

Minnesota State Patrol

Investigative Services Section



2007 Annual Report

During 2007 the Minnesota State Patrol Investigative Services Section was comprised of the following sections:

Motor Vehicle Crime Task Force

Crash Reconstruction unit

K-9/Criminal Patrol unit

Asset Forfeiture unit.

Motor Vehicle Crime Task Force

The Minnesota State Patrol Motor Vehicle Crime Task Force was staffed by two state troopers during 2007, which is slightly less than one half of its original strength when the unit was formed in 1998. The two troopers assigned to this unit investigate motor vehicle theft, complaints of fraudulent activities by new and used motor vehicle dealers, and foreign state registration violations (failure to register vehicles in Minnesota that are based in this state). Most of the cases investigated by this unit originate as complaints from citizens. The second most common type of case is one that is referred to this unit by another law enforcement agency because of the knowledge and expertise of the troopers in this unit in investigating motor vehicle crime. With two investigators to cover the state, this unit can investigate only a fraction of the total number of cases reported to it. Troopers prioritize the cases by the dollar value of the loss involved and the seriousness of the crimes alleged to have been committed.

In 2007 this unit recovered 4 cloned stolen motor vehicles, and identified three other cloned stolen vehicles that were subsequently located by law enforcement agencies in other states. Nearly all of the recovered cloned stolen vehicles were newer model year, high value sport utility vehicles. The majority of these vehicles were reported stolen in south Florida. These vehicles, after the theft, were eventually sold through an auto auction, purchased by a Minnesota dealer, and then sold to Minnesota residents.



**Cloned/Stolen Cadillac
Escalade**

At the time they were sold in Minnesota, these stolen sport utility vehicles had the public VIN plate (on the dash) and the federal safety sticker (on the driver's door) replaced with counterfeit VIN plates and federal safety stickers. The term cloning comes from the process of duplicating the VIN from a legitimate vehicle, and then placing the counterfeit VIN plate and federal safety sticker on the stolen vehicle. Once this is accomplished, the stolen vehicle can then be titled and registered. This is generally done in a different state or province from where the legitimate vehicle that was the source of the counterfeit VIN is located, so as to not arouse the suspicion of the licensing authority (by having two vehicles with the same VIN registered in that state). Troopers in this unit have also recovered cloned vehicles that had originally been reported stolen in Canada.

On the vehicles recovered in 2007 by this unit, the craftsmanship involved in replacing the public VIN plates and the federal safety stickers was deemed to be exceptional. The skill of those involved in this type of crime was so great that we believe these vehicles would escape detection of law enforcement officers 99% of the time.

The process of inspecting these vehicles to determine their true identity is a complicated and time consuming endeavor. Once troopers identify a vehicle as a cloned stolen, the vehicle is returned to its rightful owner. In almost all cases this is the insurance company which paid the claim when the original owner reported the vehicle stolen. Prior to turning the vehicle over to the insurance company, troopers remove the counterfeit public VIN plate and the counterfeit federal safety sticker. These are retained as evidence. These vehicles are then required to have a new VIN plate attached before they can be sold to the public. The total value of the recovered stolen/cloned vehicles recovered by troopers in this unit in 2007 was \$137,000. In 2006 troopers in this unit recovered five cloned vehicles with a value of \$175,000.

Unlike stolen vehicles recovered by patrol officers where the thief is behind the wheel, cloned vehicles are almost always stolen and altered by someone other than the person in possession of the vehicle when troopers in this unit inspect the vehicle. In some cases, the individuals in possession of the vehicle at the time of our contact, are innocent consumers who paid a significant amount of money for the vehicle. In other cases the vehicles are in the possession of individuals engaged in other types of criminal activity. These expensive SUV's are a favorite of narcotics traffickers because of the large areas where narcotics or currency can be hidden when in transport. One of the stolen vehicles recovered by this unit was found to have an aftermarket hidden compartment built into it when the troopers inspected it.



Cloned/Stolen GMC Yukon Denali

Identifying a vehicle as a cloned stolen vehicle is only the first step in an investigation of this type. The second step involves attempting to identify the individual(s) responsible for the theft and cloning. Because of the national and international nature of this crime, troopers in this unit work closely with the FBI, as well as a number of law enforcement agencies across North America. At this time there are on-going federal and state investigations in several locations relating to the cloned vehicles recovered by Minnesota troopers.

