

Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) Program
A Proven Resource for Law Enforcement

Fiscal Year 2013 Testimony to the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related
Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations, United States House of Representatives

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The **Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS)** is a proven, trusted, and innovative program that supports local, state, federal, and tribal criminal justice agencies in their effort to successfully resolve criminal investigations and ensure officer safety. There is no other program in existence through which officers can receive the level of support that RISS provides. Although the demand for RISS's services grows each year, the FY2012 appropriation for RISS was severely decreased, from the FY2011 appropriation of **\$45 million to \$27 million**. RISS and law enforcement agencies nationwide have already felt the effects of this \$18 million reduction. On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of officers and public safety professionals RISS serves, we urge you to **restore FY2013 RISS funding to \$45 million**.

RISS has spent nearly 40 years building a valuable and cost-effective program that is used and trusted by officers and criminal justice professionals in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, Australia, Canada, England, and New Zealand. RISS consists of six regional centers that tailor their services to meet the needs of their unique regions while working together on nationwide initiatives. 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. The support provided by RISS has enabled law enforcement and public safety agencies to increase their success exponentially. A representative from a West Virginia Sheriff's Office recently said, "*RISS is the most important working tool for law enforcement to combat criminal activity and terrorism.*"

RISS offers law enforcement agencies and officers full-service delivery, from the beginning of an investigation to the ultimate prosecution and conviction of criminals. An officer can query intelligence databases, retrieve information from investigative systems, solicit assistance from research staff, utilize surveillance equipment, receive training, and use analytical staff to help prosecute criminals. RISS's service delivery is flexible, convenient, and efficient. Law enforcement agencies and officers rely on RISS for its diverse and far-reaching services and programs. Without access to these services, thousands of law enforcement agencies and hundreds of investigations will suffer.

RISS has been at the forefront in providing resources to enhance officer safety. More than 19,000 law enforcement officers have died serving our nation. At the current rate, one officer is killed every 53 hours in the United States. The **RISS Officer Safety Event Deconfliction System (RISSafe)** is an essential component to helping ensure that our officers are safe. 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 is **the only comprehensive and nationwide deconfliction system** that is accessible on a 24/7/365 basis and available to all law enforcement agencies.

Since RISSafe's inception in 2008, more than **456,800 operations** have been entered. Of those operations, **32.5 percent, or 148,646, have resulted in an identified conflict.** Currently, **19 RISSafe Watch Centers** are operational, 13 of which are operated by organizations other than RISS, such as state agencies, fusion centers, and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas. These organizations have invested resources to support this critical nationwide officer safety program. Many agencies have adopted internal policies mandating the use of RISSafe for their operations. RISSafe continues to proliferate throughout the country, with demand for its use increasing each day. **It is impossible to put a cost to the number of officers RISSafe has already prevented from harm or, worse, death.**

Recently, RISSafe was used during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation event to geographically map scheduled events as well as the lodging sites of the delegations from the attending nations. RISS staff posted and deconflicted all events on a 24-hour basis, as well as any scheduled law enforcement operations. During the time of the event, First Lady Michelle Obama was planning a trip to Oahu. When the event was posted in RISSafe, the staff was alerted to a long-term law enforcement operation planned in proximity to her intended destination. RISS staff contacted the appropriate authorities regarding the conflict. The agency confirmed that it would not operate at the location during the visit. A representative from the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service, stated that RISSafe was extremely beneficial to its dignitary protection operations.

The **RISS Officer Safety Website** was deployed in March 2011 and has been visited more than **13,000** times. The 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. RISSafe and the RISS Officer Safety Website are two important components of **the U.S. Attorney General's Law Enforcement Officer Safety Initiative**, along with the VALOR Program and the Bulletproof Vest Initiative. Efforts are currently under way to bidirectionally interconnect the secure VALOR Website with the RISS Officer Safety Website. RISS also provides officer safety training and develops and distributes publications about emerging threats, such as the *Sovereign Citizens Movement* special research report. With more than 800,000 law enforcement officers across the country, more support to ensure their safety is essential.

