



NNOAC Insight

The Official Position of the National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition

REGIONAL INFORMATION SHARING SYSTEMS PROGRAM

The National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition (NNOAC) strongly supports the funding and use of the Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) Program. In 1974, Congress initiated an effort to aid state and local law enforcement agencies by establishing the RISS Program. RISS is comprised of six regional intelligence centers serving law enforcement and criminal justice agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, Canada, Australia, and England. The RISS Program is designed to enhance the ability of local, state, federal, and tribal law enforcement member agencies to identify, target, arrest, and prosecute criminal conspirators and support investigation and prosecution efforts against terrorism, narcotics trafficking, organized crime, criminal gangs, and violent crime that span multijurisdictional boundaries. The six RISS centers are the Middle Atlantic-Great Lakes Organized Crime Law Enforcement Network (MAGLOCLLEN), the Mid-States Organized Crime Information Center (MOCIC), the New England State Police Information Network (NESPIN), the Regional Organized Crime Information Center (ROCIC), the Rocky Mountain Information Network (RMIN), and the Western States Information Network (WSIN).

As law enforcement professionals, we understand the need to be able to access a single-source agency that is able to act as a clearinghouse for the coordination and timely sharing of criminal intelligence information. Since the inception of the RISS Program, the six RISS centers have done an outstanding job of providing that service. The RISS centers have greatly enhanced officer safety by identifying known violent offenders and serving as a deconfliction system to help prevent undercover operations from overlapping. The NNOAC believes that through this system of deconfliction, the RISS Program has prevented officer injuries and deaths that might otherwise have occurred. The RISS centers are essential to providing a safer work environment for our nation's law enforcement officers. By providing timely and accurate intelligence information, the RISS centers have greatly enhanced law enforcement's ability to more effectively dismantle criminal organizations. The results of these successes can be measured in the number of violent career criminals that are removed from our communities and the reduction of illicit drugs that are available to our young people.

The major premise underlying the establishment of the RISS centers is that law enforcement and criminal justice agencies in various regions of the country need to instantaneously communicate and coordinate the sharing of criminal intelligence information. The RISS centers are designed to assist that cooperative relationship in a structured, efficient, and responsible manner. Presently, services are provided to over 744,000 sworn criminal justice officers in more than 6,700 law enforcement and criminal justice agencies in the United States.

In keeping with the mandate of Congress and the needs of the law enforcement community, the RISS centers have developed state-of-the-art Web-based technology operated by RISS that provides a secure, private intranet easily accessible via the Internet to facilitate rapid communication and information exchange among member agencies and RISS center staff. More and more officers take advantage of electronic access to the RISS nationwide criminal intelligence network (RISSNET) to check RISS criminal intelligence databases and obtain information on RISS services. The following are the five components of RISSNET:

1. The RISS Secure Intranet

- Utilizes Internet technology to provide a secure private intranet that connects the six RISS centers and their participating law enforcement member agencies, as well as other agency systems operating as nodes on the intranet.
- Ensures inexpensive connection to RISSNET by all RISS member agencies.
- Provides secure electronic mail (e-mail) transmissions for enrolled RISS member law enforcement agency personnel to exchange sensitive information and for contact with RISS center staff.
- Provides secure Web browser access by enrolled RISS member agencies to all authorized databases and services located on the RISS secure intranet.
- The RISS center Web sites, the RISS Criminal Intelligence Databases (RISSIntel), the RISS National Gang Database (RISSGang), the RISS Investigative Leads Bulletin Board (RISSLeads), the RISS Training Web site (RISSTraining), the RISS search engine (RISSSearch), and connections to nodes are located on the secure intranet for easy, secure access.

2. RISS Center Web Sites

- Each RISS center maintains a Web site to provide users with:
 - Easy access to the RISS center criminal intelligence databases.
 - Information on other RISS services and resources.
- Users are directed via RISSNET to their respective regional center Web site.

3. RISS Criminal Intelligence Databases (RISSIntel)
 - All six RISS regional criminal intelligence databases are electronically connected. An electronic inquiry to one, several, or all six center databases can be made at one time.
 - RISS member agencies can access their respective center databases for subject inquiry and entry by using their Web browser via RISSNET, or by using secure e-mail to request assistance from their RISS center staff.
 - Access by law enforcement users to RISSIntel via RISSNET averaged 85,462 times per month during 2003.
 - As of December 31, 2003, the number of criminal subjects maintained in the RISS criminal intelligence databases (RISSIntel) for all six centers combined was 761,676. The combined databases at all six RISS centers also maintained data on 1,167,306 locations, vehicles, weapons, and telephone numbers, for a grand total of 1,928,982 data records.

