

Coming out of the Dark Ages

Revolutionizing Firearms Records Management

BY COLIN SULLIVAN

The Problem

Imagine a complete inability on the part of the Massachusetts Firearms Records Bureau to provide timely access to gun sales and licensing records. Imagine over 725,000 disorganized, handwritten cards, vital firearms licensing records, sitting in a basement at 1010 Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. To locate any one record, a manual search of all the entries was necessary (with no cataloguing system in place), a search estimated to take 74 days, with a cost of \$5,600 in staff time — *to find a single record.*



Gun sale records, completed by the vendor at the time of sale, were mailed directly from the dealers to the Firearms Records Bureau, at which point these records were stored in cardboard boxes and old file cabinets. "The old system was composed of arbitrarily placed records in hundreds, maybe thousands, of shoeboxes built-up over a ten-year period," said Captain Paul Campbell, of the Worcester Police Department. It's a case of a virtually inaccessible, primitive database (records sitting disorganized in a room) progressively becoming more primitive. As of 1996, at the height of the problem, more than 640,000 gun sales records sat, unusable, while more than 106,000 gun licenses/permits remained unlogged.

The practical implications of the problem were overwhelming. Handicapped by the non-system, police officers just couldn't do their job as it should be done. Experienced investigators were forced to spend valuable hours sorting through the chaos to track weapons potentially linked to felonies, the real life

consequence being investigation backlog and an inability to follow crucial leads. "The detectives could not track a firearm back to its owner. They would literally thumb their way through the whole system," said Kevin Harrington, of IDP Companies. Police officers approaching a crime scene had no available method to assess if firearms were

registered at the location and were forced to enter potentially life-threatening situations blindly. The absence of an accurate, centralized database of information was literally placing lives in jeopardy.

It seems only logical to assume that public safety is enhanced greatly if our police force knows where the guns are. It's a matter of being able to access vital information quickly in order to liberate the process from red tape and primitive administrative processes, thereby saving time, money, and, most importantly, lives.

The Solution

In stepped Public Safety Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Kathleen M. O'Toole. In order to get the necessary funding, O'Toole removed the Firearms Records Bureau from the Department of Public Safety and placed it under the Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB). The CHSB then hired IDP Companies, of Sudbury, Mass., to create and implement an imaging system to index all these records in a LAN-based electronic index.

IDP's objective was to provide a complete document management (DM) system whereby all designated staff would have instant access, through a PC, to the image index and individual files. An IDP Service Center assessed the problem, began the conversion process, including card counting (735,000 total), batch processing, scanning, and loading into an imaging system. "The idea was to create a system that would allow the user to go into the database and find all the guns ever owned by an individual, tracked by serial number, and to allow the user to then download a list of all the weapons registered to that specific individual," said Jim Walchner, president and CEO of IDP.

Implementation Challenges

Components include a Microsystem Technology, Inc.'s OCR engine, Bell & Howell's FB1500 scanner, IDP's Infotrieve document imaging and computer output to laser disc (COLD) application, and a SmartStorage CD-ROM storage system. Bringing the components together to form an integrated, working system, according to Walchner, wasn't quite as challenging as scanning the original documents, mostly handwritten, scribbled, etc., into the new system. Data entry, due to deficiencies in the original storage system, was difficult. IDP decided to redesign the transfer of ownership form to deal with the problem in the future.

In addition to problems with data entry, another challenge faced during implementation stages was the need to have the information accessible during the on-site transfer. Walchner cited one case in which an officer actually called during the data transfer stages to track a weapon. The officer fully expected the search to take weeks, even months, but IDP was able to produce the registration info on the spot, which ultimately led to a successful prosecution. Said Walchner, "It was really the first time we got to see the real potential of the new system in action. The officer was amazed at the quickness of the response."

The Results

On May 11, 1998, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Firearms Records Bureau won the Vision Award for the technological initiative with the greatest potential to transform a business or social process and the Vertical Market Solution Award in the Government category, co-sponsored by the Association for Information and Image Management International (AIIM) and Kinetic Information. The current system can search and retrieve an entry in less than 30 seconds at a cost of nine cents per trace. More than 726,000 gun sale records have been entered, including registrations between January, 1985 and March, 1998. The savings in manpower (detective hours not spent sorting through boxes) has been estimated at \$1.75 million. In less than five and half months, according to Harrington, IDP has helped the Bureau "go from being in the dark ages to being a leader in innovation."

