Fingerprint Database Delay Leads to Release of Murder Suspect

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In Boston, a murder suspect was released from custody due to a delayed response in their Fingerprinting system. The system currently in place in Boston failed for the first time since 1994 and should be a warning sign that the national and federal crime database is not a flawless system.

Despite the use of this technology in major metropolitan cities, there is always the possibility of error. In this case, a **computer server error** resulted in a delayed response from the crime database. The judge ordered the release of the suspect, likely because he perceived the lack of an immediate result from the database as a sign that there was nothing to be found. Typically a match would be detected in fifteen minutes, while in this case, several hours were needed to obtain the proper results.

Police Departments across the country are moving towards Automated Fingerprinting Information Systems (AFIS) and it is important to realize the importance of such systems. AFIS allows a department to scan an individual's fingerprints and run them through the national and federal crime database. While most large localities have this technology, not all departments have implemented such technologies.

It is important for more cities to look to the federal government for grants and other means of paying for AFIS. It is possible that an arrest in a small town could lead to a similar release due to a lack of a digital and automatic fingerprinting system. In order to prevent situations such as in Boston, automated fingerprinting is necessary to protect citizens across the country from potentially dangerous criminals. Not only do police departments need AFIS, but motor vehicle departments require similar systems to prevent duplicate licenses and fraud. As more localities look to this technology, vendors will need to determine the type of system necessary that will fit the needs of that department.

Currently GovWin is tracking several large **AFIS initiatives across the country,** some of which include a Biometric Identification System (BIS). In **San Franciso,** a Request for Information was released earlier this year, in the hope of implementing a BIS and AFIS database which would be integrated with the current Computer AIded Dispatch and Records Management System. In **New York,** a Request for information was released in 2006 with the hope of implementing a statewide fingerprinting technology. While funding had initially been an issue, $24 million has been allocated as part of the FY09 budget plan. Statewide and large city intiatives to implement AFIS will continue, as improvements and enhancements to this technology are rolled out. GovWin continues to track and monitor these developments and monitors the state's progress in releasing solicitations for these systems.