HISTORY

In the mid 1950’s, local and state law enforcement agencies in the United States recognized that no single agency or organization was responsible for receiving, collating, maintaining, and disseminating information on persons involved in organized crime. These law enforcement agencies surmised correctly that organized crime would exploit advancing technologies in transportation and communications, become more mobile, and increase their spheres of influence and criminal activities.

As a result, twenty-six (26) local and state law enforcement agencies met in San Francisco, California on March 29, 1956 to discuss problems and possible solutions. The most important result of that meeting was the creation of the LAW ENFORCEMENT INTELLIGENCE UNIT (LEIU), whose sole function was to address this issue of sharing confidential criminal information. Over the succeeding decades, LEIU’s membership grew to over 240 agencies and it subsequently opened its membership to federal agencies. In 2008, in order to more appropriately represent its membership, LEIU changed its name to the Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Units. It has, however, maintained its original acronym—LEIU.

In the 1960’s and 70’s, the social turmoil in the United States during the Vietnam War and the Watergate era led to public criticism and lawsuits against law enforcement agencies for misuse of the intelligence function. In 1976, LEIU established professional standards for the collection, maintenance, and dissemination of intelligence among law enforcement agencies. These standards were subsequently recognized by civil libertarians as an appropriate balance between the needs of law enforcement and the constitutional rights of individuals.

PURPOSE

The original purpose of LEIU was to gather, record, and exchange confidential information not available through regular police channels, concerning organized crime and terrorism. Over the years LEIU has expanded its role within the criminal intelligence field to also include the establishment of professional standards and guidelines, comprehensive training, conferences and regional training courses, authoritative publications, networking opportunities, and an independent voice in advocating information sharing and professionalism in the criminal intelligence field. Today, LEIU’s stated mission is: “Providing leadership and promoting professionalism in the criminal intelligence community in order to protect public safety and constitutional rights.”

OPERATIONS

LEIU is an association of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies--similar in many respects to numerous other professional associations serving doctors, attorneys, journalists, and educators. LEIU has no capability as an entity to conduct any investigation or law enforcement activity of any kind. Each member agency is bound by--and acts pursuant to--local law and its own agency regulations.

The Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Units is divided geographically into four (4) Zones, they are: Eastern, Central, Northwestern, and Southwestern. Each Zone elects a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson to serve as Zone Officers. LEIU elects a General Chairperson...
and Vice General Chairperson. The General Chairperson appoints a Secretary-Treasurer, a Legal Advisor, a Federal Agency Representative, and an Executive Director who, along with the past General Chairman and two representatives from the Central Coordinating Agency (CCA), serve as National Officers. The National Officers and Zone Officers, make up the Executive Board. The CCA acts as the administrative arm for LEIU and is housed in the California Department of Justice in Sacramento, California. The CCA has been housed at the California Department of Justice since LEIU was founded in 1956. The Executive Board is the governing body of LEIU, and as such establishes policy and approves or denies applications for association membership. The Executive Board is governed by a Constitution and Bylaws.

LEIU membership is limited to law enforcement agencies having a criminal intelligence function. Exceptions must be approved by the Executive Board. To become a member, an agency head makes written application. The applying agencies must be sponsored by a LEIU member. Each member agency CEO appoints a LEIU representative to be the contact for the Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Units. A background screening is conducted of the applying agency and the individual nominated to represent that agency. The application is voted on by the Executive Board. If an agency is approved by the Executive Board, all LEIU member agencies are notified of the application for membership and have an opportunity to comment on the application. Termination or suspension of a member agency for violating the bylaws or for acts detrimental to LEIU is provided for in the Constitution and Bylaws.

Modern transportation allows an organized crime subject, gang member, or terrorist to travel from coast-to-coast in a matter of hours. Membership in LEIU provides a means of coping with the multi-jurisdictional investigation of organized crime/gang/terrorism information.

To submit a suspected criminal subject to the LEIU automated system, a member agency enters the subject information through a secure intranet, which is stored and managed at the CCA. Members can access the system using the Regional Information Sharing System (RISS) communications highway. The subject information includes, among other items, the subject’s identity, criminal activity, and criminal associates. All information submitted to the LEIU Automated File must meet LEIU File Guidelines and comply with 28 Code of Federal Regulations, part 23 (28CFR, part 23). The submitting agency must certify the subject meets established criteria, including criminal predicate.

The membership of LEIU is comprised of law enforcement agencies in the United States, Canada, and South Africa. Due to the rapport established at the annual training seminars and through multi-agency investigations, representatives of member agencies have established a highly professional relationship of trust and respect. This facilitates the exchange of confidential criminal information between agencies. Although the LEIU Constitution and Bylaws restrict the dissemination of information to non-member law enforcement agencies, it is the policy of LEIU that every member shall assist any law enforcement agency making a valid request concerning organized crime/gangs/terrorism. This exchange of criminal intelligence information is completed only after establishing a “right to know” and a “need to know” by the receiving agency. This policy provides for the security of the information and protects the privacy of individuals.

In addition to gathering, recording, and exchanging confidential criminal information, the CCA maintains an automated gaming index. The gaming index is a compilation of public information
provided by member agencies that acts as a pointer system to assist in determining whether background information on individuals and companies applying for gaming licenses exist and whether the licenses for which the applicants have applied have been granted or denied.

The existence of organized criminal enterprises (traditional organized crime, gangs, or terrorists) in a free society requires alert law enforcement to proactively gather and analyze data. The traditional reactive approach to crime control is not effective when dealing with the scope and nature of organized criminal enterprises. The ability to retain data and review material is necessary to prevent crime or determine if criminal prosecution can be obtained. While accomplishing this, law enforcement agencies must abide by the rules and legal decisions that relate to the issues of security and privacy. LEIU members are guided in this area by the LEIU Constitution and Bylaws, the Representative’s Position Responsibilities, and LEIU File Guidelines.

LEIU is a professional association that is recognized and discussed in books, periodicals, governmental documents, and news media articles. LEIU representatives have voluntarily testified before Federal and State legislative committees concerning the LEIU organization, its goals, and its role in combating organized criminal enterprises. The importance of gathering criminal intelligence information has been stressed by at least (8) National Commissions.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has also recognized a need for the collection of criminal information. The IACP hosted a criminal intelligence sharing summit in March 2002, with the intent of enhancing the sharing of intelligence among various national, state, and local agencies. LEIU was invited to participate in this summit and was a leader in developing a National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan (NCISP) that enhances public safety. This Plan was accepted and embraced as a national guideline by the United States Attorney General in October 2003. The plan recognizes and addresses the critical role that criminal intelligence performs in the implementation of effective Community Oriented Policing strategies within our communities and stresses the need to appropriately share criminal information among authorized agencies.

LEIU recognizes that in the past there have been errors made by some law enforcement intelligence units. But a response to such errors is not the abolition of law enforcement intelligence files and criminal intelligence units. A solution lies, rather, in having well-defined standards governing the operations of criminal intelligence units. LEIU supports this concept and recognizes that there has to be a balance between protecting our constitutional liberties and protecting our society against those involved in criminal activity.

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2 Example: A Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights of the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary, March 14, 1974.

Back in time with LEIU!