



Police figures changed, but crime still down Initial statistics were incorrect because of computer malfunction

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - January 11, 2005

Author: JOHN DIEDRICH, jdiedrich@journal sentinel.com, Journal Sentinel: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Police figures changed, but crime still down

Initial statistics were incorrect because of computer malfunction

Crime in Milwaukee didn't drop last year nearly as much as the Police Department had earlier reported, an error officials attributed Monday to a computer malfunction.

The number of crimes reported to police as of Dec. 27 was 8.1% lower than during the same time in 2003, according to new numbers from the department.

A department document earlier said crime was down 15.5%, and that figure was reported Jan. 1 in the Journal Sentinel.

The number of homicides didn't change: It dropped from 107 to 88, a 17.8% drop and a 16-year low.

The problem was that the department was using incorrect 2003 crime numbers as a comparison, said Chief Nannette Hegerty. In April, for an unexplained reason, the department's mainframe computer duplicated crimes from 2003, making it seem like crime was down more than it was in 2004, Hegerty said.

"When we gave you those statistics, we thought they were truthful," Hegerty said.

The higher crime drop was reported in an internal department document that is routinely converted into maps used by commanders to figure out where officers should be patrolling.

The problem meant commanders were getting faulty data for roughly eight months, but Hegerty said it didn't have a major effect on enforcement. That's because on the maps, dots appeared on top of each other because the computer reported the same crime several times, she said.

"The maps were still correct," she said.

None of the incorrect numbers was reported to the FBI, she said.

The official in charge of the department's computer said he wasn't sure what happened but said it won't happen again as the department converts to a new computer system.

"I am fairly confident what you are looking at will be where (the numbers) will end up," Inspector Mark Meyer said of the newly released information.

The problem was detected while department computer staff members were auditing numbers, he said.

Although crime isn't down as much as was previously reported, it's still a sizable drop, Hegerty said.

"It is important that people know crime is down and the city is safer," the chief said.

The department is replacing its 25-year-old mainframe computer with a new system, a move that began late last year and is expected to be done sometime this month, Meyer said. But he said the conversion did not cause the crime data problem in April.

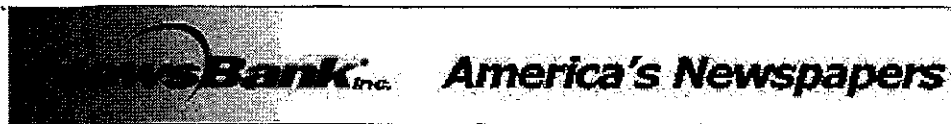
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Glitches in new computer hold up police reports Upgrade bugs delay major crime listings

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - June 15, 2005

Author: JOHN DIEDRICH, Staff, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

The Milwaukee Police Department has not given out full summaries of major crimes to the media for nearly six months as it encountered difficulties converting to a new computer system.

The summaries were used by the Journal Sentinel to prepare the "Police Report" that appeared in the Metro section on Wednesdays. The reports for suburban communities, based on data from several other departments, are still published in Thursday's Metro section.

A department official said the crime summaries should soon be available again. And in about 60 days, the department plans to begin posting an unprecedented amount of information about recent crimes on the city's Web site, said Inspector Mark Meyer.

Throughout the computer upgrade, officers on the street and their commanders have continued to get crime updates, sometimes on paper, said department spokeswoman Anne E. Schwartz, who added Chief Nannette Hegerty expected the upgrade would be further along by now.

Bugs in the conversion have led to other problems. The department has not reported crime statistics to the state Office of Justice Assistance since January, said Paul Guequierre, office spokesman. Milwaukee police usually report crime numbers each month and must send its mid-year numbers to the state by the end of July.

"We don't view it as a problem yet," Guequierre said.

Schwartz said the department will meet the July deadline.

In January, the department began to convert to a new, \$6.8 million computer system to replace several old systems that did not communicate with each other, Meyer said. Purchased from Tiburon Inc., the computer would track all crime, criminal backgrounds, department personnel records and other information, Meyer said. It also included 400 mobile terminals for squad cars, he said.

"We wanted officers to go to one computer and run a single search and know everything the department knew about that individual," he said.

Officials expected the system to "go live" in January, but that timetable immediately slipped by a month.

Meyer attributed the delays to software problems and mistakes by department staff as they tried to adapt to the new system.

Meyer said extensive training was done and staff visited other police departments that already use the same system.

