costs down without compromising your operational capabilities. How can you do that? Many organizations have turned to smart lockers as potential solutions. This article explores criminal justice agencies' challenges in armory management and highlights how smart armory management systems help overcome them.

The Costs and Challenges of Manual Armory Management

Maintaining an armory at full readiness is expensive. It is even more expensive when you rely on human labor for all administrative work. The direct costs are obvious, but lurking behind those are many indirect costs administrators might have yet to consider.

It is worth laying out what exactly manual armory management costs an organization. We can break costs down into three categories:

1		**2**		**3**
Material Costs	—	**Personnel** Costs	—	**Regulatory** Costs

Material Costs

The larger your armory's inventory of firearms, LTLs, PPE, and other tactical gear, the more manual management is required. For example, inspections and servicing both take time. So too, does managing those service schedules and tracking equipment use.

Since dynamic use tracking is very time-intensive, many organizations try to get around it by servicing their tactical gear on a set schedule. But that approach only makes sense for equipment degrading steadily, which might not be true for tactical gear used only once or twice a year or mobile electronic devices.

If armory equipment and electronics are used more frequently, software, hardware, and other use-related problems will occur more frequently. That is why it is essential to maintain live usage and transaction records so you can customize schedules.

Personnel Costs

While costs from equipment quickly add up, they are the costs related to law enforcement personnel that stack up the most. Consider all the management tasks an armory manager, quartermaster, or other assigned officer must perform. At the most basic level, they might include:

- Logging new weapon inventory
- Updating existing records
- Managing transactions
- Auditing armory storage
- Recovering lost or missing gear
- Ordering replacement tactical gear
- Filing departmental reports
- Filing state and federal compliance reports

And then there are inevitable human errors. Even small ones can generate large downstream problems. For example, suppose an officer deposits their firearm and ammunition after a call but forgets about their radio. It might just be sitting at their desk, in their locker, or on the bench in your tactical van, but that officer and others need to have it available for their next call. And eventually, they will spend valuable work hours hunting for a vital piece of equipment that could have just been automatically and accurately tracked in the first place.

Regulatory Costs

Criminal justice organizations are often mandated to track firearms and tactical gear purchased through Federal grants. In addition, asset tracking on opioid painkillers in first-response kits may also be necessary to comply with narcotics regulations.

Error-prone, manual tracking exposes agencies to too many regulatory violations and fines. For example, an incorrect transaction time or unentered signout name may prevent them from showing a complete chain of custody for firearms or controlled substances.

Benefits of Using Smart Armory Management Systems

So what exactly can armory management systems do to make life easier for your personnel? These tools offer ten key benefits to police departments, sheriff's offices, correctional facilities, and other criminal justice entities.

1

Secure, customizable storage

Each agency has different armory management needs. For example, a major metropolitan police department will want to keep very different tactical gear from a rural sheriff's department, which stores and uses weapons differently from a major regional correctional facility. Advanced armory lockers have a modular design, so you can stack together different-sized compartments to store the firearms and PPE your agency needs in the space you have to work with.

2

Real-time insights

Smart armory systems are fully digital. You get instant insights and alerts on what you care about most from the smart lockers' and management dashboard's content surveillance sensors.

3

Automated transactions

During routine operations, when criminal justice personnel needs something from your armory system, they first must authenticate themselves at the attached smart terminal. For enhanced security, you can configure the terminal to accept whatever credentials you want, including access cards and biometrics. The smart terminal can then present the user with procedural checklists to improve accountability and usage logging.
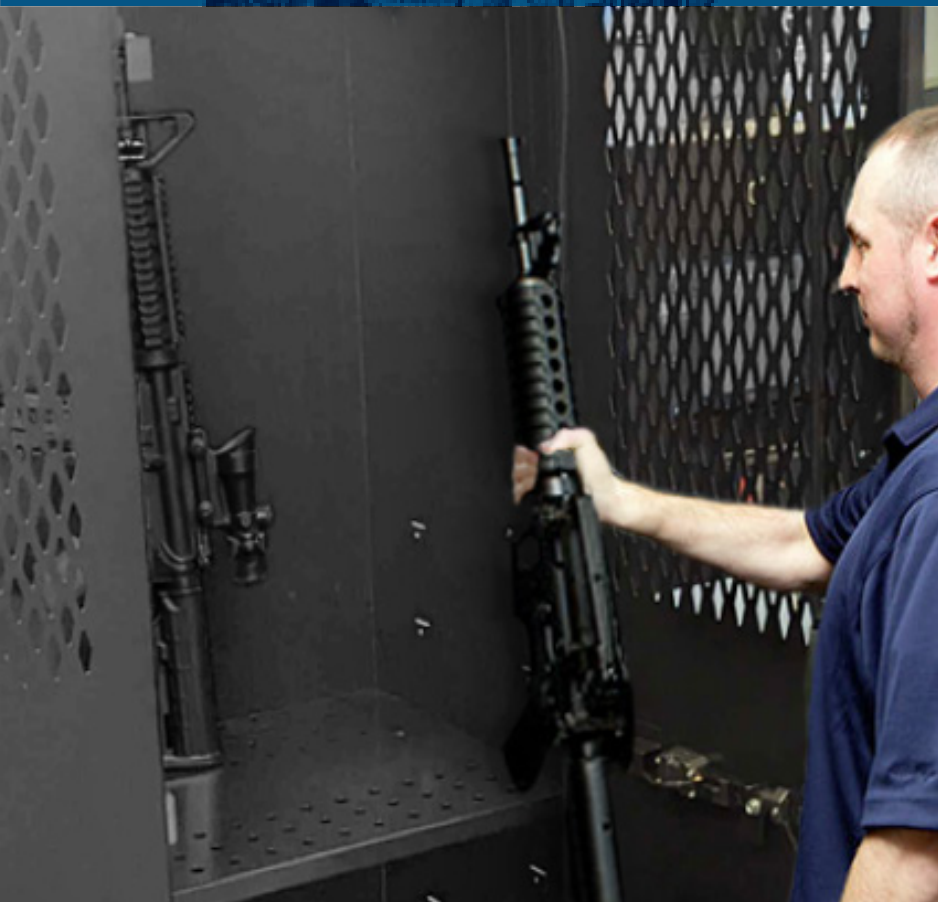
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Reporting

