

The Washington Times

Mr. Magoo vs. the terrorists

MONDAY, AUGUST 5, 2002

America must bolster its tracking aptitude

By **Charlie Weaver**
and **Robert Ulrich**

About two months before he spearheaded the most deadly domestic terrorist attack in United States history, Mohammed Atta should have been in police custody. On July 5, 2001, Atta was stopped in Palm Beach County, Fla., for a traffic violation. The incident was handled as a routine matter and Atta was released. Yet, in neighboring Broward County there was an outstanding bench warrant for Atta for failure to appear in court on an invalid license charge.

Atta remained free because police in Palm County weren't able to access the records of their counterparts in Broward County. The simple, horrible truth is this: Atta wasn't detained because the CIA, FBI, INS and Florida law-enforcement agencies didn't have the technology to share information. They still don't.

Much of our homeland's insecurity comes down to this: America's law-enforcement community has an inventory management problem. Target Corporation has better information systems to track the socks at its 1,028 stores than law-enforcement agencies have for tracking criminals and potential terrorists.

The Florida information breakdown is symptomatic of what occurs in every police department throughout the country. Police and sheriffs often lack the technology to share information with other law-enforcement agencies within their state, with other states or with federal agencies. Courts often don't have complete records when they sentence criminals. Consequently, criminals are able to move freely throughout our country.

Unless all law-enforcement agencies — from the smallest county sheriff's office to the FBI — have the means to share information, homeland security remains at risk.

Atta is not an isolated example. The CIA tracked two al Qaeda operatives who were also part of the September 11 attack as they entered the United States. The CIA, though, did not let the FBI know the al Qaeda soldiers

were in the country. The two lived openly, listing their address and phone in a local phone book, obtaining drivers licenses, Social Security cards, credit cards, and opening bank accounts in their own names. One of the terrorists was even stopped by an Oklahoma state trooper prior to September 11 for speeding but was released with a ticket when a computer check came back clean.

The FBI insists that had they known about these two terrorists, they may have been able to tie all 19 hijackers together, potentially preventing the September 11 attacks.

According to Sen. Evan Bayh, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, "I really do think we need a thorough, top-to-bottom reorganization improvement of our ability to collect information, both internationally and domestically. If we don't do that, then we're really not going to be in as good a position to protect America, regardless of whoever is heading these agencies."

Reorganizing the federal government alone won't work. We need to restructure business practices, adopt common technology and language and change how information is collected and shared at every level, from the FBI, to the states, to the cities and counties.

And while much of our nation's attention is focused on stopping foreign terrorists, homeland security also should protect us from the criminals in our own communities. Every day in the news there are stories about criminals who manage to elude capture for years.

There is a solution. A unique criminal justice information system now is being constructed and tested in Minnesota. It could be the nationwide model for enhancing public safety and our country's homeland security efforts. Called CriMNet, the system is a secure Intranet that will connect together the

state's 1,100 law-enforcement organizations and the information they have. It is the only system in the country that will give law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, probation and correction officials current and complete criminal history information on suspects and criminals throughout Minnesota — from the state down to the county and city levels.

The Minnesota business community has partnered with law enforcement to support legislative funding for CriMNet because the private sector has the expertise and resources to provide assistance. We have a stake in safe communities for our employees and customers, and we have a



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responsibility to invest in our communities.

The president and Congress are on the right track with improving the nation's inventory management problem by improving collaboration and information-sharing to better track terrorist and criminal activities. But we won't approach the type of safety this nation deserves until tracking terrorists and criminals is as effective as tracking inventory at a Target Store. We need to know exactly where they are.

Charlie Weaver is Minnesota's commissioner of public safety and director of homeland security. Robert Ulrich is CEO of Target Corp.

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Review

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Aaron Sorenson
Woodbury editor

After being arrested for criminal sexual misconduct in 2000, school bus driver Kerry Dean Stevenson, a convicted criminal with a history of violations against children, was about to be tried and sentenced in Anoka County.

When law enforcement officials searched his criminal record, they found six convictions in Hennepin County, including fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct, indecent exposure and driving while intoxicated. What the prosecutor and judge didn't initially see was an additional 16 convictions Stevenson had in Ramsey, Hennepin, Anoka and Pine counties using 10 aliases and seven birth dates. Those convictions included eight indecent conduct violations and three fifth-degree criminal sexual conduct violations.

In 1999, Donald Blom murdered 19-year-old Katie Poirier after kidnapping her from a gas station in Moose Lake, Minn. Blom, who was already on probation when the murder occurred, had six prior sex-offender convictions throughout the state that law enforcement officials were not aware of when he was placed on probation. If law enforcement officials would have had a more complete picture of Blom's past, it's possible he would have been off the streets before he abducted and murdered Poirier.

These are just two of many cases in which law enforcement officials are not immediately obtaining a complete criminal history for those they are arresting, jailing and prosecuting. Law enforcement agencies throughout the state are using individualized systems that are not easily accessible for other jurisdictions in the state.

That could soon change if supporters of CrimNet get their wish.

CrimNet, a state-operated internal system, has been designed to connect Minnesota's nearly 1,100 law

enforcement jurisdictions by allowing for the instantaneous exchange of data across all of the state's criminal justice information systems, including: fingerprints, mug shots, warrant status, pre-trial release status, current processing status in all counties, domestic and restraint conditions, conviction status, probation conditions, incarceration status and weapons prohibition status.

"The epitome of the problem with criminal justice information systems is at the beginning of the process you arrest people, you identify them, you bring some sort of charge, you take fingerprints (and) you throw them into the criminal justice system. The information has to pass all the way through and it somehow has to get connected," said Tom Kooy, deputy director for CrimNet.

That isn't happening right now, said Kooy, adding almost every day criminals are slipping through the criminal justice system.

In the case of Blom, who lived in Richfield, there were numerous records in different jurisdictions of the state in which he had used different surnames and dates of birth. In fact, at the time of his arrest, Blom was using his wife's maiden name.

"Essentially what we had was different criminal history records that had never been matched back that this is the same guy," Kooy said. "So at some point when someone was making a decision about do we put him in jail, do we put him in prison or do we put him on probation, they weren't seeing the whole picture of what this guy's life had been about."

CrimNet, an integrated information sharing system, is designed to function like the Internet. When a law enforcement agency searches for information regarding a suspect, vehicle or weapon, CrimNet will return possible matches in order of their likelihood of being a correct match.



Keeping **CRIMINALS** off the streets

Supporters of CrimNet say a statewide computer system would provide law enforcement more complete and accurate information on those they arrest, jail and prosecute.

"This isn't new information, it already exists," said Rep. Rich Stanek, R-Maple Grove, who authored the most recent CrimNet legislation in the state House of Representatives. Law enforcement officials "should have all this information at their fingertips instead of in different databases," he said.

Stanek, who is also a commander with the Minneapolis Police Department, said law enforcement officials are completely in favor of the system's implementation. "Two years ago officers were skeptical of the technology. Now, after showing them how it works, they are passionate about this and determined to see this take place."

Stanek said he has heard little opposition to CrimNet in the House. Sen. Jane Ranum, DFL-Minneapolis, who authored the legislation in the Senate, said there also appears to be strong bi-partisan support on her side of the Legislature.

Ranum said as a prosecutor for the Hennepin County Attorney's Office for 20 years, she knows firsthand the benefits of implementing a system such as CrimNet.

"When I was a prosecutor, I assumed I was getting all the information on a suspect. I didn't realize

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CriMNet...

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there was a suspense file, where people had been found guilty on other charges but either hadn't been entered into the system or didn't match a file currently in the system," she said. "It was not a good thing for public safety that you had all these silos of information that couldn't talk to each other."

CriMNet would take all of the "silos" of information and connect them through one integrated system.

But the program does not come without a price. Even supporters such as Stanek and Kooy admit the \$100 million to \$150 million it will cost to roll out the system could spark a heated debate in the Legislature next year. But if past legislative support is any indication of future support, the two are confident the funds will be approved.

The CriMNet concept was originally approved by the Legislature in 1993, when it appropriated money to form The Criminal and Juvenile Justice Information Policy Group. The group is comprised of law enforcement practitioners who give advice to another eight-member policy group that includes the commissioners of public safety, corrections, finance and administration, the chief judge of the state Supreme Court, the chief judge of the court of appeals, one district court judge and the state court administrator. The legislation also allowed for the hiring of staff members to develop an information shar-

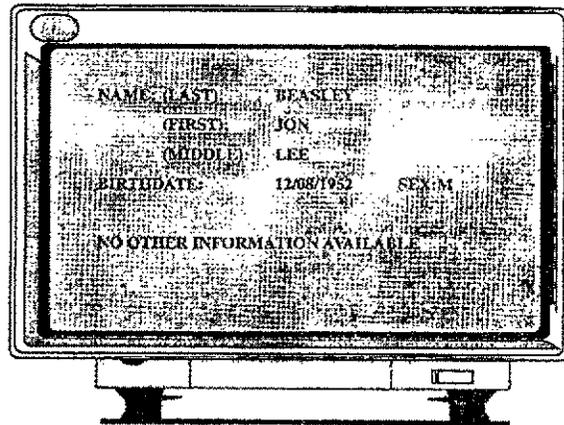
ing system.

In the 2001 session, the Legislature approved \$5 million to build the CriMNet model and house the group in the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. Over the past six years, the state has invested nearly \$57 million, while the federal government has kicked in \$14 million over that same time. A portion of the funding has been used to build a number of systems and databases that will become part of CriMNet in the future. The Predatory Offender Registry and the Minnesota Repository of Arrest Photos are just two of the systems that are operational and can be accessed by law enforcement agencies throughout the state.

According to Kooy, who has been traveling nationwide to talk about CriMNet, the system could become a national model. The system has piqued the interest of many other states, as well as federal government agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office of Homeland Security and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

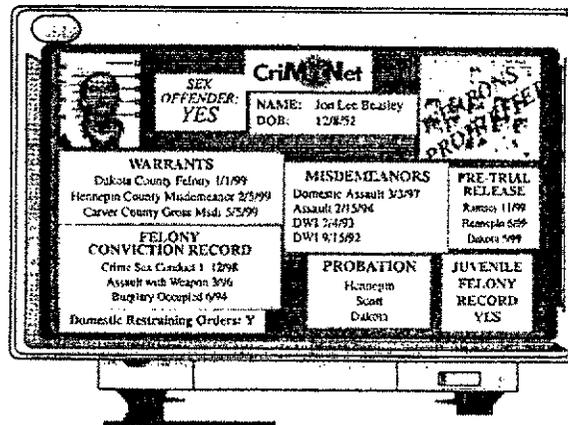
"We'd like to see as much federal money come in and supplant what we have to pay as Minnesota taxpayers," Kooy said.

If CriMNet receives the funding it is seeking, Kooy said, the program could be rolled out statewide in about two to three years. In the meantime, Ramsey, Dakota, Hennepin, Anoka and St. Louis counties, serving as pilot counties, will begin using CriMNet by the end of 2003, Kooy said. Using local



graphics by CriMNet

Above, what current records include. What CriMNet records would include, below.



funding and state-match grants, the five counties are currently working to make their systems compatible with CriMNet.

Lt. Dave Fenner, of the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, said he will support the CriMNet model as long as it improves the criminal justice system.

"I believe it will," he said.

