

A Profile of the Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force (NIATTF)



Prepared for

the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council

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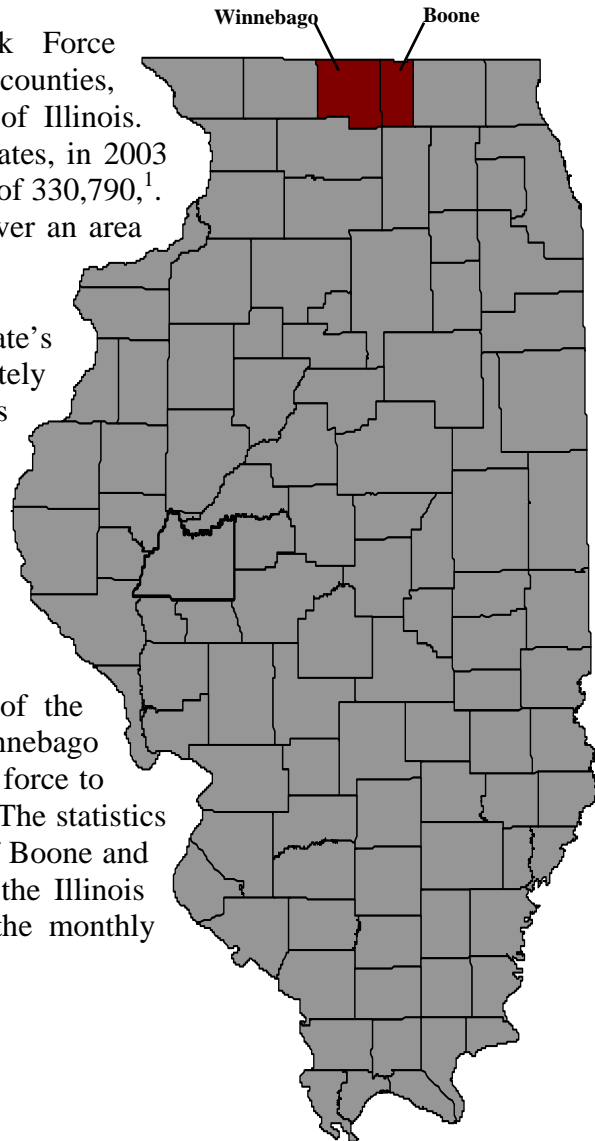
**ILLINOIS MOTOR VEHICLE
THEFT PREVENTION COUNCIL**

Introduction

The Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force (NIATTF) serves Winnebago and Boone counties, which are located on the northern border of Illinois. According to the U.S. Census Bureau estimates, in 2003 the two counties had a combined population of 330,790,¹. Boone and Winnebago counties together cover an area of 795 square miles.

According to the Illinois Secretary of State's Office in 2003, there were approximately 303,895 passenger vehicles and trucks registered in the area covered by the task force². In Winnebago County, 261,465 passenger vehicles and trucks were registered, while there were 42,430 registered passenger vehicles and trucks registered in Boone County.

This profile provides a general overview of the vehicle theft problem in Boone and Winnebago counties, as well as the activities of the task force to reduce the identified vehicle theft problem. The statistics in this report represent the combined total of Boone and Winnebago counties. The data is based on the Illinois State Police Uniform Crime Reports and the monthly data reports submitted by staff of NIATTF.



¹ United States Bureau of the Census. 2004.

