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08/22/2004 -- AT&T and VINE Help Locate Beds for Feds

VIENNA, Va. - The Victim Information & Notification Everyday database (VINE) is now being used by the Office of Federal Detention Trustee (OFDT) to locate available bed space for federal inmates over the Internet.

AT&T Government Solutions and Appriss Inc., VINE's purveyor, launched the National Repository for Detention Space Availability to help state and local governments to electronically post the availability of detention space.

Through VINE, Appriss receives real-time data feeds describing movements of prisoners. VINE's facility-level population statistics are fed into the OFDT repository. By comparing VINE's population counts with data obtained from state, local and private detention facilities, OFDT infers a count of available spaces.

According to John Scalia Jr., an OFDT statistician, data describing a facility's operating capacity may not be as reliable as the population counts, but the online repository currently includes more than 500 state, local and private detention facilities.

"The Appriss Data Network is connected to more than 65 percent of the nation's county and state prison beds," said Mike Davis, Appriss president. "With this kind of data, we can automatically update the OFDT on offender bed space on a real-time basis."

The Appriss/OFDT system joins an online bed-location market shared by FSG Software, which launched JailBedSpace.com in July 2003. While the ODFT's service has the weight of the federal government behind it, JailBedSpace.com retains the edge in user-friendliness, offering point-and-click color-coded maps. In addition, JailBedSpace.com's information on capacities is updated directly by local jail administrators.

Beginning in October 2004, the OFDT initiated a data collection effort to gather information describing the approximately 1,900 facilities operating under federal contract. Approximately 1,100 responses were received by March 1, 2003, and facility administrators now have the capability to update their information online.

AT&T Government Solutions and Appriss also partnered in July 2000 on the federal Victim Notification System (VNS). Currently, VNS notifies victims on the custody and court status of federal offenders under the jurisdiction of the FBI, Federal Bureau of Prisons and U.S. Attorneys.

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