

FEATURE

COMPUTERS IN CRIME FIGHT

TWO new computer systems being introduced by the AFP are placing it at the forefront of crime fighting technology and taking it into the new generation of computers used in law enforcement.

Paul Lewer prepared this report.

'The new system will be a great advance and will put the AFP well on the way to having a paperless system,' Chief Superintendent Walter Williams (Commander International Division) said.

'The capacity of our investigators and intelligence people will be enhanced and they will be able to control their operations much more effectively.

'Our investigative methods are sophisticated but procedures in the field can be time consuming and slow,' he said.

The systems are called AXIS and HOLMES.

AXIS is an acronym for the AFP Xerox Intelligence System and HOLMES stands for the Home Office Large Major Enquiry System.

AXIS essentially is an aid to the criminal intelligence analytical process and will enhance the AFP's procedures in this field.

The system is already installed at AFP HQ and at the regional intelligence units in Sydney and Melbourne.

The nine work stations are networked and can communicate with each other through the electronic mail capability and have access to the AFP mainframe at the automatic data processing complex at Weston in Canberra.

It will be extended elsewhere as funds become available.

The other system, HOLMES, has been developed in the UK and is being introduced by most police forces in that country. It is being adapted for use in Australia where it will be known as AMVH, standing for the Australian Modified Version of HOLMES.

It gives police the ability to build up huge indexes, store statements and provides total textual retrieval.

Ask the system for any mention of a suspect — say a red-haired man driving a blue Ford — and the full textual retrieval

facility of the computer will come back with the answer in seconds.

HOLMES can store 100 million words and eight major investigations can be operated through it at once.

Chief Superintendent Williams told 'Platypus' that AMVH and AXIS would put the force at the forefront of high tech. crime fighting.

'AMVH and AXIS complement each other and with the AFP's existing main frame system based at Weston in Canberra will give the force a complete computer system,' Mr Williams said.

The AFP has its national crime data base, INTEL 2; a system called DORS (Drug Offence Report System); the M NIFTY system (Master Names Index Facility) and access to an intelligence system operated by the New South Wales police.

'The AFP already has quite a sophisticated computer system but it does not really adequately penetrate the operational areas,' Mr Williams said.

'The AMVH system will be used for our investigative work, initially in Sydney and Melbourne, and AXIS for intelligence analysis and support.

'The Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence and the National Crime Authority already have a Rank Xerox system,' he said.

Mr Williams has been in England to look at how the HOLMES system is used there and the Investigations Department will be devising a complete set of investigative procedures for the AFP Australia-wide for using the system.

Mr Williams said the AFP would be using technology to improve its effectiveness and the government, by agreeing to providing the funding, would be putting the AFP at the forefront of investigative capability in Australia.



Det. Supt. Lionel Claydon, AFP computer chief. (Picture by Sgt. Ralph Strong)

'A big problem with any large investigation, such as the large scale fraud and crime fighting operations mounted by the AFP, is managing the volume of information and leads.

'The HOLMES system is specifically structured and designed for the management of investigations and AXIS is more suited to the intelligence process; the collating and analysis of information.

'The HOLMES system has been demonstrated to our investigators in Sydney and they are most enthusiastic,' he said.

The Project Manager for the Investigation Department's computer systems, Mr Roger O'Donnell, expects AMVH to be operating by the end of the year in Fraud and General Crime in Sydney and Drug Operations in Melbourne and, subject to funding, be extended to other AFP Regions Australia-wide within three years. A composite team from the Investigations Department and the Information Systems and Scientific Services Division has been committed to this project. The team, headed by Station Sergeant John Holroyd at ISSSD, is in the first stage of compiling the request for tender.

'AXIS is already greatly speeding up intelligence compilation,' Mr O'Donnell said.

'The hardware is very advanced and uses optical 'mouse' driven icons on a 19 inch black on white screen. The installed software includes a very powerful word processing package interfacing with a complex information management pack-

age which assists the intelligence analysts in the collection, structuring and analysis of textual and graphic information.

'However there is a need to enhance the computer facilities in the regional intelligence units in Sydney and Melbourne and to extend AXIS to the units in Perth and Brisbane.

'This is necessary to enhance the law enforcement analytical processes by expeditiously recording, collating, evaluating and rapidly disseminating criminal intelligence between commands.

