Overview of Current Criminal Justice Information Systems

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Criminal justice information systems can be divided roughly into two categories: "public record" information (e.g., stolen property reports, arrest warrants, criminal history records, sex offender lists) and investigative systems (non-public information on cases under investigation, including names of suspects, informants, victims and witnesses), although there has been some overlap. Some systems operate on a name search (augmented by date of birth, race and other non-unique identifiers), while in others (in particular, criminal history records) identification is supported by fingerprints. The states and the Federal government also maintain separate DNA identification databases. Finally, there are databases of non-personally identifiable information, such as stolen property or ballistics data. In the US, there are nearly 19,000 state and local police agencies, approximately 200 federal police agencies ranging from the FBI to the Government Printing Office police, plus thousands of courts, prosecutor's offices, probation departments, and prisons in the criminal justice system, each with one or more internal systems as well as links to national systems.

Each of these systems has always posed fair information issues: is the information accurate, does the record subject have a right to review and correct, who has access, for what purposes can the information be used, how long is it kept for, what protections are in place against misuse? Overlaying these questions is the fact that some of these records are "public." Now, driven in part by the Internet, a key movement is towards "integration" or linking of criminal justice information systems in the hope of better efficiencies. The purpose of this paper is to give an overview of the major criminal justice information systems, as background to a discussion of issues of access, linkage and control.

1.   The National Law Enforcement Telecommunications Systems (NLETS)

NLETS is a nationwide network that links all states and many federal agencies together for the exchange of a criminal justice information. In each state, an interface agency is responsible for maintaining an in-state law enforcement telecommunication systems that delivers messages throughout the state. Through those connections, any criminal justice agency on a state law enforcement

telecommunications systems in one state can communicate with any criminal justice agency on a law enforcement telecommunications system in any other state. This includes all major police agencies and most smaller ones. In addition, many prosecutors, probation departments, parole offices, etc. communicate with each other and with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies through these systems. Law enforcement and criminal justice agencies use NLETS more than 1,000,000 times everyday via nearly 327,000 terminals.

INFORMATION AVAILABLE FROM OTHER STATES VIA NLETS

- Vehicle Registration Information
- Drivers License Information
- Criminal History Records
- Boat and Snowmobile Registration *
- Parole and Probation Information*
- Corrections Information*
1) Sex Offender Registration Information*
    *Information not available from all states

NATIONAL FILES AVAILABLE TO NLETS USERS

- ATF Gun Tracking Data
- FAA Tracking Information
- FAA Aircraft Registration Data
- National Impound Vehicle File
- National Drug Pointer Index
- Hazardous Material information
- INS's Law Enforcement Support Center

DATA AVAILABLE FROM CANADA THROUGH NLETS

- Wanted Persons
- Stolen and Registered Vehicles
- Drivers License Files
- Stolen Articles Files
- Stolen Guns Files
- Stolen Securities Files
- Stolen Boats files
- Criminal History Records
    The NLETS users consist of:

MEMBERS AUTHORIZED TO ACCESS NLETS   (Partial List)

- 50 States, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico
- U.S. Department of State
- FBI
- Treasury Enforcement Communications Systems (TECS)
    - U.S. Customs
    - IRS Inspection Service
    - Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms
- U.S. Department of Justice
    - Drug Enforcement Administration

- Immigration and Naturalization Service
- U.S. Marshal's Service
- Interpol
- Postal Inspection Service
- Department of Defense
- U.S. Secret Service
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
- Department of the Interior
- Department of the Army
- National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB)
- Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts
- U.S. Coast Guards
- Federal Protective Service
- Veterans Administration
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC)

NON-MEMBERS AUTHORIZED TO ACCESS NLETS (Partial list)

- National Institutes of Health, Protection & Security Management Branch
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General
- U.S. Government Printing Office, Investigation & Security
- U.S. Department of Transportation, Odometer Fraud Division
- National Gallery of Art (Security Division)
- American Samoa Police
- Federal Aviation Administration
- Amtrak Police
- Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA)
- Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN)

2.   The FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Network

In addition to connecting to NLETS, each state law enforcement telecommunications system also connects its users to the NCIC network. The system has been in operation since its inception in 1967. Its current enhanced version, NCIC 2000, came on-line in July 1999. NCIC is a national index of theft reports, warrants and other criminal justice information submitted by law enforcement agencies across the country. It provides real-time (end-to-end 12 second response time required) notification of information regarding persons and property to police officers by the side of the road, case investigators, booking personnel, prosecutors, probation and parole officers and others. Through NCIC, almost all police departments in the country share their theft reports, warrants, missing person reports, etc. with each other in an on-line, real-time mode. At present, users generate more than 2,000,000 transactions per day.

INFORMATION REGARDING PROPERTY AVAILABLE FROM NCIC

Stolen Vehicles (954,607 – US; 175,215 - Canadian)*
Vehicles Used in Felonies
Stolen License Plates (695,083)*

Stolen boats (31,481)*
Stolen articles
Stolen securities
Stolen Guns
Recovered Guns

INFORMATION REGARDING PERSONS AVAILABLE FROM NCIC

Wanted Person Reports (Warrants) (518,410, plus 7742 juvenile warrants)*
Foreign Fugitive Reports
Missing Persons Reports
Protective Order Data
Persons of Possible Danger to Secret Services Protectees (25)*
Sex Offenders Registration Data (16,569)*
Persons on Supervised Release (1)(?)*
Violent Gang and Terrorist Organization (and Members) Data (1791)*
                        * Number of records in the system as of October 1999

The NCIC Network also provides inquiry access to the FBI's Interstate Identification Index (III). The III index points to the criminal history record residing either in the FBI or the particular state(s) holding information. The III utilizes the telecommunications systems of the FBI, the individual states and NLETS to respond to requests for criminal history information. This decentralized systems promotes the use of state records, which are more complete, and reduces the FBI workload in maintaining and disseminating the records.