The absence of an accurate, centralized database of information was literally placing lives in jeopardy.

William Pickett, director of the Bureau, said there have been over 1,700 successful searches from Feb. 2, 1998 to date, including queries to locate weapons used in homicide cases, rapes, and federal felonies. Over 200 law enforcement users have been trained in the system, and numbers continue to grow. Said Pickett, "The greatest benefit is that an officer now knows what he's stepping into, how many guns are on the premises. We advise all our policeman to call before any raid, just to see if the subject is armed."

Campbell called the new system "a Godsend to the local police department." He cited a specific application that would have never been possible otherwise. As dictated by the Domestic Violence 209A Statute in the state of Massachusetts, when a restraining order is granted to a potential victim of domestic violence, the ruling judge will request that all firearms owned by the subject be immediately confiscated. Prior to the current system, the police officer serving the restraining order had no way of accurately knowing the number of firearms in residence. As it stands today, this same police officer has access to a printout bearing the serial number and description of every firearm ever purchased by the same subject, effectively taking the guns out of the hands of potential bad guys. Prior to the current system, the police simply had to take the bad guy's word for the number of guns on the premises.

Another example cited by Campbell is the recent conviction of an illegal gun dealer. A "straw-buyer" means, in police lingo, a felon who uses his legitimate firearms license to purchase weaponry for an illegitimate subject (in this case, gang members). Often these straw-buyers will report firearms stolen and then proceed with the illegal sale. In January, 1998, after the implementation of IDP's system, police officers in Massachusetts were able to track a firearm used in a murder-homicide case back to the original straw-buyer. The subject had reported the already confiscated weapon stolen a month and a half

after the homicide. The firearms dealer and three others have since been federally indicted for illegally selling guns to gang members in Worcester, Mass.

Common Sense

As Campbell stated, this kind of centralized tracking system is "a logical thing to have." Massachusetts Governor Paul Cellucci recently praised the Bureau's vision, "I'm pleased that Massachusetts leads the way in innovation among all states and topped dozens of national firms with this vital public safety process. These records now provide police instant access to vital gun data to keep weapons out of the hands of batterers and other criminals." Steve Weissman, president of Kinetic Information, also praised the direction of the Bureau, "The vision award encompasses a social dimension that no other technology award addresses. The Bureau's new system promises to have a dramatic impact on public safety and clearly exemplifies what the Vision Award is all about."

Common sense would then dictate other states soon following course. The object being to take the guns out of the wrong hands while leaving entitled owners alone — a reasonable goal, correct? Not so fast. The reason law enforcement agencies have been so slow to embrace new technologies for such applications is a little known federal provision outlawing the creation of a computerized federal listing of firearms registration information. The facts are in: This system leads to felony convictions and saves lives. Why would we not lift such limitations in the interest of public safety? The case of the MA Firearms Bureau highlights the overwhelming benefits of such a system. Why stop here? ■

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Case Study

GOVERNMENT

"OF ALL THE VENDORS I HAVE DEALT WITH IN MY 11 YEARS WITH THE OJC, IDP HAS BEEN THE BEST AND MOST PROFESSIONAL. THE LEVEL OF SERVICE THEY PROVIDE IS ALWAYS TOP NOTCH.

THE TAXPAYERS OF MASSACHUSETTS HAVE BEEN WELL SERVED BY THE STAFF AT IDP."

**GREGORY W.R. FULCHINO
PROCUREMENT OFFICER**



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Office of the Jury Commissioner - Mass.

The Office of the Jury Commissioner is responsible for the administration of Massachusetts' "One Day/One Trial" system. Every three years, each citizen is eligible to serve as a member of the jury pool for one of the 51 Courts. With a population of over six million, this amounts to 25,000 mailings per week, or 1.3 million per year.



Before installing the IDP system, responses were processed on a hardware-based scanning system. The equipment was experiencing high levels of failure and did not allow flexibility in changing the form without incurring prohibitive programming costs.

IDP installed a fully integrated forms processing/document imaging system. The forms processing system using OCR for Forms, a software application developed by MTI, Inc., is used for extracting data from the completed juror confirmation cards. IDP modified OCR for Forms to accommodate the unique requirements of the OJC, minimizing operator validation activity, while increasing accuracy and throughput.

