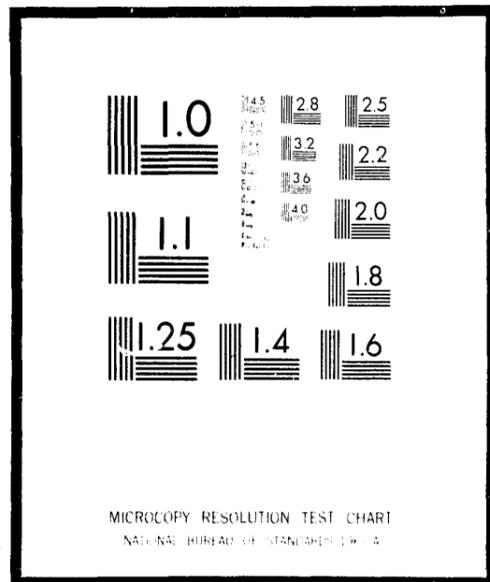


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LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFERENCE SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20531

1/4/77  
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## LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION (LEAA) POLICE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT

SUBJECT: Review Field Reporting and Record Keeping Procedures in order to Maximize the Value of Crime Analysis

REPORT NUMBER: 76-113/071

FOR: Mount Prospect, Illinois Police Department

Population	49,000
Police Strength (Sworn)	59
(Civilian)	13
Total	<u>72</u>
Square Mile Area	12

CONTRACTOR: Public Administration Service  
1776 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20036

CONSULTANT: Charles O. Hale

CONTRACT NUMBER: J-LEAA-002-76

DATE: July 30, 1976

35867

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## SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

The Chief of Police in Mount Prospect, Illinois, requested technical assistance in reviewing field reporting and records-keeping procedures in order to maximize the value of crime analysis. The request for technical assistance was approved by the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission (ILEC) and by Region V of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), respectively.

Preliminary reconnaissance on the nature of the problem to be addressed was conducted on July 7, 1976. A follow-up on-site visit was conducted on July 13, 1976. A total of four consultant days were utilized to perform the on-site work and to prepare the written report.

The following subject areas were examined in the study:

- Field report forms, processing procedures, and records-keeping methods
- Existing information analysis capabilities and methods
- Information flow systems and data requirements for operational and support personnel

The following personnel were interviewed during the conduct of the study:

- Chief of Police R. J. Doney
- Commander E. Nastek
- Lieutenant F. Hedlund
- Sergeant J. Bopp
- Officer M. Coy
- Officer T. Daley
- Mr. Ken Sterrenberg, Manager  
Northwest Municipal Data System
- Mr. David H. Brunner, Director  
Northwest Central Dispatch

SECTION II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In January, 1976 the Mount Prospect Police Department, through a first-year grant in the amount of \$78,903 awarded by the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission, initiated a Crime Prevention Unit (CPU). The CPU consists of two police officers and a secretary. In accordance with the grant requirements, both officers have attended a formal crime prevention training program.

The essential purpose of the crime prevention program is to identify significant crime problems in the city and to develop appropriate prevention strategies. A requisite feature of this program is the availability of reliable, timely data on crimes and persons suggested of committing crimes. This data is not presently available in a form which can be used by crime prevention officers.

A related problem is that the police department does not presently have a crime analysis capability, nor does it have personnel with training or experience in crime analysis.

### SECTION III. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

An analysis of the problem suggests the following study objectives:

- To examine the current field reporting practices, word processing methods, and information dissemination procedures of the department; to assess their suitability for the purpose of obtaining essential crime data; and to recommend improvements accordingly.
- To provide general guidelines for the development of a crime analysis capability, including organization, staffing, and procedure requirements.
- To develop an outline of an information system that will serve the purposes of crime analysis and therefore improve the operational efficiency of the crime prevention unit.

