

Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) Program

Fiscal Year 2012 Testimony to the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations, United States House of Representatives
Submitted by Gerard P. Lynch, Esquire, RISS Chief Executive Officer

The **Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) Program** was established more than 30 years ago by the law enforcement community for law enforcement agencies and officers to close the gap on information sharing and to serve as a force multiplier in the areas of secure communications, intelligence sharing, and investigative support. RISS is a proven and cost-effective program that leverages funding to support thousands of local, state, federal, and tribal law enforcement agencies across the nation. **It is respectfully requested that Congress appropriate \$45 million to RISS for FY2012.** This amount is level with FY2010 funding.

RISS consists of six regional centers that tailor their services to meet the needs of their unique regions while working together on nationwide initiatives. The RISS Centers provide investigative services to more than **8,700** law enforcement and criminal justice agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, Australia, Canada, England, and New Zealand. **Hundreds of thousands of officers** utilize RISS resources and services each year. RISS supports efforts against organized and violent crime, gang activity, drug activity, terrorism, human trafficking, identity theft, and other regional priorities, while promoting officer safety.

Through RISS's timely and accurate intelligence information and critical investigative support services, law enforcement and criminal justice agencies have increased their success exponentially. These results are measured in the number of career criminals that are removed from our communities and the reduction of illicit drugs available on our streets. With level funding, RISS will continue to maintain the following critical services and programs:

- Operate the six RISS Centers and the RISS Technology Support Center
- Provide investigative support services, including analytical services, equipment loans, and research assistance
- Operate and maintain the RISS Secure Intranet (RISSNET)
- Operate, maintain, and enhance the RISS Criminal Intelligence Databases (RISSIntel) and the RISS National Gang Intelligence Database (RISSGang)
- Operate and maintain the RISS Officer Safety Event Deconfliction System (RISSafe)
- Participate in and implement goals of the sensitive but unclassified(SBU)/controlled unclassified information (CUI) Interoperability Initiative (SII)
- Operate and maintain the RISS Automated Trusted Information Exchange (ATIX)
- Operate the Pawnshop Database and identify strategies to expand the application
- Continue to support partnerships with fusion centers

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, provides oversight and program management for the RISS Program. The RISS Centers have adopted appropriate operational policies as well as a privacy policy that fully complies with the Criminal Intelligence Systems Operating Policies (28 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 23). RISS firmly recognizes the need to ensure that an individual's constitutional rights, civil liberties, civil rights, and privacy interests are protected throughout the intelligence process.

RISSNET is an existing and proven infrastructure that connects disparate systems and enables users to query connected systems simultaneously. RISSNET resources include RISSIntel, RISSafe, RISSGang, RISS ATIX, the RISS Investigative Leads Bulletin Board (RISSLeads), a data-visualization and link-analysis tool (RISSLinks), the RISS Search Engine (RISSearch), the RISS Center websites, and secure e-mail. More than **600 resources** from a variety of sources are available to authorized users via RISSNET. The owners of these resources rely on RISS for its secure infrastructure and communications.

In FY2010, more than **3.4 million records** were available in RISSIntel. In addition, RISS experienced more than **4 million inquiries** to RISS resources. Users query RISSIntel to obtain information on subjects, weapons, and addresses. Users select one or all connected systems and conduct a federated search. In addition to RISSIntel, member agencies have access to various state, regional, federal, and specialized criminal justice intelligence systems connected to RISSNET. Almost **100** agencies are connected or pending connection to RISSNET, including **31** High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTAs), **38** state agency systems, and **22** federal and other systems, such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Law Enforcement Online; the FBI National Gang Intelligence Center; the National Virtual Pointer System; Nlets—The International Justice and Public Safety Network; and many others. RISS continually strives to maximize information sharing among these systems and increase the number of systems connected to RISSNET. By connecting agencies and systems to RISSNET, rather than funding the build-out of infrastructure for new stand-alone information systems, hundreds of millions of dollars are saved and millions of data records are easily and quickly accessed by law enforcement at little or no cost to the user.

RISSafe stores and maintains data on planned law enforcement events, with the goal of identifying and alerting affected agencies and officers of potential conflicts impacting law enforcement efforts. RISSafe helps prevent undercover and other operations from conflicting and prevents officer injuries and deaths that might otherwise have occurred. RISSafe was honored as one of ten 2010 Honorable Mention winners at the 23rd Annual Government Computer News Awards for “Outstanding Information Technology Achievement in Government.” In addition, in February 2011, RISSafe achieved a milestone with the **300,000th operation** being entered into the application. Since RISSafe’s inception, close to **100,000 conflicts** have been identified.

The **RISS Officer Safety Website** serves as a nationwide repository for issues related to officer safety, such as concealments, hidden weapons, armed and dangerous threats, officer safety videos, special reports, and training opportunities. At the recent International Association of Chiefs of Police conference, the U.S. Attorney General addressed officer safety, specifically announcing the VALOR Program, which is designed to promote officer safety and prevent injuries and deaths to law enforcement officers in the line of duty. RISSafe and the RISS Officer Safety Web site are two RISS resources available to support the VALOR Program’s efforts.

