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The NCIC Off-line Search

The National Crime Information Center (NCIC) is a nationwide computerized information system that includes millions of records for stolen property, wanted persons, missing persons, and unidentified persons. Through the NCIC system, federal, state, local, and tribal criminal justice agencies across the United States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and Canada have instant access to all available records. In addition, special provisions allow several other foreign nations to have limited access to records stored in the database.

NCIC
National Crime
Information Center

Law enforcement personnel conduct online inquiries of NCIC and can quickly retrieve accurate information, thereby increasing the probability of criminal detection. However, in certain investigative situations, an online inquiry alone may be inadequate, and agencies may need to request off-line searches of the NCIC database. Investigators may initiate an off-line search by contacting the Investigative and Operational Assistance Group (IOAG) of the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division at **304-625-3000** or via e-mail at **IOAU@fbi.gov**.

An off-line search is a special technique that IOAG can use to obtain information not available through an online inquiry. The results may provide relevant investigative information. For example:

- An off-line search of the NCIC transaction log can reveal if inquiries were made on a particular individual or property item. This type of search can find inquiries performed from 1990 to the day previous to the current day. Off-line searches can assist an investigator in locating a property item, determining the proximity of an individual to a crime scene, substantiating or discrediting an alibi, or tracing the route of a person of interest.
- IOAG staff can search a time frame of the previous five days, including the current day, through the Delayed Query Log.
- IOAG can search for activity from specific areas during certain time frames. This technique produces investigative leads in cases where investigators suspect the same unidentified individual(s) was involved in several incidents. The Originating Agency Identifier (ORI) Cross Match (OCM) compares all activity from the ORIs during the requested time frames and returns transactions in which the same subject or vehicle information was contained in two or more transactions. These matches indicate the same subject or vehicle could have been present at, or near, multiple crime scenes. The investigator can use the results to develop a list of possible suspects.
- To determine if a record for an individual or property item has been entered, IOAG staff can perform an off-line search of the active, purged, or a combination of both NCIC database entries using one or more of the information fields contained in the record.

The following examples demonstrate instances in which an off-line search, specifically tailored to the needs of the individual investigation, provided vital information that led to cases being solved.

Example #1 (Transaction Log Search)

IOAG was contacted by a special agent (SA) with a state's Division of Criminal Investigation, who was seeking assistance with a cold case almost 30 years old, which involved sexual assault and kidnapping. The SA used deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) testing on recovered evidence and identified two suspects who were related. After the SA conducted a closer review of both subjects, one was found to be a convicted sex offender with a lengthy criminal history, and the other was an unlikely suspect as a veteran, entrepreneur, inventor, and business owner. Using biographical information provided by the SA, IOAG conducted NCIC transaction log searches on both suspects and returned the results. The searches revealed that the unlikely suspect was in the area when the sexual assault and kidnapping occurred.

A few months later, IOAG received confirmation that the results from the transaction log search, combined with the DNA test results, were enough for the SA to switch the unlikely suspect to official primary suspect status.

Example #2 (Active/Purge Search)

A law enforcement agency requested assistance in identifying human remains found in a construction hole. The victim was killed execution style, and officials estimated that his body had been placed in the hole approximately 10 years earlier. The agency provided information obtained from the victim's autopsy, which included a description of several tattoos. An off-line search of the tattoo descriptions returned a missing person record that identified the remains. The agency reported the victim was the subject of a major gang case. Investigators had long suspected that he had been murdered 10 years earlier during a drug deal that went bad, even though his body had not been found.

Example #3 (Transaction Log Search)

A law enforcement agency contacted IOAG regarding a parental kidnapping case. A young child had been kidnapped by a noncustodial parent, who had threatened to shoot the child and herself if law enforcement interfered. The agency investigating the case believed the suspect was traveling to Florida. Using the last known license plate of a vehicle associated with the suspect, the off-line search staff found activity in the transaction log and advised the agency that the subject's license plate was queried the previous week in a western state. Because the license number was not entered into NCIC, the officer conducting the traffic stop was not aware that the driver

was suspected of kidnapping the child. The original requesting agency advised agencies in the western state of the situation. Investigators in that state located the car at the house of the suspect's sister, where they placed a tracking device on the vehicle. Officers followed the vehicle to a gas station as the suspect was leaving town. When the suspect went inside the store to pay, an officer safely recovered the child and found a loaded gun in the car. The requesting agency said investigators had no indication the suspect would be in this state and would not have focused its efforts in that area without the off-line search. Since the suspect was leaving town when caught, the officers asserted that receiving the results the same day was critical to the safe resolution of this case.