RISS provides a full complement of investigative support services, including analysis, investigative and research support, equipment, training, publications development, field services support, and technical assistance. Since 2000, RISS has assisted in training more than **668,000 individuals**, conducted more than **326,000 on-site visits**, loaned almost **57,000 pieces of equipment**, and produced more than **290,000 analytical products**. These statistics illustrate how RISS is impacting law enforcement efforts, but the real success stories come directly from agencies and officers. For example, RISS analytical staff provided assistance in a child pornography investigation involving digital forensics analysis. RISS staff analyzed multiple computers and hard-disk drives. The collection of pornography discovered was one of the largest, with more than 100,000 images requiring analysis. With RISS's assistance, the investigation led to an 18-year sentence.

In another case, RISS staff reproduced charts, maps, photographs, and diagrams and created a timeline for a criminal trial of a defendant charged with murdering two police officers. Following the trial, the defendant was convicted by a jury and subsequently sentenced to two life terms in the state penitentiary. The Assistant District Attorney said, *“I will continue to get my fellow prosecutors to use the services of RISS because it is a great prosecutor’s tool.”*

On January 8, 2011, United States Representative Gabrielle Giffords hosted a “Congress on Your Corner” gathering in Tucson, Arizona, to talk with her constituents. As the event began, a gunman entered the crowd and shot Representative Giffords. The gunman turned on the crowd, killing 6 individuals and seriously wounding 12 others. The shooting was recorded on video by a store security camera. There was an urgent need to locate an audio/video analyst to clarify the still photos taken from the video surveillance to determine whether an accomplice was at large. RISS was contacted to assist in this effort. The results of the RISS analyst’s work enabled law enforcement to close a potential lead, saving valuable law enforcement time and resources.

The same types of successes are happening in jurisdictions across the country. Since 2000, agencies utilizing RISS’s services and resources made more than **57,360 arrests** and seized more than **\$942.5 million in narcotics, property, and currency**. **RISS is an excellent return on investment for our country.** All law enforcement and public safety entities are facing tightened budgets and limited resources. RISS’s structure and diverse services are helping to augment law enforcement efforts. A Pennsylvania police department officer said, *“RISS offers services and support that law enforcement cannot obtain anywhere else. Analytical products, equipment loans, and training are important tools for law enforcement. Connectivity to RISSNET is absolutely critical to solving multijurisdictional crimes.”*

Historically, law enforcement and criminal justice agencies have faced obstacles related to information sharing, communications, and technology. Many problems stemmed from the fact that although these agencies individually held pieces of information about criminals and their activities, they lacked a mechanism to securely collect and exchange information. Consequently, the law enforcement community’s response to criminal activity was often fragmented, duplicative, and limited. Since the inception of the RISS Secure Intranet (**RISSNET**) in 1997, however, many of these obstacles have been resolved.

RISSNET is a secure Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU) law enforcement information sharing cloud provider. RISSNET provides access to millions of pieces of data; offers bidirectional sharing of information; and connects disparate state, local, and federal systems. Agencies can easily connect to RISSNET, share information and intelligence in a secure environment, and query multiple systems simultaneously. Our nation’s public safety mission requires an interoperable information sharing environment to proactively solve crimes. RISSNET is a critical component in meeting this need. RISSNET also serves as the secure communications infrastructure for a number of critical resources and investigative tools. Currently, **86 systems are connected or pending connection** to RISSNET. There are more than **400 resources available via RISSNET to authorized users**; the owners of these resources rely on RISSNET for its secure infrastructure. By connecting agencies and systems to RISSNET, rather than funding the build-out of new stand-alone information systems, hundreds of millions of dollars are saved and millions of data records are easily and quickly accessible by law enforcement.

Examples of RISSNET resources include the RISS Criminal Intelligence Databases (RISSIntel), RISSafe, the RISS National Gang Program (RISSGang), the RISS Automated Trusted Information Exchange (ATIX), the RISSLeads Investigative Bulletin Board, the RISSLinks data-visualization and link-analysis tool, the RISS Center websites, and secure e-mail.