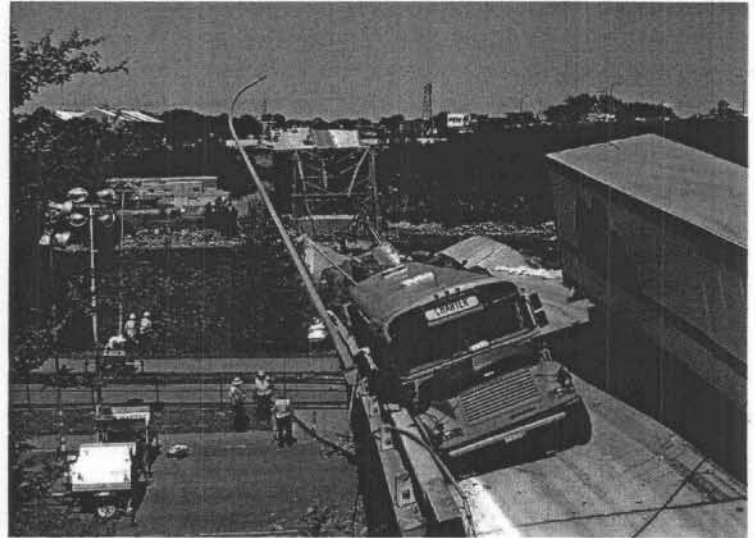
Frequently when this unit recovers a cloned stolen vehicle, we learn that the Minnesota resident who purchased it, paid significantly less (20-30%) than book value for the vehicle. Consumers purchasing used vehicles from someone other than the original owner should heed the old saying that "if a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is". This is especially true when purchasing a more expensive model.

In addition to auto theft investigations, troopers in this unit investigate complaints of fraud committed by new and used motor vehicle dealers. After a two year investigation involving the execution of multiple search warrants, in 2007 a Twin Cities area man was charged with twenty four felony counts relating to fraudulent activities at a RV dealership he operated. It was determined that the subject defrauded multiple victims out of a total of \$585,000, and failed to pay the State of Minnesota over \$23,000 in motor vehicle sales taxes that he had collected.

In a case from Olmstead County, troopers in this unit investigated the proprietor of a dealership that sold new and used large trucks. There were complaints from multiple victims alleging that the dealership defrauded them out of large sums of money during transactions involving the purchase or sale of commercial trucks. After the completion of this investigation, the dealership was closed, and criminal charges are pending. The combined loss to the various victims, as well as to the State of Minnesota for motor vehicle sales taxes owed, exceeds \$1 million.

In addition to these large cases, during 2007 this unit also investigated numerous smaller cases involving individuals and motor vehicle dealers attempting to defraud the state out of thousands of dollars in motor vehicle sales taxes and registration fees. These cases usually resulted in individuals or dealers submitting the sales tax and registration fees owed, or the filing of criminal charges, or both. To show the complexity of even a smaller case of this type, this unit received a complaint that a Minnesota resident, a high ranking member of a Native American tribe, was registering his vehicles with the tribe and not the state despite living outside of the reservation. The investigating trooper had to study the treaties and acts which created the reservation in the mid 1800's. Following that, the trooper arranged to have the affected boundary surveyed to ensure it hadn't changed since the creation of the reservation. After determining that the subjects residence was not, and had never been part of the reservation, the subject remitted \$2,427 to the state in back motor vehicle sales taxes and registration fees.

Crash Reconstruction Unit



The Minnesota State Patrol Investigative Services Section is home to our Metro Crash Reconstruction unit, and the Crash Reconstruction Coordinator. The Metro Crash Reconstruction unit is staffed by five state troopers whose full time duty is to investigate serious and fatal motor vehicle crashes. Most of their caseload is in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, but they do respond occasionally to crashes in other parts of the state as the need arises.

