



## **Sex Offender Supervision in the Nation's Capitol Numbers on Satellite Tracking Will Grow to 100 Per Day GPS Locations Now Being Linked With Crime Reports**

By Paul Brennan, Supervisory Community Supervision Officer

The Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) is a federal executive branch agency responsible for supervising over 15, 000 parolees, supervised releases and probationers in the District of Columbia. The agency prides itself on high levels of contact with offenders through office and community contacts, extensive drug testing and joint patrols with the Metropolitan Police Department ("Accountability Tours"). The agency also is aggressively involved in supervision programs and treatment for substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, drinking-driver, faith-based reentry issues, and sex offenders. CSOSA is a new agency, independent as of August 2000.

From April of 2003 to February of 2005, CSOSA conducted a satellite tracking pilot program. The Sex Offender Unit (SOU) placed 200 sex offenders on satellite tracking and determined that the technology has utility. Examples include:

*In November of 2005, CSOSA was contacted by the US Park Police who were investigating an assault that occurred at Logan Circle in the District of Columbia the previous month. The investigating detective informed us that witnesses observed the suspect wearing an ankle bracelet and a device attached to his hip. Recognizing that the witnesses' description of the device matched those worn by offenders on GPS tracking, we proceeded to review all of our GPS records for the timeframe in which the crime was committed. After our analysis was completed, we were able to put one offender at the scene of the crime at precisely the timeframe identified by the detective. In fact, GPS showed that he left the crime scene at a rate of speed that suggested that he was running from the area. Our office forwarded a photo of the offender. He was eventually picked from a photo spread by one of the witnesses. An arrest warrant was prepared and he was arrested by the US Park Police at the parole office. The offender, when confronted with the GPS evidence, confessed to the assault.*

*An offender was mandatorily released from prison earlier this year. Case records revealed that the offender had been diagnosed as being a pedophile with a preference for underage boys. In fact, for several years the offender had been hospitalized after the court found grounds to commit him as a sexual psychopath. The offender was prohibited from having contact with children and using a computer. He was ordered into a half way house for up to 120 days, and had to participate in sex offender treatment. The offender presented the highest risk to community safety and was immediately placed on satellite or Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking so that we could monitor his movements throughout the community. GPS records showed the offender traveling to the Martin Luther King Library in the NW section of Washington, DC. When confronted about his purpose there, the offender admitted that he was using the computer to access the Internet. GPS records also showed the offender taking a route from his Community Supervision Officer's (CSO) office to the halfway house that was considered to be out of the way, consequently causing him to be late for check-in. Further investigation by the CSO of the GPS records showed that the offender had traveled to a subway station at a time when children get off from a school. When confronted, the offender had no plausible explanation for being in that area and missing his curfew. Based on this evidence the CSO sought a warrant for the sex offender's arrest and his parole was subsequently revoked.*

Because of examples like the above, CSOSA's Director, Paul A. Quander, Jr. decided that the number of sex and high risk offenders under satellite tracking (sometimes referred to as Global Positioning System, or GPS tracking) should be increased to 100 offenders each day. "Public safety is the primary goal of our operations, and strict enforcement of the rules regarding sex offenders and others posing a risk to citizens is essential to safe communities," Quander said. Those eligible for tracking include sex offenders, violent criminals and those adjudicated for domestic violence offences.

Satellite (or GPS) tracking of offenders gives law enforcement and community supervision authorities the ability to monitor an offender's movements anywhere in the country, enforce curfews, and impose and monitor exclusion zones. GPS systems for tracking people vary in their design. The system that CSOSA currently uses consists of a miniature tracking device (MTD), an ankle bracelet, and a charging stand. The MTD is tracked by a series of satellites constantly orbiting the Earth. The ankle bracelet essentially "tethers" the offender to the MTD and the system alerts law enforcement when the offender strays away from the MTD. The charging stand, or docking station, charges the MTD's battery and downloads the data collected by the MTD through the phone line from the offender's home to a data center. The data is then made available to enforcement authorities through their PCs or laptops, and violations can be received by text messaging on the officer's cell phone. CSOSA currently uses a

passive tracking system. This means that the information collected by the tracking system is not real time. Active, or real time, tracking is available if needed, however, manpower constraints prohibit real-time response. Per the first example, another attractive feature is the link between the GPS data and police crime reports to help identify offenders on GSP who were in the vicinity of a known crime.

CSOSA has recently begun working toward linking the GPS records we maintain with the DC Police Department's crime reports. The intention is to get an agreement with the police department that will allow CSOSA to share its GPS data with the police so that we may work together to solve or prevent crime. CSOSA is investing time and resources in the testing a number of other GPS systems to meet our growing needs, to include active (real time) tracking. CSOSA's vision is to significantly expand the number of high-risk offenders placed on GPS to an average of 100 per day, to give access of this data to the police who then will be able to identify offenders in the vicinity of crime scenes, conduct crime analysis, and dispatch officers to locate offenders who break curfew or enter prohibited areas.

