

The public-private crime prevention partnership

Private car security system for stolen vehicle recovery

INTELLIGENCE

Short description of the problem

Car theft has traditionally served as a means of training for criminals. The sophistication of modern anti-theft alarms has led to more serious problems such as car-jacking, home-jacking, and other types of violence, mainly affecting urban areas.

Period

Since the late 1990's in Europe.

Data

Although the total number of car thefts has decreased slightly in recent years, the proportion of car-jacking and home-jacking has surged, and represents a large proportion of those thefts. Over the same period, the number of joy-riding thefts has decreased, while the proportion of stolen vehicles which are never recovered is constantly increasing (Source: CEA/SBD/SEC/1505 – June 2004).

Types of offenders

The offenders mostly belong to professional organizations, and are divided according to area of specialty. The thieves are usually young and aggressive individuals, rootless ethnic minorities, or drug-addicts. Those involved in the alteration of vehicles or forging of documents represent the more "professional" and skilled group. Above them, the head of the network belongs to various mafias or crime organizations for whom stolen vehicles represent liquid currency.

Modus operandi

Home-jacking, car-jacking, and other types of similar methods. In most cases, the thieves target a specific type of vehicle for which an order has been placed. They then locate it, and follow it until they deem that the situation is ripe.

The victims

Anyone, mostly in urban areas. Certain high priced models are notorious for their popularity among thieves. The majority of thefts, however, involve regular, average, cars.

Causes

Need for rapid cash.

Do

Institute precise statistics of the different types of thefts and modus operandi.

Don't

Confuse matters.

INTERVENTION

Short description of the project

It involves the equipping of law enforcement patrol cars and helicopters with specific detectors able to track stolen cars.

Short, medium, and long term objective of the project

In the short term, law enforcement has decided that a public-private partnership is necessary to fight auto theft. In the medium term, the goal is to demonstrate the ability to recover stolen vehicles and arrest thieves. In the long term, the objective is to have several types of similar partnerships in order to discourage thieves and decrease thefts.

Activities

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Issues to address

Victims of stolen vehicles used to complain about the inefficiency of law enforcement.

Victims generally suffer high losses and damages as a result of the theft of their vehicle, which may have served business, or personal, use, or both.

Since the number of thieves who were caught and prosecuted was very low in the past, young thieves considered themselves immune and therefore felt motivated to commit more crime. Thus, the publicizing of the first successes of the new system will act as a deterrent.

IMPLEMENTATION

History of the project

A first experimental phase determined the technical and operational compatibility of the system with law enforcement methods. An agreement (called a PPP) was signed between law enforcement authorities and a private operator (Traqueur).

Subsequently, about 1000 patrol cars were equipped and their operators trained: 750 gendarmerie cars to start, followed by 250 police cars.

In the long term, more cars and helicopters will be equipped and basic police training will include training focused on operating them.

Project plan

A phased implementation has been taken into account in the agreement.

Project customisation

The project ensures that the number of detectors deployed in each region or each city is customized based on the intensity of local vehicle thefts. In the long term, some detectors can be moved to other areas in accordance with changes in regional theft rates.

INVOLVEMENT

Involvement of Private and public partners

Ministry of Defence/Gendarmerie Nationale, Ministry of Interior/Police Nationale, Large cities/Polices Municipals, Traqueur S.A. (private).

Roles and responsibilities of each partner

Traqueur's role is to deploy and operate the network of radio towers and patrol car units, and to sell the transmitters to private owners through approved car dealers. When a theft takes place, Traqueur acts as a secure control centre coordinating with law enforcement command centres in tracking the vehicle.

Law enforcement takes into account, in their everyday operating procedures, the information emitted by the tracking transmitters.

Financing

All hardware and peripheral costs are borne by the private automobile owner, with law enforcement covering their own training costs.

Did the project have an impact upon the intended target group, did it impact upon other parties as well?

Yes.

Do

A formal and detailed agreement shall be signed by the parties, specifying each party's rights and duties.

Don't

Do not deal with any private operator who is unable to provide credible assurances regarding its reliability (i.e. strong investors, sufficient funding, ethical, long-term commitment...etc.).

IMPACT

Has the project been evaluated?

A yearly report is carried out among the parties.

What was evaluated?

Mainly the number of thefts, the percentage of recovered vehicles, the delay for recovery, the number of offenders arrested while carrying out the theft, the system's user-friendliness, quality of cooperation with the control centres, and potential hazards.

At what stage?

After the first experimental phase, and then once per year.

Participants

Public and private parties, in cooperation. Police unions have also been consulted.

Results

In the past year, over 100 stolen vehicles were recovered, with an average 50% arrest rate, and in a 12 hour average time rate. Some offenders have also been convicted of more serious crimes.

Have the project's goals been attained

Yes, however further success is limited by the pace at which patrol cars are being fitted with the required equipment.

Do

Employ the same basis for measurement when several different systems are used (e.g. GPS, direct tracking).

Don't

Expect immediate spectacular results, as results grow with time.