



staff photo by Warren Morgan

Sgt. Bob Wilson says the police computer helps detectives pool their data on past crimes, compare notes and predict the times and locations of future crimes

# Computer makes a good detective

By RON BELLAMY  
Of the Register-Guard

The masked gunman works alone. He robs one small grocery store and, a few weeks later, another. And then another.

Police lack enough information to connect the seemingly random attacks, but give their clues to crime analysts who feed the information into the police computer.

By comparing a variety of elements, such as the time and location of the robberies and the techniques of known offenders, the computer predicts where and when the robber will strike next.

Police stake out the store — and catch their man.

A few years ago, that scenario would have been plausible only on a TV police show. Now, in theory, it can happen in Eugene.

The key is the Eugene Police Department's Integrated Criminal Apprehension Program (ICAP), a federally funded program that uses computer-age technology to fight crime.

Developed by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, ICAP has the goal of increasing police effectiveness and efficiency by basing patrols and investigations on solid, systematic data.

The data, stored in computers, can be used to measure and predict crime trends, to keep track of known criminals and, ultimately, to give some indication of where and when a criminal will strike.

Police department crime analysts are using that approach to try to apprehend a man who has raped and robbed several women in the Eugene-Springfield area over the past few years.

"Crime forecasting is the ultimate achievement of the ICAP approach," says police Sgt.

Jim Horton, program manager in Eugene. On a more basic, everyday level, Horton says, the program serves as a "clearinghouse" for crime information within the department.

"We've had crime analysis in the past," says Sgt. Bob Wilson, who is in charge of crime analysis under the ICAP program. "If a detective investigating some burglaries wanted to analyze them for similarities, he did it himself, usually for his own use."

"In the past, the detectives in burglary might have half a pattern about a series of crimes. And right next door detectives in juvenile might have the other half. And neither would know about it."

## Fighting crime with a machine sounds like something out of TV cop shows, but a federally funded program in Eugene proves the method can work in real life, too

Now, through a variety of criminal analysis bulletins, such information is more widely disseminated.

The police department received its \$274,000 grant for the program last September under the LEAA's "career criminal" program.

"By increasing the efficiency of police services, the program is designed to apprehend and remove from society the career criminal," Horton says. But the program, which began functioning in December, has a broader scope, providing Eugene police with:

- Crime analysis — The ICAP team uses a computer terminal to tap a broad base of data stored in the large Lane County computer by the Lane County Sheriff's Office, by the county courts, by the state Motor Vehicle Division and by local police departments. The team can pro-

vide police officers with a wide variety of crime statistics and information.

- Operational analysis — By providing police administrators with statistics and studies, Horton says, "ICAP is the facilitator for change by providing information for people to make decisions." Included is information about deployment of police officers, workloads, current department programs and "tried and tested" programs in other departments, Horton says.

- Crime prevention — The Community Officer Patrol (COP) team, funded in part by the ICAP grant, provides the public with information on how to prevent crime. The COP team members use ICAP-generated statistics to focus

on specific crime problems in specific areas of the city.

Federal funds pay the salaries of Horton and Wilson, of the three uniformed members of the COP team, of crime analyst Agent Ken Hanfland and operations analyst Agent Randy Wight, and of a computer programmer and two clerical workers.

About 47 cities in the United States have received funds for ICAP-type programs, and federal funds pay some travel expenses so the cities can compare notes.

For police in Colorado Springs, Colo., those travel funds paid unexpected dividends recently when Hanfland, on a trip to provide technical assistance, helped the Rocky Mountain officers nab two burglary suspects.

"They were having some trouble with a series of commercial burglaries that was giving them fits," Horton says. "Ken did some work with the information they had, and predicted that the next time they hit would be Sunday or Monday night, that they would be white males, 18 to 25, that they would live a certain distance from the business, which business it would be, and that they'd be on foot."

"The Colorado Springs police staked out the building and on the second night they caught the burglars. . . . They thought that was the greatest thing since peanut butter."

In a program that stresses efficiency, crime forecasting is the ultimate achievement. But there's more to it than punching some keys on a computer terminal.

"One of the problems with crime forecasting is that the data has to be uniform," Horton says. "Some of those things, at least on the face, are insurmountable. How do you tell, for example, exactly what time a burglary occurred?"

In "a number of years," Horton says, the department hopes to be able to determine patterns and predict certain crimes with some consistency. "On a scale of one to 10, other departments are between zero and one and we're between six and seven. But we're still a long way from being able to do it consistently," he says.

Nevertheless, the ICAP team's crime analysis has already proved successful, if not spectacular.

Recently, Hanfland put out a bulletin on burglaries in the Dillard Road area, noting consistencies in the crimes and that they'd apparently been committed by a juvenile.

The police put a "directed patrol" in the area, an officer who worked on that specific problem by interviewing people and gathering more information. That in turn resulted in an-

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## Computer

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other ICAP bulletin and, a few days later, the arrest of a 14-year-old boy who confessed to nine burglaries.

The ICAP team has access to information stored in the main county computer and can add information constantly. New information compiled by the team ranges from descriptions of getaway cars to lists of aliases and "street names."

An important element of the program's criminal analysis program is the department's new Interactive Graphics Computer System — a \$29,000 package of equipment and programming that translates statistical data into maps, charts and graphs.

By punching keys on a video display terminal, members of the ICAP team can create a map of a specific area in Eugene and, for example, pinpoint the

last known addresses of burglars as well as single-family dwellings and daytime burglaries over the past month. "It's the ultimate pin map," Horton says.

The graphics computer system and the vast amount of data stored in the county computer system since the mid-1960s have pushed Eugene into the forefront of ICAP cities. Recently, police officials from about 25 cities spent three days here to study the Eugene program.

Horton emphasizes that "the computer can do great things, but it can never replace the cop on the beat. The computer is never going to make an arrest."

Horton and Wilson say the program has been well received by rank-and-file Eugene police officers (Wilson and Horton are department veterans and Wight is president of the Eugene Police Patrolman's Association), partly because the

information provided by the program is proving worthwhile.

Meanwhile, through operational analysis, the ICAP team has generated change in traditional police practices. For example, "directed patrols," or "D runs," allow an officer to patrol a specific area and follow specific instructions to solve a specific problem.

Instead of patrolling randomly and trying to discourage crime through visibility, a patrol officer works on a particular crime trend that has been discovered by ICAP crime analysts.

Another innovation, "case management," keeps track of crimes that aren't likely to be solved — a simple theft, for example — so detectives can spend time working on more productive cases.

Federal funding for the ICAP program expires in September but Horton

says he's confident the first year of the program can be extended until December and that funding can be obtained for the remaining two years of the three-year program. Then, if the program is to survive, the department will have to find a way to absorb the salaries of ICAP team members into the regular budget.

Horton says he believes the program will survive in one form or another. Doug Moore, in charge of administrative services for Eugene police and in overall command of the program, says the ICAP approach is "thought of nationally as the closest thing going in terms of professional law enforcement for the future."

"If we can look into the future, we'll see that the ICAP cities and concepts are ahead of their time."