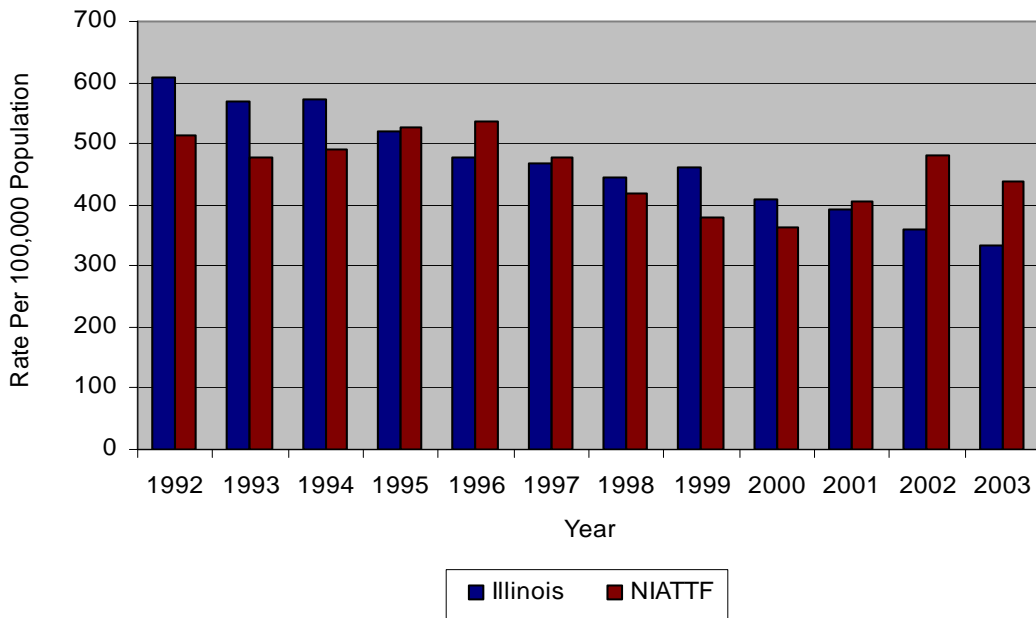
² State of Illinois, Office of the Secretary of State. 2004.

Motor Vehicle Theft in Winnebago County and Boone Counties

According to the Illinois State Police, the number of motor vehicle thefts reported in the area covered by the Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force (NIATTF) decreased 4 percent between 1992 and 2003, from 1,510 thefts to 1,447 thefts. During this time, motor vehicle thefts reached a high of 1,666 thefts in 1996. Motor vehicle thefts decreased 41 percent statewide during the same period.

Between 1992 and 2003, at time when the population in the area covered by NIATTF increased 13 percent, the motor vehicle theft rate in the region decreased 15 percent, from 517 to 437 offenses per 100,000 population. The statewide motor vehicle theft rate decreased 46 percent, from 612 to 334 offenses per 100,000 population.

Figure 1
Motor Vehicle Theft Rate
1992-2003



Data Source: Illinois Uniform Crime Reports

Program Summary

The Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force (NIATTF) combats auto theft and insurance fraud in Winnebago County and Boone County by combining the expertise and resources of multiple law enforcement agencies. Operating since November of 1993, NIATTF links the efforts of the Illinois Secretary of State's Office, the Winnebago County Sheriff's

Office, the Boone County Sheriff's Office, the Winnebago County State's Attorney's Office, the Loves Park Police Department, the Cherry Valley Police Department, the Rockton Police Department, and the Belvidere Police Department. On April 13, 2004, the Illinois State Police assumed supervisory responsibility of the NIATTF from the Secretary of State. NIATTF's multijurisdictional, cooperative approach maximizes its ability to investigate and prosecute auto theft in Winnebago and Boone counties. Implemented by the Winnebago County Sheriff's Department, NIATTF's services are available to all law enforcement agencies within Winnebago and Boone counties.

NIATTF educates law enforcement personnel, auto dealers, and the general public about the vehicle theft problem. The task force conducts training sessions on auto theft investigation for patrol officers and police investigators. NIATTF also presents anti-car theft programs to community organizations, neighborhood watch groups, and citizen police academies. The task force also conducts VIN etching programs, making participants' vehicles less attractive theft targets. VIN etching is a process in which the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) is permanently etched into the glass of a vehicle's windows, making the vehicle easier to trace and consequently less attractive to auto thieves.

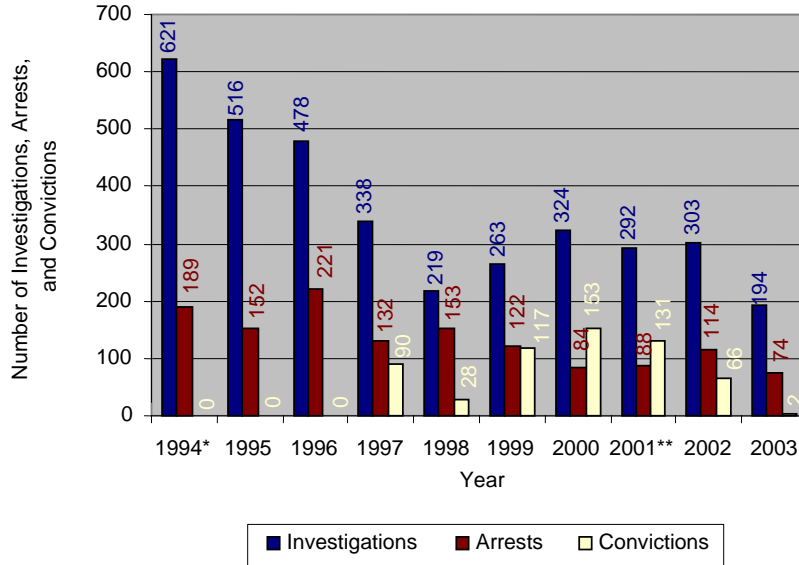
NIATTF continues to combat auto theft by initiating numerous investigations into the following categories of vehicle theft: heavy equipment, insurance fraud, retagging, drug related auto thefts and career auto thieves. Finally, NIATTF formulates programs with the local Crimestoppers in Winnebago and Boone counties.

