MARYLAND'S COMPUTERIZED ARREST BOOKING SYSTEM

By Allen Hafner

Wednesday, October 30, 1996, Maryland State Police arrested a man suspected of selling stolen property on the parking lot of the Francis Scott Key Mall in Frederick. During the arrest, the suspect assaulted one of the troopers, but there were no apparent injuries. The suspect had no identification and the name he gave was checked through NCIC with negative results. To all appearances, this was a routine arrest. Normal procedure would call for the trooper to take the suspect to his home Barracks to be booked under the name given. Instead, Trooper Robert Calo took his prisoner to the newly opened central booking facility at the Frederick County Detention Center. While Trooper Calo did his charging documents on an Arrest Booking System PC (ABS), Sheriff's Department Cpl. David Ward fingerprinted the prisoner on an Identix Touch-Print.

The digitized fingerprint image was transmitted to the Baltimore office of Maryland's Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS). A Fingerprint Specialist saw the new file name appear on his computer screen, checked the fingerprint images for clarity, marked the cores, then launched a search through MAFIS. The computer system found a candidate, the identification was confirmed by the Fingerprint Specialist, and the suspect's State Identification Number (SID) was entered on the ABS. In just twenty-nine minutes after fingerprinting, Trooper Calo learned that his prisoner had given a false name and was wanted on nine warrants in Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania. A few days before this same suspect had been arrested in Pennsylvania, but was released when no record was found under the alias he gave.

This is just one of the many small success stories which now occur on a daily basis. The identification of an arrestee has always been a challenge for law enforcement officers. We have to rely on a variety of methods to aid in identification: personal knowledge of a suspect, possession of a valid photo ID card, or the interviewing skills of the officer. Fingerprinting, of course, is the best way to confirm an identity, but they usually cannot be checked at the time of arrest. The use of an alias is sometimes enough to get through the booking procedure without having a warrant served or to escape future prosecution, as demonstrated in the above story.

Previously, fingerprint cards would be mailed to the CJIS office at MSP Headquarters in Pikesville. Cases in which an arrestee's identity was in question, the suspect would sit in a cell for hours while a police officer would drive to Pikesville and have the fingerprints searched. The use of fax machines has helped speed up this process, but not all departments have a machine with the fine resolution required for fingerprints. ABS represents the next logical step in the use of an AFIS database; the timely identification of arrestees on a full time, twenty-four hour basis. We will focus on this identification phase after a brief summary of the ABS.

With the start of ABS, Maryland's CJIS was divided into two divisions, Civil and Criminal, with the Criminal Division moving to downtown Baltimore. Working in a small office inside the Baltimore City Central Booking and Intake Center, this part of CJIS is the hub of a planned state-wide network of computerized booking centers. Administratively, CJIS is a part of the Information Technology and Communications Division (IT&CD) of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. This new booking system, developed by IBM, is designed to speed up the identification process by integrating the ABS and TouchPrint with the older Morpho equipment on which Maryland's AFIS is based. By standardizing the arrest forms and charging documents on the ABS, officers are able to complete these forms and return to patrol duties more quickly than before. Once an identification is made, the offender's arrest records are automatically updated. If this is a first arrest the digital fingerprint images are added to the MAFIS database by typing in a newly assigned SID number.

Systems testing began in November, 1995, and operations began in January, 1996, with a splash of publicity. Beginning with just two of Baltimore City's nine police districts, the remaining districts were phased in over the next six months, including other police agencies working within the city. Soon after, Harford County Sheriff's Department came online, followed by Frederick County. The addition of other counties has been postponed pending reorganization and hardware/software upgrades to handle the increase in workload (April '98). Montgomery and Howard Counties should be online by the time this article is published. Agencies not online still mail their fingerprint cards to CJIS for manual processing.

The ABS is primarily a computerized system for tracking arrestees and documents through each stage of the booking process. System components can be tailored to the size of the agency and the average workload in a particular facility. When a police officer brings a prisoner into Baltimore City Central Booking, the prisoner is turned over to a booking officer, who attaches a bar-coded wristband. The bar code contains a computer generated tracking number (called "CBF number") that follows the prisoner through the booking process. This wristband can be checked at any time with a hand-held bar code scanner linked to the ABS.

