

Eyes and Ears On the Inside

By Bill Rankin, Communications Officer, Communications and Citizen Engagement Sector
Photos: Bill Rankin

On a quiet day a few months ago, Security Intelligence Officer (SIO) Mike Costa received an anonymous phone call. In a low voice the caller warned Costa that a woman visitor had smuggled a packet of illicit drugs into Kingston Penitentiary – morphine tablets, 30 milligrams each – very potent stuff. Costa knew that on any black market the pills would be in big demand and drug users are willing to pay a high price for the few hours of euphoria that just one pill generates. Costa also knew that the drug might lead to deadly overdoses, drug debts and, subsequently, violence amongst the inmate population.

He thanked the caller, hung up the phone and quietly pondered his next move. Before he and his team could act, he had some work to do corroborating the caller's information. Was the visitor still inside the prison grounds on a private family visit (PFV) with her inmate boyfriend? Was he a known drug user? Was there other information linking the inmate to involvement in the institutional drug subculture? If so, then Costa would go to the warden, explain the situation and ask for authorization to do an exceptional search of the PFV unit, the inmate and, if necessary, detain and search the visitor.

He assigned his assistant, Kim Breen, to look up the inmate's record and went over a few possible scenarios with his security analyst, Lynn Lamirande. Once all the questions were answered and a plan was formulated, they took a walk to the warden's office to obtain the required search authorization.

The warden listened carefully, asked a few questions of her own, and then signed the authorization based on the strong evidence that had been presented. Costa and his team were ready to move. Both visitor and inmate were detained; the PFV unit was combed over by Search Coordinator Jim Robinson and his high-energy companion, CJ, the drug dog. But no drugs were found.

There was only one likely explanation: the inmate had hidden the pill packet in a body cavity. He was isolated and interviewed for search purposes.

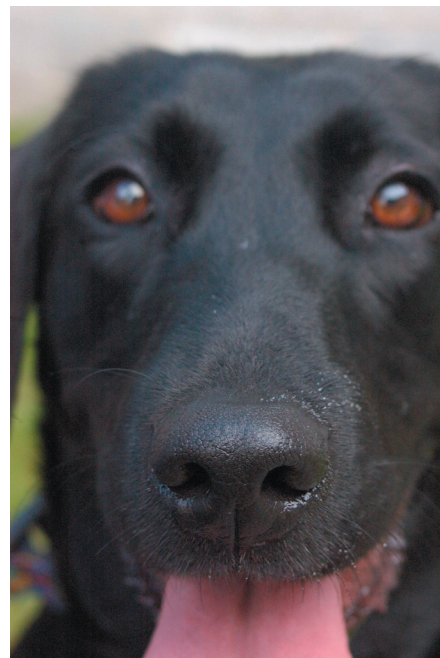
Within hours the drugs were recovered and taken into evidence.

The Combined Police/Corrections Investigation Unit or Pen Squad as it is popularly known was called in; police officers quickly arrived and charged the inmate and his girlfriend with possession of a controlled substance for the purpose of trafficking.