CriMNet system aims to connect and empower state's law agencies

by Brett Andersen
Staff Writer

In the movies, law enforcement officials type a name into a dashboard computer and retrieve a complete history of a person's criminal activity.

"That's the furthest thing from the truth," said Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) Deputy Director Tom Kooy.

According to Kooy, ineffective and nonexistent communications links between Minnesota's 1,100 criminal justice agencies have allowed criminals to remain on the streets.

The agencies aim to fill the cracks with the help of Internet technology.

Over the past couple of years, Minnesota has spent "\$30-plus million" designing and implementing the "backbone" of CriMNet, Kooy said.

"It's really an Internet-based, e-commerce model," said Kooy. "Except it's an extranet, closed and secure."

CriMNet is not a database. Kooy said databases simply get "too big" when city officials load their information onto county systems. Counties in turn load information to the state, which passes it on to the federal agencies.

Since the databases exist, information doesn't need to be moved; it needs to be linked.

The need for a central information broker is well illustrated by the case of Mohammed Atta, a suspected participant in the Sept. 11 attacks. Atta was pulled over for a traffic violation shortly before Sept. 11. The officer let Atta go because he didn't know that Atta was on a federal "watch list."

CriMNet will deliver relevant information to prosecutors, judges, law enforcement officers, and probation and corrections officials who make a query concerning a suspect.

Criminal histories are often incomplete because of the passage of time, clerical mistakes and a lack of communication. Kooy said in some counties "40 to 90 percent of all convictions delivered by judge or jury don't end up on criminal history."

According to Kooy, "well over 50 percent" of requests for criminal history come from non-criminal justice entities. They include business and schools checking backgrounds for employment reasons.

Kooy said he worked with the Hennepin County sheriff years ago and studied the business model of criminal justice. He discovered a few inefficiencies.

"You're recollecting the information about the person's name and date of birth 47 times," he said. "There's a lot of room for mistakes. A lot of salary dollars are wasted in criminal justice doing that kind of work."

Once information is captured in CriMNet, it can be passed on to other systems.

"The public by and large has the perception, 'You mean you guys don't have this stuff?'" said Kooy.

That perception is one of the issues agencies have been fighting.

"We've got probably another \$100 to \$150 million over the next two or three years to go out and connect 1,100 databases," he said.

CriMNet is built on a "flexible" operating system to allow various applications access to the system.

Another challenge of instituting a common computer platform is the technology — or lack of it, especially in rural jurisdictions. Local implementation costs for hardware and software weighed against other local priorities could potentially prevent some areas from connecting to the systems.

Kooy said it's "critical" that all Minnesota criminal justice entities be connected so safe areas are not created for criminals.

In addition to officers in the field, probation officers may significantly benefit from the system. It is not unusual for a single probation officer to manage up to 80 cases, reviewing each case "maybe once a month," Kooy said.

Through CriMNet, the probation officer can "subscribe" to cases and be e-mailed whenever updates occur.

The subscription service also carries implications for investigations, said Kooy. Investigators who have a suspect but insufficient evidence can subscribe and be notified if another agency has contact with the suspect.

Minnesota has about 650 police agencies, any one of which may have information helpful to an investigation.

"But who do I call?" said Kooy.

Currently the only way an investigator can mine for information is to get on the phone and call each agency.

CriMNet is a method of prevention rather than "cleanup," said Kooy. Using the Sept. 11 attacks as an example, Kooy said much of the information was available to intelligence agencies, but was just scattered enough to not be usable. Once

See CriMNet, 26A

CrimNet/From 9A

Once the attacks were put in a frame of reference, authorities were able to account for about 75 percent of the main "100 actors" in the drama within 36 hours, Kooy said.

Kooy said the bulk of the \$40 billion America committed to homeland security is going out through the Federal Emergency Management Agency and is built around rescue and cleanup efforts.

CrimNet has attracted attention from the newly formed Department of Homeland Security, the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

"They're really looking at this as something they can mine," said Kooy.

The potential exists to create CrimNet-style systems in

each state tied together with a federal system, to make information-sharing across borders easier and faster.

As an analogy, Kooy said when he and his girlfriend, who is from Michigan, went to rent a video from a national chain, they used her card. The night before, her son returned a tape late.

"She couldn't rent a tape in Minnetonka until she paid the fine from Kalamazoo, Mich," he said. "We don't have that system."

With the public focus on security since Sept. 11, the BCA expects CrimNet to become a prominent campaign issue and an issue in the next legislative session.

More information about the system is available at www.crimnet.state.mn.us.



June 27, 2002

CriMNet to help keep tabs on criminals

By Matt Erickson
Staff Writer

BREEZY POINT -- A tool is being developed to keep criminals from falling through the criminal justice cracks.

Called CriMNet, the tool will be a cross-jurisdictional information system where a common set of accurate, precise, complete and comprehensive criminal justice data is collected, processed, shared and evaluated in a timely manner.

Once complete, CriMNet will give Minnesota's prosecutors, judges, law enforcement officers, probation and corrections officials current, accurate and complete criminal history information on suspects and criminals throughout the state.

The hope, said CriMNet Deputy Director Tom Kooy, is that every law enforcement agency and court in the state will participate. "It's got to be available everywhere, and it's clearly needed everywhere," said Kooy. "The only way to safeguard our communities, our own borders, is to know who's in the criminal justice system."

Kooy was at Breezy Point Resort Wednesday to promote CriMNet to Minnesota court officials gathered for a statewide conference.

Simply put, CriMNet would put a stop to criminals avoiding prosecution by staying on the move within the state. Counties share information when it's requested, Kooy said, but often criminals are able to commit several crimes before being caught.

An example, said Kooy, is Donald Blom, who was convicted for the kidnapping and murder of 19-year-old Katie Poirier in Moose Lake. Blom was a career criminal who'd been released from jail on probation before the Poirier kidnapping because local law enforcement officials didn't know that he had committed several prior offenses. Blom is one of the reasons CriMNet was developed, said Kooy.

"The case helped get the ear of legislators and a wider audience," said Kooy. "No longer did we bring up technical issues and have people's eyes glaze over. Here was a graphic, pictorial representation of where the breakdown was."

The CriMNet Web site also noted the case of Mohammed Atta, the suspected ringleader of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Atta was pulled over for a driving violation just before the attacks, the CriMNet Web site reported, but the officer let Atta go because he didn't know Atta was on a watch list.

The CriMNet network would tie in all 1,100 of Minnesota's law enforcement entities together. Still in the developmental stage, the future of CriMNet is uncertain, Kooy said. At a probable total cost of between \$100 million to \$150 million, the project could be a casualty to budget cuts.

If it is completed plans are to connect the system to seven other states: North Dakota, South Dakota, Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana. There also is a plan to create a national model, Kooy said.

Good
Morning!

INDEPENDENT

WEDNESDAY
JUNE 26, 2002

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Southwest Minnesota's Daily Newspaper

Marshall, Minn.

How does the criminal justice system share information?

*Not as easily as most
people think, but a
computerized
information system
called CrimNet
could help*

By JUSTIN LESSMAN
Independent Staff Writer

The United States changed forever last September 11.

Prior to that day, terrorists, bombs and anthrax letters were atrocities heard of only in distant countries. We read about them in newspapers and saw them on television.

Today, with the threat of terrorist activity so real, the stress on homeland security has never been greater. And the need for an upgraded criminal justice system to ensure that security has never been of more importance.

That is where CrimNet comes in. CrimNet is a computerized internet information system being designed to link the state's 1,100 criminal and juvenile justice jurisdictions by using common sense and a standard computer language. By connecting each jurisdiction's systems, complete, accurate and timely information files can be shared throughout the state.

In the future, it is hoped that information from other states would also be integrated, much improving access to critical information and better safeguarding the nation.

CrimNet Deputy Director Tom Kooy, in Marshall last week as part of a public-awareness tour, said the public's perception of police scanning a name and instantly seeing records of criminal history on a computer screen is false.

"The thing is, we have that technology available," he said. "We just haven't harnessed it all, yet. The technology is real, the connection is not. CrimNet would be that connection."

Kooy likened the CrimNet system to an Internet search engine.

"When completed, police will be able to type in a name, press 'search,' and receive what are, in essence, 'hits' on the suspect from different jurisdictions around the state, if there are any," said Kooy. "CrimNet would create organization out of the chaos of loose information."

CRIMNET FROM PAGE 1A

Currently, under today's system, a county sheriff wanting to know if a suspect has any previous arrests or warrants pending would have to call each of the 1,100 jurisdictions one by one.

"Obviously," said Kooy, "this often does not get done."

Kooy calls the current system "archaic" and "something out of the 1970s."

"All this information is not easily accessible and yet, criminal justice professionals are making decisions every day based upon information they have," Kooy said. "Bail, charging, and sentencing decisions are often based on prior criminal history, some of which is not known to those making the decisions."

A prime example lies within the makings of September 11.

Mohammed Atta, the suspected ringleader of the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., was pulled over for a minor driving violation shortly before September 11. The officer let Atta go free because he did not know he was on a federal "watch list." CrimNet could have let the officer know.

CrimNet was developed at a local level and originally tested in Hennepin County. Some individual functions are currently available to law enforcement agencies, but the central function of connecting the 1,100 databases, will require months, if not years, of work and financial backing.

And it's not going to be cheap, said Kooy.

He said that CrimNet has been developed and tested thus far on a \$27 million grant, and will require \$100 million to \$150 million of state and federal funds over the next three to four years before being fully implemented.

Despite the high price tag, Kooy said government interest is high and support is strong.

"When you think about it, who could really be against this?" Kooy asked. "The legislature has been generous, the executive branch has been supportive, and the judiciary sees the need for this. This could even become a platform issue in the upcoming campaign season."

Kooy said, above all, the most important thing is that this system gets implemented as quickly as possible.

"People don't want to have to think about this," he said. "It's like when somebody calls 911. They don't care where the call goes, what ambulance comes to get them or how it works; they just care that it works. CrimNet will work."

Local/State

Assistant managing editor, Mike Knaak, 255-8747 St. Cloud Times ♦ Tuesday, June 25, 2002



Times photo by Jason Wachter, jwachter@stcloudtimes.com

Area law enforcement officials listen to an update Monday of the CrimNet computer system by Tom Kooy, CrimNet deputy director (left), and Sen. Dave Kleis (right) in the St. Cloud City Hall Council Chambers.

Local officials get look at CrimNet technology

System will allow search of records from other counties

By Sandra Rodriguez
srodri@stcloudtimes.com

St. Cloud-area officials got a look Monday at the technology that will allow law enforcement officials to more easily access a full background on criminal suspects, regardless of the county in which their crimes were committed.

"Anywhere you have a geo-political division there is a black hole of communication," said Tom Kooy, deputy director of CrimNet, a network that would link 1,100 criminal justice entities throughout the state.

Kooy ran Monday's demonstration at St. Cloud City Hall for a mix of local officials. St. Cloud-area agencies would like to join the network.

Hennepin, Anoka, Dakota, Ramsey and St. Louis counties are running a trial program of CrimNet. Kooy hopes to get live access working by the end of the summer.

"For the time being, they will have to go to the CrimNet Web site," he said.