#### Field Reporting Practices and Record Processing Procedures

##### Current Procedures

Police reports and related information concerning police activities are usually initiated by patrol officers in the field. A request for police assistance is received by a police dispatcher located in the communications center which is housed in the Arlington Heights police facility. The Northwest Central Dispatch is a consolidated police communications system servicing the police departments in Arlington Heights, Mount Prospect, Buffalo Grove, and Oak Grove.

Upon receipt of a request for police assistance, the police dispatcher time-stamps an assignment card and enters preliminary information concerning location, nature of incident, and similar information onto the card (see figure 1). Identical cards are used for all four police agencies, but they are color-coded for easy identification.

Assignment cards are also initiated upon notification from a patrol officer of a self-initiated incident, such as a traffic stop or a check of a suspicious person.

Upon completion of the assignment, appropriate disposition information is entered by the dispatcher onto the assignment card. All completed assignment cards are then batched and prepared for pick-up.

Once each eight-hour shift completed assignment cards are picked up and delivered to the desk officer at the Mount Prospect Police Department. The desk officer logs the assignment cards sequentially by complaint number on a typewritten complaint log.

Most calls for police service require the completion of a formal report by the patrol officers. Typically, patrol officers will obtain the complaint number and time information from the police dispatcher and then, depending upon the type of crime, or nature of the incident, complete one of several field report forms.<sup>1/</sup> Completed reports are turned in during or at the end of each shift to the desk officer. The desk officer checks the reports against the log sheet and matches them up with the appropriate assignment card.

Assignment cards and reports are generally checked by the patrol shift commander to ensure accuracy and completeness. In addition, the supervisor is required to read and approve all assignment cards for which no formal report is prepared.

At the beginning of each work day, completed assignment cards and reports are picked up by a record clerk. A check is made to ensure that either an assignment card or a police report is present for each complaint number recorded in the complaint log. A list is maintained of complaint numbers for which no assignment cards and/or field reports can be found. When the missing reports appear, they are crossed off the list. An average of six reports or assignment cards are somehow lost each month. Moreover, some reports do not appear in central records until several days after they were originally taken.

Once reports and assignment cards are received in central records, they travel a series of processing steps involving coding and tabulating data for the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR); typing master name index cards on persons listed in report; and making copies of report for other city departments, such as finance and public works.

Index cards are filed by name and offense classification, and a separate index file is maintained for persons arrested. Arrest jackets are prepared for all arrests which can result in confinement, and a copy of the offense report is placed in the arrest jacket. The original offense or incident report is filed by complaint number. Assignment cards are also filed by complaint number.

Very few copies of reports are made. Detectives, for example, do not receive copies of all reports. Instead, a detective will personally review all original reports each day and select those which require follow-up action. Copies of these reports are then made for use by detectives.

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<sup>1/</sup> Mount Prospect is a contributing agency to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program; consequently, patrol officers must conform to the standards, definitions, and information required by the UCR system.

Copies of reports of significant interest are made and forwarded to the chief's liaison officer for information purposes. A Daily Bulletin report is prepared by a records clerk each work day. The Daily Bulletin contains a brief description, by offense classification of all reports taken since the last Daily Bulletin was prepared. The Daily Bulletin is disseminated through the department for briefing purposes.

#### Problems Identified

An effective crime prevention program depends upon the availability of complete and accurate information on crimes and other police-related incidents. Similarly, an efficient field reporting, and records-keeping system is essential to effective crime analysis. In other words, the police records system is a key factor in the success or failure of both crime analysis and crime prevention.

There are several weaknesses in the current records system of the Mount Prospect Police Department. These are summarized below.

Report Classification. Offense reports are often incorrectly classified by patrol officers, either due to a lack of knowledge on the part of the officer as to correct UCR classification procedures, or to a failure to obtain complete information, or simply due to carelessness. In any event, many offense reports are turned in with incorrect UCR classifications and must then be reclassified at some later time.

Report Review. The purpose of report review is to ensure that all reports contain complete and accurate information. Initial report review is performed by the patrol shift commander. Reports are later reviewed by records personnel and, in some cases, by investigators.