Once the department fell behind, a backlog of paper reports piled up, Meyer said.

During this process, the department revamped its public reports on major crimes.

The old reports included the following information about a crime: date, time, place, victim and suspect description and the general nature of the offense.

Earlier this year, the department released a pared-down version of that report, which was what came with the software package, Meyer said.

Journal Sentinel editors felt those summaries were incomplete and chose not to publish "Police Report" based on them. The summaries didn't give information such as the victim's gender or age, the nature of the confrontation in robberies or place and manner of entry in burglaries.

Meyer said his staff is working now to re-create the old report and hopes to make it available in coming weeks.

If the reports include that critical information, the newspaper plans to bring back the "Police Report" for Milwaukee.

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Glitch leaves police in dark Delayed computer upgrade means officials don't have crime numbers

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - August 7, 2005

Author: JOHN DIETRICH, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Killings have soared in Milwaukee this summer, but homicide figures don't tell the whole story of violence in the city.

Veteran police officers and crime experts say the more telling statistic is the number of violent crimes, especially shootings, which could easily have become homicides, depending on aim and ambulance speed.

But Police Chief Nannette Hegerty doesn't know how many people have been shot in Milwaukee this year. She also doesn't know how many robberies, aggravated assaults or sexual assaults there have been. A new computer system that police say will revolutionize the way the department deals with crime data is five months late, leaving the chief, city leaders and the public in the dark about whether overall crime is up or down in the city. Homicide is an exception, because compared to other crimes, the numbers are low enough to be tracked by hand.

Last Monday, the department missed its deadline to turn in mid-year crime statistics to the state, which forwards them to the FBI.

The Fire and Police Commission, the civilian body that oversees the department, usually receives crime updates. The lapse has angered at least one member.

"It is unacceptable, underline unacceptable," said commissioner Woody Welch. "Concise and timely information being made to the commission, mayor, council and the public is essential."

Commanders blame the delay on myriad technical problems compounded by human mistakes but said the new \$7 million system already is coming online. The final step — producing accurate citywide crime numbers — should be done in a month or so, they said. Milwaukee's problems aren't unique. Other departments have taken a year or more to bring systems online, but the payoff is huge, experts said.

"The department deserves an award for being futuristic," said John Firman, director of research for the International Association of Chiefs of Police. "This is a hard, hard task . . . If citizens can have a little faith, when they are done their department will be positioned in the elite number of departments that have made that transition."

Things got so bad that for the month of January, Milwaukee district commanders used push pins on maps to track crime. But throughout the process, officials said, street-level policing was not affected. District commanders have enough raw data to move officers into hot spots.

But no one in the department is sugarcoating the computer upgrade problems. The mission now, they said, is to fix it and then figure out how to prevent it from happening again.

"Our stats drive to a great degree what the larger policy makers do, and when we don't give them those numbers it is real difficult. None of us are happy about this," said Assistant Police Chief Joseph Whiten, Hegerty's second-in-command who was assigned last month to personally oversee the troubled project. Hegerty was out of town last week and unavailable for comment.

Past computer problems

Milwaukee police have had problems with crime stats in the past. Through the latter half of 2004, Hegerty touted the double-digit drop in crime. But it turned out crime wasn't down 15.5%, only 8.1%. The chief blamed the numbers mix-up on the department's failing, 16-year-old computers.

For years, police used dozens of computers that stored information on crimes and suspects, keyed in from hand-written reports. Officers had to enter a suspect's name into several computers to get a complete background check.

In the new system, officers will type reports on in-squad computers (400 are planned for installation later this year) connected to a single main computer. Later, they will be able to enter a name and know every time the department has had contact with that person.

The system will also report more details, allowing the department to map out trends and quickly react to them. Other departments, such as those in New York City and Chicago, have used such systems for years, one of the reasons cited for falling crime in those cities. Information about crimes also will be available to the public on the city's Web site shortly after they occur, said police Inspector Mark Meyer, the head of data services.

To save money, Milwaukee chose a standard police system instead of custom-built software and hardware. They planned to turn on the new system in January and complete the conversion by March, Meyer said. Officers stopped entering data into the old system, though officers could still retrieve information from it. Meyer said he expected the department would go without computers for a matter of days before reports began entering the new system.

It didn't happen that way.

The department immediately ran into software problems and difficulties converting 16 years of old data, Meyer said. There were also mistakes by police staff, even though all were trained, he said.