Background information and criminal history on a suspect has to be gathered from a variety of sources and databases. Investiga-



Tom Kooy, deputy director of CrimNet, explains the technology that allows criminal justice professionals to share accurate, complete and timely information.

tors have to search each source independently. That can delay an investigation or leave holes in a suspect's criminal history.

For example, in 2001, Kerry Dean Stevenson, a convicted criminal with a history of violations against

children, was nearing trial for criminal sexual misconduct. Investigators had access to only a part of his record. Stevenson had 10 aliases and seven birthdates. What they didn't know was that Stevenson had been convicted of other crimes, in

other counties. The information could have changed Stevenson's sentence.

The public has the misconception that officers type a name into a computer and the person's criminal history appears, Kooy said. Officials only know of a person's criminal past if they have a record in the same county.

CrimNet reduces the time spent researching a person's criminal history on the state's multitude of databases. Instead of five searches, a CrimNet search would explore some or all of the databases at the same time.

Results of the search also would include the name of the agency that has that information, prior criminal history and outstanding arrest warrants.

Law enforcement agencies have been supportive of CrimNet's efforts, saying it will help officers deal more quickly with dangerous suspects.

"We will be able to put the right info in the hands of the right people at the right time and in the right place," said Capt. Richard Wilson of the St. Cloud Police Department.

"We would like to join them in that endeavor," Wilson said.

Kooy said he hopes that CrimNet will be fully developed by 2005.



Albert Lea Tribune

June 24, 2002

New statewide system would link law-enforcement records together

By Masaaki Harada, Tribune staff writer

Investigation scenes you see on TV, where a police officer punches in the name of suspect on a computer to retrieve all the necessary information such as an address, vehicles, mug shot and fingerprints, are far from reality.

The reality is that, in Minnesota, an officer needs to call up several different agencies to get the information. The number of criminal justice authorities in the state is 1,100.

The state has started building a new system, called CriMNet, which will eventually connect information each agency has accumulated and makes real-time data about any individual available.

"A technology is out there, but it is not used," said CriMNet Deputy Director Tom Kooy. "It's almost a joke."

The system functions similarly to an Internet search engine. An inquiry made on a name automatically will go through the computer files of every agency in the system and retrieve all relevant information.

Currently, most of the database criminal justice agencies can use are contained in centralized files, and the computers don't store all the information field offices have gathered. Plus, there's often a significant time lag between the time an incident occurred and when the computers are updated.

CriMNet aims not only to bridge different jurisdictions but also to reduce the time deferral by hooking up the local computer files directly to a system that anybody can access.

"It will allow a police officer to check the criminal records of a suspect in different counties and jurisdictions through an on-board terminal in the squad car," said Sen. Grace Schwab, R-Albert Lea.

Schwab pushed the legislature to approve \$27 million, the largest appropriation to date, in the last legislative session. About \$20 million will be used to update the state court information system, according to Kooy.

The interactive data communication will be possible only after major renovations are done on existing computer systems. And the total cost will exceed \$200 million before the system is done.

"Nearly \$2 billion is spent on criminal justice in Minnesota," said Kooy. "The investment on CriMNet will improve efficiency and accountability. That will pay for itself."

June 22, 2002

Criminals Beware

By KATIE CAMPBELL

Press staff writer

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Criminals beware. CrimNet is on its way.

A secure intranet system, CrimNet is designed to connect Minnesota's 1,100 criminal justice jurisdictions, so that prosecutors, judges, law enforcement officers, probation and corrections officials will have access to complete criminal histories.

"Officers are making decisions on the street with the information available and in most cases that's incomplete," CrimNet's Deputy Director Tom Kooy said. "They can only see local history, but beyond that there are 86 counties they can't see."

Four years ago, Hennepin County law enforcement officials began working on a way to access criminal histories across the state, making Minnesota one of the few states developing any kind of system of this kind. Today Minnesota's CrimNet project has been deemed the national model, Kooy said.

"People think we have these data systems in place. People think that the information is at our fingertips, but it's not," Kooy said. "Nobody is doing what we're doing. There's no system holistically incorporating all of the criminal justice systems."

State-wide driving records can be accessed and severe, felony-level convictions can be gathered nationally, but misdemeanors, warrants, probation violations and the like cannot be accessed except for in the county where the incidents occurred. "Every step up, the information is thinner and high level," Kooy said.

The other problem is that the different agencies on the city, county and state levels don't automatically share information. "We collect the information, but it sits in different systems," Kooy said. "I've never had experience where I couldn't call other jurisdictions and get information. It can be shared. The problem is I don't know where the information is." Under these silo-like systems, law enforcement officials must work extra hard to get the real story on some criminals."

On the local level, Steele County Court Administrator Gordon Meiners said CrimNet would be beneficial for judges in making decisions about posting bail or issuing warrants. "Right now we're isolated by our county. This is going to give courts a lot more background on a person. The courts will be able to make informed decisions," Meiners said.

County Attorney Doug Ruth said CrimNet could become an important link between law enforcement officials and prosecutors. "It would be crucial for some cases and helpful on a day-to-day basis. It's a great system and the county attorney association is very excited about it," Ruth said.

"It's clear to us that this needs to be done, and it needs to be done holistically," Kooy said. The only piece holding the CrimNet project back is funding. Kooy said the CrimNet project could be put in place across the state within the next two to three years if it had an estimated \$150 million to revamp all the systems on city, county and state levels.

The state legislature has already allocated \$32 million toward the CrimNet project to get it to this point. "By fall we'll be able to provide information on a web browser" that law enforcement officials will be able to access, Kooy said. But to finish the project, more funds will be needed.

Kooy said they are hoping for money from the Homeland Security fund, the state legislature and from the local government level. Each year the legislature spends about \$1 billion on criminal justice administration, Kooy said. "We spend so much on the number of staff because the system is not efficient."

"We'll spend \$2 billion in the next two years doing the same old business when we could reallocate that money and make a more efficient system," Kooy said.



June 21, 2002

Law enforcement eyes new system to find criminals

By Lee Bonorden

CriMNet helps connect the dots.

It allows a sheriff in far northern Roseau County, a Bureau of Criminal Apprehension agent in the Twin Cities, a probation officer in Rochester and a district court judge in Houston County to have the same, accurate and, perhaps most importantly, up-to-date information on criminals.

It tightens the cracks in the criminal justice system making it less likely wrong-doers will slip through.

Tom Kooy, deputy director of CriMNet, has dozens of examples like the convicted murderer of Katie Poirer and the suspected ringleader of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on America.

Kooy believes CriMNet will also keep track of the criminal mundane. Dead-beat dads, for instance, who avoid paying child support.

It will also trip up stalkers and abusive husbands, who ignore orders for protection.

CriMNet will do all that and make good business sense, too. How many tax dollars and how many public employers does it take to process weapons prohibition and arrest warrant information, pretrial release data, conviction status on all offense levels, post-conviction restrictive prohibition conditions, detention/incarceration data, alcohol driving convictions, juvenile arrests and conviction data as well as all the other esoteric, but necessary, facts of criminal justice life?

Start at "hundreds of millions of dollars" and go higher fast.

Kooy is on the road across Minnesota explaining CriMNet in anticipation of it becoming a prominent issue of the election campaigns and the 2003 Minnesota legislative session.

As he explains it, "Currently, Minnesota's 1,100 law enforcement agencies do not have an integrated computer system to track criminals.

"CriMNet, a new, integrated information system will connect criminal and juvenile justice systems throughout Minnesota," Kooy said. "It will provide a 'network of networks' so that a judge in Mower County or a police officer in Minneapolis will have the same, accurate and up-to-date information on criminals."

Mower County Sheriff Barry J. Simonson is among the "believers."

Simonson said, "I believe it certainly would help law enforcement track criminals."

When peace officers stop a motorist today, "All we can get is wants and warrants, but not much more," Simonson said.

"With CriMNet, if we put the name and date of birth into the system we'll know a lot more about that person," Simonson said.

"It could be enough for probable cause to initiate a search or it could be information that would warn the officer that the person is really dangerous; perhaps a felon with a history of assaulting law enforcement officers," he said. "Having more information will help law enforcement do its job."

CriMNet is like the Internet. "It is a system of systems designed to work and share information with all criminal justice agencies," Kooy said.

In this case, CriMNet is a secure intranet system that will link criminal justice jurisdictions by using common business practices and a standard computer language.

The idea was borne of a dilemma: criminals and suspects can remain free to re-offend simply because a police record in one county does not get to a judge in another county.

"This means many senseless murders and other crimes could have been prevented if only prosecutors, police officers or judges had accurate information," Kooy said. "Right now they are relying on 1970s technology or worse."

Kooy points to the murder of Katie Poirer as one example, but his other example carries greater significance.

Mohammed Atta, suspected of being the ringleader behind the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks was pulled over for a traffic violation shortly before Sept. 11.

"The officer let Atta go free because he didn't know that Atta was on a 'watch' list," said Kooy. "Currently, this federal information is not readily available to other levels of law enforcement. With CriMNet, it could be."

So intrigued by the implications of CriMNet are federal authorities, that they have made it a potential "role model" for development of a nationwide network of information systems.

This means the possibility of federal funding and funding is something Kooy needs lots of for CriMNet.

Although the Minnesota Legislature has been supportive with \$27 million in early funding for the program, more is needed - between \$100 and \$150 million a year over the next two years.

Because of the state's own budget crisis, funding for CriMNet may be as elusive as the criminals Kooy hopes the system will snare.

Kooy is buoyed by the support CriMNet has received from the Minnesota Business Partnership and the powerful former state senator Duane Benson.

Pointing out how business has embraced the idea, Kooy said CriMNet "makes good business sense" by reducing criminal justice expenditures with a one-time, albeit large, investment in the tracking system.

Kooy imagines when electronic digital fingerprinting and photo images will help tighten the noose around criminals and take an even larger bite out of crime.

After all, the basic purpose of the system is to ensure accountability for offenders and greater public safety.

"We will be able to make decision based on the accurate, up-to-date information we have at our fingertips," Kooy said. "Who knows what might have happened had we had the full criminal history of Donald Blom before he murdered Katie Poirer. That we didn't is a travesty."

June 19, 2002

System to link agencies

CriMNet's connections could be critical for police

By Janice Gregorson

gregor@postbulletin.com

Could a computer-based information system have prevented the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11?

No one will ever know, but it's a possibility, according to those developing just such a system in Minnesota.

The system is called CriMNet. When complete, it will connect statewide criminal and juvenile justice databases.

That means a police officer in Rochester making a traffic stop can quickly learn if the driver is wanted elsewhere in the state, if he has a criminal record and for what types of offenses.

Tom Kooy, Deputy Director of CriMNet, said that didn't happen in Florida when Mohammed Atta, suspected ringleader of the Sept. 11 attacks, was pulled over for a driving violation shortly before Sept. 11.

The officer let Atta go because he didn't know a warrant was out for his arrest from a county a short distance away, or that he was on a federal "watch list." The officer could have known that with a program such as CriMNet.

Kooy says the public perception is that such information is readily available and shared with modern technology.

Unfortunately, it's not and never has been, he said during a stop in Rochester Tuesday.

Kooy notes that about 1,100 agencies in Minnesota collect criminal and juvenile justice information across all levels and branches of government. It is collected on people, incidents and cases. But it often is incomplete and is not shared by the various agencies.