The data the armory management system collects feeds into a central management system. Transaction times, who signed out which weapons, when they returned them, whether they were late, and any defects reported, all of this information and more is compiled into reports you can access in just a few clicks.

You can set alerts to go to email automatically, so you know the moment there is a problem. For example, if a sheriff hasn't returned a tactical long gun at the end of their shift.

5

Remote management

Large agencies can network their various on-site armory management systems together. For example, they can have one at headquarters and three more at offices around their jurisdiction. Yet, they can still manage them centrally, maintain control, and get instant insights into any issues.

Smart system reporting can also reveal patterns you might not have noticed otherwise. For example, maybe officers at all three remote offices are seeing the same defect with OC spray canisters your quartermaster ordered.

6

Consistent access

Smart armory lockers never get tired, don't leave when a shift ends, and never call out sick. Smart armory management systems give agencies control over who can access which gear and when around the clock. You can restrict access by individual, location, or job type. You can configure lockers only to release firearms to officers registered for tactical response.

7

Universal authentication

Smart armory management systems replace error-prone manual tracking with smart access control terminals that record every transaction. In addition, they support a range of authentication types.

8

Usage tracking

RFID sensors in locker compartments enhance control over weapons and tactical equipment transactions. Radiofrequency identification (RFID) content surveillance systems can scan each kit component even through hard cases.

9

Error-free chain of custody

Since transactions are automated, your personnel can sign out or return weapons and other armory gear 24 hours a day. They don't need to wait for a quartermaster to be on duty.

10

Workforce enablement

Workforce enablement is when you give criminal justice personnel the necessary resources to be as self-sufficient as possible. It is the opposite of micromanagement. For example, smart armory management systems allow your personnel to self-service access the gear they need in a controlled environment. After hours, they don't need to wait for the armory manager to be around to help them get what they need.

And since you can build quality control checklists into transactions, you still exert the necessary checks and balances on tactical gear use. For example, reminders popping up on the smart terminal screen can help prevent officers from accidentally forgetting kit components when responding to an incident.

☑ Checklist

Simple Armory Management Assessment

While a comprehensive operational assessment is best carried out by a professional, conducting one yourself in-house has plenty of value. Follow this checklist assessment to evaluate your organization and see whether smart armory lockers improve your security readiness.

✔ Audit your operating procedures

Review the weapons use procedures your personnel follow in their day-to-day routines. For example, are firearms and LTLs stored in a central location? What access controls do you have in place? How are you notified if weapons need servicing? Or if they're not returned on schedule?

Consider procedures during all times of the day. For example, you may maintain high security during operating hours, but what about overnight? Do essential personnel have a way to access weapons during off-hours emergencies? Are these procedures documented so everyone knows what access is and isn't permitted?

✔ Audit your emergency plan

Review your emergency plans. Securing weapons for use in day-to-day operations is essential, but don't neglect planning for low-probability, high-risk events. Law enforcement and corrections staff must be prepared should any emergency occur. Are weapons stored in locations easily accessible during emergencies? Can officers take them quickly in the event of an emergency? Management systems are excellent tools for day-to-day operations, but they must be flexible enough to accommodate emergency actions.

✓ Identify your inefficiencies

Every law enforcement and corrections agency faces different risks at different levels of severity. Many factors contribute to your unique risk profile, and the first step in assessing your organization's security is to understand all of those factors. You need to understand your risk profile to understand how well-positioned you are to be responsible for distributing firearms and LTL weapons. Next, assess the specific risks and inefficiencies in your organization. Consider:

- Location—Urban vs. rural, northern vs. southern, coastal vs. inland, location significantly impacts the risks you might face, like crime or natural disasters.

- Facility size

- Workforce size

- Staffing level—Are you fully staffed or chronically understaffed? Your risk levels can significantly increase if many locations within your buildings are lightly staffed or vacant.

✓ Assess your specific threats

Identifying risk factors simply sets the background. Next, you need to identify the specific physical security threats you face. Also, identify how likely each is to occur.

For example, your law enforcement agency might serve a community that struggles with vandalism, theft, and other petty crimes. Officers might carry a higher than normal number of LTL weapons but fewer firearms. LTL weapons often have Federal reporting requirements attached to them when they're discharged. Not properly filing those reports puts your organization at risk of regulatory fines.

✓ Audit your existing management systems

The final review to conduct is of your access control and armory management systems. They should be able to automatically monitor every point where someone accesses your firearms, LTL weapons, and other tactical equipment. Do these systems have any blind spots? Are there any windows of time where assets are left unmonitored? Do you rely on manual or electronic access control?

Armory Management Matters

Law enforcement and correctional agencies increasingly use automated armory management systems to manage their electronics, firearms, and other tactical equipment. Budgets are tight, and these agencies need ways to save on labor costs without compromising effectiveness. Implementing better armory management systems is one of the best ways to achieve this goal.

Real Time Networks

Contact us today to schedule a live demo of our **AssetTracer armory management solution.**

▶ **BOOK A DEMO**

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