The document imaging system is IDP's INFOtrieve. Juror confirmation cards, once processed, are automatically stored in INFOtrieve. There is no requirement for operator involvement to index the cards, as the index values are taken from the output of the forms processing system. Employees can retrieve juror confirmation cards on their PCs. In the past, this access was virtually impossible because of the offsite storage of paper-based files. Now, the juror confirmation card desired is available at the desktop in under three seconds.

The automated nature of uploading the juror card images from the forms processing system to INFOtrieve was particularly important because adding headcount to perform any additional work to store the image files was not an option.

Since the inception of the system, the Jury Commissioner has authorized changes to the forms, and now collects additional demographic information. The changes required to process these new forms were produced with minimal cost and minimal time. The value of the imaging system has increased since internal requirements have changed the frequency with which the documents are examined.

The system works so well that 3,000 to 6,000 cards are now processed each day by a single operator. Several staff positions were eliminated and these people were redirected to other tasks which urgently needed attention.

Firearms Record Bureau

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

LAW ENFORCEMENT CASE STUDY

"THIS SYSTEM IS NOW HAVING A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ABILITY OF THE ENTIRE LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMUNITY; FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL; TO TRACE FIREARMS IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS, AND OBTAIN IMMEDIATE RESULTS.

THIS CAPABILITY IS SOMETHING THAT DIDN'T PREVIOUSLY EXIST IN MASSACHUSETTS AND DOES NOT EXIST IN ANY OTHER STATE THAT I AM AWARE OF."

**WILLIAM E. PICKETT, JR. -
DIRECTOR, FIREARMS
RECORDS BUREAU**



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The Firearms License Imaging Program (FLIP)

Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 140, Section 123, requires all licensed gun dealers, as well as individual private citizens, to report the sale of any firearm to the Massachusetts Firearms Record Bureau (FRB). Between 1985 and 1997 alone, more than 726,000 gun sale transactions have been reported to the Bureau, and an average of one thousand (1,000) new sales are recorded each week.

The forms required to record a gun sale transaction are mailed to the FRB and, until recently, they were put in file drawers or boxes. Because of shortages of personnel and other resources, the information written on the various forms was never entered into any type of automated system. As a result, the massive amounts of data collected by the Bureau were of no benefit to anyone, especially police officers wishing to trace the origins of guns located at crime scenes or recovered in some other fashion. We can now conduct firearms traces in less than 32 seconds, at a cost of nine cents per trace. Previous traces conducted using department personnel would have taken in excess of five hundred and eighty-three hours (almost 75 working days) to conduct a single search, at a cost of \$5,600 per trace.

Realizing the importance of the data stored on gun sale records to public safety in general, and to law enforcement specifically, the Criminal History Systems Board embarked on a mission to automate the FRB's gun sale records. Using IT Bond II funds, the agency enlisted the services of IDP, Incorporated, located in Sudbury, Massachusetts, to build an imaging system and to supply the software and indexing services necessary to create and populate a LAN-based electronic index. As a result, all of the FRB's gun sale records have now been digitized and placed on CD-ROM. In addition, FRB personnel have PC access to the LAN-based image index, allowing them to search the gun sale files for individual purchases in seconds and to view and/or print images of individual gun sale records. In the first two months of the system's operations, the Bureau has conducted over 300 gun traces for various law enforcement agencies; Federal, State and Local; with outstanding results*

*Information from the Massachusetts Information Technology Bulletin - Winter '98

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER SERIES

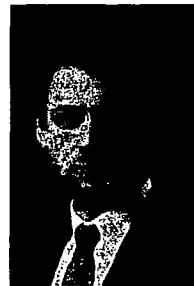
New chairman discusses AIIM's future

David Silver, CEO of Kofax Image Products (www.kofax.com), assumed the position of chairman of the AIIM Board of Directors during the AIIM Show. *KMWorld* Executive Editor Bruce Hoard took the opportunity to ask him about the most important issues facing AIIM, and how he hopes to resolve them.

Q: What's your top priority as you move into your new position?

About 18 months ago, we started putting into place an agenda at AIIM. The three top priorities are:

SILVER continues on page 35



David Silver

SOLUTIONS FOR BUSINESS PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

KMWorld

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT WORLD

Process Innovation Awards announced

AIIM International (www.aiim.org) and Kinetic Information (www.kineticinfo.com) have announced the winners of the 1998 Process Innovation Awards, recognizing the most innovative corporate applications of information management technologies.

"The awards are great examples of what technology can do for people," said Steven Weissman, president of Kinetic Information.