After the prisoner is searched and his personal information is entered on an ABS terminal, he is then fingerprinted on the TouchPrint and photographed with a video capture system. Hard copies of the prisoner's prints and photo can be printed out at any time. The prisoner is placed in a holding cell until completion of the identification phase and the charging documents. The CBF number is used to keep track of the prisoner's location, any property taken during the search, his fingerprints and photo, charging documents and any other related paperwork. All of these items come together at the final stage of release from the facility, either on bail or to the Detention

Center. When the identification is completed and the prisoner's SID number is added to ABS, this SID number replaces the CBF number for tracking purposes. It is then possible to access the prisoner's past record and check for outstanding warrants.

The identification phase of ABS is <u>not</u> a truly integrated system. Data is not fully exchanged between the three different computer systems currently in use, requiring a lot of manual input by the CJIS personnel. The flow of work in this phase is very difficult to explain, so I have broken it into steps for clarity.

Step 1: The fingerprint images captured on the TouchPrint are received at a CJIS workstation called the Store & Forward. These images are checked for clarity and to see if they are in the proper sequence. This is the only workstation at which the plain impressions are visible. If needed, a hard copy of the ten-print card can be printed from this workstation.

Step 2: The fingerprint images are transmitted through a computer Gateway (maintains communication with a computer Server) to a Morpho workstation. This critical step sets the parameters for the prints to be searched through MAFIS. The prints are checked for proper pattern type and references are added if needed. The core of the print is marked and the print is then sent into MAFIS.

Step 3: When a candidate is found, the fingerprints are compared and confirmed, a "hit." If no hit is made, further checks are made.

Step 4: The SID number is then taken from the record on MAFIS and manually entered into the Information Processing System (IPS) portion of ABS. IPS uses the SID number to access the CJIS Identification Index, then transfers the new arrest information to the existing record. The SID number will then appear on the ABS screen in the booking center. Once the booking process is complete and the final disposition is entered on ABS, the system will automatically print out the final fingerprint cards: one local agency card at the booking center, one card for the State archives, and one FBI card.

If a fingerprint hits in MAFIS, the identification phase takes only a few minutes. If the print does not hit, it can take much longer. A ten-print card is printed and given to a data entry person to be searched using the personal information entered by the booking officer. If a record is found, the SID number is entered on MAFIS and the prints checked. If no record is found, the prints can then be searched on MAFIS a second time by direct entry at a Morpho workstation. If it still does not hit, the record is treated as a first time arrest. A new SID number is generated on the IPS and the new record created in the Ident Index. The new fingerprint images are then added to the MAFIS database.

Currently, 30 percent of the prints do not hit on MAFIS during the initial search, causing delays in responses to the booking centers. Only 10 percent are actually first time arrests. A lot of time is spent on the 20 percent that are on the system but do not hit. They miss for a variety of reasons: poor images received from the TouchPrint, poor images in the MAFIS database, improper pattern typing, and just plain old typing errors. Each miss is investigated and corrections made to the database when required. We have also been finding numerous individuals who have two or more records in the system due to the use of an alias or poor pattern typing. These records are then consolidated under one SID.

As with any new venture there are teething problems. It has been a learn-as-you-go process and the above steps are a refinement of two years of operation. Any minor computer problem can cause delays. This also seems to have a domino effect on related systems; as soon as one system is back up, the next one goes down. Minor software changes have sometimes created major problems, requiring the changes to be deleted. Major software upgrades have not been made and are over a year beyond their schedule. The entire computer system has proven to be more labor intensive than envisioned.

For the short term, equipment and personnel at CJIS will have to be increased prior to expansion of the online system. The system was initially designed to handle 200 records per day. On busy weekdays we operate at nearly triple that rate. It was recently announced in a press release that CJIS handled over 60,000 records through the ABS system during the past fiscal year. It has been projected that CJIS will handle 90,000 in the current fiscal year. In addition, this division continues to handle the fingerprint cards received through the mail from the entire state, a number still higher than that handled on ABS.

Despite these problems, the ABS has been successful in standardizing and speeding up the booking process. However, the most important aspect is the ability to identify fugitives through the immediate search of their fingerprints *while they are still in custody*.