In hindsight, Meyer said, the timeline was probably too aggressive.

Days without a computer system turned into weeks.

While Meyer blamed the delays on software, human error and conversion problems, an official with the company doing the work suggested there were different reasons.

"I have spoken with the department, and they have not said any of those things to me," said Ben Tang, a vice president of marketing for CompuDyne Corp. in Fremont, Calif. He declined further comment.

When the computers started to work, information flowed into the districts, and commanders again began to get computer-generated crime maps, which they shared with the neighborhood groups.

"Operationally, we aren't crippled," Meyer said. "The idea that the police department is blindly groping along with no idea of what is happening, that is certainly not the situation." Every week, he said, the chief sees raw data; it's just not added up and released outside the department.

Killings on the rise

As the department struggled to get its new computer system online, killings were on the rise in Milwaukee.

As of midday Saturday, 79 people had been killed compared with 55 on that date last year. In July, 21 people were killed, making it the deadliest month in at least 11 years in Milwaukee, according to a Journal Sentinel analysis of homicides since 1994.

Hegerty has said there is no gang war or drug turf battle to explain the killing. She blames it on arguments that are increasingly turning deadly.

One factor that hasn't been discussed publicly is whether shooting victims were just luckier last year. Comparing shootings and homicides in 2003 and 2004 suggest there might be a relationship.

In 2004, 88 people were killed, a 16-year low and down 16.9% from 2003. Shootings, however, were down only 9.2% — 523 compared with 576, according to department figures — suggesting last year's low homicide total may have been an anomaly.

That conclusion would be easier to draw if the department knew how many people have been shot this year. When asked that question last week, Whiten said he would like to know that figure and directed staff to do a hand-count of shootings from the raw data. The results were not available late last week.

Missed deadline

Before this year, Milwaukee sent crime statistics to the state every month. That stopped in January because of the computer changeover. In mid-June, Milwaukee officials promised the state the crime data would be in by Aug. 1, the deadline to get midyear numbers from Wisconsin's largest cities: Milwaukee, Madison and Green Bay. The data is sent to the FBI.

Last month, it became clear the department wouldn't make that deadline, so 13 clerical staff members were deployed to type in the backlog of reports, Meyer said. He declined to say how many employees in total were working on the project.

The missed deadline has raised questions at the state Office of Justice Assistance, which is working with Milwaukee to ensure the more critical year-end numbers are in on time.

"People want to know what is happening in their community and what crimes are being committed," said Paul Guequierre, office spokesman.

FBI spokeswoman Mary Victoria Pyne said there is no sanction for missing a deadline. The FBI has had its own computer woes. Earlier this year it scrapped a planned \$170 million computer system, costing \$100 million in tax money, because of planning and technical errors.

Ald. Michael Murphy, chairman of the Finance Committee who has been critical of past problems with police computer system spending, wants an audit, which he said the department vetoed because of security concerns.

Three years ago, West Allis police built a system similar to what Milwaukee is installing. Officials said the task was easier because West Allis is so much smaller. Also, they ran their old and new systems simultaneously for six months to make sure the new one would work. Now, the department is seeing time savings for officers, said Capt. Dick Jansen.

Criminal justice experts differ on just how crucial overall crime numbers are to the police mission, but all agreed that a revamping of how departments collect data is a major workplace shift, and one of the biggest hurdles can be convincing officers to move from paper forms to keyboards.

Stan Stojkovic, a criminal justice professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, said, "This is more than changing technology. It is a cultural change, how we understand and use data. That is a massive change."

576 Number of shootings reported in Milwaukee in 2003

523 Number of shootings reported in 2004

?? Number of shootings reported so far this year. Police were doing a hand count in response to an inquiry.

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City plans audit of police computers Comptroller to look into system problems 6 months after due date

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - September 14, 2005

Author: JOHN DIEDRICH, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

The Milwaukee Police Department's new \$7 million computer system, nearly six months behind schedule and still failing to deliver basic details about crime this year, will be audited by the city comptroller, an official said Tuesday.

Deputy Comptroller Mike Daun said his staff was meeting this week to determine if outside experts would need to be hired to evaluate the system, which police officials say will revolutionize the way the department handles arrest and crime information.

Police Department leaders blame the delay on a series of technical problems compounded by human error but have vowed the system will be fully functioning soon. Chief Nannette Hegerty said as recently as Friday that she still doesn't have overall crime numbers for this year to date.