The Vision Award, honoring the technology initiative with the greatest potential for transforming a business or of social process, went to the Massachusetts Firearms Records Bureau (Chelsea, MA) for its system that reads, archives and retrieves firearms registration forms for access by law enforcement personnel. IDP Companies (www.idpco.com) nominated the bureau, which also won top honors in the government vertical market.

"The system implemented by the Massachusetts Firearms Records Bureau was considered 'vision-worthy' because it greatly enhances communication between the bureau and the law enforcement community and makes it much more difficult for criminals to

procure weapons," said Weissman. "I applaud the bureau for its system, which clearly qualifies for the Vision Award because of its potential to transform a business or social process."

The vertical market awards went to applications in the following fields: education, financial services, government, healthcare, insurance, manufacturing, transportation and utilities.

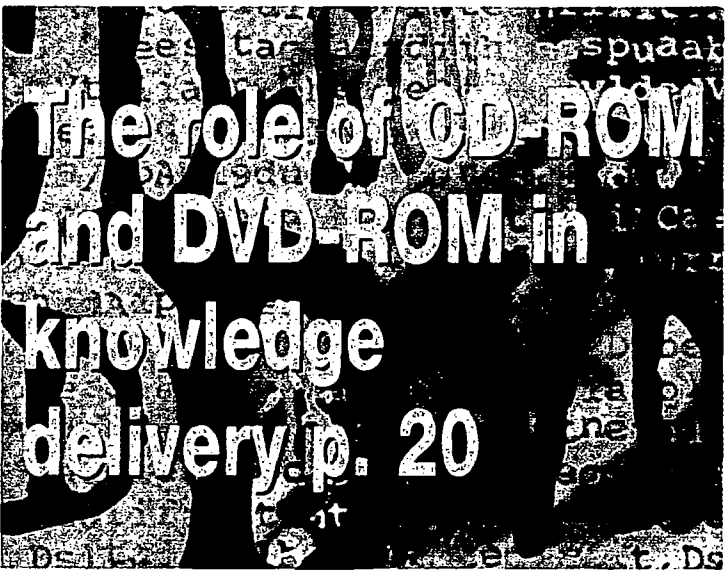
For education, the University of Texas at Austin, which was nominated by DocuCorp International (www.docucorp.com), won the award for its admissions system and student record retention and retrieval.

The second place winner, nominated by Cardiff Software (www.cardiff.com), went to the New York Board of Education (New York).

Chase Manhattan Bank (New York), which exhibits at the AIIM Show (Booth #1065), won the financial services award for a system that makes trust account information available to users. BankBoston (Boston), nominated by PC Docs (www.pcdocs.com), claimed second place.

In the government category, Massachusetts Firearms

AWARDS continues on page 35



AWARDS continues from page 10

Records Bureau won and the U.S. Army Medical Command (Frederick, MD), nominated by JetForm (www.jetform.com), took second place.

CFI's (Orlando, FL) system for controlling the flow of orders received by the mail-order drug company and accessing associated documentation, history and order status, claimed the top spot in healthcare after being nominated by Logical Software Solutions (www.lssc.com). OTG Software (www.otgsoftware.com) nominee, Florida Hospital, claimed the second spot.

Allstate Life Insurance (Northbrook, IL) and its FileNet (www.filenet.com) system for sorting incoming claims by line of business received the top insurance honor. Second place went to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana (Baton Rouge), nominated by Dataplex (www.acsdataplex.com).

For manufacturing, EMJ Co. (Brea, CA), an Image-X (www.imagexx.com) nominee, took first place for a system that replaces two separate and incompatible systems with a new infrastructure that links all company operations, procedures and information together.

The second place manufacturing winner was Gen-Probe (San Diego), nominated by Novasoft (www.novasoft.com).

US Xpress Enterprises (Chattanooga,

TN), from Lanier Worldwide (www.lanier.com), won in transportation for its system that captures critical trucking documents and automatically routes them to appropriate personnel in different departments. Milan Express (Milan, TN), took second for the system installed by Magellan Software (www.magsoft.com).

In utilities, Texas Public Utilities Commission (Austin, TX) won for its system for speeding the submission and processing of legal and regulatory filing. The system designed by EZPower Systems (www.ezpower.com) also offers access via Windows client or Web browser. Niagara Mohawk Power (Syracuse, NY), nominated by Xerox Engineering Systems (www.xerox.com), took second place.

