

## **Overview of CCST Report on Managed Access Systems for Intercepting Calls from Contraband Cell Phones in California Prisons**

- Contraband cell phone use by prison inmates in California is a serious and growing problem. In 2011, approximately 15,000 cell phones were seized in California's 33 prisons.
- Inmates use contraband cell phones to communicate with family members and for entertainment. They can also use them to coordinate criminal activity inside and outside prisons, including the ordering of hits and witness intimidation.
- At the request of members of the California State Senate, the California Council on Science and Technology (CCST) prepared a detailed analysis and report on the problem of contraband prison cell phones. This report was requested by California State Senators Elaine Alquist, Loni Hancock, Christine Kehoe and Alex Padilla.
- CCST's report advises the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to use security systems, similar to those in airports, before investing millions of dollars in inadequately tested technology such as MAS, or managed access system. CCST's report urges this issue be addressed prior to investment in MAS, or other call blocking technologies.
- Theoretically, MAS uses a database of authorized cell numbers to filter out and block unauthorized numbers from within an area covered by a MAS umbrella. However, CCST's report identified several issues that would limit the effectiveness of MAS, and perhaps carry unintended consequences.
- CCST's report also found that MAS in its current state is not developed enough to function on a mass basis across all 33 CDCR prisons. MAS technology is currently used at only one U.S. prison, a remote correctional facility in Mississippi, which is having difficulty implementing and managing MAS to the level of performance desired.
- MAS could block inmate cell phone calls, but could also interfere with correctional and public safety cell phone use. If a prison is in a populated area, MAS could possibly prevent members of a surrounding community from making emergency cell phone calls to 911, because their cell would not be included in the MAS database.
- Even if MAS can be configured to be relatively successful when launched, continuing advances in cell phone technology could soon render MAS ineffective in blocking rapidly evolving cell phone technologies without

concurrent upgrades of the MAS system. As currently contracted by CDCR, MAS cannot capture Wi-Fi, Mi-Fi, Skype or satellite transmissions. Also, text message capture capability would need further study to determine its efficacy.

- The California Council on Science and Technology is a nonpartisan, impartial, nonprofit created in 1988 by a unanimous vote of the California Legislature. It is designed to offer expert advice to the state government and to recommend solutions on science and technology-related policy issues.

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