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Local Contract

From AT& T Unit, a Way to Find Cells for Inmates

By Roseanne Gerin
Special to The Washington Post
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Federal prison guards can rest assured that their inmates will find a cell for the night, thanks to a Web-based system that lets law enforcement officials quickly locate available bed space.

AT&T Government Solutions of Vienna won a five-year, \$3 million contract extension to continue providing support for the National Repository for Detention Space Availability.

The program uses a central database of locations that lets federal law enforcement officials quickly identify where prisoners can be housed in a particular geographic area. The Justice Department's Office of the Federal Detention Trustee and other agencies, including the U.S. Marshals Service, the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the Homeland Security Department's Immigration and Customs Enforcement bureau, use the repository to find state, local and private detention space available for federal use.

The repository is similar to a hotel search site on the Internet, said Heidi Myers, AT&T's program director for the project. It provides a search screen with criteria for what is needed, including medical and transportation services, the per diem amounts charged to house offenders and types of prisoners housed (men, women or juveniles), Myers said.

Federal law enforcement officials also can search for detention

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facilities within a specific distance and see estimates of the number of vacant beds. The repository provides maps of the detention centers' locations and contact information so users can call to confirm a space and arrange transport.

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Previously, law enforcement officials had to make rounds of calls to various prisons for this information. The automated repository is a more cost-effective and efficient way of locating and managing detention space, Myers said.

The Office of the Federal Detention Trustee awarded AT&T and subcontractor Appriss Inc. of Louisville the original one-year contract to build the repository in July 2003. The Internet-based tool was launched March 1, 2004.

The original contract was valued at \$194,000 but grew to \$709,000 with several customer changes, Myers said.

Under the \$3 million contract extension, AT&T will provide certification and accreditation for the repository, while Appriss will provide specialized systems and data links for real-time information.

The Office of the Federal Detention Trustee was established in September 2001. Reporting to the deputy attorney general, it coordinates detention activities for the Justice Department and for Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The office reported that more than 63,700 people were in federal detention at the end of fiscal 2002, the most recent data available on its Web site.

AT&T Government Solutions and Appriss also worked together in July 2000 on the Justice Department's Victim Notification System, an automated program that notifies victims of federal crimes about the custody and court status of defendants under the jurisdiction of the FBI, the Federal Bureau of Prisons and U.S. attorneys. Victims can receive the information via e-mail, regular mail or phone. They also can log in to a Web site that was launched in March.

Founded in 1994, Appriss is a privately held company that specializes in such services. AT&T Government Solutions provides telecommunications and information technology services for the federal government. Its parent company, AT&T Corp. of Bedminster, N.J., employs 47,600 workers and had 2004 revenue of \$30.5 billion.

Roseanne Gerin is a staff writer with Washington Technology. For more details on this and other technology contracts, go to <http://www.washingtontechnology.com>.