

Overview of Crime Analysis

According to the International Association of Crime Analysts (IACA), crime analysis is defined as the follows:

A profession and process in which a set of quantitative and qualitative techniques are used to analyze data valuable to police agencies and their communities. It includes the analysis of crime and criminals, crime victims, disorder, quality of life issues, traffic issues, and internal police operations, and its results support criminal investigation and prosecution, patrol activities, crime prevention and reduction strategies, problem solving, and the evaluation of police efforts.

In addition, the IACA defines crime analysis as all types of analysis performed within a police agency, with the exception of evidence analysis (e.g., DNA, stolen property), human resources-related administrative analysis (e.g., budgeting, overtime, sick and vacation leave, salary), and analysis of supplies and equipment. Importantly, the IACA does not distinguish between crime analysis and crime intelligence analysis performed within a police organization. The term *intelligence* is one that is used in a variety of contexts in the crime analysis profession with some inconsistency. The term is used to describe information about an enemy, typically gathered covertly, resulting in more specific terms such as *military intelligence*, *criminal intelligence*, and *intelligence analysis*. More recently, the term has been used to describe information of operational value—for example, as a product rather than a source of analysis. Thus, the IACA adopts a definition of *crime intelligence analysis* (discussed in Chapter 4) to reflect a focus on criminal offenders as opposed to crime information in general. While certain analysts may specialize in particular functions, the IACA defines crime intelligence analysis as a set of techniques performed by crime analysts.

The primary purpose of crime analysis is to support (i.e., assist) the operations of a police department. These functions include criminal investigation, apprehension, and prosecution; patrol activities; crime prevention and reduction strategies; problem solving; and the evaluation and accountability of police efforts. Without police agencies, crime analysis would not exist. Although general, the definition encompasses a wide range of activities in which crime analysts assist police agencies. A publication by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) provides an overview of how an analytical function benefits law enforcement agencies in nine ways (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2005):

1. *Helps solve criminal investigations.* The analytical function develops a variety of intelligence products to assist investigators in detecting, preventing, and responding to criminal and terrorism activities. Analytical personnel initiate inquiries, conduct information searches, and act as points of contact for information gathered.
2. *Increases the ability to prosecute criminals.* Personnel assigned to the analytical function develop summary tables, charts, maps, and other graphics for use in a grand jury or trial. Analysts provide factual and expert testimony and organize evidence for presentation in court.

3. *Supports the chief executive and the agency's mission.* By maximizing the analytical function, the chief executive can obtain important information and intelligence to possibly prevent future criminal activities. Personnel can prepare materials to assist in allocating resources; developing budget and resource requests; and preparing departmental reports, investigative briefings, and press releases.
4. *Proactively informs law enforcement officers of crime trends and develops threat, vulnerability, and risk assessments.* The analytical function provides support to tactical and strategic operations. Personnel analyze crime reports, identify crime hot spots, develop crime bulletins and summaries, study serial crime data, and forecast future crime. The analytical function develops proactive intelligence products that assess the potential threats of crime groups or criminal activities and recommends methods to intervene in these threats.
5. *Trains law enforcement and other intelligence personnel.* Staff members develop course modules on intelligence and analytic methods and provide awareness and methodology training to agency members, executives, and managers.
6. *Assists in the development of computerized databases to organize information and intelligence.* Personnel within the analytical function help in the development and maintenance of systems that collect, collate, retrieve, and disseminate information. Analytical staff members participate in departmental testing and acquisition of investigative, intelligence, and analytical software.
7. *Fosters meaningful relationships with other law enforcement personnel.* Analytical staff members interact with other law enforcement agencies and build relationships with peers, allowing them to quickly obtain information and efficiently assist in multijurisdictional or complex cases. Through contact with national programs and professional associations, personnel are able to ascertain national issues that may affect local agencies.
8. *Ensures compliance with local, state, tribal, and federal laws and regulations.* Analytical personnel provide expertise and knowledge in the development of protocols to ensure compliance with local, state, tribal, and federal laws and rules that govern intelligence sharing, privacy, and civil liberties.
9. *Provides support to fusion centers.* Personnel provide support to local, state, or regional fusion centers by performing intelligence services such as crime pattern, association, telephone toll, and financial analysis. They create intelligence reports, briefs, threat assessments, and other intelligence products to aid in the prevention and deterrence of crime, including terrorism.