



Scorpion Micro DV: One Tiny Camera

by Bruce W. Jackson, PCI #239

The College and University Police Investigators Conference (CUPIC), was held at the Sheraton Premiere in Tysons Corner, VA, in July of 2010. Maureen Becker and I were sitting at the IPMBA booth selling the heck out of IPMBA and the 2011 conference in Richmond, VA, when we were approached by fellow vendor Matt Byrd of Law Enforcement Associates Inc. He excitedly introduced us to the Scorpion Micro DV. The Scorpion Micro DV is one tiny camera. Back when I became a policeman, it would have been the kind of thing only seen in a Hollywood spy thriller, but here it is, 2011, and these can be had by us common folks.

The camera dimensions are 2.17"x .85"x .78"; for the mathematically challenged, that means it is small. It is designed to be worn on a uniform or mounted on something, say, oh, I don't know – maybe a bike helmet – and used throughout a shift, similar to a dashcam. It is lightweight (1.7 ounces) and has various mounting options available. If that's not small enough for you, check out the Scorpion Tiny Micro DV, which measures just 1.5" high.

Matt contacted Maureen, and soon a product sample was on its way for me to torture. Torture it I did. First I took it out of the box and read the instructions (ok, actually I didn't. I'm a guy, and we don't read instructions. That's what hammers and duct tape are for.). What I really did was put the mini CD into my laptop and download the software while it was hooked up to my 6-year old. I then played around with it for a while, figuring out how to get it to record and how to transfer the video files to the computer to watch later. Once I had an understanding of it, I took it to work.

It went on patrol with a bunch of different cops. As we all know, if you want something broken, give it to a cop. We can break anything. Surprisingly, I kept getting it back in working condition. The micro SD card was still in the camera (it comes with a 2GB but can handle up to an 8GB card, according to the user manual) and the camera usually had plenty of juice left on the battery. The user manual says it has up to two hours of record time and 250 hours of standby time on a single charge. Again for the mathematically challenged, that means it has more than a 10-day standby time (don't worry; I used a calculator to figure it out).

After plenty of patrol time, it went to bike school for a week. I scheduled the last bike school just because the weatherman kept saying we were having below average rainfall. Sure enough, it rained and rained hard. Three straight days of showers with gentle breezes out of the south at about 100 miles an hour made for a fun time by all. We found plenty of places to train away from the rain, and the low light conditions made it even more fun. The Scorpion Micro DV worked like a charm. I wished I had the waterproof case advertised in their online store because I would have liked to see how it did in the rain, but I wasn't going to risk soaking the thing.

After two months of playing around with it, I can tell you what I liked and what I didn't. I love its size. It is lightweight, but not so lightweight you forget that it is still attached to your shirt before you throw it into the wash. It is easy to use. There are only three buttons for the user to manipulate and if you don't like the voice activated (VOX) feature, you only have two. The



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software and video files are easy to swap, and recharging the unit is as easy as plugging it into the computer. It recharges off the USB port while it transfers the files. The files play in Windows media player and don't require special software to open or run. This makes it nice and easy to email the video file to the DA or Commonwealth's attorney prior to court. Charge time is approximately two hours. I like that it has several mounting options available. It comes with a small belt / clothes clip as well as a mounting bracket to put on a helmet or anything else that has a flat surface.

I am not one of those guys who heaps praise on anything just because someone sends it to me, so here is what I didn't like. I didn't like the fact that the video isn't protected once it is on the card, so anyone can transfer or delete the files. This is a double-edged sword. It makes it easy to use at the operator level and keeps the cost down. I was told that if they wanted to program it to be "write only", it would really drive up the cost.

I also didn't like the way the memory card locks into the unit. During training, I dropped the unit on concrete. Not really looking, I picked it up and put it in my pocket. What I didn't know was although the impact did not damage the camera (a big plus), it popped the memory card out and sent it flying. Trying to find a micro SD card in a dimly lit parking garage is challenging, to say the least. I would like to see a slight modification that would lock the SD card in and require a direct manipulation in order to eject it. Recording a scene and then losing the card before you can transfer the files would really make for the end of a lousy day.

The last thing I didn't like is that if the unit is recording and you accidentally hit the power switch, turning it off without hitting the "record" button to stop the recording, it will NOT save the file. They make it clear that you must stop the recording and then turn it off or it will not save the file. I found that out the hard way. I wonder if I should have read the instructions?

Would I recommend this camera? Yes, I would. In my opinion, the cost for what you get is very fair. The unit is available in various packages, ranging from \$125 for the base unit to \$160 for the "Patrol" Package, which includes the SCORPION Micro digital video recorder, 8GB Micro SDHC memory card with USB card reader, cigarette plug USB car adapter, multi-use clip and bracket, a USB cable, AC adapter, silicone protective sleeve, storage pouch, strap and Velcro, and a hard plastic storage case. The mounting accessory kit can be bought separately for \$19.95, and I would spend the extra \$29.95 and get the waterproof enclosure just because I know I will find myself in the rain!

For more information or to place an order, contact Matt Byrd at 800-354-9669 or mbyrd@leacorp.com, or visit www.leacorp.com. Be sure to tell them IPMBA sent you!

To all my brothers and sisters, stay safe and keep the rubber side down.

Bruce Jackson has been a police officer for 21 years and co-founded his department's bike patrol in 1991. He was certified as an IPMBA Police Cyclist in 1994 and became an IPMBA instructor in 1997. He is currently assigned to his department's training division.

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