The **RISSIntel user interface provides for real-time, online federated search of 15 RISS partner intelligence databases**, including state systems and CalGang, and does not require the RISSNET user to have a separate user account with the respective partner systems. In FY2011, RISSIntel contained more than **3.1 million intelligence records** and users made almost **4 million inquiries** in RISSIntel. These records include individuals, organizations, and associates suspected of involvement in criminal activity, as well as locations, vehicles, weapons, and telephone numbers. Furthermore, the interaction between RISSafe and RISSIntel provides comprehensive officer safety event and subject deconfliction services.

The **RISSGang Program** is the only comprehensive gang resource that offers a criminal intelligence database, a website, a secure bulletin board, and gang-specific news and publications. The RISSGang database provides access to gang information, including suspects, organizations, weapons, photographs, and graffiti. Like RISSIntel, RISSGang provides for a federated search, including CalGang. RISS is connecting other gang databases to RISSNET, such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' GangNET.

RISS ATIX is a communications and information sharing capability that enables law enforcement, public safety (including fire, health, and emergency services), and private sector entities to share terrorism and homeland security information in a secure, real-time environment. RISS ATIX resources include Web pages that contain general and discipline-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, and other information.

RISSLeads provides authorized law enforcement officers with the ability to post information regarding cases, investigative leads, or other law enforcement issues. Authorized users are able to view and respond to posts, ultimately working together by exchanging information on similar or related cases. Connecting law enforcement officers across jurisdictional boundaries is crucial in detecting, deterring, and apprehending today's mobile and sophisticated criminals.

Each RISS Center maintains a website to provide users with easy access to RISSIntel, other RISSNET resources, and other resources, such as the National Railroad Trespasser Database, the Cold Case Database, the Forensic Accounting Database, and the Pseudoephedrine Violator Tracking System. In addition, because of demand from agencies and officers, RISS has expanded its Pawnshop Database nationwide. The number of investigative records available through these different systems exceeds **28 million**.

RISS seeks new and strengthens existing partnerships with other law enforcement entities and participates on regional and nationwide committees to further expand and enhance information sharing. **RISSNET is one of four SBU networks participating in the Assured SBU Interoperability Initiative under the auspices of the White House and the Office of the Program Manager, Information Sharing Environment (PM-ISE)**. The goal is to provide

simplified sign-on and access to a variety of system-to-system enhancements within an interoperable and protected SBU environment for local, state, federal, and tribal law enforcement, regardless of agency ownership of the individual network. RISS is the only nonfederal partner providing the critical state, local, and tribal law enforcement piece essential to the nation's information sharing environment. RISS is at the forefront in providing federated access and simplified sign-on to resources and systems. The Federal Bureau of Investigation Law Enforcement Online users, the Chicago Police Department users, and the Pennsylvania JNET users access RISSNET resources via Federated Identity technologies.

RISS continuously seeks and is sought out by others to enable new information sharing partnerships that leverage its secure SBU information sharing capabilities. Most recently, several state Medicaid Fraud Control Units (MFCUs) began pursuing the use of RISSNET to securely share information, strategies, best practices, lessons learned, and other information to help in their detection and prosecution efforts. Ultimately, this project has the potential to support Medicare and other health care fraud investigations and information sharing efforts. In addition, RISS supports the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative by connecting systems to RISSNET and hosting individual state servers. RISS continues to connect fusion centers to RISSNET, integrate RISS services and tools into fusion center operations, and provide training to fusion center staff. RISS supports the National Virtual Pointer System and partners with numerous other organizations, such as the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, the National Gang Intelligence Center, the United States Secret Service, and the United States Attorneys' Offices. RISS is supported by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, the National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition, and the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations. RISS's partnerships have resulted in an unprecedented level of information and intelligence sharing.

It is respectfully requested that Congress restore FY2013 funding for RISS to the FY2011 amount of \$45 million so that this essential information sharing and public safety program can continue to serve our nation. Inadequate funding and support for RISS could cost lives, hinder investigations, and impact the safety of our communities. It would be counterproductive to require local and state RISS members to self-fund match requirements, as well as to reduce the amount of Bureau of Justice Assistance discretionary funding. 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 creating a safer working environment for our nation's law enforcement. RISS's services increase the ability to detect, prevent, identify, solve, and prosecute crime. Appropriate funding will enable RISS to continue 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.