The Minnesota State Patrol Crash Reconstruction Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that all Minnesota State Patrol Crash Reconstructionists receive on-going professional training to stay abreast of the changes in vehicle equipment and technology, as well as studying the rapidly changing investigative tools used in this type of work. Apart from the Metro Crash Reconstruction Team, the Minnesota State Patrol has approximately thirty five other crash reconstructionists based around the state who perform their reconstruction duties on a part-time basis and fulfill regular state trooper duties during the remainder of their work week. The Crash Reconstruction Coordinator also ensures that all reconstructionists in the state have the complex equipment necessary to perform this vital task.

The goal of a crash reconstruction is to document how a crash occurred, and determine which factors caused the crash. While the vast majority of crashes are caused by some type of driver (or pedestrian, or bicyclist) error, a crash reconstruction can also assess the role that vehicle defects or roadway design may have played. If a vehicle defect or roadway design is determined to be a contributing factor, that information is forwarded to the appropriate local, state, or federal authority so that vehicle design or roadway design changes can be made.

In 2007 Minnesota State Patrol Crash Reconstructionists investigated 668 crashes, this is an increase from the 540 cases in 2006. The time needed to complete a crash reconstruction varies greatly depending on the complexity of the crash. Troopers spend anywhere from eight hours to several hundred hours on a single crash. The norm would be somewhere between those two extremes. Of the crashes reconstructed in 2007, thirty nine percent were completed for allied law enforcement agencies, compared with thirty eight percent in 2006. Of the 668 cases in 2007, 57% resulted in criminal charges, compared with 67% in 2006.

In 2007, Minnesota State Patrol crash reconstructionists were given one of their most daunting challenges ever, when they were called to the scene of the I-35W bridge collapse on the evening of August 1st in Minneapolis. While police, fire, emergency medical personnel, and private citizens worked to rescue the survivors, the call went out to the Minnesota State Patrol Crash Reconstruction unit. State Patrol Command Staff quickly authorized the Investigative Services Section to draw whatever resources were needed from around the state to ensure the task of documenting this disaster could be completed in a timely manner. Sgt. Brent Richter, the Minnesota State Patrol Crash Reconstruction Coordinator, was on the scene approximately thirty minutes after the collapse. Sgt. Richter studied the scene and quickly formulated a plan to document as much evidence as possible, in as short a time as possible.

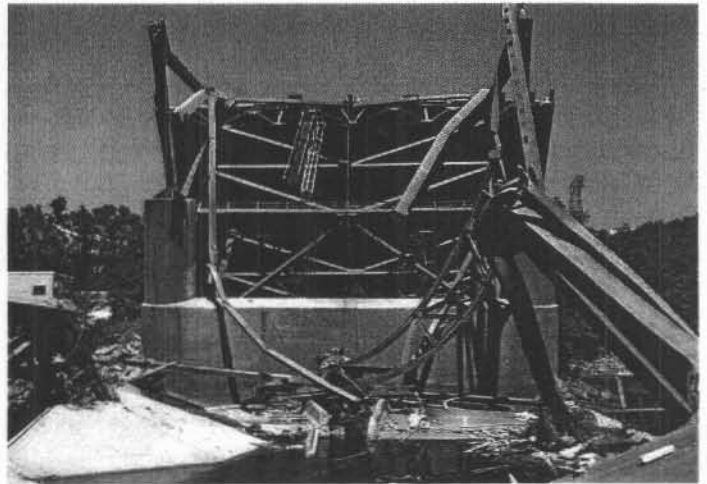
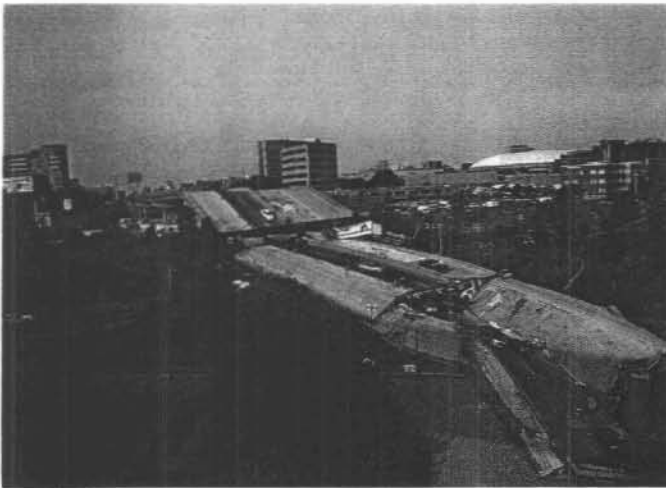
State Patrol Crash Reconstructionists from around the state were called, and many drove for several hours, arriving in the Twin Cities late in the evening. After obtaining a few hours sleep, the group assembled at the bridge site at 6:00 a.m. on August 2nd. As dawn arrived at the disaster site that day, Sgt. Richter was conferring with officials from MNDOT and the Federal Highway Administration. Bridge experts from these agencies advised that the various sections of the bridge appeared to be stable enough to allow the crash reconstructionists onto those sections. The decision was made to deploy teams of reconstructionists to the various sections of the bridge to document not only the location of the vehicles involved, but also the locations of the major sections of the bridge.

