



TECHNOLOGY BEAT

National Institute of Justice ■ National Law Enforcement Technology Center



The National Law Enforcement Technology Center: The "One-Stop Shop" for Law Enforcement Information

April 1995

In November 1993, Attorney General Janet Reno announced the creation of a new technology center. On October 3, 1994, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) officially opened the National Law Enforcement Technology Center (NLETC), a technology and informational center for law enforcement (i.e., police, sheriffs, corrections, border patrol, and other criminal justice officials), located in Rockville, Maryland.

The October 1994 premier issue of *Technology Beat* announced the opening of NLETC. This second issue discusses the newly established Regional Law Enforcement Technology Centers as components of a Technology Information Network (TIN) that will allow law enforcement and criminal justice users easy access to information on an increasingly broad range of products and technologies applicable to their requirements.

The Technology Information Network

In addition to providing Federal and particularly State and local agencies with objective information on new equipment and technologies, TIN will assist law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies in locating equipment that is used relatively infrequently on a temporary or emergency basis.

Through its various components, the Network will:

- Help determine what law enforcement and criminal justice agency requirements are for products and technology.
- Save law enforcement time and money in tracking down information about technology ("one-stop shop").
- Collect, utilize, and share relevant technology information (e.g., from other Federal, State, and local agencies; professional organizations; and laboratories).
- Focus technology information for easier access by law enforcement.

- Encourage and simplify industry access to the law enforcement market.

Through the application of advanced technology for use by law enforcement and criminal justice professionals, agencies can increase their options and effectiveness; make the user's job easier; enhance productivity by reducing administrative overhead and improving responsiveness; limit the consequences of poor judgment; and improve the safety of the officers and the public.

Any technology that can be of significant use to law enforcement, shows promise of improving important law enforcement capabilities, and is affordable is a candidate for development by NIJ. Projects recommended by the Law Enforcement Technology Advisory Council (LETAC) (formerly the Technology Assessment Program Advisory Council) already underway or to be initiated under the regional centers include NIJ research projects:

- Concealed weapons or contraband detection technologies.
- Ways to stop cars safely, without injury to occupants, bystanders, or law enforcement personnel.
- Less-than-lethal technologies to subdue suspects without injury.
- Improved fingerprinting technologies.
- Better, faster, cheaper methods of DNA identifications.
- GPS/GIS technologies (Global Positioning Systems/Geographic Information Systems).
- Illicit substance detection systems.
- Better communications.
- Digital information systems.
- Surveillance technologies.
- Smart weapons that can be fired only by their owners.
- Tracking systems to use in tracking suspects or to keep close tabs on persons on probation or parole.

- Improved security systems for prisons.

The key to technological development is developers working hand in hand with the end users. Getting useful partners pulling in the same direction.

The National Law Enforcement Technology Center

To expand its technology information coordination efforts through NLETC, NIJ has reorganized the Institute's Technology Assessment Program Information Center (TAPIC), which provided technology information to law enforcement agencies for nearly two decades.

Described as a "virtual" center, NLETC will include regional centers located across the country to leverage facilities and resources that already exist, such as technical expertise and local support, while keeping costs under control. The regional centers will also position NLETC closer to the local law enforcement communities.

In an age of rapidly advancing technologies, NLETC will serve as a "one-stop shop" central technology education and referral source for law enforcement. Essential elements of NLETC are:

- Assessment of generic law enforcement product and technology needs.
- Technology alliances, coordination, and transfer.
- Technology research and development support.
- Technology assessment and evaluation.
- Technology awareness through demonstrations.
- Product information.
- Standards and testing.

NLETC is developing bulletin board access and data bases, which will provide the law enforcement and criminal justice communities with 24-hour access to NLETC technology/product information. Initially, NLETC data bases will include:

- **Manufacturer and product identification** that will help agencies wanting to buy a particular product to access a comprehensive list of manufacturers of that product.
- **User product data exchange** to link agencies considering the purchase of a product with other users of that product to evaluate its effectiveness.

- **Technical assistance** to help agencies locate or borrow equipment from other agencies or to locate experts in a particular field.

The development of working partnerships among Government, Defense, industry, academia, communities, and law enforcement is a key element to this program's success. Instrumental in this endeavor is the participation of regional centers.

Regional Centers

Each regional center will provide specialty support to NLETC—a unique technology focus, as well as an advisory council and easy access to all of the assets of NLETC. Each regional center will act independently, with its own staff, offering a wide area of expertise and specialization to coordinate information relating to technology that is relevant to the geographical area in which it is located. Through their combined efforts, NLETC and the regional centers will:

- Help determine agency technology and research needs.
- Identify and evaluate available technologies suitable for law enforcement and criminal justice needs.
- Facilitate partnerships among private and public organizations to develop new technologies.
- Provide demonstrations of these technologies.
- Invent new ways to leverage limited law enforcement and criminal justice resources and funding.

Each center will promote technology demonstrations, evaluations, and transfer of technology. In addition, each will host industry-wide briefings to inform potential contractors of new technology developments;

discuss law enforcement requirements, limitations, and concerns; inform contractors of potential markets; and present test and evaluation results. Each center will serve as a technology information center and resource for law enforcement agencies throughout their respective regions. Ideas and concerns of law enforcement agencies as well as industry will be actively solicited.

The current regional centers are:

Charleston, South Carolina. Located on a U.S. Navy installation, the National Law Enforcement Technology Center, East Region (NLETC-E), will focus on corrections technologies and development of the electronic hub for the Technology Information Network.

