

FBI Wants to Purge Computer

San Antonio, Tex.

Attorney General Edward H. Levi disclosed last night that the FBI has asked his permission to discontinue its program of compiling computerized criminal records on thousands of individuals.

"The final decision will be difficult because of the potential value of the computerized criminal history program," Levi said, adding that he has not yet reached a decision.

His remarks were in a speech to the National Association of Attorneys General.

The FBI in 1970 launched the plan to store individual criminal records in computers. The plan called for state and local law enforcement agencies to supply

criminal records of millions of individuals.

The computerized system would spew out an individual's criminal record within minutes to answer requests for information from federal, state or local law enforcement officials.

The plan attracted widespread criticism from those who feared that it would infringe upon citizens' right to privacy.

Levi noted that only eight states have agreed to supply information for the program. The low level of participation "has limited the immediate value of the computerized criminal history program," he said.

An FBI spokesman said Kelley wrote Levi about three weeks ago

asking permission to discontinue the operation and purge the computerized system of the 859,000 criminal records already collected.

The high cost of the operation and the lack of state participation prompted Kelley's request, said an FBI statement.

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