The reconstructionists went out onto each section of the collapsed bridge, wearing life jackets in case of a fall into the swift moving Mississippi River, and hard hats to protect themselves from any falling debris. As they photographed and measured the various vehicles and pieces of the bridge, these troopers also conducted a thorough search for any victims who might have been missed the previous night (the crash reconstructionists were the first emergency workers onto the collapsed bridge on the morning of August 2nd). This team worked for twelve hours (most with very little sleep) in hot weather, burdened with the additional safety gear, and by nightfall they had managed to complete a large portion of the task.

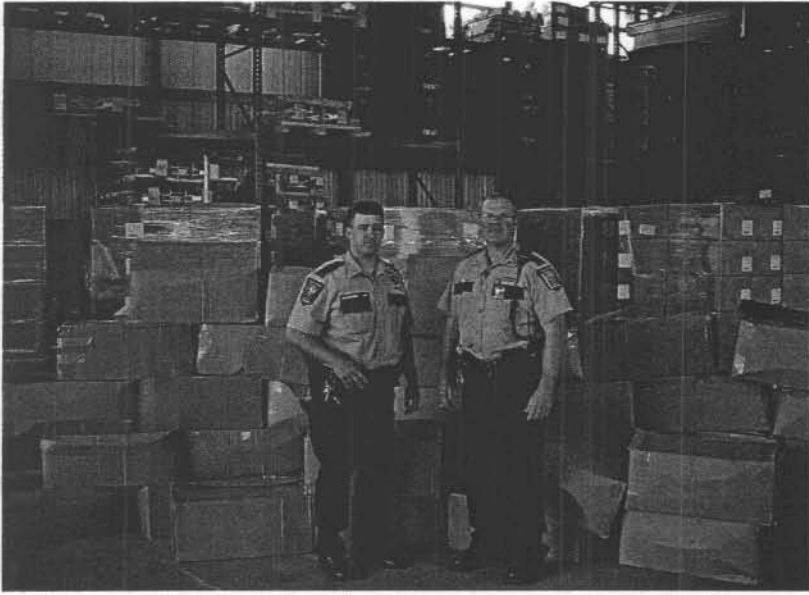
In the days that followed, all vehicles and bridge sections resting above the waterline were mapped and photographed. State Patrol investigators and reconstructionists stood by as divers from several law enforcement agencies and the United States Navy located victims and vehicles underwater. As each vehicle and victim was recovered, these

troopers obtained GPS coordinates of their location, so that information could be documented on the final map of the scene. This information was then transmitted to the National Transportation Safety Board for their use in determining the cause of the collapse.

This author is reluctant to attempt to name each of the reconstructionists and investigators who assisted in the investigation of this disaster for fear of overlooking someone. Suffice it to say that nearly every reconstructionist in the state played a role, either directly at the bridge site, or in handling the call load of serious and fatal crashes that continued to occur as the investigation continued for many more weeks. In each case, their dedication and professionalism was a source of amazement to all who witnessed it. The final report submitted by MSP Investigative Services documents 82 vehicles involved, with 13 fatalities and 147 persons injured.