Because of the computer problems, Milwaukee police last month missed a deadline to turn in midyear crime statistics to the state, which forwards them to the FBI. A state official said Tuesday the state is starting to get data from Milwaukee, but nothing past February has been submitted and some of the data appears flawed.

Ald. Michael Murphy, chairman of the Finance Committee, requested the audit on Aug. 22. Murphy said the council needs to ask the department tough questions given the Police Department's large budget and recent moves to spend more.

Earlier this summer Mayor Tom Barrett authorized Hegerty to spend up to \$635,000 from existing grants in police overtime for a "violent crime reduction task force." Barrett also moved up the incoming 60-member police recruit class from December to Nov. 7, at a cost of \$210,000.

In a letter to Hegerty, Murphy questioned how the council can support spending increases without knowing if crime is up or down this year. Homicide is an exception because compared with other crimes, the numbers are low enough to be tracked by hand. There have been 91 homicides this year, compared with 88 in all of last year.

"I think we have an obligation to hold a department that receives nearly \$200 million a year accountable," Murphy said. "We are investing millions into a computer system, and to me it is not looking pretty, and I want to hold them accountable as to why."

Murphy asked Hegerty for results of spending more than \$300,000 on police overtime between July 22 and Aug. 21.

Hegerty and her subordinates did not return a call for comment Tuesday.

In a letter dated Friday, Hegerty said crime was down in four "tightly targeted areas" where the task force was focused. She did not identify the areas, but officials said last week they cover parts of police districts 5, 3, 7 and 2.

Compared with the previous month, there was one fewer homicide in the areas; shootings and shots fired dropped from 81 to 41; overall violent crimes dropped from 191 to 131; gun seizures went up by 76; and arrests jumped from 887 to 1,153, according to her letter.

Those numbers show what the department can do with additional patrols, Inspector Vincent Flores said last week.

"When the homicides started to increase, the officers were doing everything in their power to stem the tide. . . . But unfortunately with the number of calls for police service, it didn't allow them to go out and do their proactive patrolling, and they were actually going from assignment to assignment," Flores said.

Hegerty said the department's increasing number of vacancies will make sustaining such efforts difficult.

247 vacancies

The department is authorized 2,156 positions but has 247 vacancies among sworn officers, her letter says. Another roughly 130 officers are eligible for retirement next year. In 1997, the department had only 44 vacancies, she said.

Officials calculated the one-month numbers by counting the crimes by hand but are still in the dark about overall crime trends in

the city this year.

In January, the department converted to a new computer system meant to replace a patchwork of 16-year-old systems that didn't work together. The idea was to enter all the information just once into a system accessible by all officers. Residents would get up-to-date crime information off the Web.

The department immediately encountered software problems made worse by human error, officials said in August. In January, commanders were forced to return to push pins on paper maps. A backlog of data mounted.

Clerks were pulled from throughout the department last month in an effort to wipe out the backlog. It wasn't clear Tuesday whether that had been done.

Throughout the troubled upgrade, district commanders have had information about their areas and policing was not affected, officials said.

The Comptroller's Office intends to begin the audit later this year and hopes to finish it quickly, Daun said. On Tuesday, he was still trying to understand how complex the task would be. He said it isn't unusual for problems to crop up during computer upgrades. Auditors will examine what problems arose and how the department handled them, he said.

"Part of the audit is to look back as well as to look forward," he said.

Bob Purvis of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report.

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City crime was down before summer Police blame computer system for delayed release of statistics

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - October 18, 2005

Author: JOHN DIEDRICH, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Milwaukee police reported Monday that serious crime dropped by 15.9% during the first three months of 2005 compared with the same time last year, continuing a trend of falling crime in the city.

Milwaukee's figures, from January through March, show every category of major crime, except rape, fell or was flat in the first quarter of the year compared with the same time in 2004.

More current crime numbers were not available, including what happened with other crimes over the summer when homicides spiked. Those numbers are expected later this fall, said Chief Nannette Hegerty.

"I tell you I would love to take credit for the reduction in crime but to be honest with you crime is very, very complex," Hegerty said. "Not only does it have to do with how effective the police department is . . . it also has to do with society in general."

The crime numbers were delayed because of problems the department has had with its new \$7 million computer system, Hegerty said.

