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In the last ten years lawlessness and violence have increased in North Carolina at a rate unparalleled in the history of our State. During the same period, crime has increased throughout America eleven times faster than the population of this country.

Homicides were up about fifty per cent and there were 1279 homicides reported in North Carolina during this same time. Violent assaults were up more than 120 per cent.

Rapes were up over 100 per cent. Property crimes were up 60 per cent. These figures show only those cases handled by the SBI. Many crimes occur in which the SBI is not involved.

And because there is more illegal use of narcotics and dangerous drugs today than ever before, and it is necessary for the users of such drugs to maintain their habit, we can expect the number of robberies, burglaries and killings to continue to increase unless we are willing to make a total commitment of our resources to the war on crime.

We should note, I think, that criminals have become more sophisticated and more knowledgeable in the ways

of crime. At the same time, the recent decisions of the United States Supreme Court have made it more difficult for law enforcement officers to carry out their duties and responsibilities. Such decisions have made it mandatory that we provide our officers with the knowledge and training to enforce the laws, while at the same time maintaining and respecting the individual rights of every citizen.

No amount of training and knowledge, however, will be of much avail unless we provide our law enforcement officers with the tools to do the job—the scientific and technical weapons which have been developed for use in combatting the rising crime rate.

A few generations ago, such equipment as this was not necessary. For the average criminal usually resided within a given neighborhood or community and his mode of transportation and communication generally limited him to that area.

Today, however, a criminal may commit a crime here in Catawba County and be on the other side of our State within a matter of hours or even in other states.

To cope with this problem of rapid transportation and mobility of today's criminal, North Carolina has developed the Police Information Network at an expense of several million dollars. This Police Information Network is the most progressive system of its kind in the nation and will, when fully operative, be the most effective weapon against criminal activity available anywhere. I believe that the need for such a network and its use can best be demonstrated by illustrating some of the problems that now confront law enforcement officers and then looking to see how the network can aid in solving or meeting such problems.

Let us assume that tonight somewhere along the highway in this county, a heroin addict stops at a local service station, seeking funds to buy the heroin he needs to maintain his habit. In the course of committing the robbery, a tussle results and the attendant is killed. As the robber speeds away an onlooker records his license number and calls the local sheriff. The chances are pretty good that before this information can be communicated to the Sheriff and his office alerted, the robber and killer has already escaped from Catawba County. Of course, under today's system, the information would immediately be placed upon the highway patrol radio.

But only those officers who were on duty at that time would be likely to hear this information. Even then, the chances of their recording or remembering the license number or the description of the automobile are somewhat remote—the capabilities of the human mind being limited as they are.

It would be impossible for your sheriff to get on the telephone and call every other sheriff and police department in North Carolina because to do so, would take at least a day in itself. An hour or two later, the robber and murderer might very well be stopped by a highway patrolman near Raleigh for some minor traffic violation. His driver's license would be checked and unless the officer just happened to have heard the wanted report on the highway patrol radio, the murderer would probably be cited to court for the traffic violation and released. Released at the very time that he was wanted for armed robbery and murder in Catawba County.

When you consider the speed of modern methods of transportation and the limitations of the law enforcement officers of today, it is a wonder that we are able to solve as many crimes as we do.

But lets look to see what would happen in the same case if the Police Information Network were operative in Catawba County and fully operative across the State. First of all, when the report of the crime was first received by the Sheriff's office, the officer on duty would immediately go to a terminal in the Sheriff's Office which resembles a typewriter and type into this terminal the information that the crime had been committed, the license number of the automobile and any other identifying information which might be made available.

Now as soon as this information is put in the terminal in the Sheriff's Office it is transmitted electronically to the Department of Justice in Raleigh where it is stored in the computer system. This would mean that this information would then be available to every law enforcement officer in North Carolina and all over America who has access to the Police Information Network or the National Crime Information Center in Washington.