While it is good to have a succession of report audits, the initial review by the patrol shift commander is the most important; and it is this review that seems to present the most difficulties. That is, the review conducted by the patrol shift commander is apparently incomplete and perfunctory in some cases. As a result, reports are processed through the system with either inaccurate or incomplete information, or both.

Inadequate Control. One function of a central records unit is to ensure control over all reports once they have been received. Effective control can be enhanced in several ways: (a) limiting the number of personnel who handle reports; (b) reducing the steps between report initiation and delivery to records; (c) ensuring that unauthorized persons (i.e., persons not involved in the records process) are not allowed access to records. Each of these control mechanisms needs to be improved in the Mount Prospect Police Department.

A fundamental problem of control relates to the fact that too much time elapses between the time a report is initiated by the reporting officer and the time it is delivered to central records. In some instances, this delay may be as much as several days. This is apparently due to the fact that patrol shift commanders retain reports which are incomplete or need additional work by patrol officers. In some cases, patrol officers do not turn in reports at the end of their shifts, but are allowed to complete them upon returning to work the next day.

Unnecessary delay is experienced in the routine processing of reports as well; particularly those that are taken over the weekend. Reports initiated after 8:00 a.m. on Friday are not picked up by records personnel until 7:00 a.m. the following Monday. These reports remain in an incoming report file and may be taken by investigators, patrol officers, or supervisors who wish to review them or take some further action on them.

Also contributing to this problem is that investigators are allowed to review original reports, either before they have been forwarded to central records, or while they are being processed in central records. This unnecessarily disrupts the records processing routine and also creates more potential for reports to be lost, delayed, or misplaced.

Recommended Solutions

A number of changes are recommended in the records procedures of the Mount Prospect Police Department in order to improve the integrity of the records system.

First, all records should be completed and turned in no later than the end of each shift. If follow-up work is required, this fact should be noted on the original report, and the original report should be turned in. The patrol shift commander should review all reports turned in during his shift and should ensure that all reports are accounted for and turned in to the central record unit before going off duty. There should be no reason for holding reports back or for unnecessarily delaying them from being processed.

Second, the police department should investigate the possibility of using no-carbon-required forms or carbon-required form-sets that would eliminate the necessity of xeroxing reports for interested parties. If this were done, the shift commander could, upon reviewing and approving a report, distribute one copy to investigators and one copy to patrol for briefing purposes, and forward the original to central records. This would eliminate the need for anyone but records personnel to handle the original report and thus improve overall report security and control.

Third, no authorized persons should be allowed access to original reports. When reports are needed by investigators or other personnel in the department, copies should be made and routinely distributed to them. There

should be no reason for an original report to be lost or misplaced once it is received in central records.

Fourth, patrol officers should be given refresher training in UCR classification procedures, and patrol supervisors should be required to more closely scrutinize reports completed by officers under their command.

#### The Crime Analysis Function

Crime analysis is an important police function and can be used for a variety of purposes. Basically, crime analysis assists law enforcement personnel in identifying key crime problems and in developing appropriate responses to them.

Crime analysis can best be viewed as a staff function which supports and assists line elements (patrol and investigators), as well as other staff elements (crime prevention). The crime analysis function is graphically displayed in Figure 2.

The life-blood of the crime analysis function is information on crimes and offenders. Most of this information is derived from internal sources, such as offense and arrest reports. In some cases, crime analysis data may be received from sources external to the police department, such as other police agencies.

An important part of the crime analysis function is identifying necessary data sources. Related to this, is determining what types of data are to be analyzed. This is a critical step, since time and resource limitation require that crime analysis be selective and specific. In other words, crime analysis should be directed toward specific targets.

Once data sources have been identified and specific types of data have been selected for analysis, a procedure must be established for ensuring that the necessary data is received by the crime analysis unit in a timely fashion. New report forms and different reporting practices may be necessary to ensure that the crime analysis unit receives all the necessary information.