While many agencies have problems when converting to new computers, Hegerty said the problems were severe enough in Milwaukee that she has ordered \$1 million of the bill withheld from CompuDyne Corp. of Fremont, Calif.

Hegerty said CompuDyne failed to deliver on a promise that the new system would be up and running in a couple of days. That promise prompted Hegerty to agree to turn off the old system Jan. 1 to save tax dollars.

"We were assured by the computer company that produced the software that we're using that we would be up and running with the new system and of course that didn't happen," she said.

Officials from CompuDyne could not be reached for comment.

With the old system shuttered and the new one not working, the department went more than a month without computers, forcing commanders to use paper maps and creating a backlog of reports that continued to build all year.

While Hegerty and her command staff didn't know if crime was up or down across the city, she said street-level policing was not affected because districts tracked their own crimes.

Officials billed the system as revolutionizing how the department handles information, providing commanders, beat officers and ultimately the public with much more up-to-date crime information.

The department missed its deadline to report crime figures to the state and the FBI from the first half of the year, but a state official said numbers are now coming in from Milwaukee.

The city Comptroller's Office is doing an audit of the computer system at the request of Ald. Michael Murphy. The comptroller is awaiting information from the department to begin the audit, said Mike Daun, deputy comptroller.

Homicide has been the one citywide crime statistic that could be tracked through 2005, because of its low raw numbers. The news hasn't been good.

After a relatively quiet first three months of the year — the time frame covered by the newly released figures — homicides jumped between April and September. There have been 100 homicides so far this year, compared with 88 in all of 2004, which was a 16-year low.

The department also had problems with its old computer system.

For much of last year, Hegerty touted a 15.5% drop in crime. After discovering a glitch, she learned the drop in crime was actually 8.1%.

"That caused me a great deal of consternation," Hegerty said, prompting her to move more slowly in releasing this year's numbers. The numbers released Monday already have been reviewed and approved by the state, according to Paul Guequierre, spokesman for the state Office of Justice Assistance.

The numbers released to the media Monday also include an inaccuracy. Initially, the department said there were 23 homicides in the first three months of this year compared with 19 over that period last year. The correct figure for the first quarter of this year is also 19. The other four were homicides later ruled "justified" and aren't counted in the total, Hegerty said.

Hegerty blamed that latest inaccuracy on a "coding error" between the department and the state.

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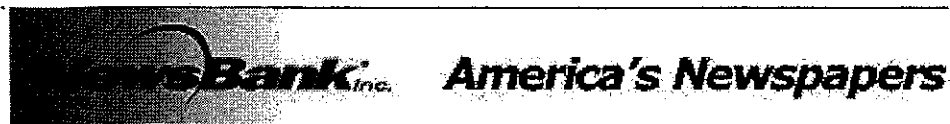
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Reported leap in city crime questioned Milwaukee increase is biggest among large cities, FBI says

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - June 13, 2006

Author: JOHN DIEDRICH, Staff, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Violent crime in Milwaukee — particularly assaults and murders — soared last year compared with 2004, according to new numbers released by the FBI Monday.

But questions were raised Monday about the accuracy of the numbers. Milwaukee police adopted a new computer system in 2005, which might make a year-to-year comparison with previous years difficult, if not impossible.

Milwaukee had the biggest increase in violent crime nationwide among cities of 250,000 or more, the FBI's preliminary crime statistics said. The surge comes after two years in which violent crime fell in Milwaukee.

State officials are investigating the reason for the apparent spike, suggesting Milwaukee might be counting crimes differently now from 2004 and before. They also are looking into whether the crime figures reported in 2004 — when every category was reportedly down — were incorrect.

Department commanders are certain crime was up last year compared with the previous year, but not by how much, acknowledged Anne E. Schwartz, department spokeswoman.

"It is less important to us to know how 2004 compared to 2005. What is most important is how to police the city now," Schwartz said. "We don't wait for these numbers to figure out how to police the city."

Mayor Tom Barrett said whatever the increase was, it was too high. He said he is trying to bring down crime by supporting police overtime, 40 new officer positions, summer jobs for teens and other programs.

"I am going to fight the fight on every front," he said.

Are vacancies to blame?

John Balcerzak, president of the city's police union, said the jump in crime shows that Milwaukee is paying for its 200 officer vacancies. He said police overtime is a short-term fix that will burn out officers and cause more problems later.

"The city is drowning. . . . We need someone to pull Milwaukee out, and that would be the cops," Balcerzak said. "Cops cannot prevent everything, but a lack of cops doesn't help."

