Most policing in the United States is done by law enforcement agencies at the local level. Although most Americans prefer that policing be controlled locally, there is considerable support for federal help in funding police. One area in which federal funding has been seen as useful is in the development, testing, and implementation of improved technology. An initiative proposed by the Clinton administration would increase funding for state and local law enforcement, with emphasis on technology assistance, technology deployment, crime lab improvements, and training. This report provides information on the current status in each of these, gives examples of what has been accomplished, and suggests prospects for improvements.

RAND’s Science and Technology Policy Institute was asked to provide the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy with an analysis of local law enforcement agency technology needs. This report should not only interest those in the fields of policing and criminology, but also those in the general public troubled by violent crimes and interested in steps being taken to combat crime.

Originally created by Congress in 1991 as the Critical Technologies Institute and renamed in 1998, the Science and Technology Policy Institute is a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the National Science Foundation and managed by RAND. The Institute’s mission is to help improve public policy by conducting objective, independent research and analysis on policy issues that involve science and technology. To this end, the Institute
• Supports the Office of Science and Technology Policy and other Executive Branch agencies, offices, and councils
• Helps science and technology decisionmakers understand the likely consequences of their decisions and choose among alternative policies
• Helps improve understanding in both the public and private sectors of the ways in which science and technology can better serve national objectives.

Science and Technology Policy Institute research focuses on problems of science and technology policy that involve multiple agencies. In carrying out its mission, the Institute consults broadly with representatives from private industry, institutions of higher education, and other nonprofit institutions.

Inquiries regarding the Science and Technology Policy Institute may be directed to:

Bruce Don, Ph.D.
Director, Science and Technology Policy Institute
RAND
1333 H Street NW
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 296-5000
Web: http://www.rand.org/centers/stpi
E-mail: stpi@rand.org