CriMNet will provide that critical connection, he said, giving prosecutors, judges, law officers, probation and correction agents current and complete criminal history information on suspects and offenders throughout the state.

Authorities point to the Katie Poirier kidnapping and murder in May 1999 as a major turning point.

That case got the ear of the Minnesota Legislature, largely due to public outcry after it became known that career offender Donald Blom, now convicted of the murder, was out on probation at the time after having numerous prior convictions, Kooy said.

In 2000, the Legislature approved funding for a model for CriMNet that could be used in all 87 counties. The model was completed in October 2000.

The largest appropriation to date has been the \$27 million approved during the 2001 special session. Of that amount, Kooy said, \$15 million was transferred to the state court administrator to update the court information system. Other funds have gone to the state public defender system, the state Department of Public Safety and for grants to fund local planning and implementation.

Alexandria Echo Press

CriMNet links law enforcement

By Joe Albert, Staff Reporter

Wednesday, 6/12/02

When Donald Blom kidnapped Katie Poirer in May of 1999, he probably shouldn't have been out on probation.

He had a long history of convictions under various names in different state and local agencies, but none of the agencies knew of other agencies' information.

"What was he doing on the street?" asked Tom Kooy, the deputy director of CriMNet, an information system that will connect criminal and juvenile systems throughout Minnesota. Kooy visited Alexandria to talk about CriMNet and how it could be used to stop the kind of crimes Blom was convicted of.

For law enforcement officers to get information on a person, they must physically call each agency, wasting time and resources.

CriMNet is going to be clearinghouse of information.

"It will try and create and direct you to a single haystack," Kooy said.

Once CriMNet is off the ground — beginning at the end of this year, and in full fruition in Minnesota by 2003-04, Kooy hopes — all law enforcement agencies and criminal justice professionals will be able to share information about anyone with a criminal record.

It will cost between \$150 and \$200 million to connect the entire state, Kooy said. State and federal appropriations will cover the majority of the cost, although a small part will be paid by each local agency.

"It is going to be another step," said Captain Rick Wyffels of the Alexandria Police Department. "My belief has always been that the only way law enforcement can succeed is to share information as quickly as possible."

The Minnesota State Legislature began earmarking money for a system like CriMNet eight or nine years ago, Kooy said. The CriMNet concept was defined in 1999, and "Katie's Law" brought in money to set up the infrastructure, Kooy said.

To connect with the 1,100 Minnesota agencies, an agency will need a computer and secure Intranet system. CriMNet will allow law enforcement officials to get information, photos and fingerprints in seconds, according to Kooy.

"We can get more information about the subject," Wyffels said. "Where he's been and where he's been in trouble with law enforcement."

CriMNet will standardize software so all agencies can read it.

"In towns like Alexandria and larger, there are about 20 different softwares," Wyffels said. "It is going to make us all talk together."

While CriMNet is beginning at the state level and will tie Minnesota together at the city-county-state level, the Department of Justice is interested in the Minnesota CriMNet model as a national system.

CriMNet holds added significance for towns like Alexandria because of Interstate 94, which runs through numerous states.

"The I-94 corridor is one that people underestimate the significance of," Kooy said.

Wyffels agrees.

"It's one of the main arteries of our country," he said. "We're pumping the good, the bad and the ugly right down that artery."

So the Alexandria Police Department could arrest someone in Alexandria for petty theft. That same person could have been arrested two days earlier in Minneapolis for the same thing.

Apart from each other, the two crimes may seem rather insignificant. But taken together, they may be meaningful, because it is important to stop criminals while they are committing small crimes, Kooy said.

"We have a highly mobile and habitual crime element," Kooy said. "But you rarely see a major crime committed by a first-time offender."

In other words, stopping someone like Donald Blom in the early stages — and connecting his various crimes — would likely have prevented the needless death of Katie Poirer.

"That is just an excellent example of where sharing information is so valuable," Wyffels said.

CriMNet to link 1,100 databases

CriMNet will be search engine for information

By Ron Larsen
Journal Staff Writer

NEW ULM -- With potential terrorists walking in our midst, the fear of violent criminals slipping through the cracks in the state's criminal justice system has never been greater.

Enter CriMNet, the technological caulking gun being designed to seal those gaping cracks for good. When fully developed, up and running, the secure intranet system will link Minnesota's 1,100 criminal justice jurisdictions through the use of common business practices and a standard computer language.

CriMNet Deputy Director Tom Kooy and the firm's director of communications, Mahogany Eller, visited New Ulm last week as part of an out-state tour to explain the program to law enforcement agencies and news media.

"We're talking to law enforcement agencies to help them in understanding what CriMNet is, giving them some idea of time lines, the things they need to be thinking about, and preparing them for some motivation about why they are going to want to be involved and get connected to this," Kooy explained.

"But we're also here to just start to propagate some community understanding about what the project is, what the investment is, and why it's needed."

Kooy said TV shows and Hollywood movies have led people to believe that the data is already out there -- which is true -- but there's also the idea that you can take a driver's license and swipe the mag stripe on a machine and bring back every piece of data that's known about an individual. His current address, criminal history and everything down to speeding tickets, and, naturally, it will be delivered right to the computer desktop.

"Nothing is further from the truth, and yet criminal justice professionals every day have to make decisions based upon what information they do have," Kooy explained. "It's usually only a fragment of people's accurate criminal history."

CriMNet isn't about compiling a vast, central database to serve the needs of the state's criminal justice system.

"CriMNet will act like a search engine, pulling information from the various existing databases," Kooy said. "With roughly 1,100 different criminal justice databases in Minnesota alone, trying to dynamically build a redundant database on top of all that just doesn't work, but it is always what has been done, usually within lines of business."

Whether it be local police reports, state police, court reports or corrections reports, they all have reporting mechanisms, Kooy explained. However, the problem is, in accessing these reports, that they aren't in the same form or a compatible computer language.

"So, while you may be able to access the information, it may not be in the proper order so it doesn't make sense. So being able to effectively access these various databases and being able to pull out the right information is the big challenge."

While there are some individual functions that are now available to agencies, there's a lot of work left to be done on the program's central function, that of searching 1,100 different databases for pertinent information, Kooy explained.

However, Kooy and the other staff members of CriMNet are pleased with the progress thus far.

"We've had inquiries from surrounding states in the Midwest, including Illinois, wanting to know more about our system, and we've received inquiries from the Justice Department about the possibility of our program becoming a national model."

It's not an inexpensive project, either. With funding coming from federal and state sources, the price tag is expected to be \$50 million or more.

"It's an immense undertaking," Kooy said. "Harnessing over 1,100 individual databases and establishing a connection between them, with a common computer language, so the resulting information pulled from them is understandable is not an easy job.

"They have to be connected in such a way that all of the data, regardless of how it's being collected and stored today in the different data bases, different technologies, different data structures, relational, non-relational databases that we can commonize so you can share and view them all in one way.

"With different accessibilities, we've got to deal with connecting. They've got to be able to pull, push the information so there are some infrastructural issues that we have to commonize so that all this data can move."

All in all, CriMNet will be a great tool for law enforcement agencies when it's done, but Kooy admits that it's a long way from being fully operational.

Heitke brings CriMNet to NLC steering committee

CITIES BULLETIN NEWSLETTER

Publication of the League of Minnesota Cities

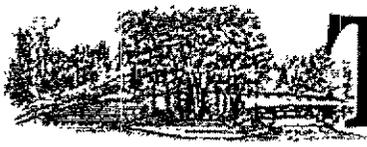
Author: Anne Finn , Editor: Erica Norris

Date: May 14, 2002

CriMNet, Minnesota's integrated criminal justice information system, could become a national model with help from the National League of Cities (NLC). The NLC Public Safety Steering Committee met last week in Morristown, Tenn., to begin its annual policy adoption process.

At the suggestion of Willmar Mayor Les Heitke, vice chair of the committee and president of the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC), the committee heard a presentation on CriMNet. The presentation was part of a broader agenda on public safety technology. Heitke introduced CriMNet, noting that its success is the result of broad-based support including the state, local units of government, and the Minnesota business community. Tom Kooy, deputy director of CriMNet, gave a compelling presentation using real examples and touting Minnesota's leadership on integration efforts. He noted that all the states on Minnesota's borders plan to use CriMNet so that the ability to access information about criminals will not stop at the state's boundaries.

The presentation was well received, and several committee members said they would like to see their states linked to CriMNet. The committee will continue discussions about integration efforts at future meetings.



Albert Lea
Tribune

May 04, 2002

Column: Crime prevention's wave of the future

By Sen. Grace Schwab, Senate District 27A

This week I had the opportunity to meet with Minnesota public safety officials to take a virtual tour of CriMNet, the groundbreaking criminal justice data system I worked to fund last session.

Recent high-profile cases like Donald Blom's abduction of Katie Poirier have painfully illustrated the need to combine all relevant information on crime suspects, especially those with an extensive criminal background or multiple identities.

Last year the legislature significantly contributed toward that goal by investing \$27 million in CriMNet, a program that will eventually allow police in any part of the state to instantly access a suspect's complete criminal history.

When completed, it will offer city, county, state and federal information on prior arrests, juvenile detention, court verdicts, prosecution, defense, jail or prison sentences and probation. The CriMNet program is serving as a national model of crime prevention efficiency.

In theory alone, CriMNet was easy to support. As a member of the Senate Crime Prevention Committee, I was proud to be a lead voice for last session's investment and I am pushing the legislature to consider bonding for further investments this year. But, to actually see the project up and running this week proved beyond a doubt that we made a worthwhile investment. As the stakes of public safety have risen over the past year, I feel good knowing we are growing better prepared through projects like this.

As part of the overall CriMNet endeavor, the state is also working to compile photographs of known criminals. MRAP, the Minnesota Repository of Arrest Photos, will allow police to put together a virtual lineup of mug shots in a matter of minutes.

The CriMNet officials who demonstrated the computer system and provided a status report for me this week, say comprehensive background files like these are so valuable some law enforcement agencies will forego squad cars and other basics in order to purchase them.

I am so proud of the achievements in information sharing that this project has delivered. Each added bit of knowledge we can provide to our law enforcement officers reduces the size of the mesh in their nets. Every piece of data we can share on these perpetrators decreases the chances that they'll slip through our grasp again.

In all, the state has contributed \$57 million to the CriMNet effort so far. Officials with the program say they will need approximately \$200 million more to take CriMNet from the prototype stage to a fully operational form throughout the state. My fellow lawmakers and I expect to receive a sizeable funding request next session in order to continue progress on the project.

I for one believe the work that has gone into CriMNet is amazing and I am more committed than ever to seeing it through.

Sen. Grace Schwab, R-Albert Lea, represents Freeborn County and the western part of Mower County in the state senate.

CrimNet funds needed
Rochester Post Bulletin

Saturday, January 5, 2002

A widely supported crime-fighting tool has a doubtful future because of the proposed state funding cutback.

It is CrimNet, a plan for linking state and local criminal records and making them accessible statewide. If it goes forward, the system will enable Minnesota law enforcement agencies to have up-to-date, accurate information on criminals' records and their identities.

The program will plug a gap in the current system, which often allows lawbreakers to be sentenced as first offenders when, in fact, they have a number of previous offenses that are recorded only in local databases that are not accessible statewide. It also will help crime victims know when an offender has completed a sentence and is about to be released.

