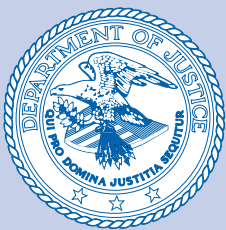




TECHNOLOGY BEAT

National Institute of Justice ■ National Law Enforcement Technology Center



National Institute of Justice Announces Opening of the National Law Enforcement Technology Center

Stepping into the unknown has always gone along with police work. But deciding what should be strapped to a policeman's belt, hidden beneath the uniform, or mounted in the patrol car should be trusted to something more than chance or the limitations of existing products. Similarly, the increased incarceration of younger and more violent offenders has placed an added strain on our Nation's aging correctional facilities, and administrators need to know what options are available to ensure a safe environment for inmates and staff.

The National Law Enforcement Technology Center (NLETC) has opened its doors to do just that. The Center, a program of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), is responsible for helping to facilitate the identification, development, manufacture, and adoption of new products and technologies specifically designed for law enforcement and criminal justice applications. The Center, which was known for the past 9 years as the Technology Assessment Program Information Center, will continue setting performance standards for law enforcement and criminal justice equipment, testing equipment, and distributing the information that law enforcement and criminal justice agencies need to make sound buying decisions.

According to Attorney General Janet Reno, this new Center is to "be part of a new law enforcement information network that will make it easier for law enforcement to find useful products and assist industry in identifying law enforcement requirements."

The Technology Center, located in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area, will offer toll-free access to

technology and product information and a reading room. It will also have facilities for technology demonstrations. Manufacturers and labs will be invited to demonstrate prototype technologies, and state-of-the-science technologies currently available will be on display. However, the Center's real promise will be the information gleaned through the use of computerized bulletin boards and data bases which are planned for the near future.

Here in this cyberspace center, industry, the research and defense communities, law enforcement, and criminal justice practitioners can interact: manufacturers can meet potential customers, researchers can confer with law enforcement and industry, and police departments can share information with their colleagues around the country on products that work, and how to get the most out of them, as well as those that don't work. Initially, the Center plans to compile and computerize information that will include:

■ **Manufacturer and product identification.** An agency wanting to buy a particular product, such as body armor or radios, will be able to get a comprehensive list of manufacturers.

Dear Colleagues:

The National Law Enforcement Technology Center is here to serve your needs.

The Center's mission is to assist law enforcement in moving from the 19th century gun-and-stick technology of Wyatt Earp into the 21st century.

We hope that recent events, such as the new spirit of cooperation between the Departments of Defense and Justice, will speed the development of new tools for law enforcement and that the Center will assist agencies to find high-quality, reliable equipment that does the job they want.

Technology can save lives and make our first line of defense against crime more effective. We look forward to an active partnership in accomplishing this important mission.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Travis
Director
National Institute of Justice
Department of Justice

■ **User product data exchange.**

Agencies considering purchasing a product can find another agency that uses the product in order to evaluate how well it worked or didn't work.

■ **Technical assistance.** Agencies needing to locate equipment to borrow or lease from another agency or to locate an expert in a particular field will be able to call for this information.

This is a pilot center for what is planned to be a network of regional centers located around the country providing information and other resources on what could become a flood of new products and technologies for the law enforcement community.

While in the past the pace of development of new products has been slow, this will change because of a number of important recent developments:

■ With the end of the Cold War, the defense industry has shown interest in developing equipment for law enforcement use. The national and private R&D laboratories, which have worked on developing high-tech weapons and equipment for the Pentagon, have begun focusing attention on developing equipment that could be used for law enforcement. Using these resources is good for police work, and keeping these industries operating in an era of declining defense budgets will help the economy.

■ The Departments of Defense and Justice recently launched a 5-year partnership to develop and share dual-use technologies that could be used by law enforcement agencies and for military operations other than war.

This partnership was formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding signed in April 1994 by the Attorney General and the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

These developments will enhance the relationship between law enforcement and the Pentagon and defense industry. The recent past has shown that equipment that was developed and built according to military specifications was often too expensive or of limited or no use when applied to the law enforcement requirements.

With the military engaging in peacekeeping missions worldwide, they are beginning to focus efforts on technologies that have also been a top priority for law enforcement, such as identifying individuals carrying firearms, safely restraining people, or safely stopping a fleeing vehicle.

Although there are more than 17,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States, manufacturers see problems in trying to serve this market because it is so fragmented and so spread out. Not all departments have the same needs, and while all budgets are tight, smaller departments often have to be especially conscious of costs. Departments big and small are concerned about quality, because equipment failure can mean more than lost money; it can cost someone's life.

NIJ is establishing the Technology Center to help fill these gaps and answer these important concerns. But, for the Center to succeed it will require the strong involvement—indeed, a partnership—with law enforcement and criminal justice personnel at every level, from the beat cop and corrections officer to the chiefs and the wardens. Tell us what you need. This is your Center!

Technology Beat Newsletter

Welcome to *Technology Beat*, a newsletter of the NIJ National Law Enforcement Technology Center. *Technology Beat* was designed to reach the important constituents of the law enforcement community as well as its supporters: the R&D communities, industry, academia, and Defense, which are vital to the development of technologies for law enforcement. This issue of *Technology Beat* is the premier issue of a quarterly newsletter bringing to these varied groups the latest information on the Technology Center as well as information on the latest technology initiatives, what R&D is going on, and what new products are available. In addition, the newsletter will contain highlights of the latest publications and meetings, profiles of people who have had an impact on the law enforcement community, and a calendar of upcoming events.

The first full issue of *Technology Beat* is scheduled for January 1995. If you would like to learn more about *NLETC* and how you can be involved and receive a copy of the first *Technology Beat* issue, please call 1-800-248-2742 or write: NLETC, Box 1160, Rockville, MD 20849.

U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs
National Institute of Justice
National Law Enforcement Technology Center
P.O. Box 1160
Rockville, MD 20849

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300

BULK RATE
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
DOJ/NIJ
Permit No. G-91