3.   The FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services Wide Area Network (CJIS WAN)

The FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services Wide Area Network (CJIS WAN), launched in July 1999, connects the states to the FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification Systems (IAFIS). This WAN has a connection in each state, which allows for the electronic submission of arrest fingerprints to the FBI from the state criminal history repository. That submission causes the creation of a criminal history record in III. The CJIS WAN also provides for the electronic submission of latent fingerprints for the investigation of crimes, and for submission of the fingerprints of non-criminal justice applicants for national background searches.

With IAFIS, those states that have built, or are building, in-state AFIS systems capable of accepting electronic submission of fingerprints from local arresting agencies will be able to forward those electronic fingerprints to FBI and receive a response as to that person's national identification and criminal history within two (2) hours.

Plans for the CJIS WAN call for an expanding use, to include non-CJIS services. The first major addition is to use the WAN for the delivery of certain FBI Laboratory services, such as the DNA information shared among the states and FBI. Long terms plans call for the NCIC 2000 Network and the CJIS WAN to be consolidated into a single network.

4.   Other Systems and Telecommunications Networks

A.   National – systems that support local, state, tribal and federal agencies:

• CODIS-Combined DNA Index System, a national index of DNA profiles, limited to convicted of-

fenders and crime scene evidence

- NIBIN-National Integrated Ballistics Information Network-an attempt to unify BATF and FBI firearms databases
- NDPIX-National Drug Pointer Index, a pointer system that allows state, local and Federal agencies to determine if a suspect is under investigation by any other participating agency
- UCR/NIBRS-National Uniform Crime Reporting System, a statistical system based on crime reporting by state and local police agencies, not intended to include personally identifying information
- NICS-National Instant Criminal Background Check System for pre-sale firearm background searches by licensed firearms dealers (est. 7,000,000 checks to be performed in 2000)
- LEO-Law Enforcement On-Line, a public safety intranet, for research and training

B.   Federal - systems that support the justice activities of one or more federal agency at the federal level only.

- TECS-Treasury Enforcement Communications Systems
- DRUGX-a common FBI/DEA drug intelligence database intended to allow coordination of investigative activities
- JABS-Joint Automated Booking System, a federal booking capability, scheduled to begin operation in December 1999, to enable federal agencies to share arrest data and to provide linkage between the booking systems of federal law enforcement agencies and the FBI's IAFIS
- NIPC's-National Infrastructure Protection Center data
- IDENT-INS's two print AFIS capability for searching aliens entering the country
- FinCEN – Financial Crimes Enforcement Network

C.   State - systems at the state, regional, and/or local level.

- Criminal History Records Systems
- State and Local Stolen Property and Wanted Person Systems
- State Correction Information Systems
- State and Local Court Systems
- State Labs Systems
- Driver and Vehicle Registration Systems
- Juvenile Justice Systems
- State and Local Parole, Probation and Supervised Release Systems
- Online Booking Systems
- Jail Management Systems
- Prosecutor Systems

D.   Multi-State

- Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS)
- WIN-Western Identification Network, an AFIS consortium of western states
- SWBS ADIS-Southwest Border States Anti-Drug Information System
- GREAT – Gang Reporting, Evaluation and Tracking system, investigative database of suspected gang members, maintained by the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, accessible to agencies nationwide

5. FBI Information Systems

The FBI occupies a unique position, administering several of the major nationwide criminal justice databases, including NCIC and the Interstate Identification Index/National Fingerprint File (III/NFF), while at the same time maintaining large in-house databases of investigative information. To give just one example of the scope of its systems, as of 1997, it held 87,000,000 civil fingerprint cards, representing more than 39,000,000 individuals, including military personnel, applicants for federal employment and other non-criminal justice purposes, plus over 130,000,000 fingerprint cards with related criminal histories on more than 35,000,000 individuals. It was receiving approximately 12,000,000 new cards per year, roughly split 50-50 between criminal justice and non-criminal justice purposes.

The FBI's first budget initiative for FY 2000 was information collection and analysis: "The specific IT program objective supported by the ISI [Information Sharing Initiative] during FY 2000 is the development of Intelligence Systems for Collection, Analysis, and Dissemination of Investigative Information by Headquarters, all Field Offices and Legats [overseas offices]." FBI, *2000 Authorization and Budget Request to Congress*. Among the analytic tools being developed by the FBI are:

"1) link analysis – the identification of relationships across organizations, people, places, and events, etc.;
2) telephone toll analysis – the analysis of information collected through pen registers;
3) visual investigative analysis – a graphical representation of data analysis …;
4) geographic analysis – a mapping of subjects activities movements;
5) enterprise access to Multi-Domain Expert Systems …;
6) analysis of large volumes of data related to a single case at a single location."

The FBI is also a consumer of commercial databases. Its Investigative Information Services program provides all offices "with investigative information gleaned from numerous commercial online, public source, and internal FBI databases."   "Lexis-Nexis is the FBI's primary commercial online database subscription and provides a wide range of information." In FY 2000, the FBI anticipated that it would spend $6,556,034 for subscriptions to commercial databases.

Information analysis and sharing initiatives are also prominent in the DOJ's FY 2001 budget outline released in early February 2000.

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