The Legislature has approved \$27 million for launching the program. However, because of a looming budget shortfall, there is some question as to how much can be made available now.

David Billeter, who has been hired to direct the program, has said that any budget cuts could result in years of delay. The total costs of the finished program is estimated at \$100 million. It will link the databases of 1,100 criminal justice agencies so they can exchange information.

Billeter gave up a high-level executive position with General Motors to take the lower-paid position as director. He is hoping to open bids for setting up the program in January. The program already has demonstrated its value with the establishment of mini-projects integrating some existing computer systems. The projects have shown the value of a systemwide integration program.

Officials have recognized for a long time the need to provide better communication among the various criminal justice entities -- city police, sheriff's departments, state police, the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys and probation officers.

It is impossible today to make certain that all agencies have access to criminal records, fingerprints, personal data and other essential information. When complete, CrimNet is expected to provide that service.

We recognize that no agency can be totally exempt from the current economic pressures. However, CrimNet has such broad support that we hope it can receive a sufficient appropriation to get the program started.

It offers a real opportunity for ending the information void that has always hampered the state's criminal justice system.

Fighting Crime with Information

Improved safety comes with integrating criminal justice information systems, but the process isn't easy. And it takes money.

By Blake Harrison

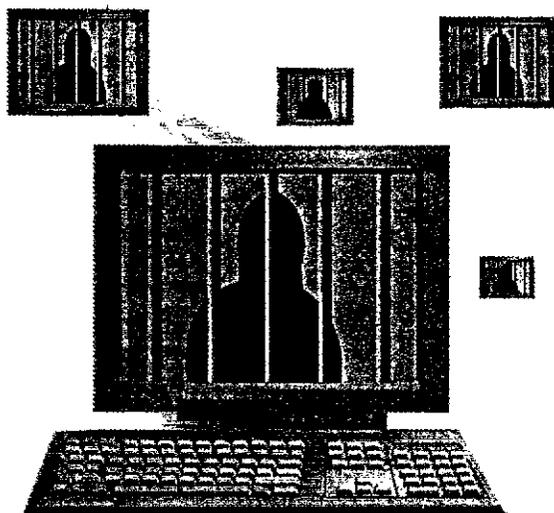
Minnesota Representative Richard Stanek, a veteran of the Minneapolis police force, was the watch commander on the night of Sept. 29, 1997, when a woman was fatally shot by her ex-husband. At first this tragedy seemed to be another inevitable, brutal crime.

But in the days that followed, it became obvious that the murder might have been prevented if judges and prosecutors knew the killer's complete criminal record. The murder occurred while the man was out on bail, awaiting sentencing, just three weeks after he was convicted of killing his ex-wife's new boyfriend. In addition, and unbeknownst to the judge who approved his release, the man previously had been arrested for threatening his ex-wife with a gun and had been convicted of robbery in 1995.

If the criminal justice system failed in this case, it was not the result of careless police work or lack of scrutiny on the part of the judge. It stemmed from the lack of information exchange among criminal justice agencies and officials. These early crimes occurred in different counties within Minnesota, preventing the sentencing judge from having all relevant information. At that time, the state's criminal information system was incapable of tracking an offender's status and record throughout Minnesota's 87 counties.

"Every time I talk to an official about integrated criminal justice, they have a similar story highlighting the need to bring criminal databases up to speed," Stanek said. "The technology is available. We just have to have the political will to put the right kind of system in place."

Stanek, along with other lawmakers, agency



Representative
Richard Stanek
Minnesota

officials and business leaders, has since worked to make Minnesota's system the best funded in the country and an example for other states.

The vision for an integrated criminal justice information system is grand, and yet basic. It is a system in which criminal justice personnel have, within minutes, each piece of information needed to make informed decisions. Planning for integration also addresses who can obtain what data, with built-in security and privacy safeguards.

The public, and even some elected officials, may assume that in the information age such a system already

exists. But pertinent data like outstanding warrants, protective orders, child support orders, sexual offender registration requirements, and the status of probation and drug treatment is often maintained in separate databases by different agencies, often at different levels of government.

"There is a very wide gap between public expectation and the reality of these systems," says Joe Lehman, head of the Washington Department of Corrections. He says that paroled offenders often have prohibitions requiring them to stay away from minors, felons or victims, but an officer on the street has no way of knowing about these conditions. When information breakdowns cause failure to prevent or detect crimes committed, corrections gets a black eye. "We need connectivity because the state is being held accountable," Lehman says. "There is no limit on liability when errors occur as a result of information that the department should have known."

In at least 31 states, integration efforts are under way to pull this information together. Yet to date, none are fully operational.

In Minnesota, the system called CrimNet will be able to link existing and developing criminal justice information systems that contain thorough case information. The system is capable of collecting and sharing everything from an incident report through disposition.

Two years ago if a city police officer in Minnesota wanted to know

Blake Harrison works on criminal justice information in NCSL's Denver office.

if a suspect was on probation in another county, he would have to call every jurisdiction or rely on the offender's word. Today most counties are connected and are able to find the information through the Internet. Soon every county will be included. When the system is complete, any officer in the state will be able to get an instantaneous record on a suspect from inside the patrol car.

Lack of readily available complete information helps criminals and impedes law enforcement, Stanek says. It's a public safety issue as well as an officer safety issue. If an officer knows a suspect has a violent history before he responds to a call, he can proceed accordingly.

The greatest benefits to integration—an improved justice system and enhanced public safety—are hard to quantify. Other easier-to-see benefits are things like more accurate information and better efficiency in getting and sharing data. Once information is placed in an integrated system, it doesn't need to be entered again. This saves on labor costs and prevents duplicate entries that often result in errors. Records can then be shared electronically with fewer transmission costs and without the time lags of pushing paper.

Minnesota's spadework began in the early 1990s when Senator Jane Ranum introduced legislation to identify information gaps in the criminal justice system. A task force created by the legislation reported some findings, shocking even to Ranum, an experienced prosecutor from Hennepin County who knows the system from the inside out. "Almost half of all felonies were not even reported because there was such a backlog. The ones that were in the system were more than a year old."



Senator
Jane Ranum
Minnesota

Following that discovery, the Legislature began funding updates to the state's criminal history records, including solving access, retention and accuracy problems. By 1999, both policy and funding were driving integration of Minnesota's criminal justice information. A policy group created by the Legislature consisting of agency heads and members of the business community guided the process.

A significant obstacle, according to legislators involved, was opposition from agencies that didn't want to give up their current systems or relinquish power over their information. The Legislature required that funding requests by state, county or local agencies be reviewed by the policy group to ensure the proposal was compatible with integration. Tying funding to integration has helped keep the efforts on track, and, according to Ranum, ensured that legislation designed to enhance public safety can do in practice what the Legislature set out as its purpose.

"We have spent a lot of time in the last eight years focused on legislation to protect people," Ranum said. "You can't, for example, be hired in a day care facility or work in a nursing home if you have a certain kind of criminal record. But we need timely and accurate information to make that type of legislation meaningful and effective."

KANSAS, TOO

Kansas also has had an integrated system for the past seven years. Kansas' Criminal Justice Information System was created in 1994 to meet requirements of the National Instant Check System, also known as the Brady Bill, which aimed to improve criminal history records for background searches for gun purchases. The Kansas system works off a central repository system that serves as a directory to law enforce-

ment so that government employees can get information they need without having to know who keeps it. This has allowed Kansas to move their integrated justice systems projects along faster than most states. The system today has state criminal history information available to court, community correction and parole officers.

Kansas became the first state in 1999 approved by the FBI to access the National Criminal Information Center via the Internet. The national center is a database that provides documented criminal justice information to law enforcement agencies. This approval allows qualified personnel quick access to national records without having to dial into the center through dedicated terminals. Everyone connected to the Kansas system can now find out if a suspect has warrants or action pending in other states.

In Colorado, the state's Integrated Criminal Justice Information System links five state-level criminal justice agencies—law enforcement, district attorneys, courts, and adult and youth corrections. A user on any of the five systems can view information contained on another system as if it were stored locally.

SHARING POWER AND COOPERATION

Each of these states arrived at an integrated system in different ways, but all have had in common different agencies working together to develop a plan for integration that was followed with adequate funding.

"Agencies need to share power, and cooperation needs to take place at the highest level in order to make sure the vision is achieved," said former Colorado Representative Peggy Kerns, who sponsored legislation to enable integration. "It means they are giving up autonomous control of certain information and the system they built to house it."

Lawmakers and justice officials in other states face similar challenges in updating criminal records and information systems. In today's highly mobile society, preventing crime in one state may very well depend on how well another state manages its records. The Interstate Compact on Community Supervision, now passed by 24 states, has among its objectives improved and expedited information sharing among offenders move to another state. Complete adoption of the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact will allow full use of the Interstate Identification Index, a decentralized system for the exchange of criminal history records for employment and other background checks.

There has been some resistance by privacy advocates to integration

FINDING IT ON THE WEB

The Office of Justice Programs Information Technology Initiative.
<http://www.it.ojp.gov>

The Crime Identification Technology Act (CITA).
<http://it.ojp.gov/fund/sources.html>

SEARCH, the national consortium for justice information and statistics.
<http://www.search.org/>

Government Technology, technology solutions for state and local governments.
<http://www.govtech.net/>

efforts. Preventing sensitive information from getting into the wrong hands is a legitimate concern and needs to be addressed. Richard Varn, the Iowa chief information officer and a former state senator, says much of the resistance is aimed at keeping public information relatively inaccessible, but is misplaced. "If information is public, it should be accessible. If advocates want information to remain private, they should work to keep it private in all forms."

FEDERAL MONEY AVAILABLE

Convincing state agencies and local governments to scrap their current infrastructure is difficult if they don't have the funds needed to help them update and integrate. Federal money has contributed substantially to state efforts—covering about two-thirds of the costs to date in Kansas and Colorado. Congress passed the Crime Identification Technology Act in 1999, which authorized assistance to states to establish or upgrade criminal justice information systems. Congress is expected to appropriate \$150 million to the effort for FY 2002. Federal funds may also be used to support state and local participation in national databases managed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, such as the National Instant Check System, Combined DNA Information System and the Interstate Identification Index system. "These systems will meet their full potential only to the degree that state systems are upgraded and interconnected," says Dave Roberts, the executive director of Search, a consortium working with the Office of Justice Programs to improve justice integration.

The Office of Justice Programs has overseen the federal initiative in recent years to encourage and support integration of state and local criminal justice information. Grant programs ranging from Byrne Formula Grants to the National Criminal History Improvement Program to the technology program under Community Oriented Policing Services have contributed more than \$800 million per year to state efforts. The high-alert status of local law enforcement agencies since the recent terrorist attacks on the United States brings with it new challenges for information management. "This is a critical time for making real progress in criminal justice information sharing—not only to fight terrorism in the wake of Sept. 11, but to improve the effectiveness of the justice system," says Richard R. Nedelkoff, director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance. "To be successful, we must promote collaboration and information sharing among all agencies."