K-9/Criminal Patrol unit



Troopers Rauenhorst & Snyder
2,750 lbs of marijuana seized
from tractor-trailer rig
(concealed in a 40,000 lb load
of jawbreakers).
Hwy 52/Dakota County
July 2007



Troopers Monson, Mills, and
Fairmont PD officer Bryan
Boltjes
10 kilos of cocaine - \$1 million
street value
(concealed in fuel tank)
I-90/Martin County

During 2007 the Minnesota State Patrol K-9 unit was staffed with 12 dogs trained to detect the odor of narcotics. The State Patrol K-9's are not trained in other typical police functions such as apprehension or tracking. We feel that by concentrating only on detecting the odor of narcotics, these dogs will become experts at that, as opposed to a multi purpose dog which may be somewhat less skilled in several different areas. The Minnesota State Patrol K-9's are all Belgian Malinois which many people believe resembles a smaller version of a typical police German Shepherd. This smaller size fits their assignment well, allowing them to access and sniff an area as small as the trunk of a passenger vehicle. These dogs are also trained to sniff loaded semi-trailers by walking on top of the cargo, or by squeezing through gaps in the cargo, to sniff the entire length of the trailer. They are able to do this in a fraction of the time it would take a human to search these same vehicles by hand.

The State Patrol K-9's live with their state trooper handlers and the handler's families. These K-9 teams are stationed in various areas of the state. These troopers and their K-9 partners meet as a group for two days of training each month. This regular training is imperative for both the dog and handler to maintain their high level of expertise. The training for this unit is planned and scheduled by a trooper holding the title of State Patrol K-9 Coordinator. The K-9 Coordinator also works with the handlers to ensure the dogs receive proper medical treatment, a well balanced diet, and assist the handlers with any behavior issues that arise with the dogs. Of the twelve K-9 handlers, nine perform these duties on a part-time basis in addition to their regular state trooper duties. The other three handlers together with the K-9 Coordinator comprise the Criminal Patrol Team. This team has the full time assignment of traveling around the state performing regular traffic law enforcement duties on Minnesota's highways. While doing this, these troopers attempt to identify and apprehend persons who are engaged in criminal activity. These troopers maintain a close working relationship with local, state, and federal law enforcement officers from around the country who are engaged in similar work. This networking allows for the timely exchange of information regarding our most modern criminals who move around the country and around the world as often as many airline frequent flyers. This team frequently coordinates efforts with agencies in other states after learning that a subject involved in a crime in Minnesota is also suspected of committing a similar crime in another state or country.

All of the Minnesota State Patrol K-9 troopers regularly respond to requests for assistance from a wide variety of allied law enforcement agencies. These requests in 2007 ranged from assisting a police agency in a small town with a sniff of student lockers at a high school after the principal expressed concern about possible drug use in the school, to assisting on many search warrants executed by local law enforcement where drugs were believed to be hidden inside of houses, to a request from the US Coast Guard to search an ocean going ship that had entered the Duluth harbor and was believed to be carrying narcotics.

Troopers in the K-9/Criminal Patrol unit are extremely dedicated individuals. They realize they are on the front lines, regularly facing off against the world's drug cartels who have the goal of making dangerous drugs readily available to every man, woman, and child in Minnesota. Every week these troopers are coming face to face with drug traffickers who are attempting to either smuggle their valuable cargo of narcotics into Minnesota, or who are attempting to smuggle drug proceeds back to their criminal organizations around the world. These troopers know their next traffic stop could mean the difference between a Minnesota community being awash in illegal drugs, or a community where illegal drugs are scarce.

During 2007 the K-9/Criminal Patrol unit troopers taught approximately twenty Criminal Interdiction classes around the state to local law enforcement, prosecutors, as well as the Minnesota County Attorney's Association Annual Conference. At the 2007 United States Police Canine Association's National Narcotics Detection Trials, Trooper Chad Mills and his K-9 partner Arco won First Place overall. Trooper Doug Rauenhorst and his K-9 partner Sonja received Second Place overall. In the team competition, the

Minnesota State Patrol team of 12 handlers and dogs received First Place overall in the team competition. We were thrilled at the performance of this group as they competed against the best narcotic detecting dogs in the country.