Now let us assume that the murderer I described before is stopped in Wake County by the highway patrol for a minor traffic violation. As soon as he stops the vehicle and looks at the man's driver's license he immediately picks up his radio and relays this information to his headquarters.

While he is talking to the operator along side of the road, the officer on duty at headquarters will immediately go to his terminal and put into that terminal the license number and other identifying information. This information is immediately transmitted to our office in Raleigh and when the computer receives it, the wheels begin to turn to search the records to see if this automobile or the operator is wanted anywhere in North Carolina.

Of course, when the search is made by the computer it would immediately determine that the man was wanted in Catawba County for murder. It may very well disclose that he is wanted elsewhere for other crimes. Before this information is relayed back to the patrol area headquarters, however, the computers in Raleigh will switch automatically to the National Crime Information Center in Washington, DC.

There the computers will make a similar search to see if the car or its occupant is wanted in any other state in the nation which is connected with the system. Any information received from that network is relayed electronically back to the computer in Raleigh and then all of the information is relayed back to the area headquarters electronically.

From there the operator transmits it to the highway patrolman along side of the road. All of this would take no more than two to four minutes. Of course, as soon as the patrolman receives this information, he would immediately arrest the man or take him into custody.

Let us assume another situation, a typical situation which takes place every day in many places in North Carolina. A law enforcement officer in the lonely hours of the night is patrolling the highways and streets of your county or city. In the wee hours of the morning he comes up behind a suspicious looking automobile; one that he believes, because of his training and intuition, has been stolen or in some other way is in violation of the law. To stop such an automobile late at night is extremely dangerous and so before he makes an effort to stop it, he radios his area headquarters and relays the license number of the automobile.

This information is again fed into the terminal and relayed to Raleigh where a search is made by the computer there and at the National Crime Information Center in Washington.

Whatever information is revealed is then relayed back to the highway patrolman. It may alert the officer that this car has been stolen and that it is occupied or believed to be driven by dangerous criminals. Such information would be most helpful to an officer and would enable him to take precautions before trying to apprehend the person involved.

I can think of a number of highway patrolmen that have been killed in our State, two of them in my area, whose lives might have been saved had this information been available before they attempted to apprehend the occupant.

The Police Information Network will store many kinds of information which will be invaluable to the law enforcement officer. A great deal of this information will be of a confidential nature which is and must be made available only to law enforcement officers.

For instance, in the future we expect to be able to feed into the computers identifying characteristics of particular crimes. Such information will be helpful especially in apprehending those who are involved in



organized criminal activities—such as safecracking gangs who are involved in safe-cracking and robbery.

Suppose that in the western part of North Carolina, a safe is blown open by drilling a hole immediately above the combination lock in a given way. The investigating officer may be able to feed this information into the system and then inquire for other similar safe jobs across the country. The system may be able to inform that officer that this is the technique normally used by a certain gang, that certain other safes in the past have been blown open using the same techniques, and that in those cases a particular individual was arrested and served time and is now free. Or it may advise the officer that other safes have been blown open in a similar manner and that certain individuals are suspected of such robberies.

All of this information together will enable the officer to do a better job in apprehending those who are involved in lives of crime.

Let's take another illustration which in many cases would be closer to home.

One of the common complaints in my county is that officers cannot or will not locate those accused of crimes. This is especially true where an individual is charged with non-support of his children and the county is providing aid for his dependent children. Many times the families will not or cannot give any information which would lead to the apprehension or location of the accused. If the accused is outside of the county, as is generally true, about all that the sheriff can do is pass the word to his officers and put the warrant in the file hoping that some day he will return.

He may disseminate the information across the State by means of the SBI Bulletin or other criminal publications. Here again, however, the human mind is not a computer and it cannot recall immediately and instantly all information which it might have had access to in the past. Therefore, an officer in Wilmington may have read that John Jones is wanted for non-support in Catawba County, but when he arrests John Jones for public drunkenness, or some other crime in Wilmington, be unable to recall where or when he was wanted, or if he was wanted at all.