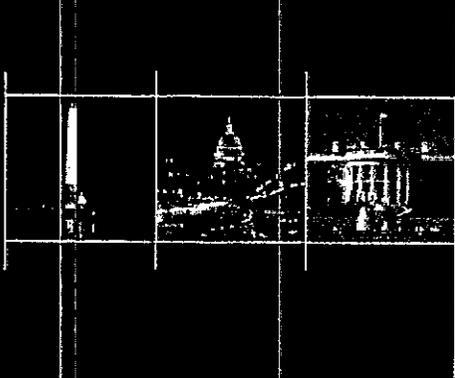
Minnesota's CrimNet has enjoyed much greater state funding over more years than other state efforts. To date, the Legislature has appropriated \$57 million to get the state's databases interconnected. The entire project could cost up to \$250 million, with some of that coming through federal grant programs, but Dale Good, the Supreme Court's director of integrated technology, is quick to put that figure in perspective.

"The costs for integration compare to an annual budget of \$2 billion that the state spends on criminal justice operations," says Dale. "And that's for a system that doesn't work well without integration." ■



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Duluth Tribune July 2nd, 2001

Justice at the touch of a button

Funding for statewide database would give police quicker, more complete access to crime information

By Chris Hamilton
News Tribune staff writer

A murder witness gives police a license plate number.

The camera pans in as a modern movie detective punches in the owner's name and records of the man's violent past pop up.

"This has gotta be our killer," the detective says.

Once again movie cops have it easier than their true-life counterparts, although not for long if state and local authorities get their wish in the Legislature.

St. Louis County is part of a pilot project for "CriMNet," a \$260 million, six-year effort to create a statewide information network. The Department of Public Safety's project is designed to provide sheriffs and police departments, courts and prisons with uniform, comprehensive information about criminals' identities, histories and legal status.

"We don't really have a system right now," said Sen. Jane Ranum, DFL-Minneapolis, a Hennepin County prosecutor. "People think we have a system, but we have all these silos of information that don't all talk to each other."

Proponents say CriMNet would go beyond assisting investigators catch crooks. It would keep repeat offenders from getting more lenient sentences and provide accurate background checks for employers.

Ranum's bill asks for \$41.5 million for CriMNet this session. Gov. Jesse Ventura set aside \$27 million for funding that would advance last year's "Katie's law."

Katie Poirier, 19, was kidnapped and murdered in Moose Lake on May 26, 1999 by six-time convicted sex offender Donald Blom. Poirier's family said with better information, police might have kept tabs on Blom and he would not have felt free to attack Poirier.

That police would have gotten to Poirier in time with the new technology is unlikely. Blom said he strangled Poirier within an hour of abducting her.

But authorities believe if they had CriMNet, Blom -- who used 18 aliases to cover convictions in the 1970s and '80s for sexually assaulting five teen-age girls -- might not have evaded them for as long as he did.

Blom case study

Two days after the abduction, an employee of the sandwich shop next to the convenience store where Poirier worked said she followed a suspicious man's dark colored pickup truck that night.

She remembered a Minnesota license plate with 557 and the last letter Y. Investigators found 1,500 to 2,000 possible matches in state registration records. Later that day, Richfield Police investigator Beth Roberts drove by Blom's Twin Cities home.

Blom's criminal record was not known at the time. With so many possible truck matches, investigators had no way of doing the background checks quickly, said Bureau of Criminal Apprehension Special Agent Phil Wagner.

Investigators were focused on finding the truck. And Blom's black pickup was misidentified as white in state records, which put it low on the priority list.

Roberts never saw the truck and Blom's wife, Amy, told her over the phone they had loaned it to a friend.

"If we had a system where you plug in a license number and have all this stuff pop up, well, that would have been wonderful," Wagner said. "People think it's like the movies, you sit down at a computer terminal and it just happens. But it's not like the movies at all."

Investigators nabbed their man on June 18, 1999, when a tipster said Donald Hutchinson had been acting suspicious since Poirier's abduction.

Carlton County Sgt. Kevin Mangan ran Hutchinson's name through state drivers records and discovered it was an alias for Blom. Blom's criminal record was in a second database. A third database revealed Blom owned the pickup with license 557-HDY. A fourth database revealed he owned property in Carlton County.

"Who in Carlton County is a sex offender would have been nice to know at 2 a.m. on May 26," Wagner said. "Unfortunately, in this case it wouldn't have made any difference."

Filling in gaps

Even in the midst of the Information Age, when police find six TVs in a ditch they still rely on good old-fashioned phone calls or shoptalk over coffee at Perkins to figure out where they came from.

Minnesota has 1,100 law enforcement agencies -- 18 in St. Louis County -- and 500 different databases. Most have old technologies that don't talk to each other, said Sgt. Kevin Kivisto of the St. Louis County project.

"All the files of intelligence and information are out there, but because the criminals are so mobile now it's hard to know who has it," said Lt. Tim Hanson, of the Duluth Police Department. "The cop on the street needs it tied together."

CriMNet essentially would operate as a search engine. It would pull together existing or rebuilt databases maintained by local police, corrections, probation, prosecutors, the courts, BCA and FBI.

Proponents say CriMNet will more consistently fill in the gaps now missing for officers, such as whether probation conditions prohibit someone from drinking or whether someone is wanted in a neighboring county.

Both House and Senate versions of the bill would provide \$20 million to create a comprehensive clearinghouse for all state court records. Another \$1.5 million would link corrections, \$6 million would manage, staff, plan and implement CriMNet, and \$11 million would go to local governments.

St. Louis County is one of five CriMNet pilot counties. Last year the county matched a \$50,000 state grant for planning the local information system. A consortium of county, police, corrections and district court officials is figuring out what that system would look like and the cost of implementing it over the next two years.

CriMNet also would fix the estimated 45 to 50 percent of court records that are not attached to the correct criminal history in the BCA's central computer system. Public Safety Commissioner Charlie Weaver told lawmakers last month that an estimated 100,000 felony and gross misdemeanor cases since 1993 are in limbo from the BCA computer system.

With so many repeat criminals changing their names and birth dates to skirt police, fingerprints are the only way to match a criminal record to the right offender. But law enforcement agencies do not always send their fingerprint cards to the BCA. When they do, sometimes the prints are smudged or the date of birth is wrong.

The record is then considered unconfirmed and put in "suspense files." Fifty-six percent of St. Louis County's criminal cases -- 5,874 crimes -- are in such files.

Ironically, Blom's criminal record for the Poirier matter was once in a suspense file, said Dale Good, State Supreme Court information technology director. Blom's fingerprints for his June 20, 1999, arrest were not sent to the BCA by the Carlton County Sheriff's Department. Good discovered the prints were missing that September.

"I hate to ding them but that's just one example out of 100,000," Good said.

The Senate bill includes \$3 million to put the suspense files back in the BCA system. Additional money is set aside to provide law enforcement with electronic fingerprint scanners.

Chronic offenders

The state Legislative Auditor's Office issued a report last week on "chronic offenders" that said 5 percent of offenders are responsible for 19 percent of criminal convictions. Most chronic offenders commit multiple crimes in numerous counties.

CriMNet is critical to prosecutors so they can file appropriate charges. About a dozen charges become more severe if there are past convictions, such as for domestic abuse or DWI.

"The more information we have, the better job we can do as judges," said 6th Judicial District's Chief Judge Gary Pagliaccetti.

Before an offender is sentenced, judges rely on probation officers to check separate databases as well as call authorities in other places where offenders once lived and worked. While all 87 county courts in the state have the same version of a 20-year-old computer record system, they are closed systems that don't talk, Pagliaccetti said.

July 1st, 2001 CIO Magazine

IN MAY 1999, 19-YEAR-OLD KATIE POIRIER was kidnapped and murdered in Moose Lake, Minn., by Donald Blom, a career felon who had just been released on probation. When an enraged public demanded an explanation, people were shocked to learn that the mistake was a result of antiquated technology that prevented police from doing what everyone who watches TV cop shows assumed they could—share case information.

Local police and prosecutors didn't know that Blom, who is appealing his conviction, had committed numerous prior offenses. He had various unconnected aliases in state and local databases, and because they couldn't match these fingerprints to each other, they let him go. The crime and the failings of the system it revealed handed Hennepin County law enforcement officials some live ammunition in the case they were making for integrating their information systems.

"The case helped get the ear of legislators and a wider audience," explains Tom Kooy, the St. Paul, Minn.-based deputy director of CrIMNet, the state's integrated justice information systems project. "No longer did we bring up technical issues and have people's eyes glaze over. Here was a graphic, pictorial representation of where the breakdown was." While all eyes focused on the problem, Hennepin County took action. And what began as a county project quickly blossomed into a statewide effort as Minnesota law enforcement administrators and legislators collaborated to create CrIMNet.

Faced with similar political pressure, most state and local CIOs—some with

Law enforcement officials are notorious for protecting their turf, government budgets are tight, and it's hard to make legacy systems communicate.

strong support from their governors—are moving integrated criminal justice systems to the top of their priority list. Yet even with backing at the highest political level, CIOs still face bureaucratic, technical and funding challenges in bringing these systems—including databases used to investigate suspects as well as systems used to manage trials, prisons and probation cases—to fruition. Law enforcement officials are notorious for protecting their turf, government budgets are tight, and it's hard to create standards that will allow legacy systems to communicate.

Why Integrate?

Most law enforcement data systems are homegrown relics of a simpler, less connected age. Police stations and district attorneys' offices use disconnected systems primarily to manage case files and data on criminals and suspects, if they use IT at all. To get the data they need, many enforcers still favor using faxes or milking personal relationships. By installing high-speed communications networks, open computing architectures and standard programming interfaces, officials hope

police will routinely share more data with prosecutors as well as with other state agencies—such as the departments of Motor Vehicles and Social Services—that help catch, convict and rehabilitate criminals. Once these statewide links are created, state and federal officials plan to expand integration to the national level, allowing more data to be shared across state borders.

The idea behind integration is that data gets entered once and is accessible from multiple vantage points. As a result, a police officer running a license check could quickly ascertain if a detained driver had any outstanding arrest warrants. To help build her case, a prosecutor might tap such a system to more easily gather data on a suspect's prior offenses. "There's an enormous amount of duplicate data entered into justice systems," says Dave Roberts, deputy executive director of Search, a Sacramento, Calif.-based nonprofit organization that works with government agencies on criminal justice system projects. "That leaves us open to too many opportunities to enter wrong data and retards the timeliness of data so law enforcement doesn't have access to the latest information."

Law enforcement integration projects are similar to corporate efforts to link enterprise systems internally and create hooks between these systems and those of suppliers and customers. Like their corporate counterparts, IT executives for state and local criminal justice agencies are grappling with such issues as getting the sponsorship of top management and keeping stakeholders, including legislators and police officers, engaged and committed to the project's success. They are also struggling to evaluate the role of key technologies, like the Web, in the design of their integrated justice systems.

"This type of project has all the same characteristics as an ERP rollout," says Aldona Valicenti, CIO for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, who is in charge of its Unified Criminal Justice Information System (UCJIS). "There needs to be a high degree of standardization and cooperation on how to share data, and the ability to deliver information quickly with a high degree of reliability." Just as companies have to determine if accounting or sales should own a specific piece of financial data, state and local criminal justice agencies need to decide who is responsible for which pieces of information. "When it's done in corporate America, it's about getting the order right and keeping the customer happy," Valicenti says. "[In criminal justice], it's about trying to save lives by catching the right criminal at the right time."