The crime analysis unit receives data in raw form. The data must then be reviewed, audited, analyzed, and disseminated. This is the essential task of the crime analysis function. The analyses performed by the crime analysis unit depends largely upon the objectives established for the crime analysis unit. For example, if burglary is one of the offenses selected for study, analyses would be conducted of the time, day, location, and modus operandi of all burglaries reported.

Upon completion of the analysis function, refined data, in the form of tables, charts and tabular summaries, must then be disseminated to user elements such as patrol officers, investigators, and the crime prevention unit. Refined data may be categorized as being one of two general types: prevention data and apprehension/solution data.

Prevention data are those types of information which can be used to develop preventive strategies and programs. For example, crime prevention efforts require information on crime trends, such as time of day, location, and modus operandi in order to develop effective crime prevention tactics.

Apprehension/solution data are those which can be used principally for the identification and apprehension of offenders, and the solution of crimes. Investigators use such data as a regular part of their investigating process.

Both types of data are useful to patrol officers who must be concerned equally with offender apprehension and crime prevention.

The exact nature of the crime analysis function will vary from one department to the next. However, the above description provides a framework for analyzing the current crime analysis capability of the Mount Prospect Police Department.

#### The Present System

The Mount Prospect Police Department currently has no formal crime analysis program. Instead, crime analysis is conducted by the officers assigned to the crime prevention bureau.

Copies of all offense reports are forwarded to the crime prevention bureau, where they are filed by offense classification. The crime prevention bureau is primarily interested only in the offenses of burglary, theft from auto, theft of CB radios, criminal damage to property, and vandalism.

Information regarding these specific offenses is plotted on pin maps daily. In addition, the crime prevention bureau prepares statistical summaries and analyses of these selected crimes according to time of day, day of week, location, and method of operation.

#### Problems Identified

The crime analysis function of the department as it is currently performed appears adequate. All necessary information is received in good order. Specific offenses have been selected for analysis. The analysis performed seem to serve a useful purpose and information is transmitted to those units and individuals with proprietary interest.

These problems relating to crime analysis exist, however. First, there is no logical reason that the crime prevention bureau should maintain copies

of all offense reports, since it is interested in only a few selected offense classifications. This is merely a duplication of the records maintained in central records and serves no useful purpose in terms of either crime analysis or crime prevention.

Second, crime analysis requires a substantial amount of the time of the officers assigned to the crime prevention bureau: an estimated 20 hours per week. This detracts from the ability of the members of the crime prevention bureau to concentrate their energies on crime prevention problems. In addition, it limits the amount of time that can be devoted to crime analysis, which is itself an important function which should not be neglected.

Third, the report forms used by the police department reflect the location of crimes committed according to patrol zones, of which there are a total of nine in the city. This does not permit more detailed analysis of crime by area other than by street location, which can be a very laborious task. A system of 195 geo-codes has been developed for reporting purposes, but has not yet been implemented.

#### Recommended Solutions

The crime prevention bureau should only receive those reports which are of specific concern to it. The duplicate set of reports maintained by the crime prevention bureau should be eliminated.

In addition, crime analysis should be the full-time responsibility of one person rather than the part-time responsibility of two officers. It is therefore suggested that the department create the position of crime analyst within the administrative service division. This would be a staff position equivalent to that of members of the crime prevention bureau, and could be filled by a qualified civilian or police officer.

Finally, the report forms used by the department should be revised to include geo-code identifiers to more specifically show the location of crimes reported to the police. In all other respects, however, the report forms used by the department seem adequate.

IV. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Analysis revealed several problem areas with respect to the capability of current records systems and field reporting practices of the Mount Prospect Police Department to support an effective crime analysis and crime prevention program.

Lack of control over police reports is seen as the biggest obstacle to be overcome. This lack of control is exemplified in the unacceptable delay experienced between the time a report is initiated in the field and the time it is received for processing by central records, and by the unusually high incidence of lost or misplaced reports.

