NAME OF SYSTEM:

National Crime Information Center (NCIC)

ORIGINATOR:

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Department of Justice

Washington, D.C. 20530

OBJECTIVE. Through utilization of the latest computer and communication technologies, to design and operate a centralized information and retrieval system that will greatly improve the effectiveness of crime prevention and detection procedures throughout the country.

BACKGROUND. The idea of a centralized crime information facility was conceived as a result of law enforcement's growing need for faster receipt of crime information, made imperative by the steadily rising incidence of crime and the increased mobility of criminals.

Advances in computer and communication technologies seemed to offer new solutions to these needs. Therefore, the FBI, in conjunction with the Advisory Group to the Committee on Uniform Crime Records, and other local, State and Federal agencies, agreed to exploit these new technologies in their crime fighting efforts. Thus, a series of policy and procedure meetings were held to formulate a program, which led to the establishment of the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). The information center began operations in January 1967. Since that time, due primarily to the support from local police, the system has expanded at a rate far exceeding original expectations.

THE NEW METHOD. The new system, located at the FBI Headquarters in Washington, D.C., is designed for the rapid interchange of information among law enforcement agencies, including most States, the District of Columbia, and Canada. The NCIC is an on-line, real-time information retrieval system.

Connecting terminals, placed near radio dispatchers, are located throughout the country in police headquarters, sheriffs' offices, State police facilities, and Federal law enforcement agencies. Dispatchers can respond quickly to requests from policemen on the street—an inquiry can usually be answered in less than a minute following the inquiry, if the proper procedure is followed. Presently, about 93 terminals are connected to the information system. This includes pertinent incoming data for storage in the file, in addition to inquiries relating to search requests. The base data stored in the computer memory contains data on such matters as wanted persons; stolen and wanted vehicles and license plates; stolen articles; missing or recovered guns; and stolen or missing stocks, bonds, currency, etc.

All items in the above categories are given identifying numbers for searching purposes. The system presently contains 1.8 million records, with an average daily transaction load of 55,000. This volume reflects updating of old records, the entering of new records, and processing of inquiries on suspected crimes or criminals. The system is now averaging 525 positive responses daily to law enforcement officials. These informative responses from the NCIC are considered as guidance only, and investigations are not terminated until confirmation is made with the originating agency. Cooperating agencies are responsible for maintaining the accuracy of their records, updating them when necessary, and purging the records no longer needed.

To illustrate how the system works, let us assume that a State trooper notices an abandoned car. He radios the pertinent data to his radio control dispatcher, who passes the information by informal note to a remote terminal or teletype operator. At that point, the operator arranges the information in properly coded transmission sequence for communicating with the NCIC in Washington.

The entry procedure includes identifying the station originating the request, the subject file to be interrogated, and last, the coded

brief of the search request. At NCIC headquarters the IBM 360 Model 50 computer, with the aid of a sophisticated program, searches its random-access storage unit and—in this example—finds a "match" identifying the abandoned vehicle as one that was reported stolen. Within minutes, the NCIC terminal keyboard operator teletypes the answer to the requesting police agency, which then arranges to have the car returned to its owner.

Information intended as input for the system's data bank storage unit is handled in much the same way as a search request.

REMARKS. This system is a good example of how computer and communication capabilities have been utilized to meet a growing information problem. The computer's ability to quickly store, retrieve, and manipulate large quantities of randomly filed data, coupled with the capability for fast transmission of information over great distances, has enabled law enforcement officers at remote locations to communicate with the NCIC almost instantaneously. These machine capabilities and the close cooperation of the local, State, and FBI law enforcement bodies will play an increasingly important role in the battle against crime.

NATIONAL CRIME INFORMATION CENTER