

Contraband cell phones in prisons

- ✧ In July 2011 CCST received a letter requesting help in evaluating cell phone signal blocking technologies that the California Dept. of Corrections is proposing to install
- ✧ Cellphones possessed by inmates pose a serious threat to safety and security in prisons. In 2011, nearly 15,000 cell phones were confiscated.
- ✧ CCST asked to undertake independent, scientific evaluation to inform both policymakers and the public about the managed access technologies being considered

The Efficacy of Managed Access Systems to Intercept Calls from Contraband Cell Phones in California Prisons



California Council on Science and Technology
May 2012

Project Team

Chair

- Charles Harper, Executive Chairman, Semtech (CCST Board Member)

Team Participants

- Patrick Diamond, Retired Senior Director of Systems Engineering Advanced Communications & Sensing, Semtech Corp
- Patrick Mantey, UC Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society (CITRIS)
- David Goldstein, Draper Labs

NASA Technical Advisors

- Pete Worden, Director of NASA Ames Research Center (CCST Council Member)
- Deb Feng, Deputy Center Director (acting)
- James Williams, IT Director and ARC Chief Technology Officer
- Bill Notley, ARC RF Spectrum Manager
- Bill Hunt, RF/IT Technician
- Bobby Cates, External Interface Network Engineer

Managed Access System (MAS)

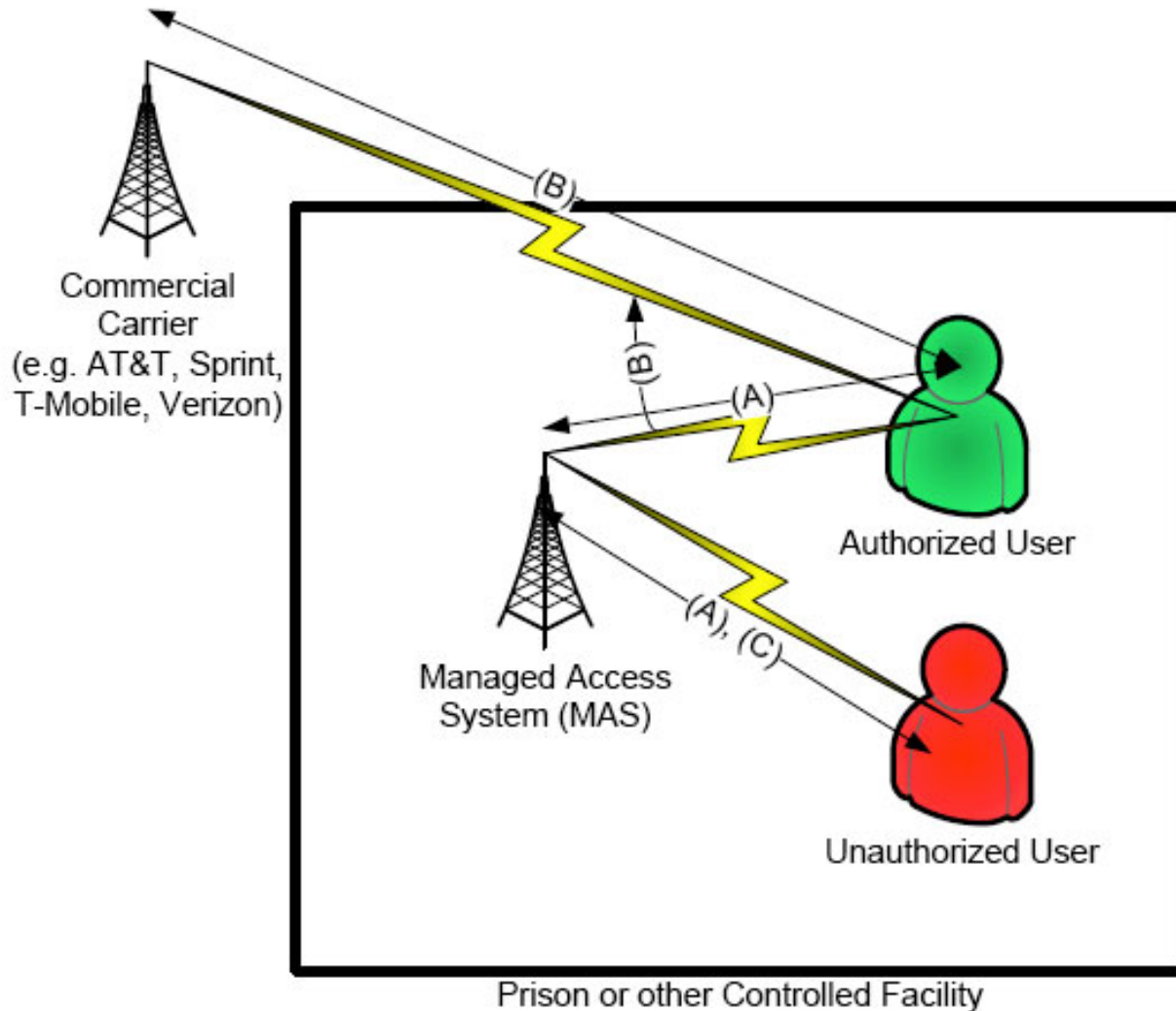


Figure 1. MAS would function as a system to detect and preclude the operation of cell phones not authorized in the MAS approved database

Key Findings

- ✧ Contraband cell phones in prisons are a growing state and national security issue.
- ✧ There is inconsistent screening at state prisons.
- ✧ There are existing and evolving complexities of signal capture.
- ✧ MAS technology is not yet proven for a prison environment.
- ✧ MAS efficacy protocols have not been defined.
- ✧ Baseline benchmarks are needed.

Recommendations

- ✧ Alternative options should be considered
- ✧ MAS, even if successfully deployed, won't be enough
- ✧ Assess cost/benefit of other options, including implementing the federal prisons screening protocols
- ✧ If MAS is purchased, test one or more pilots before contracting
- ✧ An independent consortium should be created to develop and oversee the MAS network
- ✧ Design, install, and monitor MAS pilots

Follow up:

- ✧ CDCR moved forward with MAS contract prior to receiving the final report despite letters from four Senators noting emerging concerns.
- ✧ CCST is scheduling a briefing with the California Congressional Delegation in July on Capitol Hill.
- ✧ Press coverage was significant, including the Sacramento Bee and News 10 in Sacramento.