Poor field reporting practices and inadequate supervision of reports by patrol shift commanders is a second major problem which causes unnecessary delays and reporting errors.

Finally, placing the burden of crime analysis on members of the crime prevention bureau detracts from the ability of these officers to do the job which they were intended to do. While the crime analysis efforts of the crime prevention bureau are certainly consistent with the basic principles of crime analysis, these efforts could be better performed by an individual who could devote his entire attention to this important function.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

With a few minor modifications, the field reporting and records-keeping system can fully support an effective crime analysis program which in turn can support patrol, investigative, and crime prevention efforts. The following recommendations are offered to this end:

1. A system of geo-code area designations should be implemented to support a more detailed, computer-assisted, analysis of crime by specific areas. Field report forms and assignment cards (Figure 1) should be modified to provide space for geo-code area designations.
2. Steps should be taken to improve the offense classification process with respect to initial offense reporting. In-service training should be developed for all personnel in the department, with particular emphasis on patrol officers and patrol supervisors. A field report manual should be developed to provide patrol officers with step-by-step guidelines for offense classification and report preparation. Current Uniform Crime Report classification procedures should be followed in these guidelines.
3. Every effort should be made to reduce the delay which occurs between the time a report is completed in the field and the time it is received in central records. In most cases, reports should be completed no later than the end of each shift and all reports promptly forwarded to central records.
4. Consideration should be given to adapting no-carbon-required or carbon-required form sets for all offense reports so that a copy of all reports is immediately available after a report is completed. This would eliminate the need to side track original reports before their delivery to central records, and would also expedite the processing and distribution of reports to interested parties.
5. Steps should be taken to tighten control over reports once they are received by central records. Unauthorized persons, such as investigators and patrol officers, should be allowed access to original reports.
6. Policies should be established regarding the distribution of report copies. Investigators should not be allowed to "pick and choose" those reports which they wish to follow up. Rather, a copy of all offense reports and miscellaneous incident reports should be forwarded to the investigative commander each day. The investigative commander should then assign those cases as he sees fit.

7. The practice of reproducing one copy of all reports for the crime prevention bureau should be discontinued, as this is merely a duplication of the files maintained in central records. Instead, the crime prevention bureau should receive only copies of those reports in which it has a direct interest.
8. The position of crime analyst should be created within the police department. This should be a staff function and should serve in the capacity outlined in the discussion on pages 7-9 of this report, and as illustrated in Figure 2. <sup>1/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> More detailed information concerning the techniques and procedures of crime analysis can be found in Police Crime Analysis Unit Handbook (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973.)