Program Activity

Beginning in 2001, investigations were reported separately as either "initiated," meaning initiated by Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force (NIATTF), or as "assisted," meaning the task force assisted another agency in the investigation. From the program's inception in November 1993 through December 2003, NIATTF conducted 3,511 self-initiated investigations and assisted in an additional 37 resulting in 1,329 arrests and 587 convictions. Of the 789 investigations in which NIATTF participated between 2001, when assisted and initiated investigations were initially recorded separately, and 2003, NIATTF assisted in 37 and initiated 752. Figure 2 shows the number of motor vehicle theft investigations, arrests and convictions for each program year.³

³ Due to the time lapse between an arrest and subsequent prosecution, the number of prosecutions and convictions during a year does not directly reflect the number of arrests during the same year.

Figure 2
Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force
Investigations, Arrests, and Convictions
1994-2003



*The 1994 data covers the period from November 1993 through December 1994.

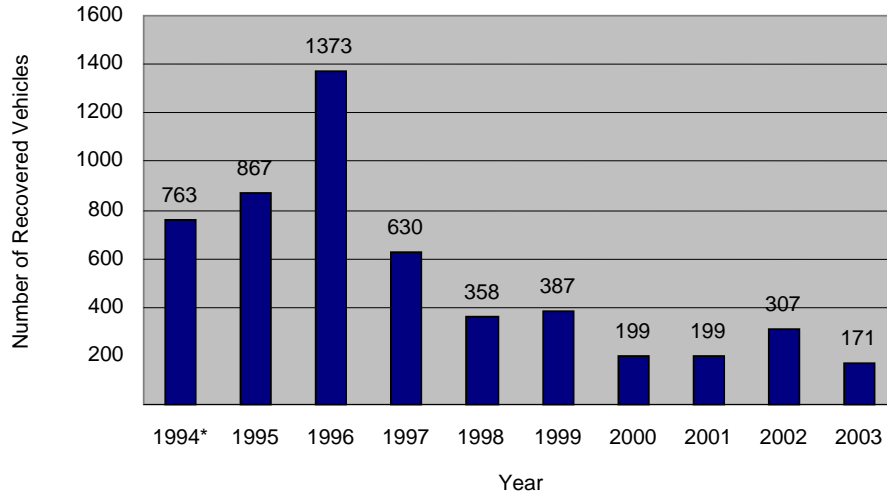
**Beginning in 2001, investigations were reported separately as "initiated" or "assisted," however, the yearly totals in this graph represent the number of initiated and assisted investigations combined.

Data Source: NIATTF monthly data reports

From November 1993 thru 2003, the task force recovered 5,254 vehicles worth an estimated \$25 million. Figure 3 shows the number of vehicle recoveries made by the task force for each year.⁴

⁴ NIATTF reports the total estimated value of all the vehicles that it recovers each month. However, this includes only cases handled by the task force, not all vehicle thefts within Boone and Winnebago counties.

Figure 3
Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force
Motor Vehicle Recoveries
1994-2003



*The 1994 data covers the period from November 1993 to December 2003.
 Data Source: NIATTF monthly data reports.

Funding Summary

The Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Act that took effect on January 1, 1991 created the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council. The Council has the statutory responsibility to “prevent, combat, and reduce motor vehicle theft in Illinois.”⁵

The Act established the Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Trust Fund, a special trust fund in the State Treasury, from which the Council makes grants to eligible applicants for programs that address the problem of motor vehicle theft in Illinois. The Act requires all insurance companies licensed to write private passenger motor vehicle physical damage coverage in Illinois to pay annually into this trust fund an amount equal to \$1 for each earned car year of exposure for physical damage insurance coverage during the previous calendar year. About \$6 million is collected each year.

The Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Trust Fund funds the Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force (NIATTF). Table 1 lists the amount granted to and expended by the task force for each program year.