Example #4 (ORI Cross Match or OCM)

IOAG assisted in identifying a suspect in the rape and strangulation of several women over a 21-year period. A member of the off-line search team saw a news article about the unsolved homicides that were linked by DNA (i.e., deoxyribonucleic acid), yet had no solid leads in their investigation. The team member contacted the agency to obtain dates and approximate times of the related homicides and ran an OCM based on these specific date ranges and areas. The results showed that three names had been queried on at least three different dates coinciding with the dates of the homicides. IOAG staff conducted an additional off-line search on those three names from 1990 through the present date and emailed the results of both searches to the agency. One of the three individuals singled out was, along with many other people, among those mentioned in a broad sweep of possible suspects around one of the victims. The OCM results revealed that officers interviewed the man on three of the dates of the first six homicides. Based on the off-line search results, the agency again scheduled an interview with the man. The suspect skipped out on the interview and left the area, prompting the agency to obtain a search warrant for his home. Based on DNA found on his toothbrush, he was linked to the victims, and the suspect was arrested.

He was formally charged in seven cases, and he was later connected through DNA evidence to three more homicides. In two of these cases, other men had been arrested, charged, convicted, and were serving time for the murders. These individuals were released from custody based on the DNA evidence. A suspect in the third murder investigation was acquitted.

Example #5 (Transaction Log Search)

A detective with the Las Vegas Metro Police Department (LVMPD) and an FBI SA identified a sixteen-year-old victim while working a child sex trafficking case as part of the FBI Child Exploitation Task Force. During an interview, the victim disclosed she was trafficked from Las Vegas to California with another juvenile. She said there were numerous suspects involved in her victimization, and while passing through California, they were stopped by officers with the Downey Police Department. The juvenile provided the LVMPD detective and FBI special agent her name and date of birth, which she had given to the Downey Police Department officers.

The detective then requested an NCIC off-line search. The search which revealed the girl's name was queried by law enforcement in California, around the time she told investigators they were stopped. After identifying the traffic stop the detective was able to obtain the fake names of the other trafficked juvenile via NCIC. The detective then contacted the Downey Police Department to obtain body camera footage from the traffic stop, which led to the identification of a second juvenile victim.

From this NCIC off-line search, the detective was able to identify all the victims and traffickers. The investigation culminated in the arrest and federal charging of the traffickers.

Example #6 (Active/Purge Search)

A law enforcement agency contacted IOAG regarding a recently recovered fishing boat, a 24-foot Everglades model with an estimated value of \$80,000. When an IOAG staff member searched NCIC's stolen boat file, he determined that "Everglades" was a brand, not the

manufacturer of the boat. After searching for the word "Everglades" in the miscellaneous field, a staff member sent the matches to the agency. Investigators there positively identified the stolen boat. In a subsequent interview, the boat owner changed his story and confessed to purchasing the boat from his friend, a boat thief with a previous federal conviction.

Example #7 (Delayed Query Log)

A law enforcement agency contacted the IOAG and requested an off-line search on a name, date of birth, and license plate number regarding a Silver Alert for a missing person. IOAG immediately conducted a search of the delayed query log looking for transactions, including inquiries from the same day, and returned the information to the agency. IOAG heard within minutes the missing person was located as a result of the off-line search. The subject was found safe at a checkpoint in another part of the state.

Example #8 (Transaction Log Search)

A law enforcement agency contacted IOAG and requested an off-line search on a wanted federal fugitive. The results showed the fugitive had entered the country through a point of entry in the southern United States. Investigators contacted that point of entry and obtained information about the car he was driving at that time. The results led the officers to a female whom the subject had once listed as an emergency contact. Subsequent investigation led to a couple of addresses where she might have been staying. Eventually, officers located the car the fugitive drove when he crossed the border. They established surveillance of the residence where the fugitive was staying, and eventually took him into custody.

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304-625-3000 or via e-mail at **IOAU@fbi.gov**.