Winners were selected in terms of process improvements that led to gains in productivity, profitability, ability to adapt to market conditions and/or competitive standing or market share.

Industry analysts making the selections included Weissman and Paula Boyle of Kinetic Information, Priscilla Emery of AIIM International, Arthur Gigrande of IMERGE Consulting (www.imergeconsult.com), Stowe Boyd of Modus Operandi (www.modusoperandi.com), Ray Edwards of Lighthouse Consulting (www.lhcg.com) and Addie Mattox of @doc (www.atdoc.com). ■



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**CELLUCCI LAUDS PUBLIC SAFETY, FIREARMS RECORDS BUREAU FOR
TOP NATIONAL INNOVATION AWARDS**

Governor Paul Cellucci today commended the Executive Office of Public Safety and the Firearms Records Bureau at the Criminal History Systems Board for capturing two top national awards for innovative use of information technology to track and retrieve data on gun sales and licenses.

The Executive Office of Public Safety and the Firearms Records Bureau won the prestigious Vision Award Monday, May 11, at the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM) Conference in Anaheim, Calif. They also won the Vertical Market Solution Award in the Government category. The Vision Award honors the information technology initiative with the greatest potential to transform a business or social process. The initiative was singled out from more than 60 nominations by a panel of independent judges.

"I'm pleased that Massachusetts leads the way in innovation among all states and topped dozens of national firms with this vital public safety process," said Cellucci. "These records now provide police instant access to vital gun data to keep weapons out of the hands of batterers and other criminals."

"This award is concrete evidence that Massachusetts is an international model in our handling of vital gun sale and license information," Public Safety Secretary Kathleen M. O'Toole said. "The Executive Office of Public Safety applied technology to reorganize the Firearms Records Bureau after moving it to the Criminal History Systems Board, and revolutionized gun record information systems through an electronic imaging system providing instantaneous data retrieval to help law enforcement agencies. This technology is already being used to protect society against those who should no longer possess weapons," O'Toole said.

EOPS and the Firearms Records Bureau were nominated by the IDP Companies of Sudbury, which contracted in a partnership to devise and implement a system that reads, archives and retrieves firearms registration forms providing law enforcement with

readily accessible firearms information. Under the direction of Secretary O'Toole and the Executive Office of Public Safety, funds were identified and overall direction given to the Firearms Records Bureau to solve a long-standing problem of records irretrievably stored in boxes.

"It used to take 74 days to trace a single gun sale that could play a key role in a gun-trafficking or anti-gang prosecution," O'Toole said. We now can search and retrieve more than 725,000 gun sale records instantly."

The awards were presented by Kinetic Information of Waltham, a research and consulting firm which develops information systems to improve business practices, and the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM) of Silver Spring Md.

"The vision award encompasses a social dimension that no other technology award addresses," said Steve Weissman, president of Kinetic Information. "The bureau's new system promises to have a dramatic impact on public safety and clearly exemplifies what the Vision Award is all about."

"IDP is proud to be at the forefront of the implementation of this technology in the law enforcement community in Massachusetts," said James R. Walckner, CEO and President of the IDP Companies Inc. "This system enables law enforcement personnel to have vital weapons information at their fingertips. This is the top honors award for the year in the document imaging community," he added.

MetroWest Edition

SUNDAY

Middlesex News

Sunday, April 5, 1998

Police pull criminals' gun permits New tracking System helps plug up 'cracks'

By Harry R. Weber
and Chris Szechenyi
CNC Staff Writers

Bellingham police revoked firearms permits from 77 people this week as part of a state crackdown on thousands who should have lost their licenses long ago but managed to slip through the cracks of a shoddy record keeping system.

Armed with reams of data from a new computer cross-referencing system, police discovered that 17 of the town's 2,000 permit carrying gun owners had a felony or drug conviction that should have prohibited them from owning weapons.

Sixty more had moved out of town, and state law requires that people live or work in the community where they are licensed.

The problem in Bellingham is epidemic statewide, said William Pickett, director of the state's Firearms Records Bureau.

Thousands of people in Massachusetts who have licenses to own and carry guns should have those permits taken away because they have restraining orders against them or felony or narcotics convictions, he said.

"We have identified thousands of people with gun licenses who are felons, who have records of domestic abuse or drug crimes on their records," said Pickett, who has developed an automated system of

tracking gun licenses and cross checking them with criminal records.