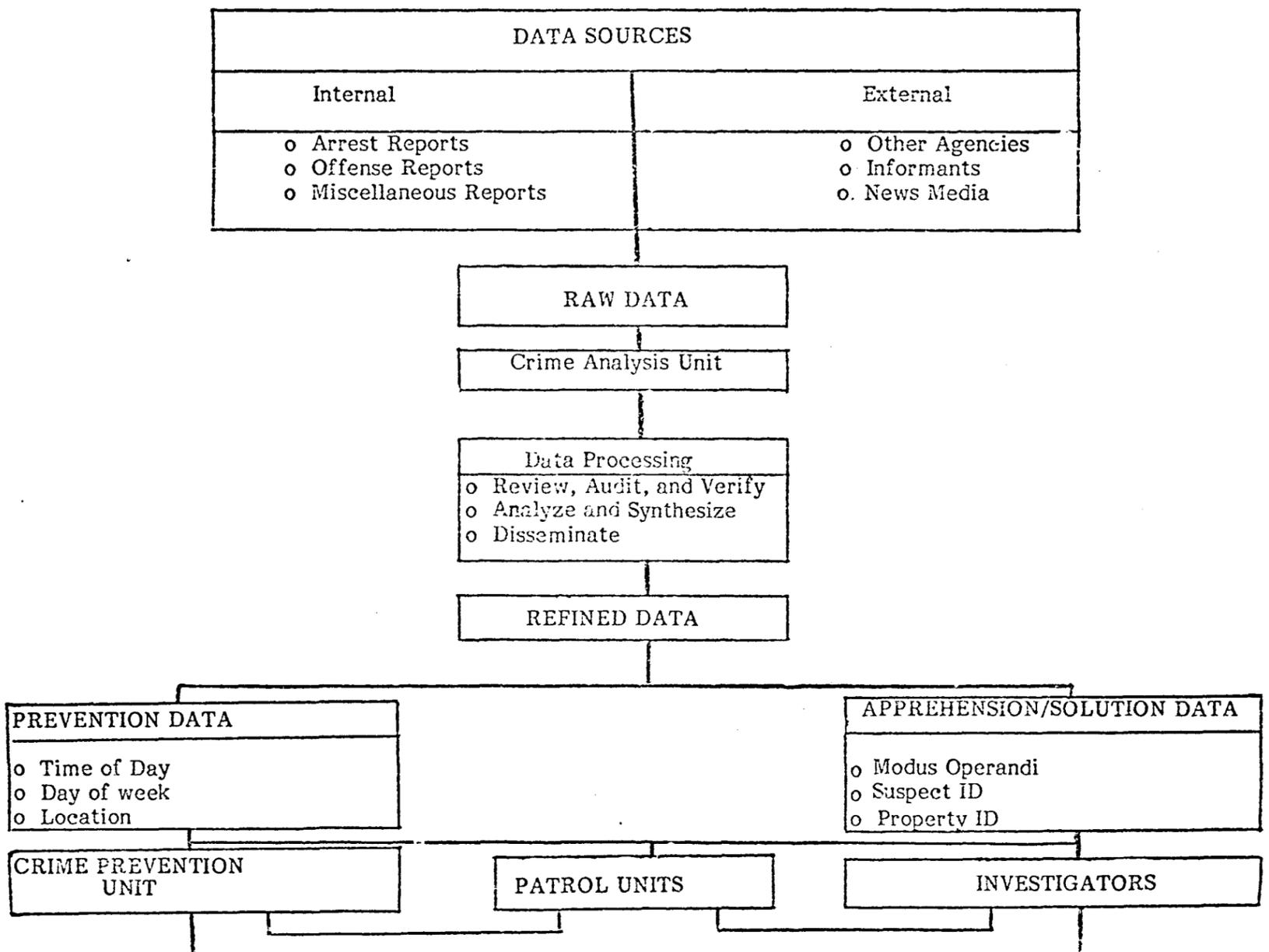
Figure 1  
Assignment Card

OFFENSE CODE	OFFENSE	NO.		
LOCATION		BEAT OF OCCURANCE		
COMPLAINANT'S NAME		COMPL. PHONE NO.		
COMPLAINANT'S ADDRESS		APT. NO.	HOME <input type="checkbox"/>	BUS. <input type="checkbox"/>
REMARKS:				
<input type="checkbox"/> NO PAPER <input type="checkbox"/> SEE COMPL. <input type="checkbox"/> DO NOT SEE COMPL. <input type="checkbox"/> UNFOUNDED <input type="checkbox"/> G. O. A. <input type="checkbox"/> REVERSE USED				
OFFICER ASSIGNED		OFFICER ASSISTING		DISTRICT
				BEAT
				SECTION
BEAT	OFFICER NO.	BEAT	OFFICER NO.	DAY OF WEEK
				S M T W T F S
				1 2 3 4 5 6 7
RECEIVED BY:		DISPATCHED BY:		HOW CALL RECEIVED
				<input type="checkbox"/> DESK
				<input type="checkbox"/> PHONE <input type="checkbox"/> C.B. RADIO <input type="checkbox"/> POLICE

RECEIVED  
ASSIGNED  
10-23  
10-24  
REASSIGNED

Figure 2

The Crime Analysis Function



**END**

*J. C. ...*