Milwaukee's rise in violence was part of a national trend. Violent crime was up across the United States for the first time since 2001, the FBI reported. Murders rose 4.8%, meaning there were more than 16,900 victims in 2005. That would be the most since 1998 and the largest percentage increase in 15 years.

In 2004, according to the FBI report, there were 87 homicides in Milwaukee, the lowest total in 16 years. Last year, there were 122 homicides.

"2004 really was an anomaly," Schwartz said of the low homicide figure.

The FBI report, based on offenses reported to local police agencies, is generally considered the official measure of crime in the U.S., but some experts say it is misleading because many crimes are never reported to police.

The federal government has two other crime reporting programs. The National Crime Victimization Survey compiles statistics by surveying 42,000 households and estimating rates. A third program is the National Incident-Based Reporting System, which collects more details of crime.

Milwaukee converted to the incident-based system last year with a new \$7 million computer system but encountered problems that forced the department to return to paper records for a time. Schwartz said the glitches have been worked out and the computer is providing current information for commanders to deploy officers.

The old system was not working properly when the department mothballed it at the end of 2004. Chief Nannette Hegerty was touting a 16% drop in crime throughout much of 2004, but it turned out to be half of that. Schwartz said the department is not

confident that the 2004 data was correct, which would make the comparison with last year flawed.

Looking for answers

State officials said they are examining the spike in crimes and looking for an explanation. State computers are designed to take Milwaukee's incident-based figures to translate into the FBI's format to ensure that year-to-year comparisons are valid, said Dean Ziemke of the state Office of Justice Assistance.

When a department goes to a new computer system, sometimes crimes are counted differently. The FBI included a note with Milwaukee's numbers that said comparisons might not be possible because of a change in reporting practices.

One fact that has caught the eye of state officials: Although aggravated assaults soared, the less serious crime of "simple assault" was down by about 20%, said Michael Smith, who works with Ziemke.

State officials will continue to investigate, he said.

"The key thing here is this is still considered preliminary data," Smith said. "We are spending a lot with them to confirm these numbers."

Violence up elsewhere, too

Milwaukee wasn't the only city with a jump in murders last year, according to the new report.

Homicides soared from 59 to 104 in Birmingham, Ala., up 76%; from 89 to 126 in Kansas City, Mo., a 42% rise; and from 79 to 109 in Cleveland, a 38% increase.

Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles and New York were among large cities where the number of murders dropped.

The overall nationwide increase in violent crime was modest, 2.5%, which equates to more than 1.4 million crimes. Nevertheless, that was the largest percentage increase since 1991.

Robberies were up 4.5% and aggravated assaults 1.9%, according to preliminary data. Alone among violent crime categories, the number of rapes fell 1.9%.

Violent crime last year increased in all regions, although the 5.7% rise in the Midwest was at least three times any other region's.

Ashley Johnson of the Journal Sentinel staff and The Associated Press contributed to this report.

CITY VS. NATION

+32.5%

Increase in all violent crimes in Milwaukee last year, according to FBI statistics

+8.3%

Average increase nationally for similar-sized cities

+40.2%

Increase in murders in Milwaukee

+2.4%

Average increase nationally among similar-sized cities

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City officials want answers from police - Delayed officer-tracking system raises concerns

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - February 20, 2007

Author: JOHN DIEDRICH, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

City leaders on Monday demanded answers about why a long-promised computer system that would help identify problematic Milwaukee police officers still is not online.

The "Early Intervention Program," first pitched by Chief Nannette Hegerty more than three years ago, still is in the works. The Police Department's latest projection is that the program, budgeted to cost \$500,000, will be working by late April.

In the meantime, the department is left to analyze one of the key indicators the system would track — officers' use of force — by reviewing thousands of written reports by hand.

Aldermen and members of the city's Fire and Police Commission want police officials to appear before them to explain the delay. The issue comes after the department had major problems with its \$7 million computerized crime-tracking system in 2005. That system is now the subject of a city audit.

Ald. Bob Donovan, chairman of the Public Safety Committee, wants to know why the police have so many problems with computers.

"Anything technical at the Police Department is always millions over budget and years behind schedule, and I don't understand that. We need to get to the bottom of this, and in a hurry," Donovan said.