"We are giving this information to police departments all over the state to take action," he said.

In Framingham, police revoked 20 to 30 gun licenses when the new tracking program was tested there a year ago, according to Lt. Wayne McCarthy.

"They surrendered their licenses and their firearms identification cards," he said. "They had to turn in their guns or sell them."

In Worcester, the state's second largest city, police have taken away nearly 700 licenses from residents in the past few months.

Marlborough Police Chief Joseph Barry said his department has suspended or revoked between 20 and 30 permits from people prohibited from owning guns because they are under a restraining order or have a felony conviction.

Those moves would have been impossible two years ago.

Because of poor state oversight and cross-referencing of criminal records, MetroWest communities have historically been ill-equipped to make sure all of their

firearms license holders are in compliance with the law.

Compounding the problem is the state's practice of making Firearm Identification Cards, the permits allowing their holders to buy rifles, chemical sprays and ammunition, good for life.

Pistol permits, which cover handguns and other types of concealable weapons, must be renewed every five years.

Working with IDP Companies of Sudbury, Pickett created a computer system that now keeps track of gun sales, gun owners, their addresses and type of firearms they are permitted to own.

Through the system, Pickett's firearms record bureau has gotten a better handle on the 3,000 new gun licenses issued each week, and discovered more than 4,000 people who are prohibited by law from having permits to carry a handgun or to own one.

"What we're doing is cross-checking criminal records against the list of licensed gun owners," said Charles McDonald, spokesman for the Executive Office of Public Safety, which is overseeing the effort.

"We're trying to find licensed gun owners who have been convicted of felonies or who have restraining orders against them. This information is being given back to the local police chiefs."

With the new computer system, officials can search gun records, not only by name, but also by date of birth, gun serial number and firearms license number. Pickett said a gun and its owner can now be traced in just a few seconds with the click of a computer mouse.

"We have been finding that some of these people had multiple licenses," said Bellingham Police Lt. James Haughey.

In the past, some people applied for licenses in more than one town and when the state received the applications no one would cross-reference them. Police are now seeing a change.

With a total of 728,460 firearms licenses registered in Massachusetts, the state has had a burden dealing with the problem of making sure everyone is in compliance.

"There was as much potential for problems here as anywhere else." Said Ashland Police Sgt. Bruce

Gauld, who also recently received a list of possible violators from the state.

Gauld said his department has not yet suspended or revoked any firearms holders.

In Marlborough, Lt. Edward Ethier said that, in the past, if a license holder who lived in town was convicted of a felony in another community no one would ever contact local police to let them know.

"Now we revoke licenses on a regular basis," said Ethier. "It's now pretty tightly regulated."

Milford Police Lt. Peter Veilleux said the increased state oversight of firearms license holder is relatively new. In Milford, 5,300 to 6,000 people have FID cards or pistol permits.

"Do they fall through the cracks? Of course," said Veilleux.

Bellingham's Lt. Haughey said he sent five of his sergeants to a state training seminar recently to get updated on new license regulations and ways to keep track of violators.

"Everyone's on the same page now," he said.

State Sen. Cheryl A. Jacques, D-Needham, said she has "grave concerns" about the discovery that thousands of people with restraining orders and criminal histories have gun licenses. But she said she is pleased the firearms records bureau has finally computerized its records.

As chairman of the Senate's Post Audit and Oversight Committee, Jacques had previously blasted the state's shoddy record keeping. Two years ago, about 700,000 records of gun sales and licenses were stored in boxes and file cabinets.

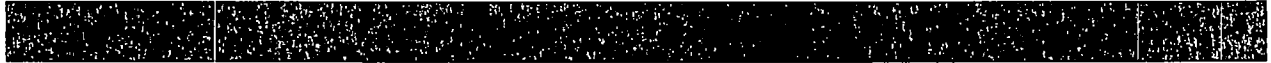
And Marlborough's Chief Barry said that despite the improvements, the state may continue to see problems with the FID card system as long as it continues to make the permits good for life.

"A firearms licensing system that last for a lifetime is not a good idea," Barry said. "It will always leave you wondering whether all of the safeguards are really in place."

Mass

High Tech

Week of June 22 – 28, 1998



Keeping Guns in Their Sights Massachusetts firearms database earns national technology award

By David Liscio

Less than two years ago, the state's firearm sales and licensing records were stored in cardboard boxes, stacked in a leaky, rat-infested, asbestos lined basement at 1010 Commonwealth Ave., in Boston, then the headquarters of the Massachusetts State Police.