4. RISS National Gang Database (RISSGang)
 - A crime-specific database used to collect information on gangs and gang members.
 - Images, such as photographs of gang members, gang tattoos, and gang graffiti, can be stored for inquiry and dissemination.
 - Access by law enforcement users to RISSGang via RISSNET averaged 7,511 times per month during 2003.
 - As of December 31, 2003, the RISSGang database contained 42,534 gang members and 3,543 criminal gangs.

5. RISS Investigative Leads Bulletin Board (RISSLeads)
 - RISSLeads is a collaborative computer server, often called a Bulletin Board System (BBS) or a newsgroup server.
 - Allows law enforcement agencies to post information on the secure RISSLeads regarding a particular case or other law enforcement issue.
 - Access by law enforcement users to RISSLeads via RISSNET averaged 314,772 times per month during 2003.
 - As of December 31, 2003, 99 conferences were available on RISSLeads for member access.

Since RISSNET was implemented, over 13,738 member agency officers have been enrolled, with more connecting every day. Web traffic via RISSNET averaged 3.7 million times per month during 2003 to search database records, post investigative leads information, and obtain information on services provided by RISS. Member agency officers also continue to use RISS telephone and WATS/patch communications for one-on-one contact with RISS staff for requesting criminal intelligence information, use of RISS resources, and referral contact for information exchange with other member agencies.

Traditionally a law enforcement information sharing network, RISS is expanding services to address the changing needs of public safety by leveraging its established technological resource, the RISS secure intranet. This nationwide communications system enables a broader information sharing community.

Through RISS ATIX, the Anti-Terrorism Information Exchange, RISS is bringing together the law enforcement community and other governmental and nongovernmental entities responsible for planning and implementing prevention, response, mitigation, and recovery efforts regarding terrorism and disasters. RISS ATIX is the secure means to disseminate national security, disaster, and terrorist threat information to law enforcement, other first responders, and key community officials. Current RISS ATIX participants include, among others, public service, public safety, emergency management, and utility personnel.

Many state and federal agency systems have electronically connected as nodes to use the RISSNET communications and information exchange capabilities. The RISS and the FBI Law Enforcement Online (LEO) systems, which interconnected September 1, 2002, as a virtual single system, shall provide the initial sensitive but unclassified secure communications backbone for implementation of a nationwide criminal intelligence sharing capability as recommended in the *National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan*. A seamless secure connection allows RISS and LEO users access to both systems, as authorized, with a single logon. Secure e-mail is also available to users of both systems.

Among the state systems connecting as nodes on RISSNET are the states participating in the Multistate Anti-Terrorism Information Exchange (MATRIX). State law enforcement resources will be available to MATRIX participants and RISS member agencies to enhance the ability of law enforcement to identify and analyze terrorist and other criminal activity.

The RISS network was created for full interoperability of existing systems. The network architecture was designed to ensure that diverse technology systems, with little modification, could utilize the network. This nationwide network and its information databases can be used by state and local law enforcement agencies as their own system, thus eliminating duplicative databases.

As submitted through Congressional Testimony before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, and the Judiciary of the Committee on Appropriations, the RISS Program is requesting \$50 million in funding for fiscal year 2005 to continue providing and enhancing the capability to share multijurisdictional information on terrorism activity, narcotics, violent criminal activity, and gang information. RISS will also increase the number of agencies enrolled for electronic connection and direct access to RISSNET, and electronically link local, state, federal, and tribal criminal intelligence systems to RISSNET.

Since 1792, over 16,000 law enforcement officers have died in the service of our nation. At the current rate, one police officer is killed every 58 hours in the United States. An additional 65,000 officers are violently assaulted each year. Nowhere is violence more prevalent than in the enforcement of our nation's drug laws. The National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition would request that Congress provide the requested \$50 million funding to support this essential program. Failure to provide adequate funding and support for this crucial program could cost lives. Not only among our country's peace officers but among the thousands of young people that die each year as a result of drug abuse.