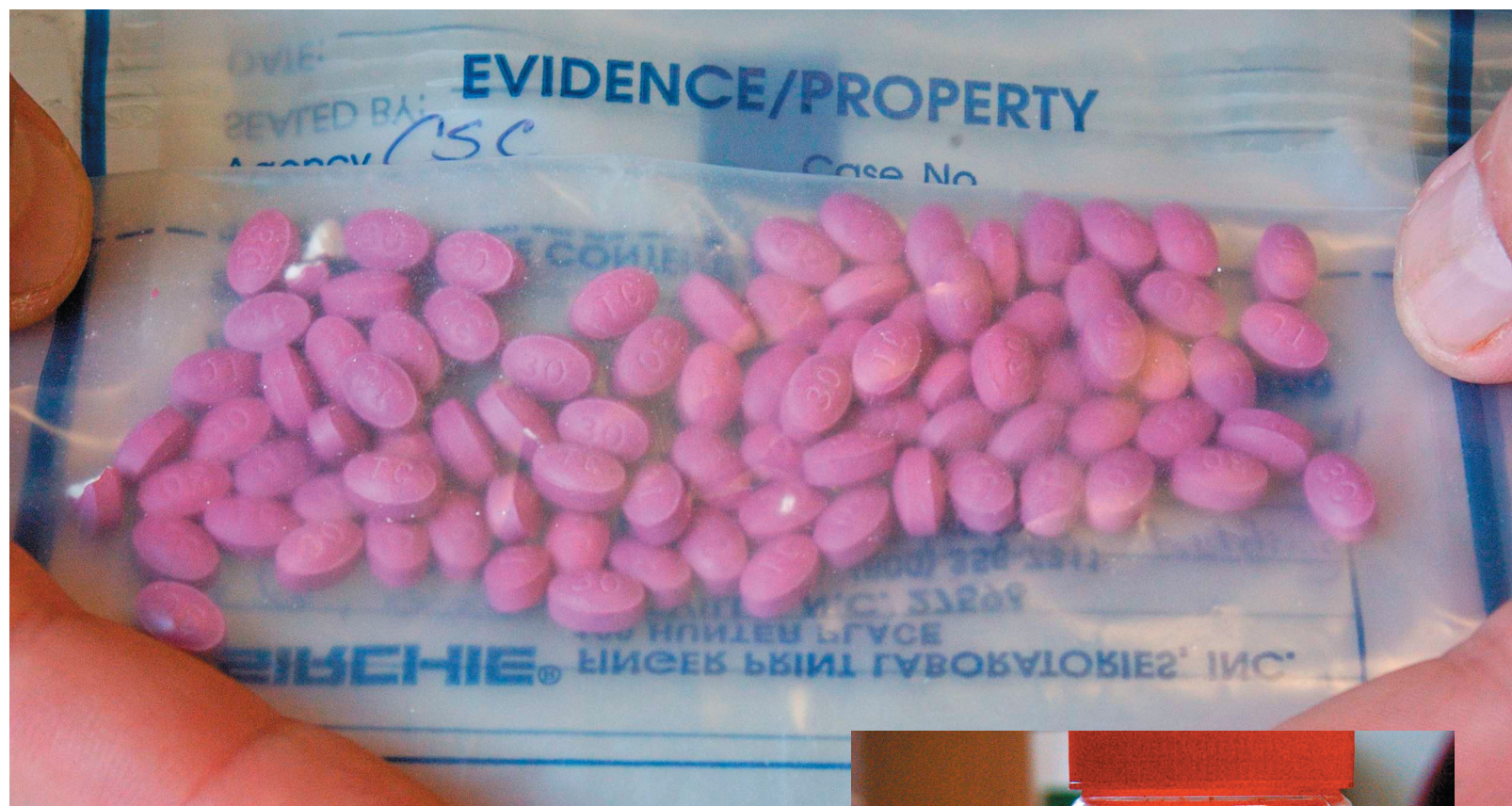
Eyes, Ears... and Noses

This is just one success story inside one penitentiary. Every day security intelligence officers in federal institutions across the country stop crime, using eyes, ears, noses and a sixth sense to penetrate the surface of institutional life. They depend on hi-tech surveillance equipment, informants, intelligence gathering and sharing with other law enforcement partners and, most importantly, they depend on the correctional officers that pound the floors of the ranges daily, interacting with offenders and practicing dynamic security.

"The CXs have incredible abilities to talk to these guys," says Costa. "They see the offenders in all their moods. They get really



The slightly damp sniffer machine developed over millions of years of evolution. Able to detect substances in parts per billion, the amazing canine olfactory sense is Mother Nature's contribution to institutional security. A trained dog can detect the tiniest trace of a specific chemical, sometimes from a considerable distance, even if the scent is masked by other harsh odours.



Confiscated morphine pills. "The bottom line with drugs – be it crack cocaine, pills, marijuana, brew, whatever – they are the root of violence inside the institutions," says Costa. "Drugs lead to debts and debts lead to violence. It's as simple as that."

"To do this job successfully, you have to really listen to what people are saying, you need good analytical skills, and an open mind as you put together a puzzle. One little observation could indicate something going on – a larger problem. It could be the missing piece of the puzzle."

good at sensing an inmate's state of mind. I wouldn't be able to do my job without the correctional officers. I'm only one set of eyes and ears; they are many.

"Doing our job right gives us the satisfaction of knowing that when we walk out through the north gate, we have made our best effort to ensure that the people living and working here are safe."

Call the Pen Squad

When a crime comes to light inside an institution, police are called in to investigate. In a city like Kingston, Ontario, home to a large concentration of federal correctional facilities, a special unit popularly known as the Pen Squad is dedicated entirely to this job. Currently led by Ontario Provincial Police Detective Sergeant Paul Clement, the squad handles homicides, assaults, drug-related offences, and even threats that occur within the confines of federal institutions.