It took an average of 74 days to trace a single gun record, at a cost of \$5,600 in staff time. Conditions at the Firearms Records Bureau frequently proved dispiriting to criminal investigations.

Public Safety Secretary Kathleen M. O'Toole realized the system needed to change, and that more than money would be needed to fix it. By mid-1996, conditions had deteriorated to the point where more than 640,000 gun sale records were unusable and more than 106,000 gun licenses or permits were not logged into the existing system.

A veteran of re-engineering techniques with private-sector experience at Digital Equipment Corp., O'Toole was committed to using private-public partnerships and technology to solve problems. She had already crafted the Department of Fire Services out of three disparate agencies to serve the state's fire community, and revamped the Committee on Criminal Justice.

According to Communications Director Charles McDonald, O'Toole's first step was to remove the Firearms Records Bureau from the Department of Public Safety and place it under the aegis of the Criminal History Systems Board. There, O'Toole had

previously combined separate "islands" of information, so a single record check made more than a dozen different databases available to law enforcement agencies, he said.

The Criminal History Systems Board used a Byrne Grant to hire The IDP Companies of Sudbury to perfect a data entry and retrieval system. Next, state Information Technology (IT2) bond funds were used to create an imaging system, with software and indexing services built into a LAN-based electronic index.

All Firearms Records Bureau gun sales were digitized and put on CD-ROM, giving the staff instant access through a personal computer to the image index. Most importantly, it allowed them to search the gun sales files for individual records in less than 30 seconds, at a cost of 9 cents per trace.

"The system really revolutionized the way Massachusetts keeps track of who sells, buys, or owns guns," said McDonald, adding that the computerization was paid for, in part, by steeply increasing fees to those obtaining licenses.

In Massachusetts, firearm licenses are state-issued, but are granted by local chiefs of police, "leading to a bifurcation of responsibility for the overall problems facing the system," he said. The state has remained responsible for keeping the records.

By 1985, however, state government had stopped entering data on approximately 1,000 gun sales which occurred each week, he said. The remaining records, tucked inside dog-eared manila folders at State Police Headquarters, continued to disintegrate.

"Each gun sale record, completed at the time of weapon purchase, was mailed in from dealers or gun owners, and the record was stored in ripped cardboard boxes, and rusting and dented file cabinets," McDonald said. "The records were exposed to leaking buildings, asbestos, and even rat feces. They remained virtually unusable."

According to O'Toole, a search would take more than two months and thousands of dollars to find a single gun sale form, information which could provide a crucial link or lead in a criminal investigation into gun or drug trafficking, gang violence or domestic abuse.

In 1992, various state-level police organizations, such as the Registry of Motor Vehicles and the Metropolitan District Commission Police, were consolidated under a single division as the Massachusetts State Police. The Department of Public Safety was left with licensing and inspection responsibilities, but no clear direction or resources were provided to devise a user-friendly technology for accessing firearm data, McDonald said.

"We knew something had to be done, and that's when [O'Toole] started looking at the technological options," he said, recalling that the fee hike was no guarantee of a solution. "Now the cardboard boxes are gone. The State Police have moved into new headquarters. And we can trace firearms data with a few keystrokes."

When firearms information suddenly became available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, police officers responding to emergencies were able to find out how many and what types of guns were in a suspect's possession.

The results, \$700,000 dollars later, were abundant. More than 726,000 gun sale records were entered, including all reported gun dealer sales, transfers between individuals, and voluntary registrations that have occurred since January, 1985.

Further, a new cross-referencing criminal records check system called Project DISARM (Development of Information Systems for Arms Removal Measures) was instituted.

The system cross checks criminal records against lists of licensed firearms holders. More than 10,000 gun licensees have been matched with relevant convictions after being licensed, and more than 5,200 of them have had their gun licenses revoked in a state-local partnership with local police.

In Worcester alone, more than 750 gun licenses have had licenses revoked by the Worcester Police Department, McDonald said.

As a mark of its success, on May 11 the Executive Office of Public Safety and the Firearms Records Bureau won two top national awards for innovative use of information technology.

The Honors included a Vision Award for the initiative with the greatest potential to transform a business or social process. The award was presented at the Association for Information and Image Management Conference in Anaheim, Calif.