'Enhancing the facilities and extending the system to Brisbane and Perth are also necessary to institute more effective and productive methods of reducing the labour intensive activities related to hard copy criminal information reports requiring transfer to the AFP computer data bases,' he said.

Mr O'Donnell also pointed out that there would be a need to enhance the computer facilities at the fraud and general crime unit in Sydney and the drug operations unit in Melbourne to make the optimum use of the AMVH system. He said it was also important to extend the system to Australia's third largest population centre, Brisbane, in 1988/89 if funds became available.

The AFP has one of the largest computer penetrations of any police force in the world and the current initiatives will result in the most comprehensive police systems development ever undertaken in Australia.

Headed by Detective Superintendent Lionel Claydon (Commander, Information Systems and Scientific Services Div-



The team working on AMVH. (from left) Stn. Sgt. John Holroyd, Mike Humphrey, systems officer, Tanya Julian, projects officer and Det. Sgt. Tom Hanlon. (Picture by Sgt. Ralph Strong)

ision) the AFP's computer section at Weston holds information equivalent to 16 million pages of A4-sized text.

Each week there are more than 1.2 million inquiries to the computer files or amendments made to the data base.

'The AFP has also developed a computer-based modus operandi system which has been described by the Adelaide-based National Police Research Unit as being amongst the most modern in the world,' Mr Claydon said.

'The AFP, as a member of the

National Exchange of Police Information Management Group, is instituting a remote fingerprint identification system which is expected to be operational this month.'

Mr Claydon also pointed out that within three years all the AFP computer systems would be re-developed and integrated within a new system which will allow a single key search.

'It will also be linked with state police force computer networks — a move which will allow the immediate exchange of information; for example state vehicle registrations, driver's licence particulars or criminal details.

'This immediate access could be vital to our men in the field because they will be forewarned about whether the person they are about to speak to could be armed or dangerous,' Mr Claydon said.

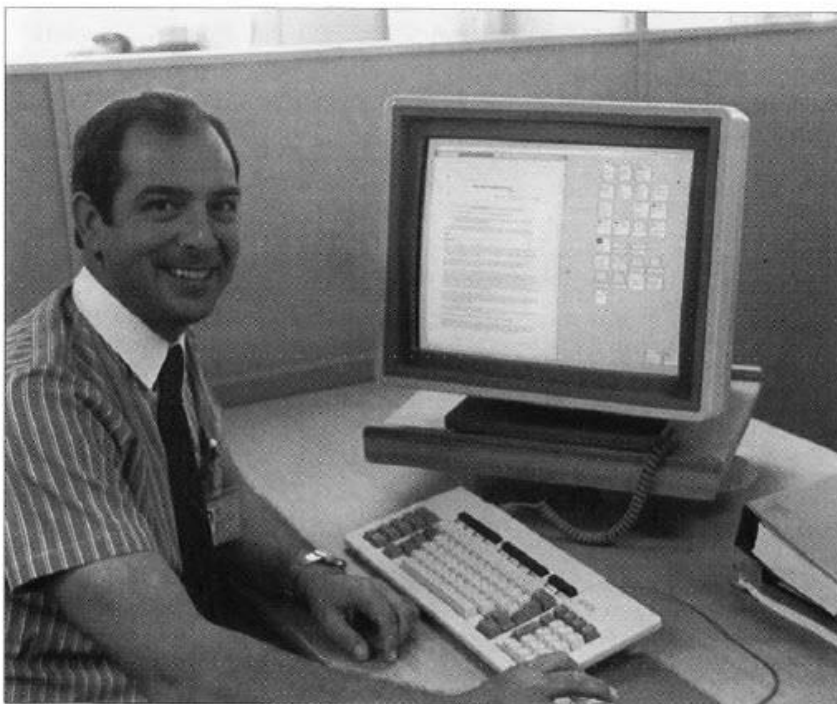
A team under the command of Detective Inspector Carl Law at Weston has already begun work on planning the new integrated computer system.

The AFP employs 50 computer professionals at Weston.

'Policing is an information intensive industry,' Mr Claydon said, 'and we are finding that the younger detectives are tending to be more computer literate and can define what they want from the system which keeps the ISSSD staff on their toes.

'We welcome suggestions for improving the systems. After all, the whole basis of the AFP's computer systems is to support operations.

'The quality of the systems depends to a degree on the level of feed-back from the detectives in the field,' he said.



Mr Roger O'Donnell, project manager. (Picture by Terry Browne)