On Sunday, the Journal Sentinel reported that in three years, former Officer James Langer used force more often and generated more complaints than his peers, and three times used his flashlight as a weapon. The department says it knew about Langer's record but didn't order training, counseling or punishment. In May, Langer hit Danyall Simpson in the face with a flashlight, breaking his eye socket and cheekbone. He quit the department shortly after it began an internal investigation of the encounter.

After a seven-month investigation, the district attorney decided not to charge Langer.

Simpson's attorney, Jon Safran, said tracking use of force must become a priority for police.

"I am tired of hearing, 'It is going to happen,' " he said.

Mayor Tom Barrett said Langer's case is evidence of the need to get the tracking system working quickly.

"I think there were an obvious number of very violent situations that should have been spotted more quickly," he said.

Aware of other problems with police computers, Barrett also said he plans to ask for more civilians to work in the department's technical units. Common Council President Willie Hines agreed.

"I would rather have someone of a computer background dealing with these systems and have officers out on the street, fighting crime," he said.

The chief and other police officials declined to be interviewed for Sunday's article, and the department wouldn't reveal how much the new computer system would cost. On Monday, a spokeswoman said the system, part of a larger database in the internal affairs unit, will cost \$500,000.

Spokeswoman Anne E. Schwartz said Hegerty always wanted the system but couldn't get the money until after news surfaced that several off-duty officers were accused of beating Frank Jude Jr. in 2004. Implementation was delayed as the department followed city contract rules, Schwartz said.

Once up and running, she said, the new system will allow supervisors, and officers themselves, to easily track all sick time, citizen complaints, use of force, traffic accidents and other indicators that can reveal potential problems.

"It gives the department the opportunity to intervene before something serious happens with that officer," Schwartz said.

Ald. Terry Witkowski expressed concern that the department wasn't more forthcoming about its system. He said he has run into similar problems while trying to get basic information such as crime statistics.

"We provide the budget. We answer to the constituents, and we should know what is going on," Witkowski said. "I get more information from the newspaper than from the department."

Robert "Woody" Welch, a member of the Fire and Police Commission, said better screening of new recruits should limit how many problematic officers join the department. He said the new computer system will be important, but it shouldn't be the only tool for tracking how officers use force.

"To the extent that it works, I think it is critically important," he said. "But it is no silver bullet."

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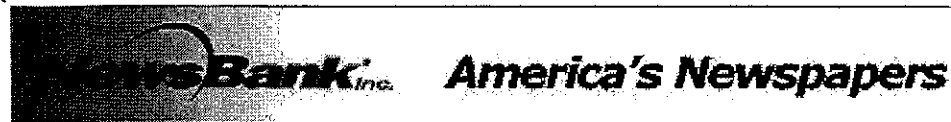
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Lack of IT workers slowed police data system, audit says - Department requests city help, disputes some findings

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - July 21, 2007

Author: LINDA SPICE, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

The Milwaukee Police Department's nearly five-year struggle to adopt a modern, integrated computer system to help track and fight crime is largely the result of administrators' attempts to tackle such a project with their own sworn officers, not trained information technology professionals, according to a city audit released Friday.

The audit says the department can expect "significant additional costs" before its \$7.3 million computer system is completely operational, and it criticized a lack of management over the complex project and poorly disclosed budgeting.

The audit, conducted by the city comptroller's office with help from the Police Executive Research Forum, found problems with conversion of old data to the new system, employees still clinging to old methods and a pronounced lack of training for department staff in use of the new systems.

In a 22-page response, the Police Department disputed many specific findings and said more than 90% of the system is working, delivering timely, accurate crime data to state and federal authorities, as well as to aldermen and the public via the Internet.

But the department admits it bit off more than it could chew when it tried to implement such a large technology undertaking in-house. The response says the police were only trying to save the city money.

"Unfortunately, use of existing personnel did not work out as planned," the unsigned response reads.

The department embraces a major recommendation of the audit and says it has requested nine civilian IT positions in next year's budget.

Ald. Michael Murphy, who requested the audit in 2005 after the Police Department missed a deadline to turn in midyear crime statistics to the state, said, "It makes me question just how much better of a job the department could be doing to protect the citizens of Milwaukee, because similar systems in other large U.S. cities have been successfully utilized to make a huge difference in the overall day-to-day battle against crime."

Common Council President Willie Hines Jr. praised Murphy for understanding the importance of using technology to its fullest.

