

Police intelligence

[David Anderson](#)

January 24, 2009 - 9:56PM

Kinston police have brought together an array of technologies and data analysis techniques to form the Crime Analysis Unit, the latest incarnation of the time-honored tradition of using intelligence to stop crime.

"All of these things keep getting added on, pieces getting put in place," Public Safety director Greg Smith said Friday. "There's always been some level of information and intelligence; it's always part of policing.

"We're just taking it to a different level; we're managing the information better, we're analyzing information better."

The unit, formed last fall, is headed by Cmdr. Frankie Howard. His troops include Det. Jeff Clark, the intelligence officer, crime analyst Veronica Raines and database manager Sue Johnson.

"This helps a whole lot when we're establishing (crime) trends," Raines said as she showed off several software programs the unit uses to catalogue and track all reported crimes and calls for service in the city.

Raines displayed a map on her computer screen showing the location of every crime and service call placed in Kinston since 1999. A brown dot represented each incident.

"If I find a pattern, I can pass it on and work in conjunction with Det. Clark," she said.

Raines and Clark, with assistance from Johnson, sift through each day's incident reports to learn what crimes were committed in the city and where and when they occurred.

The raw data in the incident reports is matched with information stored in databases and gleaned from the handful of cameras placed in the city's known high-crime areas.

The processed data can be sent from the unit's desktop computers to individual officers in the field through their in-car laptops.

"The idea is not only to get that information in and analyzed, but also to disseminate it to patrol officers via their laptops as quickly as we can," Smith said.

The camera feeds can be seen on a large monitor mounted on the wall of the unit's office. The video is a critical supplement to investigations of shootings and other major crimes, because it can be matched up with witness accounts.

"If I can get (incriminating information) from one of the cameras, I'll zoom in and make a

video," Clark said.

That monitor is mounted next to another that displays the homepage of GlobalIncidentMap.com, a Web site dedicated to monitoring terrorist activity and threats around the world.

Information-sharing is a critical function of Kinston's Crime Analysis Unit. The police department is linked into a computer network known as a "fusion center" serving eastern North Carolina, Smith said.

Another fusion center serves the western part of the state, and both fusion centers are linked to a larger statewide network in Raleigh. That network, in turn, is linked to federal law enforcement agencies and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

"Many times, our intelligence doesn't just deal with local crime," Smith explained.

One more component of crime analysis is receiving tips from the public. Residents who live in high-crime areas have a better idea of when and where incidents take place and police are encouraging them to share that information.

Information sharing goes both ways, though. Kinston residents can go online and view Crimereport.com, where police agencies around the country post real-time crime updates for public view. This gives residents a clearer picture of crime trends in their community.

"I've said all along, solving crime is a whole community's effort and this is one more tool that we're arming the community with." Smith said.

Since there are so many factors that influence crime, Smith said the analysis could not necessarily stop crime altogether, but it does allow police to predict where crimes will occur and direct resources to that area.

"It's hard to say exactly how it affects crime because crime can be so fluid," he said.

David Anderson can be reached at (252) 559-1077 or danderson@freedomenc.com.

Kinston Public Safety Director Greg Smith is preparing his annual crime report, which he will deliver to residents during the annual crime symposium. This year's symposium is scheduled to take place in February at The Gate.

On the Web:

www.crimereports.com

To leave crime tips for the Kinston Department of Public Safety, call (252) 939-4020 or

send an e-mail to tips@ci.kinston.nc.us.

In an emergency, call 911.