

# DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AUTOMATED FINGERPRINT IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM

By: Mr. Tom Burse III

Mr. Tom Burse III is a Certified Latent Print Examiner and the Supervisor of the Washington D. C., Metropolitan Police Department's Automated Fingerprint Section. Mr. Burse has over twenty-one years of fingerprint experience including eight years with the FBI. Mr. Burse holds an Associated Arts degree from American University and serves as a consultant and training instructor for the United States Attorney's Office, Washington, D. C., Georgetown University Law School, and Antioch University Law School.

Presently the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department has more than 3,000 criminal fingerprint cards on file, which were in the past maintained and searched manually. Currently there is a large amount of manual searching of fingerprints being conducted, until the automated data base reaches its total capacity of 450,000 ten-print cards. In the past, in processing a latent fingerprint, when there was no known suspect, there was no feasible way to search it against the total criminal fingerprint file; however, we did have the capability to search the five finger file with a latent recovered from a crime scene, but, with a small amount of identifications being made less than 2%, this method proved to be very time consuming and very expensive to the department.

Modern technology has been developed and was subsequently demonstrated operationally to department personnel, to automatically, via sophisticated electronics, read, store, and compare fingerprint data. With this capability, we found that prints could be

automatically and routinely searched and compared against the total criminal file for every case in which a latent print is found on a crime scene if it's of sufficient quality to enter.

The objective of the department was to purchase an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (A.F.I.S.) to provide us with the capabilities to access the entire fingerprint file, to identify suspects in cases where latent prints were recovered; to increase the speed tremendously of ten-print and latent print file searches; to improve the accuracy of fingerprint searches and help decrease the rate of crime; and have the capability of being connected with neighboring jurisdictions within the Metropolitan area.

During the month of September 1983, the Metropolitan Police Department purchased an "Automated Fingerprint Identification Computer," from the De La Rue Printrak Company, located in Anaheim, California, for the purpose of developing a more expedient method of identifying criminals and increase modern technology within the department.

Fingerprints are the most infallible means of identifying an individual used in the world today; they also play a very important role in physical evidence recovering in many police investigations.

Based on the premise surrounding this automated fingerprint system, there was a total of 20,000 criminal fingerprint cards sent to the De Le Rue Printrak Company for the process of correcting them into an automated process, in order for us to have

a fairly quick start in the beginning stages of building a data base up to 450,000 ten-print cards, and 50,000 latent impressions.

Relative to this automated procedure, certain descriptive data was captured and they are as follows:

- a. Metropolitan Police PCN numbers
- b. PDID numbers
- c. Sex
- d. Race
- e. Date of birth
- f. Year of activity
- g. File category
- h. Geographical area of offense

The above information was blended together with the use of a descriptor tape that was sent ot the Printrak Company, along with the 20,000 fingerprint cards, to insure that the descriptive information on the cards was in fact correct before they were converted.

#### D.C.A.F.I.S. Operational Advancement

During the time of installation of the system, the De Le Rue Printrak Company provided this department with a knowledgeable and qualified person to give training to employees working with the system. Training was also provided by the Prince George's County and Montgomery County Police Departments in which we are thankful.

This training phase assisted employees of this department in accomplishing certain statistical goals which was far beyond our expectations. We feel at this time that D.C.A.F.I.S. is number one (1) in the Nation as far as latent hits are concerned.

Presently, we are operating at a 50-50 ratio in our operational speeds of entering ten-print cards and latent impressions; however, our main objective is to build an accurate data base, one with quality, not just quantity.

Since the month of October, 1983, we have entered approximately 25,000 ten-print cards and approximately 3,300 latent impressions, establishing approximately 3,500 ten-print identifications and approximately 300 individual cases of latent identifications.

The accuracy of searching the ten-print cards through the existing small data base have been extremely excellent, which far exceeds the manual method of searching. It's estimated that our ten-print identification rate is 99.9% accurate.

Our daily operations include a large volume of searching and entering all latent impressions, as well as ten-print cards of sufficient quality generated from the automated prisoner processing unit.

Most employees who have experienced working with the system, truly feel that the Printrak System further defined as (D.C.A.F.I.S.) is a great asset to them as Specialists and the Metropolitan Police Department.

Additionally, the De Le Rue Printrak System has proven itself far beyond a reasonable doubt that it possesses the capability to assist us and investigators in a more expeditious manner, in closing criminal cases. It's evident that the Printrak System has indeed helped, aided, and assisted us in closing a large number of open cases of all types, that would have never been closed through a manual process.

