

## Good cop, bad cop at fingertips

Computer could  
see possibilities

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Chicago Police Department officials unveiled a computer program Friday that they say will produce a list of officers likely to "go bad" by committing crimes, using excessive force or participating in other offenses that can get them fired.

The program, built on an \$800 off-the-shelf software package, looks at demographic data and work histories of officers who have been fired for disciplinary reasons, then scans police personnel databases for current officers with similar profiles.

Officers who appear on the list would be contacted by supervisors and counseled on how to avoid committing acts that could get them fired, sued or even arrested.

At a Friday press conference complete with charts on "neural networks" and regression analyses, Police Supt. Matt Rodriguez and other top brass described the system, which they said was the first of its kind as a way to help officers who might be at risk.

"It gives him an opportunity to save his career, save his family name," said Assistant Deputy Supt. Raymond Risley.

But the officers' union, the Fraternal Order of Police, doesn't yet see it that way.

"We're very wary of it," Bill Nolan, president of the FOP, said later. "It's another form of Big Brother watching you."

To develop their profile of a "bad" cop, police entered information on 191 officers discharged between 1989 and 1993. The information included race, sex, age, education, number of traffic accidents, reports of lost weapons or badges, marital status and other factors.

Using an inexpensive artificial intelligence program, the information was compared with a control group of 2,000 current officers.

When the program was run on a desktop personal computer, it had not only pinpointed the differences between good and bad cops, but also had found 141 officers in the control group who were considered "at risk" for committing an offense that could get them fired.

In August, the department will begin using the program on the records of all of its 12,500 officers.

"Things like lost badges or weapons can be indicators of errant behavior, police say. "When an officer does go bad quickly and perhaps becomes addicted, he may sell his star to get a quick fix," said Risley.

As another example of how lesser offenses can be indicators of greater ones, Risley said that 78 percent of the 191 disciplinary firings studied were preceded by an act of insubordination or an unexplained absence.

"The district commander might be aware of individual occurrences, but the district commander would not recognize that this is part of a larger pattern," Rodriguez said.

The computer program was made possible by a low-cost artificial intelligence program, which, unlike other modeling tools, can make up for missing data and refine its findings through "speculation," "teaching" and other methods.

Because the computer crunches numbers and isn't swayed by personality, police officials hope to eliminate subjective elements that clutter up humans' appraisals of one another.

"It is an objective, standardized method of identifying at-risk personnel," said Risley.

The lack of subjectivity is no reassurance to the FOP, however. Said Nolan: "It's like, I'm from the IRS, and I'm here to help you."

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