Denver, Colorado. Located at the Denver Research Institute within the University of Denver, the National Law Enforcement Technology Center, Rocky Mountain Region (NLETC-RM), will focus initially on solving interoperability problems in law enforcement by finding ways to help departments communicate across jurisdictional lines without having to buy new communications suites.

El Segundo, California. Located at the Aerospace Corporation (a fully funded research and development corporation of the U.S. Air Force), the National Law Enforcement Technology Center, Western Region (NLETC-W), will provide investigative and surveillance technology support to the criminal justice community. NLETC-W will initially assist law enforcement agencies in collecting data and conducting independent simulations and tests and evaluations of forensic imaging and general surveillance technology and systems.

Rome, New York. Located at Rome Laboratories (a U.S. Air Force Laboratory at Griffiss Air Force Base), the National Law Enforcement Technology Center, Northeast Region (NLETC-NE), will focus on weapons and weapons safety technologies.

San Diego, California. Established jointly by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Treasury and the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the

Border Research Technology Center (BRTC) is located in San Diego's business district. BRTC will address the development of new technology concerned with control of the rising problem of border-related crime. BRTC will also assist and advise law enforcement agencies on coordination of rapid research, development, demonstration, evaluation, and fielding of technologies and address legal and societal issues relating to border control.

Wheeling, West Virginia.

Co-located with the National Technology Transfer Center (NTTC), the Office of Law Enforcement Technology Commercialization (OLETC) will help transfer technologies out of the Federal laboratories to industry for development and manufacture, ultimately as affordable, useful technologies for law enforcement. This site will create reference and training materials as well as a data base.

Another component of NLETC is the Office of Law Enforcement Standards (OLES) at the National Institute of Standards and Technology. OLES develops voluntary national performance standards for compliance testing to ensure that individual items of equipment are suitable for use by criminal justice agencies. In addition to highly technical standards, OLES also produces user guides that explain in nontechnical terms the capabilities of available equipment.

A first task for all regional centers is to establish Regional Law Enforcement Advisory Councils similar to LETAC, ensuring local law enforcement involvement.

While we know there is no substitute for an officer on the beat, technology can greatly enhance officer effectiveness. Technology—it saves lives.

Law Enforcement's Role

Special panels and councils help NLETC identify realistic needs of law enforcement. These groups include:

- LETAC, which consists of approximately 85 local, State, and Federal law enforcement officials.

- A national-level policy panel, which includes high-ranking judges, lawyers, and former military and law enforcement officials, that has been established under an NIJ grant and charged with establishing links essential to identifying and transferring dual-use technologies.

- The Less-Than-Lethal Liability Panel, made up of police department attorneys, municipal attorneys, law school professors, and others that review each new technology proposal for its liability implications.

- The Community Acceptance Panel, which includes the ACLU, NRA, Handgun Control, NAACP, League of Women Voters, and others, to ensure that the technologies pursued are acceptable to the community.

This *support structure* will extend to the regional centers through establishment of their own local advisory councils. The regional councils, which may reflect the membership structure of LETAC, will ensure the full involvement of local law enforcement agencies. Their involvement will provide a focus for the development of rational and realistic technology development strategies and ensure that they will receive the information they need to make intelligent purchasing and fielding decisions. The direct involvement of industry will enhance the development of products specifically for the law enforcement and criminal justice market.

Because the role of local law enforcement is critical to the success of this joint venture, local agencies will be recruited to work with their regional center and provide:

- Focus and valuable program critiques.
- Technology needs specific to the region and the regional centers' mission.
- The development of mutually beneficial partnerships across the country to maximize resources offered by States, industry, academia, and other agencies.
- A better opportunity to showcase technologies—sites where technologies can be displayed and possibly demonstrated.
- Development of technology transition strategies.

- Management of information programs and administration of information systems.

The success of the National Law Enforcement Technology Center and its regional centers is largely dependent on agency and industry participation.

How Information Will Be Dispersed

Information will be accessible via the Technology Information Network through:

- An 800 telephone number linked to the NLETC.
- Dial-up access to data bases and bulletin boards.
- *Technology Beat* newsletter.
- National/regional conferences.
- National/local publications, which may include newsletters.
- Visitor centers similar to NLETC's to showcase technology.

NLETC's Mission:

- Provide a focus for law enforcement technology efforts, to coordinate the development of new technologies, eliminate duplications, and ensure local law enforcement involvement at every step.
- Help transfer and adapt technologies developed for Defense use, often at great expense, for use by law enforcement. NLETC will work through the regional centers to evaluate these new technologies.
- Draw attention to the "force multiplier" advantages technology can offer, through field demonstrations for actual departments.
- Provide law enforcement agencies with access to objective, reliable information on new technologies.
- Help address the fragmented buying power of law enforcement, which makes it difficult to interest industry in addressing law enforcement markets.

For Further Information:

If you would like to learn more about NLETC, please call 800-248-2742 or write: NLETC, Box 1160, Rockville, MD 20849.

Regional Contacts:

Office of Law Enforcement Technology Commercialization

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The **National Law Enforcement Technology Center, Northeast Region**, and the **Border Research Technology Center** are just now coming online. Contact numbers will be published at a later time.

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The National Institute of Justice is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and Office for Victims of Crime.

Second NIJ Technology Conference

NIJ's second major conference on Law Enforcement Technology for the 21st Century will be held May 15-17, 1995, at the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. To obtain additional information about the Conference, which is supported by the American Defense Preparedness Association (ADPA), please contact Amy Hawkins at ADPA (703-522-1820).

Issues that the Conference will address are:

- Technology requirements for law enforcement.
- Current technology initiatives.
- How technology development can be funded.
- Government's role in technology development.

U.S. Department of Justice

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