

Cops' Computer That Knows All

By Huel Washington

A Big Brother machine which in seconds can tell a policeman if a person is wanted or a car is stolen was unveiled yesterday at San Francisco's Hall of Justice.

Starting next Monday, 16 such machines will be operating round-the-clock, linked to a crime-fighting system called CABLE, which stands for Computer Assisted Bay Area Law Enforcement.

Information fed into the machines will reach the files of several systems of local, regional, state, and federal jurisdictions within a matter of seconds. Only one inquiry is necessary.

In the past, separate contacts at each level of law enforcement were required to

get a complete record of one's transgressions.

WORTH

San Francisco police officials believe the machines will immediately prove they are worth the \$402,000 being spent to perfect the data storing and retrieval system.

Here are some examples of what the machines can find out from a central information bank:

- A cruising squad car patrolman can radio headquarters the license plate of a suspicious auto. The information is typed out on a computer keyboard.

Anywhere from six to 60 seconds later, the patrolman will know whether the car is a stolen vehicle — from any place in the U.S. — or if the owner has failed to pay any traffic tags or if it belongs to

a known criminal.

- A detective checking on possible stolen items can check on the serial numbers of, say, a stereo system and learn within a minute if it was reported to have been taken in a burglary.

- An officer finding a store's door unlocked can report the address to the machine and seconds later have the name of the owner and a phone number to reach him at.

There are two types of CABLE machines being used by San Francisco police. One shows the return information on a video screen. The other prints it out on paper so that there can be a permanent record of the return information if there is a need for it.

So far, 200 officers have gone through a 20-hour train-

ing course qualifying them to operate the machines. Eventually, the remainder of the 1900-man force will have been checked out on the CABLE system.

San Francisco's department has been testing the system and storing information in the computer for more than a year, coordinating with other law enforcement agencies throughout the Bay Area, the state and across the nation.

Initially, the local effort was financed by \$201,000 in federal grant money matched by an equal amount from the city budget.

Another \$225,000 in federal money will be matched by \$225,000 from the city to enable the CABLE operation to continue on a working basis. Police Chief Donald Scott

believes CABLE will be a time-saver that will enable officers to receive information much faster than in the past.

DANGER

It will also, he feels, lessen the danger faced by patrolmen. He said they will know from the computer whether the owner of a car is potentially violent or if a suspect being questioned in a field check has been known to carry a weapon.

Captain Louis Feder and Lieutenant Ford Long of the information bureau will direct the CABLE operation.

Eventually, smaller models of the machine will be placed in squad cars enabling officers in the field to ask questions of the computer and receive answers directly.