## UNIT OVERVIEW

The Sex Offender Unit's mission is predicated on comprehensive case planning in order to enhance community safety. The unit is proactive when managing the risk that sex offenders pose to community safety by sanctioning offender misconduct through a series of graduated sanctions, intensive monitoring and reincarceration if necessary. The SOU attempts to minimize the chances a sex offender will commit another sex offense or other criminal conduct by identifying and addressing an offender's known "risk factors" that correlate to recidivism. The SOU also offers mental health services through a qualified therapist who assesses every sex offender for treatment, their risk to reoffend, and to place them in long-term treatment if appropriate. SOU's mantra is "No New Victims." An example of this philosophy includes:

*A recent prison releasee was on parole for a series of sexual assaults against female children was discovered viewing pornographic websites while at work. His employer notified his CSO, who later determined that the sites depicted youthful looking males. His parole conditions were promptly modified to prohibit him from viewing or possessing pornography, accessing the Internet, having contact with children, and working or volunteering in an environment where children are present. The CSO was also given the authority to conduct unannounced searches of his residence and computer. A subsequent search was conducted of his residence and computer, which revealed notebooks filled with screen names, phone numbers and websites. A closer examination of the material seized showed ages next to most of the screen names and phone numbers, many of which were under the age of 18, some as young as 14. Also discovered was a phone number and contact person for the Red Cross. Follow*

*up with the Red Cross revealed that the offender had contacted them and inquired about volunteering with one of their programs that catered to youth. With this information, the offender's parole was revoked.*

The policies and procedures of the Sex Offender Unit provide consistency, thoroughness, and fairness in routine case management responsibilities.

#### **TREATMENT:**

Sex offenders must undergo an initial assessment by sex offender treatment providers. This assessment is essential in determining the offenders' risk to reoffend and need for treatment. If treatment is deemed appropriate, the offender will be required to attend outpatient treatment consisting of a minimum of weekly group sessions, plus individual sessions as determined by the therapist. The SOU requires those who treat our sex offender population to use a cognitive/behavioral modality. The offender also will be required to submit to a series of polygraph examinations. The purposes of polygraph exams are to break the offenders' denial of their responsibility in the sex crime(s) that brought them in to the criminal justice system, obtain a sexual history focusing on prior deviant sexual behavior, and a maintenance exam to determine if they are complying with the treatment objectives and conditions of release. The penile plethysmograph (to measure inappropriate stimuli) is used in select cases.

Sex offender treatment may last anywhere from 12–24 months, followed by aftercare or booster sessions for up to six months. The therapists work collaboratively with the Community Supervision Officers to ensure that the offenders' are meeting their treatment and supervision obligations. Communication between the therapist and CSOs is frequent and essential.

Substance abuse, domestic violence, anger management, mental health treatment and other forms of assistance are provided. Drug testing is frequent and, not surprisingly, detected drug use is the most common violation reported. Two examples of successful treatment and polygraph use include:

*An offender on probation for molesting a child was placed into sex offender treatment as a condition of release. For 6 months the offender denied vigorously that he committed the offense. As consequence of his denial he was not progressing in treatment and the therapist felt there was no chance he would admit the offense. The offender was subjected to a polygraph exam, which he failed. A meeting was conducted with the offender, his therapist, his CSO and the CSO's supervisor. At that time the offender was advised that he failed the polygraph and will be terminated from treatment. It was made clear to him that if he were terminated unsuccessfully from treatment his CSO would be required to report this to the judge as a violation of probation. In an effort to increase the pressure on him to acknowledge his involvement in the crime, he was offered one last opportunity to pass the polygraph. Within a few days of the meeting, the*

*offender admitted to his role in the crime and is now progressing well in treatment.*

*A probationer convicted of a crime that involved him exposing himself to children as they played outside their school was assigned to the SOU with the conditions that he not step foot on any school property, that he not view pornography, comply with GPS tracking and complete sex offender treatment. Case records revealed that he was arrested for a similar offense several years ago. The offender, in strong denial about his sexual offending behavior, convincingly presented explanations to the court as to why he did not commit this or any sex crimes and that he need not be supervised by the SOU and should be allowed to take his children to school and coach little league football. The judge did not accept his argument. The offender was promptly placed into sex offender treatment where he continued to deny his problem of exposing himself in public. A routine polygraph examination was provided, and he confessed to not only intentionally exposing himself to children in the current case, but to having engaged in this behavior for over 20 years. He further acknowledged to at least 100 incidents where he masturbated in public and exposed himself to unwitting members of the community. Since this disclosure, his progress in treatment has greatly improved and he stands a much greater chance of controlling this deviant behavior.*