"Like an iPod that can't play music or a BlackBerry that can't send e-mails, MPD's multimillion-dollar Crime Data System is virtually useless if it can't function at a high level to help our officers fight crime," Hines said in a written statement Friday.

Differences in reports Both the audit and the department response also cast some blame for repeated delays on Tiburon Inc., the California-based company that the department hired to launch the system.

Gary Bunyard, president and CEO of Tiburon, said the company doesn't comment on contracts with clients.

The department said Tiburon oversold some of its system support, was slow to address needs identified by Milwaukee police and didn't commit the right level of oversight for the project until a later change in managers.

The new system involves several components, including systems for dispatching, booking of suspects, generating and accessing reports, and managing records. While the audit found that some important functions are still not fully operational or are underused, the department's response states that only less-important parts of the system, such as global positioning system tracking of squad cars and mobile field reporting, are not in use yet, either because no training has been done or because new radios or computers are needed in squad cars first.

One of the key disputes seems to be over the new system's compatibility with the department's Criminal Investigations Bureau operations. The audit found that the bureau should be using the system's case management applications, but the department insists that the system is meant for a single-person-on-a-single-case approach and that the Police Department's aggressive shift-to-shift attention to major crimes won't mesh with the Tiburon product.

The project was not adequately disclosed in city budgets, the audit says, and it took extensive analysis by auditors to develop a

five-year summary of technology expenditures. According to the department's response, it has followed city guidelines and tried to account for all technology-related expenditures in the best ways available.

Other recommendations The majority of the system cost, \$3.8 million, or 52%, is covered by federal law enforcement grants; \$3.4 million by city capital budgets; and \$1 million by department budgets and city special-purpose funds. The department is holding back nearly \$1.1 million in contract payments to Tiburon because of "incomplete performance by the contractor," the audit notes.

Auditors suggested that the city attorney be consulted about possible contract claims against Tiburon. While the Police Department response notes that department officials did that and were told there was no basis for a claim of damages, Murphy said he will request a written opinion from the city attorney on the issue.

The audit recommends that the Police Department:

- Hire an "owner's representative" to work with Tiburon on implementing the rest of the system.
- Add staff with information technology training.
- Get more employees to use the crime data system.
- Enhance its crime reporting for public officials and outside parties.
- Develop comprehensive training in the crime data system for all staff.
- Develop an ongoing project-monitoring and -reporting component.

The audit will be discussed during a meeting of the Common Council's Finance & Personnel Committee, led by Murphy, at 9 a.m. Wednesday in Room 301B of City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.

JSONline.com To read the audit and the Police Department response, go to www.jsonline.com/links.

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Chief asks for tech help



Flynn wants to improve MPD's computer access to crime data

From the Journal Sentinel

Posted: January 15, 2008

In his data-driven approach to policing, it didn't take Milwaukee Police Chief Edward Flynn long to figure out that he needs help with his department's technology systems if he's going to rely on numbers to put officers where they're needed most.

After a week on the job, Flynn stood before business leaders at the University Club on Monday during a meeting of the Greater Milwaukee Committee and put out a plea for information technology workers who might be willing and able to help correct "an intolerable situation" for the department.

"How many crimes did we have in the last 24 hours, the last week, the last month? How does it compare to last year at this time? How does it compare to two years ago at this time? Where is it occurring? We have an extraordinarily hard time producing that level of data right now," he said.

A city audit last summer found that the Police Department's five-year struggle to adopt a modern, integrated computer system largely resulted from administrators' attempts to tackle the project with police officers and not trained IT professionals. In a response, the department disputed many findings and said more than 90% of the system is working, delivering timely, accurate data.

Flynn told the business community, however, that the department is not getting manageable information as rapidly as it should nor as reliably, with the system sometimes producing three variations of the same number.

He asked the business leaders if any of them might have "any spare IT capacity that's good at diagnosing and evaluating the difference between systems problems and personnel problems. I'm in real need of that right now. It's a very expensive system."

Setting forth a message of community-based policing, Flynn sought help from those in the room, saying that he "didn't want to get into the world of high-priced consultants."

GMC President Julia Taylor said several members approached the chief after the meeting already offering to help him out.

"You get the sense from the way he spoke about the approach that he's got a very clear way of how he wants to go about it," she said of the new chief's take on fighting crime. "I appreciated the fact that he came forward with a request of support from our group. He wasn't general. He was very specific. That was very much aligned with what his message was: a role for everybody to make a difference in this."

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