

# Information Technology

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service continues to enhance and upgrade its information technology (IT) infrastructure and technological capabilities. Technical and business groups are working cooperatively to identify business goals and external factors that determine how IT can best fulfill Postal Inspection Service needs.

The Information Technology Division (ITD) strives to provide rapid access to data, develop new IT systems as needed and deploy services that increase the overall effectiveness of Postal Inspection Service operations. Strategic alliances with business partners and interagency task forces allow for greater access to a variety of databases and the ability to electronically share data. The Postal Inspection Service's 2001-2006 *Strategic Plan* names IT development as one of six strategic management challenges.

Maintaining strategic and effective IT resources is key to meeting organizational priorities and goals. The growth of electronic commerce, the globalization of business and the increasingly rapid pace of change present new and exciting challenges to the Postal Inspection Service.

## IT Infrastructure

To maximize IT investment, the ITD staff is developing new strategies that more broadly integrate the telecommunications infrastructure. One effort entails joint research by ITD and Forensic & Technical Services Division staff on how to use the Postal Inspection Service's network infrastructure to support national radio network and video requirements. Another involves a

pilot test using wireless technology, via a handheld device, to access Inspection Service-wide applications. In concert with these efforts, staff members have upgraded strategic host computers that support national applications, enabling a redesign of its applications infrastructure that will better support the Postal Inspection Service's new integrated databases.

## Business Systems

ITD has added new Web-based applications to the Postal Inspection Service's portfolio via its Intranet site. Division staff completed the migration of "legacy" applications from a DEC VAX architecture to the new infrastructure, and all national applications were integrated into the new Inspection Service Integrated Database. The Inspection Service Database Information System also continues to be upgraded and enhanced to meet strategic goals.

ITD deployed these business systems during FY 2001:

- ◆ Firearms Management and Tracking System
- ◆ Confidential Informant System
- ◆ Confidential Funding Program
- ◆ Property Disposition System
- ◆ Freedom of Information Access System
- ◆ Vacancy Announcement Program
- ◆ Laboratory Information Management System
- ◆ Inspection Service National Assets Tracking System
- ◆ Electronic Surveillance Tracking System



The Postal Inspection Service's national IT infrastructure supports about 4,300 users at more than 220 sites nationwide.

◆ Mathematical Analysis by Route of Irregularities in the Air Transport of Mail System

### **Rehabilitation Act Compliance**

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, Web Accessibility, mandated that, by June 21, 2001, all government agencies meet established standards that guarantee handicapped individuals, including employees and the general public, access to their electronic information. ITD staff reviewed and remediated the Postal Inspection Service's Web-based applications and Intranet and Internet Web sites to ensure their compliance as required.

### **Approval for Information Technology Initiatives**

The 1996 Clinger-Cohen Act directs government agencies to improve the design, planning and management of IT projects. This fiscal year, the Postal Inspection Service implemented the IT Initiative Approval Process to align IT resources with strategic goals and ensure they meet agency priorities. Each new project must demonstrate its contribution to the agency's mission and ability to fit the existing information infrastructure. The newly established Information Technology Resource Committee (ITRC) directs the process by reviewing all requests to implement IT initiatives and determining whether they meet established standards.

### **Information Systems Security**

The ITD information security staff coordinates the Postal Inspection Service's information systems security program to ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of data and operations. To safeguard the IT network from malicious computer viruses, ITD enhanced its virus protection systems and continually upgrades the virus protection software resident on all computer networks. The implementation of new fire-

wall hardware and software also helps to minimize security risks and prevent intruders from accessing the network.

### **NCIC-NLETS**

The National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) provide critical law enforcement information to more than 70,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States. ITD staff installed fire-wall protection for the NCIC-NLETS system to protect it from cyberhackers. A new NexTest server with browser-based technology meets NCIC re-certification requirements, improving efficiencies in time and costs related to system testing and certification.

The Postal Inspection Service's NCIC Program Manager, who is the NCIC Federal Service Coordinator and NLETS Representative, serves as chairman for the Federal Working Group, vice-chairman for the Security and Access subcommittee, a voting member of the Advisory Policy Board and a member of the Operation and Procedures subcommittee. The program manager was also appointed by the U.S. Attorney General to represent the federal law enforcement community for the Criminal Justice Information Services Division Advisory Process.

### **Investigative Tools**

Postal Inspectors now use the i2 Analyst Notebook, an investigative software tool that graphically displays complex criminal activity and investigative data, with the added bonus of formatting data for use in courtroom presentations during trials. Postal Inspectors also access the Financial Management Service to obtain images of negotiated U.S. Treasury checks.

### **'Best Practices' for IT**

The ITD staff partnered with the Postal Inspection Service's Corporate

Information Management group to benchmark best practices for information technology. Best practices were identified by reviewing the business processes, IT organizations and structures, and technological needs of other law enforcement and government agencies.

### **Technology Policy Council**

The ITD staff regularly attends meetings held by the Department of Justice's Technology Policy Council, which shares information on new law enforcement technologies with member agencies. Chaired by the Deputy Attorney General, the Policy Council holds quarterly meetings chaired by the director of the National Institute of Justice of the Office of Science and Technology.