The Bloodhound Cell Phone Detector Goes Behind Bars to Uncover Contraband Cell Phones in Correctional Facilities and Prisons

METUCHEN, N.J., March 16, 2010 -- Berkeley Varitronics Systems, Inc. (BVS), a leading provider of advanced wireless solutions and products to the domestic and international wireless telecommunications industry, today announced the company has successfully field-tested the Bloodhound cell phone detector at one of the top ten largest county correctional facilities in the nation. The Bloodhound is a hand-held, wireless cell phone detector that does not employ the sledgehammer approach of cell phone jamming, currently prohibited under U.S. federal law.

BVS conducted the field-test at a national correctional facility that houses 1,300 inmates (both men and women) and employs more than 400 security officers as well as administration staff. Security officers and BVS discretely walked the halls of the correctional facility with the Bloodhound cell phone detector to pinpoint in real-time the exact location of contraband cell phones in use.

“The field-test was successful as we noted illegal cell phone activity rather quickly,” said Scott Schober, President and CEO of Berkeley Varitronics Systems. “Utilizing the cell phone detector’s high-speed scanning receiver and Direction Finding Antenna, the Bloodhound detected cell phone activity in areas where it was strictly forbidden. Surprisingly there were even cell phones detected in the cafeteria, which is prohibited.”

To combat the escalating number of contraband cell phones smuggled into prisons and correctional facilities, some prison officials have imposed fines of up to $5,000 and extended sentences up to five years when an inmate is caught using a contraband cell phone. Recently, Steve Largent, CEO of the CTIA, released a statement in support of the Cell Phone Contraband Act of 2009 (S. 1749), introduced by U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), advocating the Senate to severely penalize prison inmates who use wireless services to conduct unlawful activities or harass and intimidate the public. According to Senator Feinstein, the bill would classify cell phones and wireless devices as contraband material, and anyone who provides, or attempts to provide, an inmate with a cell phone could face imprisonment of up to one year.

“BVS has sold a significant number of Bloodhound cell phone detectors to federal and state correctional facilities and numerous government agencies since it’s release on December 14, 2009. Of the hundreds of correctional facilities that have contacted BVS, the majority are frustrated with the number of cell phones that continually make their way behind bars and are desperate for a solution like BVS’ cell phone detector,” added Schober. “According to some correctional officers, cell phones are smuggled in through criminal defense lawyers, family members, food service staff, maintenance contractors and even corrupt security guards looking to make some extra cash.”

Prior to the release of the Bloodhound cell phone detector, correctional facilities have had to battle the widespread use of contraband cell phones with specialized K-9 units that are trained to smell the batteries in cell phones. In the state of New Jersey, for example, the cost to purchase a trained dog is $5,000 plus the trainer’s salary for a comprehensive ten-week course the dog and trainer are required to complete by the New Jersey Attorney General. Couple these costs with regular vet and food bills and the solution is costly. The inmates make the K-9 units’ job even more challenging by hiding the cell phones in strong smelling foods such as peanut butter.
In addition, the FCC has been petitioned to allow cell phone jamming in prisons, currently prohibited under Section 333 of the Communications Act that specifically forbids any willful or malicious interference with licensed radio signals and prohibits the manufacture, importation or sale of any device intended to jam or disrupt wireless communications. Critics of cell phone jamming, including the CTIA, have expressed concern that cell phone jamming technology could interfere with emergency response and legitimate cell phone use near prisons.

As an alternative to cell phone jamming and K-9 units, The Bloodhound cell phone detector is a safe, legal, quick and cost-effective way to monitor and pinpoint unauthorized cell phones within correctional facilities 24 hours a day. The complete Bloodhound unit costs $1,800 and can also be utilized by government agencies that want to enforce a ‘no wireless policy’.

BVS will be showcasing the Bloodhound cell phone detector at the International CTIA Wireless show in Las Vegas March 23-25th at booth #2400, as well as at the GovSec/U.S. Law Conference in Washington DC March 23 – 24th at booth #609.

About Berkeley Varitronics Systems

Berkeley Varitronics Systems, located in Metuchen, New Jersey, has been providing advanced wireless solutions and products to the domestic and international wireless telecommunications industry for over 35 years. Since 1995, BVS has introduced over 50 unique wireless test devices for a variety of applications including the popular Cellular, iDEN, PCS, CDMA, RFID, LTE, Mobile WiMAX, FIXED WiMAX, 802.11b/a/n/g & Bluetooth specifications. For more information about BVS, visit www.bvsystems.com.

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Berkeley Varitronics Systems Company Contact:
Scott Schober
President & CEO
Office: 732-548-3737
snschober@bvsystems.com

Berkeley Varitronics Systems Media Contact:
Kelly Gorychka
The Bernard Group
Office: 512-617-6354    Cell: 512-922-8059
kgorychka@bernardgroup.com