One of the files that will be available to the Network is a wanted persons file.

Whenever the sheriff has an outstanding warrant for the arrest of a given individual, he will put this information into his terminal and it will be transmitted and stored in the computer in Raleigh. If later on, the man is arrested or taken into custody for any other cause, before he is released an inquiry will generally be made to see if he is wanted elsewhere. And of course such information would be supplied immediately.

Generally speaking, those who commit crimes in one area commit them in many areas, and therefore, it is believed that when this system becomes completely operative, we will be able to increase dramatically the effectiveness of law enforcement officers all across North Carolina.

There is another area in which the system will be of help in the administration of justice in the future. That is in the area of criminal history. Many times today a defendant is tried here in your county and convicted for a given crime.

When the judge comes to sentence he needs to know something of his background. Is this the first time that this defendant has ever been involved with the law as he claims, or does he really have a criminal history all across the state or nation?

Today, the only information available to the judge are the criminal records of the given county in which the defendant is tried, the motor vehicle violations which are on file in Raleigh, or perhaps an FBI record which probably would not include average offenses committed in North Carolina.

The only way that the court could be sure would be to make inquiry of 100 clerks of 100 courts in North Carolina which would be so time consuming that it would defeat and further hinder the administration of justice. In the future, whenever the court comes to sentencing a person who has been convicted of a crime, he will be able to make an inquiry into the system to determine what the reported history or record of this particular individual is.

Here, I am speaking of his criminal convictions, not of what he is suspected of or what it is believed he has done. This will be invaluable to the court and will prevent I am sure many criminals from committing other crimes. It may even save lives, for we all know of cases in which criminals have been placed on probation only to go out and commit crimes which took the lives of other people.

Had the judge known the criminal's background and history, he would never have placed him on probation.

Now, because much of the information used in this system could seriously hamper law enforcement officers in the performance of their duties if this information were generally known to the general public, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has required the system to be under the direct control of law enforcement officers.

This is the policy of the North Carolina Department of Justice as well. As a matter of fact, we had to agree that it would remain under law enforcement officers before we could connect with the National Crime Information Center. This is as it should be.

While keeping the system entirely under the immediate control of law enforcement officers does not guarantee the integrity of the information, it is a greater assurance of its integrity than if it were placed helter-skelter under varying departments in different localities.

The effectiveness of the entire system in North Carolina, as well as across the nation, depends directly upon the coverage of the system. In other words, if Catawba County is without this system, the county itself will suffer, but the State will also suffer.

For those criminals who seek refuge in Catawba County will not be as accessible to other law enforcement officers across the State and nation, and those who flee from Catawba County will not be as available to the law enforcement officers of this county. The system itself has already demonstrated its effectiveness even though only about 40 terminals are operative and the system is not yet complete.

For instance, one of the first inquiries made from Guilford County disclosed that the automobile involved had been stolen in a northern state. In another city, information disclosed that the person being held was wanted for a crime in another area involving the use of firearms.

Just this week, the Asheboro Police Department was looking for a stolen safe. The Randolph County Sheriff's Department found the safe, but the two departments did not communicate with each other. Neither knew of the situation until they went through the Police

Information Network and the information was relayed back to them. Many other illustrations could be given.

I sincerely regret that the county board of commissioners ordered the terminal removed from the sheriff's office in Catawba County and saw fit to label it as a "snooping device." It is not a snooping device and the only persons who have need to fear the information which will be stored in the system are criminals and those seeking to flee from the criminal justice system.

I hope that the commissioners will reconsider and provide the people of Catawba County with this additional protection against lawlessness and violence.

This transcends party lines and though your local newspaper has seen fit to describe me as a political animal because I have refused to permit the system to be placed under the hands of the county commissioners, my office is willing to sit down with the commissioners and take the time to fully explain the many reasons why it is necessary to place the terminal under the control of law enforcement officials so as to be in keeping with the rules and requirements of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the North Carolina Department of Justice.