Lining Up Supporters

Valicenti says cultivating support from everyone in the criminal justice community should be the first step in getting an integrated justice system off the ground. In Kentucky, Gov. Paul Patton jump-started the project in 1998 by ordering state agencies to work with Valicenti on such a system. Valicenti says that order took care of getting buy-in from different groups. It also ensured that all major criminal justice agencies actively participated in project planning.

Executive sponsorship also paved the way for funding—one of the biggest hurdles for such projects. While there are federal grants to bankroll development of integrated justice systems, local and state governments generally have to foot most of the bill—tens of millions of dollars. In the past three years, the Kentucky Legislature has endorsed Patton's mandate with \$9.7 million in seed money, which, augmented by federal grants and local funds, covers everything from consultants to technology purchases.

Col. Michael Robinson, director of the Michigan Department of State Police, is building support from the top and the bottom for his state's integrated justice system. Robinson, a 33-year police veteran and a member of Gov. John Engler's cabinet, convinced Engler five years ago to create the organizational framework of committees and funding sources to build integrated justice systems. But Robinson, who's done everything from road patrol to undercover drug operations, knew a top-down mandate wasn't enough to change the way tight-lipped cops have worked for decades. The best way to get them to loosen up, Robinson says, is to lead by example. So Robinson's 22 multijurisdictional drug enforcement teams are encouraged to share their data with other state and local law enforcement agencies without expecting anything in return. He also invites representatives from different local jurisdictions to help define system requirements and evaluate software that could become part of Michigan's unified system. The state will start rolling out components of this system in the next few months.

To underscore his point, Robinson, a former head of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, often tells colleagues in other states the story he believes is the ultimate testament to integration. More than a decade ago, a serial rapist was at large in a rural part of Michigan. A woman suspecting her ex-husband called in a tip to a local police department. The detective who took the call sat on the information because he wanted to make the arrest. Turns out, the suspect was known to have committed similar crimes in other parts of Michigan and had served time in another state—facts that weren't brought to light until two more women were raped and murdered. Eventually, the suspect was caught and convicted. "Those crimes probably wouldn't have occurred if [the detective] had shared the information he had," Robinson says.

Standard Procedure

Once CIOs get law enforcement officials on board, they have to hammer out common data standards and operating procedures for the system. That's where the work gets really difficult, according to Minnesota's Kooy. He heads a 25-member advisory committee of business and technology executives from a cross-section of justice agencies in the state. The group has interviewed hundreds of criminal justice agency employees about how they process information and how they prefer to access data. The result is a data model that depicts how information flows from one state justice system to another along with details of how data should be rendered to ensure that it can be shared.

Kentucky's Valicenti had been CIO for three months when her legislature's proposed bill mandating integrated justice systems landed on her desk. She knew that standards would be critical for UCJIS, so she lobbied for language to be added to the bill requiring local justice agencies to follow future standards. "Because you can't go out and purchase such a system, you have to put one together from new and old systems. The only way they're going to play together is if the systems adhere to standards," she says.

To create those standards, the UCJIS subcommittee set up half a dozen working committees that include close to 30 representatives from criminal justice departments across the state. Valicenti admits that while everyone on the team buys the vision of UCJIS, they're less cooperative when they realize they may have to

change how they work. Early in the project, while there were no overt protests, officials not so subtly dug in their heels. "But we've always done things this way" or "We always keep that information ourselves" were common refrains.

That's when Valicenti started using props. One was a drawing that maps the relationships among the state's existing criminal justice databases. The drawing became known as the spaghetti bowl because it depicted the tangled mess of how data flowed in and out of the various unconnected state justice systems. At one of the first task force meetings in late 1998, the diagram convinced agency executives—including the chief justice of the state Supreme Court—of the need for standards. "We did it primarily to show how databases interrelated, but no one could walk away and understand all the ins and outs, not even IT experts," Valicenti recalls. "Everyone was aghast that this was the criminal justice process at work." Kentucky completed its strategic plan last May and is now fielding pilot projects to demonstrate the benefits of integration.

Integration Works in Kansas

Law enforcement experts say Kansas is one of the most advanced states in its deployment of integrated justice systems. That's due largely to legislation mandating

that all of its state government branches adhere to an enterprise computing architecture that sets standards for networks, security, data management and application development among other elements, says Chief Information Technology Officer Don Heiman. The Kansas Criminal Justice Information System (KCJIS) is part of an effort to build electronic government services for the whole state, he explains. Having this broader goal in mind, Kansas was able to rally support for a computing architecture that would set the stage for KCJIS. "It was just a matter of putting the pieces together," Heiman says.

Both Kansas and Kentucky have been able to move their integrated justice systems projects along faster than most states, in part because of their push for a statewide IT architecture, notes Search's Roberts. It also helps that both states' CIOs are actively leading the integration initiatives, he adds.

The key to KCJIS is a central data repository that will serve as a directory to law enforcement information so that government employees can get the information they need without having to know who keeps it. Heiman expects this central data store to be up and running this summer. Meanwhile, Kansas has upgraded its statewide communications networks to handle transmission of large image files, such as fingerprints and mug shots, and has installed a security infrastructure. Now local police stations and prosecutors' offices are starting to deploy automated fingerprint identification systems, case management applications and low-cost Web connections if they can't afford monthly charges for the state's high-speed network (the state pays for at least one connection in every county, but counties can buy extra services). The bill for the integration effort so far: a little more than \$9 million for the statewide infrastructure, much of that funded by federal grants. Local governments have to pay for their own systems that connect to the statewide network and databases.

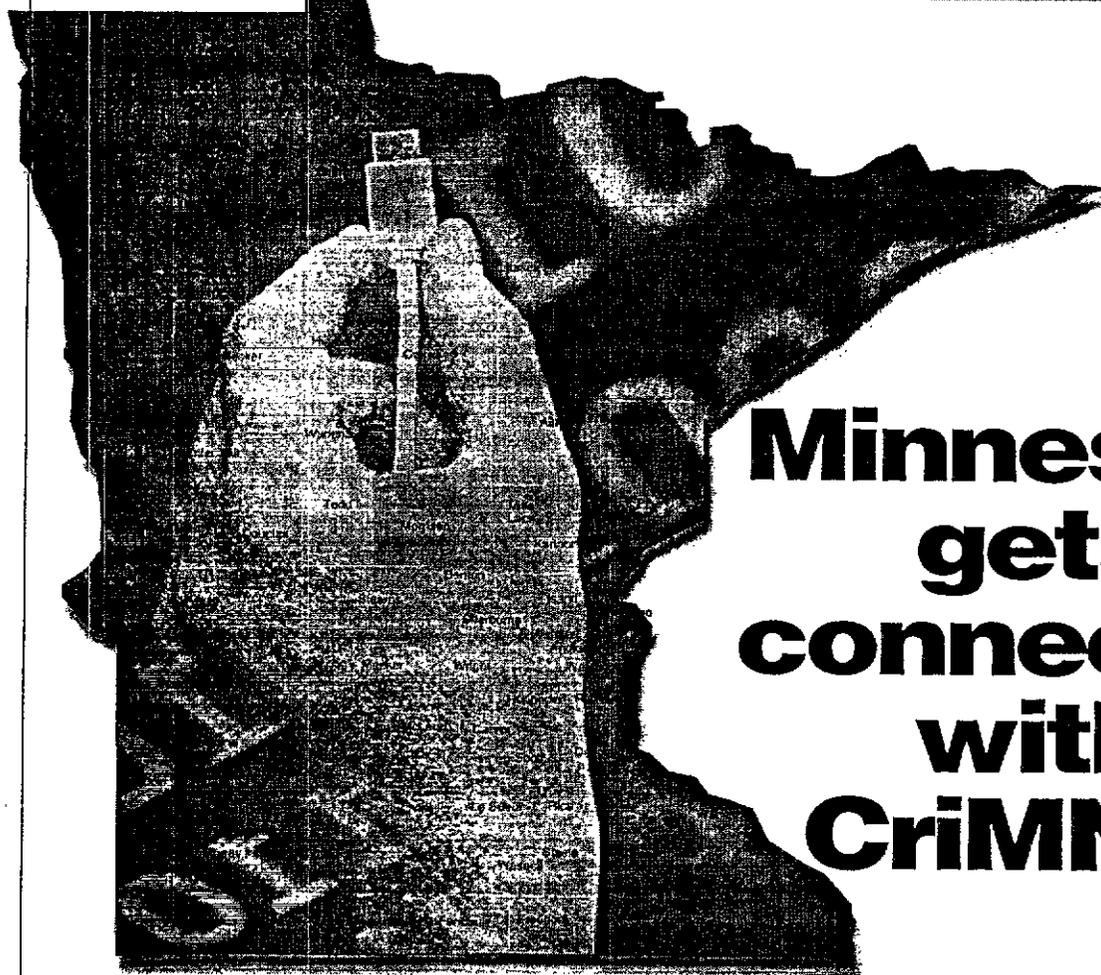
Already, this investment has paid off. In January, the help desk at the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI), a state investigative agency that spearheaded much of the development of KCJIS, got a call from an out-of-state officer taking a

statement from a robbery suspect. The suspect had admitted to robbing a convenience store in Kansas earlier in the month. The help desk broadcast a message to other Kansas law enforcement agencies inquiring about the robberies and was able to confirm within hours that one had occurred. At the same time, the bureau was able to run the suspect's license plate number through the KCJIS Archive and Logging database. In four minutes, the system spit back records of two traffic violations near the robbery that confirmed the suspect's statement. The suspect was arrested.

Before KCJIS, that same information could be tracked only through the FBI, which could take weeks to respond to such a request. By that time, Kansas officials would have missed the chance to arrest the suspect. "Unless it's an integrated system, all the information isn't available because no one knows where it is," notes Charles Sexson, assistant director of the information services division for the KBI in Topeka, Kan.

For Kansas cops on the beat, integration boils down to one simple benefit: It improves their ability to protect people. Wayne Pruitt, a lieutenant with the Salina, Kan., police department, says he and his colleagues will use KCJIS to post misdemeanor warrants to a database accessible by other Kansas counties so that their counterparts can be on the lookout for known suspects. The more tools he has for accessing information, the better. "If we don't have the right information, we don't ask the right questions, and if we don't ask the right questions, then we may not be preventing crime

By Corinne Streit



Minnesota gets connected with CrIMNet

On August 5, 1997, a man allegedly held a gun to his ex-wife's head and grabbed her by the throat. He was arrested, but not yet charged with domestic assault. Three years earlier, in 1994, an order for protection was filed against him after he threatened to shoot his ex-wife. A bail hearing followed and he pled guilty to being a felon in possession of a gun. The gun possession charge carried with it an 18-month mandatory sentence, which is now a mandatory five years.

On August 19, 1997, the man shot his ex-wife's new boyfriend at a downtown Minneapolis bar. His felon status arose from a 1995 conviction for robbery in Ramsey County, Minnesota.

Less than two months later, on Sep-

tember 29, 1997, the man, who was out on bail and awaiting sentencing, fatally shot his ex-wife in the head. The man is now serving 39 years in

CrIMNet will allow officials to track and share information throughout the state.

prison for second-degree intentional murder. Twenty days before the murder, the man's bail was reduced from \$15,000 to \$5,000. He posted bail that

day and at the end of the hearing, neither the prosecutor, nor the judge, knew of his previous domestic assault allegations or weapons violations.

The judge in this case was quoted as saying, "This case is every judge's nightmare."