The **RISSGang Program** consists of a criminal intelligence database, a website, informational resources, and secure communications to aid and support gang-related investigations. The RISSGang database provides access to gang information, including suspects, organizations, weapons, photographs of gang members, and graffiti. Like RISSIntel, the RISSGang database

provides for a federated search, including the CalGang database. RISS is working to connect other gang intelligence databases to RISSNET, such as the ATF GangNet.

RISS ATIX is available to thousands of law enforcement and public safety agencies. RISS ATIX resources include **Web pages** that contain general and community-specific information. The RISS ATIX **Bulletin Board** provides secure online conferences for users to collaborate and post information. The **Document Library** provides informational and educational materials. **ATIX secure e-mail** enables the distribution of alerts, SBU/CUI, and other information.

In addition to its information sharing resources, RISS offers a full complement of investigative support services and resources to criminal justice agencies, setting RISS apart from other information sharing programs. The following summarizes RISS's investigative support services.

- **Analysis**—RISS analysts developed **37,832 analytical products** in FY2010 for investigators and prosecutors to help increase their ability to identify, detect, and apprehend suspects as well as enhance prosecutorial success in court. These products include link-analysis charts, crime scene diagrams, telephone toll analysis and financial analysis reports, digital forensics analysis, and audio and video enhancement services.
- **Investigative Support**—RISS intelligence research staff responded to **102,761 requests** in FY2010 to conduct database searches and research numerous resources.
- **Equipment Loans**—Pools of highly specialized investigative and surveillance equipment are available for loan to member agencies for use in support of multijurisdictional investigations. In FY2010, **4,992 pieces of equipment** were borrowed by member agencies.
- **Confidential Funds**—RISS provides funds to purchase contraband, stolen property, and other items of an evidentiary nature or to provide for other investigative expenses. RISS provided **\$393,186 in confidential funds** in FY2010.
- **Training**—RISS Centers sponsor or cosponsor training classes, meetings, and conferences that build investigative expertise for member-agency personnel. In FY2010, **80,204 criminal justice professionals** received RISS training.
- **Publications**—Each center develops and distributes numerous publications, bulletins, and reports focusing on local and nationwide issues. In FY2010, the RISS Centers developed **317 documents** and distributed thousands of copies of each to law enforcement personnel.
- **Field Services Support**—The integration of field services is unique to RISS, whereby individuals regularly contact law enforcement and public safety agencies to ensure that RISS is meeting their needs. RISS field staff conducted **25,653 on-site visits** in FY2010 to train, support, and help integrate RISS services. This one-on-one support has resulted in trusted relationships and a program prized among its members.

All criminal justice entities throughout the country are facing tightened budgets and limited resources. RISS's structure and diverse services help augment their efforts. With the assistance of RISS services, agencies arrested 4,563 individuals during FY2010. In addition, agencies seized or recovered more than **\$23 million in narcotics, property, and currency**.

RISS seeks new and strengthens existing partnerships with other law enforcement entities and participates on regional and national committees to further expand and enhance information sharing. One critical initiative involving RISS is the **SBU/CUI Interoperability Initiative**.

RISSNET is one of four SBU/CUI networks/systems participating in the initiative under the auspices of the White House and the Office of the Program Manager, Information Sharing Environment. The goal of this initiative is to provide single sign-on and access to a variety of system-to-system enhancements within an interoperable and protected SBU/CUI network/system environment for local, state, federal, and tribal law enforcement, regardless of agency ownership of the individual network/system.

RISS also supports a number of other programs and initiatives and provides the secure infrastructure for law enforcement to share information, including the **Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative**, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, the National Motor Vehicle Title Information System, the United States Attorneys' Offices, and the FBI's National Gang Intelligence Center. In addition, information is shared on threats against elected officials and dignitaries through the **U.S. Secret Service Targeted Violence Information Sharing System**. RISS is supported by all national law enforcement organizations, such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, and the National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition, as well as numerous state associations.

Each RISS Center has developed partnerships and programs to meet the needs of its unique region. Some examples include the Project Safe Neighborhoods Mapping and Analysis Program, the National Identity Crimes Law Enforcement Network, the Cold Case Locator System, the Metals Theft Initiative, the Master Telephone Index, the Pawnshop Database, the Combat Meth Project, and the Cold Hit Outcome Project.

RISS is recognized in the *National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan* and the Law Enforcement Information Sharing Program Strategy as a mechanism to facilitate secure information sharing. RISS has become the program of choice for law enforcement and criminal justice agencies from across the nation.

It is respectfully requested that Congress appropriate \$45 million for FY2012 to enable RISS to continue to serve the law enforcement community by providing resources, services, and programs they have come to rely on. It would be counterproductive to require local and state RISS members to self-fund match requirements, as well as to reduce the amount of BJA discretionary funding. Local and state agencies require more, not less, funding to fight the nation's crime problem. RISS is unable to make up the decrease in funding that a match would cause, and it has no revenue source of its own. Cutting the RISS appropriation by requiring a match should not be imposed on the program.

RISS provides resources and capabilities to share critical information nationwide, serves as a secure platform for other criminal justice entities to share and exchange their information, and provides investigative support services that, in many cases, agencies would not otherwise receive. RISS is essential in promoting officer safety and creating a safer work environment for our nation's law enforcement. Appropriate funding and support will enable RISS to continue its programs while effectively serving the criminal justice community. For additional information on the RISS Program, visit www.riss.net. RISS appreciates the support this committee has continuously provided to the RISS Program and is grateful to provide this testimony.