A Preliminary Assessment of the National Crime Information Center and the Computerized Criminal History System

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FOREWORD

In recent years, the application of computer and communications technology to criminal justice systems has increasingly drawn the attention of Congress. Such concern is exemplified by requests from the House and Senate Committees on the Judiciary that OTA undertake an assessment of the Department of Justice’s National Crime Information Center and the Computerized Criminal History System.

This report, a background planning document for that assessment, identifies and analyzes some major issues in the future development of this Federal-State system. These are: the information needs for administering criminal justice programs and assuring constitutional rights; federalism, including division of authority, and cost apportionment; organization, management, and oversight; the planning process, and social impacts such as the effects on the administration of justice and the creation of a dossier society. Many of the policy and technical concerns discussed in the report are common to other major national information systems being assessed by OTA in the National Information Systems Study which addresses, in addition to the National Crime Information Center, electronic funds transfer and electronic mail.

The following background report was prepared by the Office of Technology Assessment with the assistance of an ad hoc interdisciplinary working group of experts in law, public administration, State and local criminal justice and law enforcement, computer sciences, civil liberties, and other related areas.

Russell W. Peterson

RUSSELL W. PETERSON
Director
OTA Project Staff
National Crime Information Center's
Computerized Criminal History System

Iram J. Weinstein, Project Director
Marcia J. MacNaughton Phil Hirsch
Barbara Balbiani Liz Emanuel
Robert F. Daly, Coordinator

OTA Publishing Staff

John C. Holmes, Publishing Officer
Kathie S. Boss Joanne Heming

Working Group Members

Adam D’Alessandro
Acting Deputy Commissioner
New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
Albany, N.Y.

Jerry J. Berman
Legislative Counsel
American Civil Liberties Union
Washington, D.C.

Donald G. Ingraham
Office of the District Attorney
Oakland, Calif.

Steve Kolodney
Executive Director
SEARCH GROUP, Inc.
Sacramento, Calif.

Kenneth Laudon
Professor
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
New York City, N.Y.

Charles Lister
Attorney at law
Covington & Burling
Washington, D.C.

Michael D. Maltz
Professor, Department of Criminal Justice
University of Illinois at Chicago Circle
Chicago, Ill.

Jeffrey A. Meldman
Professor
Sloan School of Management
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Mass.

Brian Ruder
Information Science Laboratory
SRI International
Stanford Research Institute
Menlo Park, Calif.

James J. Zurawski
Assistant Deputy Superintendent
Research, Development, and Data Systems Division
Chicago Police Department
Chicago, Ill.

David T. Stanley
Consultant
Vienna, Va.

Note: The working group members provided advice and critique, but do not necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse the report, for which OTA assumes full responsibility.