Recognition also arrived via a Vertical Market Solution Award in the government category. The new gun tracking process was selected for both awards from a field of more than 60 nominees, including many Fortune 500 companies, and larger state and federal agencies.

Linked to ATF National Files.

By establishing the database, Massachusetts became the second state in the country (after Maryland) to set up a direct link to the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms's national gun-tracing center in West Virginia.

Local police departments can now an instant access to those gun-sale records by using the computerized Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) at the Criminal History Systems Board. The system has helped trace stolen weapons and red-flagged potential criminal activity. For example, gang members and drug dealers often use legitimate means to purchase or obtain firearms, but the computerized system can track unusual quantities or types of weapons purchased legitimately through an otherwise law-abiding person.

Said O'Toole: "It used to take 74 days to trace single gun sale that could play a key role on a gun-trafficking or anti-gang prosecution. We can now search and retrieve more than 725,000 gun sale records instantly." Plans are under way to expand the commonwealth system through a new scannable document to help create a better, quicker database to track firearms sale information, McDonald said. Even without the scannable form, the Firearms Records Bureau uncovered 31,217 errors in the records they examined.

"The current environment has taught us that information is king, and this project gets vital information into the hands of those who protect us in an efficient, effective and technologically advanced fashion," O'Toole said.

David Liscio is a freelance writer based in Nahant.



NEW ENGLAND
TECHNOLOGY
FAST 50

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June 23, 1998

Mr. James R. Walckner
The IDP Companies, Inc.
490 Boston Post Rd.
Sudbury, MA 01776

Dear Mr. Walckner:

Congratulations! The partners of Deloitte & Touche LLP and Hale and Dorr LLP are pleased to inform you that The IDP Companies, Inc., is one of the 50 fastest growing technology companies in New England. As sponsors of the *1998 New England Technology Fast 50*, Deloitte & Touche and Hale and Dorr will honor you and your company at an awards banquet where the ranking of this year's *Fast 50* winners will be announced. In addition, all 1998 *Fast 50* winners will be profiled after the event in a special insert in the *Boston Business Journal* and *Mass High Tech*. You will receive copies of the insert at the awards banquet. The IDP Companies, Inc., has also been nominated for consideration in the National Technology Fast 500 which honors the 500 fastest growing technology companies in the United States.

The *1998 New England Technology Fast 50 Awards Banquet* will be held on **Wednesday, September 9, 1998**, at the Hyatt Regency in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Two complimentary tickets will be sent to you prior to the dinner. Additional seats may be purchased for \$125.00 each or a complete table, seating 10, may be purchased for \$1,000.00. We encourage companies to sponsor tables as a way to recognize those individuals and employees who have contributed to the Company's tremendous growth.

We are pleased to announce that this year's Master of Ceremonies will be Ray Stata. Mr. Stata founded Analog Devices, an integrated circuit maker, in 1965 and ran the company first as president until 1973, then as CEO until 1996. He is now chairman of the board.

Again, congratulations to you and The IDP Companies, Inc.! If you have any questions, please contact Katie Palacio at 617.261.8132. We look forward to seeing you on September 9!

Yours sincerely,

Michael J. Joyce
Managing Partner
Deloitte & Touche LLP

John D. Hamilton, Jr.
Managing Partner
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November 20, 1998

Mr. James R. Walckner
Chief Executive Officer and President
The IDP Companies, Inc.
490 Boston Post Road
Sudbury, MA 1776

Dear Mr. Walkner:

In October, we notified you that your company was named a 1998 Deloitte & Touche Technology Fast 500 winner, identifying you as one of the nation's fastest-growing technology companies. Congratulations on this significant achievement. Your ranking is 89.

As part of that recognition, your company was listed in a 16-page insert that was published in the November 30, 1998 issue of *Forbes ASAP*. We have enclosed a copy for your reference. Information regarding reprints is also enclosed, along with some other materials you may find interesting.

We hope you will consider participating in the first annual Deloitte & Touche Technology Fast 500 CEO Summit, held in association with *Forbes ASAP*. You should have already received a mailing regarding the Summit, but if you have not, please let us know. You may also visit www.us.deloitte.com/fast500 for regularly updated Summit information.

Again, congratulations on your success. If you have any questions regarding the Technology Fast 500, please contact Holly Schultz at (408) 920-2418, hschultz@dtus.com, or me at (408) 920-2435, mevans@dtus.com.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark A. Evans".

Mark A. Evans
Managing Director
High Technology Industry Group

Enclosure