"We don't investigate violations of CSC policy or directives," says Clement. "We deal with prisoners who commit offences found in the *Criminal Code of Canada*."

Cooperation at the Crime Scene

The Pen Squad in the Ontario Region and other police services



Homemade weapons and alcohol can lead to violent confrontations if they are not confiscated. "Moonshine" is refined from home brew (fermented from almost any kind of organic foodstuff – even ketchup) using a crude distillery apparatus cobbled together from copper pipe and electric wires.

nationally have a close, interdependent relationship with the security intelligence team at each CSC facility. It's up to SI staff and correctional officers to send out an alert to investigators (on call 24 hours a day) and, as quickly as possible, secure the crime scene before the police arrive.

This is no easy task. Correctional officers' first priority must be to ensure the safety of staff and inmates. In the meantime, offenders may have time to cook up alibis and tamper with the crime scene – hide weapons, remove stained or ripped clothing, smear or erase telltale bloodstains.

“When a violent crime occurs, often there are blood spatters that tell an important story to a trained eye,” Clement explains. “If inmates get a chance to wipe them up, our evidence is destroyed. Correctional staff can play a key role in making sure this does not happen. That first hour after the crime is committed is critical to the preservation of evidence. Once we get there, we can take over. We have our own specialists in interviewing, fingerprinting, photography, DNA sampling – all the forensics.”

Clement and his fellow officers have recently held educational sessions with CSC staff on how to approach a crime scene and preserve the maximum amount of evidence. “We had two sessions last year with supervisors at Kingston Penitentiary and Millhaven Institution. We had very positive feedback, so future sessions will involve more front-line staff.” The topic of preservation of crime scenes was delivered to SIOs by Roger Agnessi, formerly of the Montreal Police.

A Two-way Street

Security Intelligence Officer Mike Costa characterizes the relationship with the Pen Squad as a two-way street. “SI is the Pen Squad’s link into the prison and, in turn, the Pen Squad gives us an arm into the community.”

“Here’s an example of how it works: let’s say a correctional officer comes across a list of telephone numbers during a cell search. If there is reason to believe the inmate is using these numbers in drug transactions, I can give these numbers to the Pen Squad and they will obtain telephone subscriber information: who owns these numbers? Who are these people? The answers to these questions give me a more complete picture of what is going on inside the institution. And if these outsiders are involved in illegal activities, the Pen Squad passes that information on to police who can make arrests in the community.”

In essence, intelligence sharing means more effective crime prevention and crime solving. That’s why Clement’s investigators have access through CSC liaison officers to databases such as INFOPOL that contain information on offenders on conditional release in the community. As well, both CSC and the Pen Squad tap into international sites such as Interpol when their investigations lead them to criminals outside of Canada.



Search Coordinator James Robinson and his black Labrador, CJ. Dog handlers and their canine counterparts are a vital part of security enforcement within federal institutions. Dogs work and live with their handlers, developing a close partnership that can become almost telepathic in nature. The dogs’ subtlest signs speak clearly to the experienced handler.

Priorities

Both Detective Sergeant Clement and Security Intelligence Officer Costa agree that detecting drugs and preventing them from entering institutions is a number one priority. But, in addition, new challenges have grown over the last decade, in particular, the rise of organized crime. Outlaw motorcycle gangs

are no longer the irresponsible troublemakers of yesteryear, they are highly disciplined and resourceful criminal enterprises. Asian, Eastern European and our own home-grown Aboriginal gangs all have found increasing strength in numbers, both on the street and inside CSC institutions. At the present time, CSC is assessing the need for security intelligence officers in community operations as well.

In the coming years, it will take continuing vigilance, creativity and cooperation between police and correctional staff to maintain security and control.■



Video security blanket. Cameras are everywhere inside institutions, exposing infractions and crimes that may occur out of sight of watchful staff. Video tapes are visual records that make persuasive evidence should a case end up in court.



The Pen Squad. Left to right, back row: Detective Constable (DC) Gilbert Cadieux , DC Joel Blacklock, DC Kenneth Jamieson, DC Jeffrey Blackstock Front row: DC Michael Campbell, DC Stanley Babcock, Detective Sergeant Paul Clement