### **CLOSE SUPERVISION:**

Sex offenders initially are placed on Intensive or Maximum supervision, depending on their known criminal history, mental health status and past adjustments to community supervision. This means that the Community Supervision Officers are required to meet with the offender face-to-face **no less than** once or twice per week. They are also required to maintain regular contact with others associated with the offender (i.e., family, counselors, employers). Their supervision level and the amount of contacts the Community Supervision Officers have with the offender are subject to change depending on the offenders' adjustment. A poor adjustment will automatically result in more frequent contacts and imposed sanctions (GPS, curfew, supervisor conference, written reprimand, drug treatment placement or half-way house placement). A positive adjustment could result in decreased contacts with the CSO, but only with the approval of a Unit Supervisor.

This year DC Superior Court has begun to use an addendum to the Judgment and Commitment Order developed by the Sex Offender Unit that lists a host of special release conditions specifically for sex offenders. The addendum serves to simplify the process for judges to order the types of special conditions we know are needed to effectively manage this population in the community.

Face to face contacts between the CSO and offenders are an essential part of close supervision. They allow the CSOs to assess the offenders' current state of mind, obtain pertinent information, and, most importantly, keep the offenders' focused on

their supervision obligations. When an offender misses an appointment with their CSO, this usually suggests that problems exist and action is needed.

Fieldwork and collateral contacts are also essential components of close supervision. Community Supervision Officers need to be in the community visiting the offender, family, and friends where they live, work and recreate. By doing so, officers can determine if the offenders have contact or access to potential victims. For example, CSOs conducting home verifications on a convicted child molester will be looking for signs that a child has been to the home or where children are situated within the immediate environment. Meeting with collateral contacts (family, employers, friends) allows CSOs to determine if offenders are complying with supervision obligations and verify information previously provided by the offenders. CSOs work hard to convince the various collateral contacts to become involved in the offenders' success. It is often the case that family, employers, and friends will contact the CSOs when they feel the offender is headed down the wrong path.

### **COMPUTER MONITORING**

Computer monitoring is another component of the program. The SOU is now equipped and trained to conduct searches of sex offenders' computers to determine whether a sex offender is accessing pornography or other prohibited material over the Internet. The unit installs monitoring software that will allow CSOs to see exactly how the offender is using his/her computer at work or home in order to determine if they are communicating with minors or downloading child pornography.

### **OFFENDER SURVEILLANCE**

Surveillance is another tool that is available to The Sex Offender Unit. The SOU has the option of placing high-risk offenders under 24-hour surveillance through the use of a private contractor. This was felt to be a necessary function since sex offenders tend to be highly secretive about their sexually deviant behavior and CSOs are not able to perform such work routinely due to time constraints. By placing certain high-risk offenders under surveillance, we expect to discover behavior in our offender population that present community safety concerns or are contrary to their treatment objectives and supervision obligations.

### **TRAINING:**

SOU's success is largely dependent on the training of the staff. Great effort is made to see that all staff assigned to SOU are specially trained in the areas such as sex offender typologies, sex offender community management and sex offender specific treatment. We realize that staff must have knowledge that will give them the ability to recognize precursors to criminal activity, assess treatment progress, and develop comprehensive supervision strategies and how to respond to some of the unique problems this population presents.

A final example of the success of the sex offender unit includes:

*An offender on probation for sexually abusing a minor had been in abscondance for several years. After police apprehended the offender, the court immediately reinstated his probation. A review of the case file revealed that he had a prior conviction for a similar offense in another state. The offender was prohibited from having contact with children. Shortly after his reinstatement on probation, his assigned Community Supervision Officer conducted a routine home verification. When the CSO arrived at the residence, he was greeted by a female child who was determined to be of no relation to the offender. The offender was not home at the time and the child's mother was nowhere to be found. The CSO immediately pulled the child out of the home and contacted the Metropolitan Police Department to investigate. The offender was located by the CSO and instructed to report to the supervision office immediately. Investigators interviewed the child and determined that the offender had sexually assaulted her and others in the neighborhood. The offender confessed to the crime of molesting the child that evening and was subsequently sentenced to a lengthy prison sentence.*

Illustrated by these examples is Unit's belief that the most effective way to manage sex offenders safely in the community is through close supervision and holding them accountable for their behavior. The use of satellite monitoring, surveillance and treatment services plus partnerships with allied law enforcement agencies provide the best chance for success in the supervision of dangerous offenders.