

The Mission of a Real Time Crime Center

The mission of a Real Time Crime Center (RTCC) is to provide a law enforcement agency with the ability to capitalize on a wide and expanding range of technologies for efficient and effective policing. Such efforts may allow law enforcement officers to respond quickly, or even immediately, to crimes in progress or to those that recently occurred. The technologies available allow law enforcement agencies and officers to respond to crime events more efficiently, more deliberately, with improved operational intelligence, and with a proactive emphasis on officer, citizen, and community safety. However, the increasingly vast amount of data, information, and intelligence can be difficult to manage. Agencies may struggle with filtering out what is immediately important versus what can be useful later (e.g., at an investigative stage or in the court system) and delivering more critical and timely information to the appropriate constituencies (the officers or detectives on-scene, commanders in the field, law enforcement executives, private citizens, etc.).

As envisioned here and by other law enforcement agencies to date, the mission of an RTCC would centralize a broad range of current and evolving technologies, coordinate sworn and/or nonsworn human resources, and direct the attention of both to high-crime areas, active crimes in progress, large-scale public events that may require law enforcement presence or response, and/or high-profile or highly recidivistic offenders in the community. In short, an RTCC would maximize the likelihood that law enforcement can respond to crimes occurring in real time and do so effectively.

The conceptual definition and the actual implementation of an RTCC may be very different depending on resources; the nature of crime in a community; citizen, governmental, and other stakeholder interests; and a host of other factors. Most would, and should, consider the establishment and implementation of an RTCC an evolving process that will change as time passes, as lessons are learned, and as new resources and technologies become available.

Here are some RTCC videos from a variety of departments in the United States:

[Albuquerque \(NM\) Police Department](#)

[Austin \(TX\) Police Department](#)

[Charlotte Mecklenburg \(NC\) Police Department](#)

[Fresno \(CA\) Police Department](#)

[Memphis \(TN\) Police Department](#)

[Newark \(NJ\) Police Department](#)

[New York \(NY\) Police Department](#) and [Stop Talking Start Doing-NYPD](#)

[Ogden \(UT\) Police Department](#)

[St. Louis \(MO\) Metropolitan Police Department](#)

Useful References

Motorola (2016). “Communication Systems Stop Crime In Its Tracks: Real Time Intelligence Takes Police Beyond Responding, to Prediction and Prevention.”

<http://www.motorolasolutions.com/content/dam/msi/docs/solutions/law-enforcement/law-enforcement-at-a-glance-brochure.pdf>

The Function of an RTCC

The temporal signature of crimes and crime patterns is obvious and observable in most cities and counties. And on a typical day, most cities and counties will not have active, live crime or public safety events that require RTCC assistance for 24 hours a day. It is safe to say that RTCC detectives in many communities will have sufficient periods of downtime when active events are not occurring. Consequently, departments should devote considerable time to developing job descriptions and position responsibilities/duties that are consistent with the number of man-hours that will be assigned to the RTCC functions.

Departments that operate RTCCs on an as-needed basis can simply ask RTCC operators to return to their normal duties when those RTCCs are not operational. In essence, real time crime center work is a part-time organizational function. As such, these agencies will likely staff their RTCCs with part-time help which, more than likely, will mean temporary reassignment of existing personnel (who can then return to their daily routines and duties when the RTCCs are not operational).

On the other hand, larger agencies that have already established, or plan to invest in, a 24/7 RTCC infrastructure that would require full-time detectives/operators will need to consider the overall real-time versus downtime workload and consider individual work assignments carefully, while being mindful that there may be plenty of downtime.

RTCC detectives can be engaged in a range of support functions and duties during downtime. For example, RTCC detectives can assist investigators/detectives and officers by doing background work, identifying and passing along useful information and evidence (including video) that can support active cases, and helping investigators navigate the video archives and numerous databases for relevant information. Other RTCC detectives may prepare reports on the activities of the RTCCs. Still others may spend time digging deeper into their various databases, learning more about how the technology operates and evolves, and exploring the ever-expanding range of data sources that are routinely available at their fingertips. Other possible responsibilities might include assisting with background investigations, cross-checking information for active cases, assisting with warrants, or helping outside agencies with requests.

However, supervisors need to be mindful about how the RTCC detectives could best occupy their downtime. The more efficient the technology becomes, the more likely it will free up additional time for RTCC operators. Therefore, agencies need to plan for these slow periods and use their resources effectively, during real-time crime events and when those events are not occurring.