Because these various crimes occurred in different counties within Minnesota, judges and prosecutors were unaware of this man's previous offenses. Information from one county to another was not shared in a way that it was quickly and easily accessible. Decision-makers prosecute on what they know, which isn't always the whole story.

A 17-year veteran Minneapolis police officer, Richard Stanek, was the watch commander the night the woman was shot.

"I have seen a lot of dead bodies and I have never gotten used to it," says Stanek. "After seeing the events that night, I knew I was in the position to make a change."

Stanek, a four-term state representative, soon became a prominent member of the legislative team formulating a program called CriMNet. While Stanek is still a state representative in Minnesota, he is also chair of the Judiciary Finance Committee overseeing the criminal justice system as well as a police officer for the Minneapolis Police Department in Hennepin County, Minnesota.

Stanek has put his heart and soul into the development of CriMNet, which is an integrated system that will allow law enforcement officials to track and share information throughout the state. He hopes that the system will develop an integrated data system that will allow for the linking and reference of relevant criminal justice information across jurisdictions. The system will work with local governments to determine how the model can be used or modified for statewide application, and it will ensure that business practices of state and local criminal justice agencies support the integration of criminal justice information.

In 1993 the legislature started talking about integrating criminal justice systems, but they didn't know where to go or how to go about doing it. They formulated a work group from police officers, county attorneys, judges and other court officials. The idea didn't go too far in the first five years.

CriMNet is the new name of Minnesota's accelerating plan, which will develop, implement and fund a statewide criminal information network benefitting police, judges and court officers. The technological advances of recent years have illustrated the growing gap between patrol officers and the criminal records of the individuals that they face in the line of duty.

Phase I

By 1999 the project was in Phase I. About \$1 million was appropriated to give to local counties in Minnesota, 87 in total, so they could begin to draw up a blueprint for integrated criminal justice information systems. Hennepin County was chosen to test the system because of its 1.4 million people, more than a quarter of the 4.4 million people in the entire state. Hennepin County also has about 60 percent of the crime for the state. There are 37 different law enforcement agencies with-

"Now the judge will know all the arrests that a person being prosecuted has had in the past."

— Richard Stanek,
state representative, chair of the
Judiciary Finance Committee and
Hennepin County police officer

in the county and Stanek says, "If they could make it work, anyone could do it."

HEALS, an organization of community business leaders, was one of the deciding factors when choosing Hennepin County to pilot this system. "The private business community and local businesses saw a rise in crime and a murder rate that was out of control back in 1995," Stanek says. The business community then stated that either law enforcement officials fix the crime rate or they would move their businesses and the 10,000 jobs they provide out of the city.

With the business community and police agencies working together, the crime rate was reduced. It was obvious that the businesses wanted to reduce crime in the area. For that reason, Stanek felt that businesses also would

help keep these criminals off the street. He went to them asking for help to formulate this integrated criminal justice information system.

The pilot project was soon expanded from just Hennepin County to Dakota, St. Louis, Anoka and Ramsey counties, which provide matching funds to the state grants.

Phase II

Phase II of CriMNet started in 2000 when about \$12.5 million was appropriated to layout the infrastructure for this system. This was when officers were able to start using the valuable information it provided. Probation, parole and sex offenses were the first crimes to be placed into this working system.

These offenses were chosen to be the first in the system because of Katie's Law. Katie was a 17-year-old girl who worked in a convenience store. She was kidnapped from that store, raped and then murdered. The man who murdered her was a convicted sex offender and had spent most of his life in prison. He took her to his home, only a short distance away from where she was kidnapped and police had no idea. With this system, if a girl was missing, the first thing an officer would do is run a check on known sex offenders who live in the area, says Stanek.

Phase III

In 2001 Stanek decided to make the development of this system his No. 1 priority. "I reconciled a \$1.3 billion budget for the committee I oversee," he says.

By the end of 2001, Phase III should be complete. The backbone of the infrastructure should be complete and a full-time CriMNet staff should have the project up and running, maintenance and upgrades finished.

The courts will be totally integrated as well. The last time the courts were totally integrated was in 1970. They will now move from an outdated system to CriMNet.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

"Now the judge will know all the arrests that a person being prosecuted has had in the past," Stanek says.

"The judge can take all that information into account before he determines the outcome of a person's sentence."

Using CriMNet, any officer, judge or public offender can find out any person's offense throughout the country. The system doesn't stop at state lines. If someone from out of town commits a traffic violation, an officer can bring up any offenses that person has had anywhere in the country from inside his vehicle.

To implement CriMNet all an agency needs is a computer and a secure intranet system.

"As a Minneapolis police officer, I can enter information at any time," Stanek says. "I also can read it any-time I want." The state is the keeper

of the information so anyone in the criminal justice system can access it at anytime.

In the past, the only way to gain information on a suspect from another

**To implement
CriMNet, all an
agency needs
is a computer
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system.**

county was by physically calling that county and inquiring whether there is a record and then requesting the files be sent. This was not time efficient.

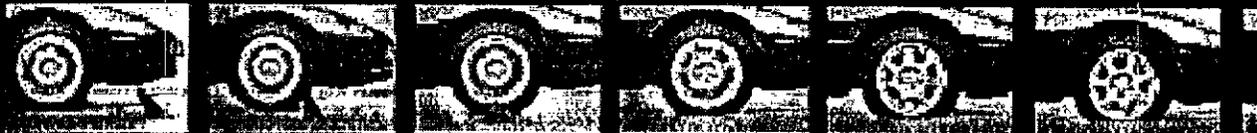
With CriMNet, officials can get information in seconds, as well as photos and fingerprints for the suspect.

The electronic fingerprinting (livescan) and photo-imaging equipment (X-Imaging-mugshots) are used so officers can positively identify offenders and obtain their criminal history records within two hours of booking. All this information is available in CriMNet.

Information that is not yet implemented into this integrated criminal justice system can be transferred easily with time. "The information already exists in the database of that local police department and in the state of Minnesota," Stanek says. "All I have to do is link those databases and the information is transferred."

Officers will be able to access information as far back as a

IF HIGH TECH MEANS IT WORKS
THIS IS VERY HIGH TECH



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department has electronic files.

The system is expected to be totally finished sometime in 2005, Stanek says. At that time Minnesota will have a completely integrated justice system.

"I would argue that no where else in this country is this happening at this rate or with this amount of success," says Stanek. "Other places have systems like this, but not all the justice system, jails, courts, etc. have access to the system."

Although not totally complete, departments can use the system while it's in the works. Currently only sex offenders and people on probation are in the database, but as more information becomes available, authorized personnel are welcome to access the system. Agencies also will have access to their individual information on all offenders in their database.

Goals for CrimNet

It is hopeful that in the future this cross-jurisdictional information system will have a set of accurate, precise, complete and comprehensive adult and juvenile justice data collected, processed, shared and evaluated.

The goals of CrimNet, according to a report from the state of Minnesota CrimNet Enterprise Architecture, are:

- A commonly understood and shared set of legal and ethical principles that govern information exchange.
 - Quality decision-making through effective tracking of individuals and incidents ensuring that the right data, is in the hands of the right people, in the right place, at the right time.
 - The support for quality operational and police analysis through improved agency-level systems and creation of an integrated, enterprise-wide information architecture.
 - It will be a criminal justice information system that is accountable, credible, seamless and responsive to the victim, the public and the offender.
 - Finally, it will be an efficient and cost-effective criminal justice system.
- In the past there was no threat to commit serious crimes such as armed

robbery, breaking and entering, battery, etc. Outside the county where the crime was committed, there would be no record of that offense. Officers would not know anything about previous offenses. A judge could impose or suspend a sentence because those other crimes would be kept in the

dark. That person could be hired in a school without anyone knowing their complete criminal history.

Using CrimNet, police, prosecutors and courts will know a person's criminal history within seconds of his stepping into the courtroom or at the scene of a crime. □

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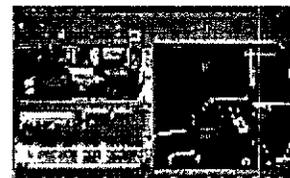
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Tuesday, April 24, 2001, Pioneer Planet, PATTY WETTERLING AND NATE GARVIS

CriMNet works Statewide network already proves value; earns increased support

What is a fair price to pay for the safety of your family? How much should the state allocate to protecting the lives of its citizens? What is "enough" when it comes to spending for a criminal justice system that has a better chance of identifying repeat offenders and putting them away?

Those are the questions at the heart of the state debate over funding for a new criminal justice information system. The system â€” CriMNet â€” would allow all 1,100 law enforcement agencies in Minnesota to share information on criminals. CriMNet replaces today's patchwork system of paper files, computer records and, in some cases, index cards stored in shoeboxes with a state-of-the-art, computer-based information system.

In practical terms, CriMNet would mean law enforcement agencies throughout Minnesota could talk with one another and share current information. When a person was picked up for a minor offense, the arresting officer immediately could determine if the suspect was wanted in other counties. When a prosecutor determined charges to file against a suspect, the person's complete criminal history could be considered. And, when a judge sentenced a criminal, judgment could be made with complete knowledge of the threat the convicted person poses to the community.

Right now, all this is a roll of the dice. There is no certainty that relevant information about a criminal record is available from county to county. Changing this haphazard system took a major step forward last year when the Legislature passed Katie's Law. Among the achievements of that legislation is mandatory sex offender registration and funding to overhaul the state's 1950s-era criminal justice information system. The impact has been dramatic. According to one estimate, the new system has made it possible for law enforcement agencies to keep track of the whereabouts of 70 percent of the state's sex offenders, compared with just 30 percent a year ago.

CriMNet has received broad support, including the backing of key Republicans and Democrats in the Legislature, Minnesota's criminal justice system, the business community, local elected officials and crime prevention advocates. The hold-up is cost. CriMNet needs \$41 million in state funds this year to stay on track. Gov. Jesse Ventura's budget recommends only \$27 million and, in a year with so many competing priorities, even that reduced level of funding may be in jeopardy.

Is CriMNet worth the cost? It now costs nearly \$2 billion a year to maintain the current, disconnected criminal justice system. Local governments spend much of this \$2 billion, and, frankly, some jurisdictions have made a stronger commitment to record keeping than others. All of Minnesota pays the price for communities that can't afford the investment or place their priorities elsewhere. No Minnesota community should be a "safe harbor" for criminals.

Last year's funding of CriMNet already has paid huge dividends. A model information system has been created and many records are being updated. But Minnesota is a large state. There are too many places to hide if all 87 counties aren't connected through a single, integrated information system. In announcing plans for this year's legislative effort, CriMNet supporters pointed to just one of many, many examples. A convicted sex offender was before a Hennepin County judge. What the judge saw was a record of six crimes, most of which were committed in the 1980s.

The reality? An additional 16 crimes in Hennepin and three other counties that weren't available to the judge. These crimes included 12 for various criminal sexual conduct offenses, including a conviction in Anoka County earlier in 2000.

Legislators are under enormous pressure this year to cut taxes and increase funding for many things that Minnesotans value. We appreciate the challenges they face. Yet, we already have seen the direct return on the state's investment in CrimNet â€” a safer state and a local law enforcement community that is able to do a better job with more efficient use of resources.

Minnesota is on the right track with CrimNet. Let's not wait until the next tragic event to discuss what could have been.

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