Our K-9/Criminal Patrol troopers make contributions to our well being in areas other than drug enforcement. During 2007 Trooper Rob Frisby testified in federal court in Missouri in a terrorism case stemming from a traffic stop he made in the Twin Cities. During the course of that traffic stop Trooper Frisby discovered evidence of suspects from foreign countries fraudulently obtaining commercial drivers licenses in the United States. The evidence uncovered during that traffic stop led to the indictment of a subject in Missouri on terrorism charges.

Minnesota State Patrol K-9/Criminal Patrol unit statistical summary:

	2007	2006	2005	2004
Investigative Sniffs	757	807	1646	565
Felony Arrests	209	256	260	124
Marijuana seized	4,399 lbs	550 lbs	762 lbs	450 lbs
Cocaine seized	116 lbs	2.5 lbs	.38 lbs	.16 lbs
Methamphetamine seized	13.4 lbs	38.5 lbs	22.6 lbs	4.3 lbs
Heroin seized	1.14 lbs	.19 lbs	5.21 lbs	.47 lbs
Other drugs seized	518.4 lbs	31.2 lbs	n/a	n/a
Currency seized	\$2,676,107	\$237,289	\$683,312	\$536,074
Vehicles seized	79	73	87	39
Firearms seized	31	44	104	38
Internal Affairs complaints	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lawsuits	0	n/a	n/a	n/a

The district forfeiture coordinators quickly proved themselves to be invaluable resources, freeing uniformed personnel from the time consuming task of preparing and monitoring these cases as they moved through the court system.

In 2007 the State Patrol seized a total of 1,198 vehicles for forfeiture as compared to 1,454 in 2006. These vehicles vary from very old vehicles in poor condition, to vehicles involved in crashes, to relatively new vehicles.

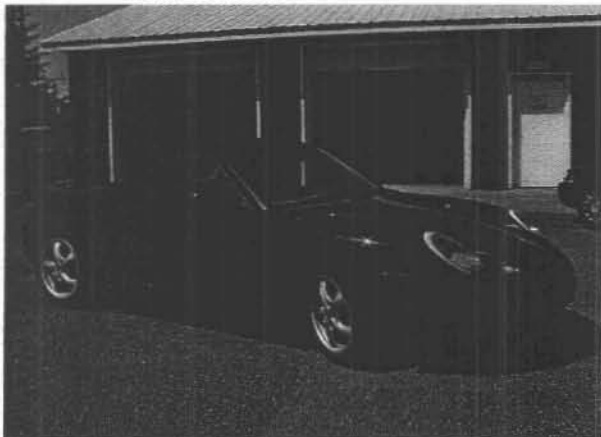
State Patrol Vehicle Seizures by District 2006-2007

District	2006	2007
Rochester	121	64
Mankato	60	38
Marshall	31	36
East Metro	372	289
West Metro	276	260
St Cloud	125	117
Duluth	161	112
Brainerd	75	68
Detroit Lakes	89	75
Virginia	91	98
Thief River Falls	53	41
Total	1454	1198

Net Proceeds From Completed MSP Forfeiture Cases

District	2006	2007
Rochester	\$154,110	\$197,099
Mankato	\$35,468	\$38,961
Marshall	\$12,567	\$35,000
East Metro	\$181,141	\$131,613
West Metro	\$109,660	\$229,155
St Cloud	\$47,018	\$64,270
Duluth	\$42,144	\$79,606
Brainerd	\$970	\$71,859
Detroit Lakes	\$37,175	\$27,069
Virginia	\$81,319	\$59,935
Thief River Falls	\$9,036	\$6,008
Total	\$710,613	\$940,581

In 2006 Kim Driskell the Forfeiture Coordinator in the Virginia district created a power point presentation and student manual to serve as a law enforcement guide to forfeitures. Several Forfeiture Coordinators as well as staff at Investigative Services began teaching classes on forfeitures to law enforcement and prosecuting attorney's around the state. In 2006 this group taught 145 personnel from 48 law enforcement agencies. In 2007 this class was taught to 311 students from 121 different law enforcement agencies in Minnesota.



forfeited 2000 Porsche Boxter convertible



forfeited 1986 Honda Civic