⁵ Chapter 20 Illinois Compiled Statutes 4005/2.

Table 1
Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force (NIATTF)
Funding by Program Year

Year	Grant Amount	Expenditures
1994	\$373,030	\$295,389
1995	\$362,279	\$301,434
1996	\$326,051	\$300,563
1997	\$343,471	\$308,958
1998	\$377,212	\$324,944
1999	\$385,940	\$369,225
2000	\$391,706	\$363,378
2001	\$401,563	\$374,254
2002	\$472,083	\$467,109
2003	\$422,172	\$402,892
TOTAL	\$3,855,507	\$3,508,146

*The 1994 data covers the period from November 1993 to December 1994.
Note: Unexpended grant funds are returned to the Council.

Figure 4 below summarizes NIATTF's program expenditures from 1994 through December 2003. Expenditures are divided into six categories:

Personnel—includes salaries, social security, and fringe benefits for program staff.

Equipment—includes computers, communication devices, and other equipment with a cost greater than \$50.

Commodities—includes consumable supplies (such as office supplies) and equipment costing less than \$50.

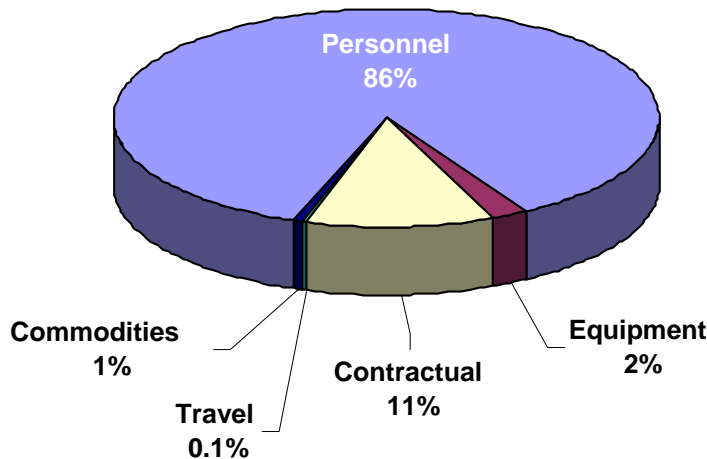
Travel—includes lodging, food, and transportation expenses incurred by program staff while conducting official program-related business.

Contractual—includes facility costs, utilities, telephone service, equipment rentals, and wages for hourly personnel.

Other—includes any costs not covered by the above categories.

Figure 4

Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force
Percentage of Expenditures by Category
1994-2003



*Due to rounding, the category percentages may not total 100 percent.

Conclusion

Since the Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force began operation, vehicle thefts declined within the task force's jurisdiction. From 1994 to 2003, the vehicle theft rate in Boone and Winnebago counties decreased by 12 percent, from 498 to 437 offenses per 100,000. During this same time period in Boone and Winnebago counties, motor vehicle thefts decreased 2 percent, from 1,483 to 1,447 thefts. Table 2 depicts the change in the number of motor vehicle thefts from year to year since NIATTTF has been in operation.

Table 2

Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force

Change in Number of Auto Thefts From Previous Year
1994-2003

Year	Change From Previous Year*
1994	+ 59
1995	+ 131
1996	+ 52
1997	- 170
1998	- 178
1999	- 109
2000	- 44
2001	+ 149
2002	+ 257
2003	- 124

*The difference between the number of auto thefts each year compared to the number that occurred the previous year.

+ Indicates more thefts than the previous
- Indicates fewer thefts than the previous year

The FBI estimates that the average value of a vehicle stolen in the United States in 2002 was \$6,701.⁶ Based on this value, the decrease in vehicle thefts in Boone and Winnebago counties between 2002 and 2003 amounted to a savings of \$830,924. Based on the varying values of stolen motor vehicles from year to year over the past five years the decrease in motor vehicle thefts in Boone and Winnebago counties resulted in a savings of \$2,863,600.

NIATTF has received a total of \$4 million in funding from the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Trust Fund. The task force has recovered 5,254 vehicles that are worth an estimated \$25 million. Combining the recovery value with the savings from reduced auto theft, the task force has produced an estimated \$26 million 'return' on its \$4 million in funding, more than \$6 for every \$1 of funding.

⁶ This is the most recent estimate available; the value for 2002 was used to calculate the total savings for 2003. *Crime in the United States – 2002: Uniform Crime Reports*. Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2004.

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