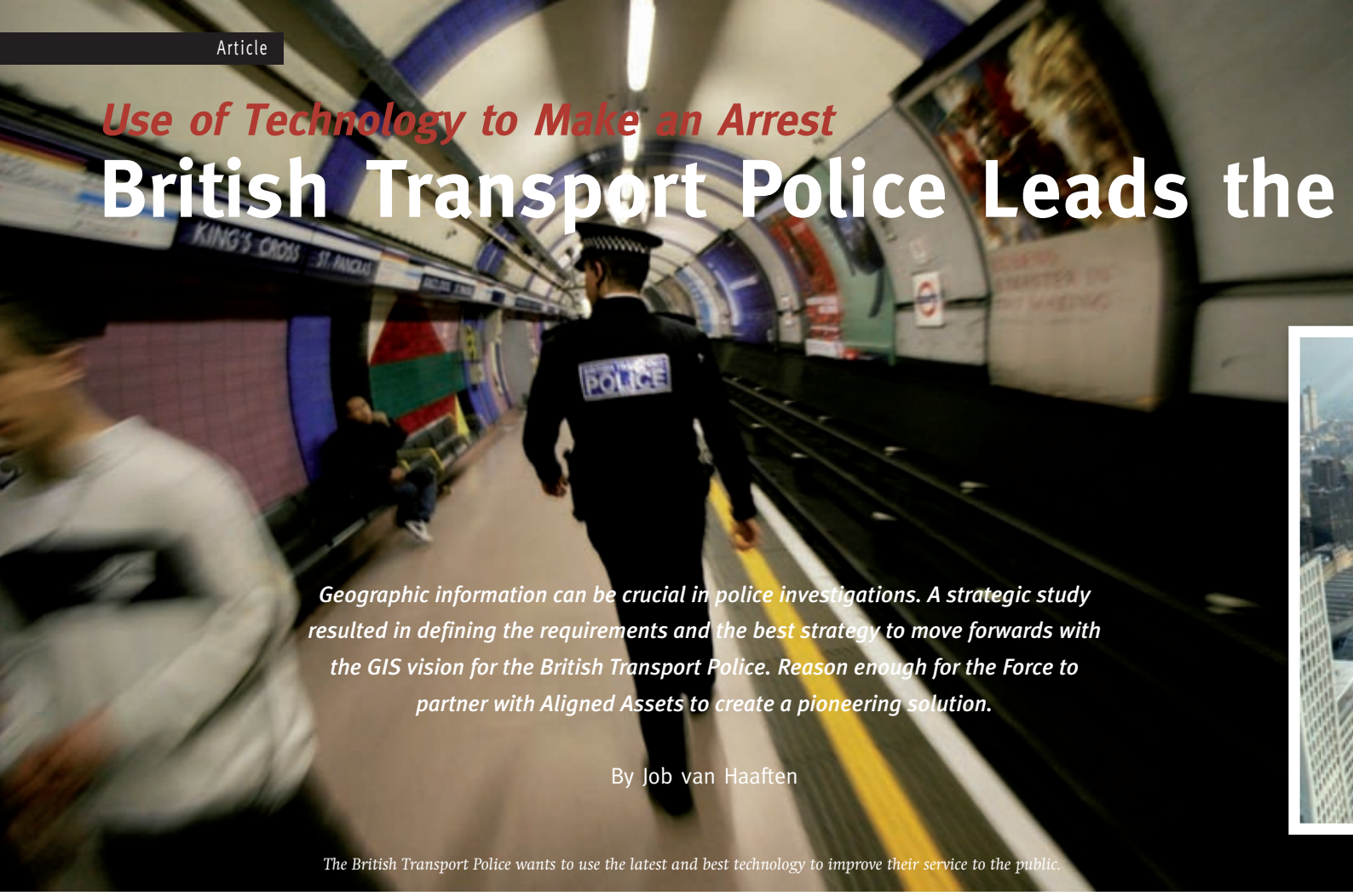
Use of Technology to Make an Arrest

British Transport Police Leads the



Geographic information can be crucial in police investigations. A strategic study resulted in defining the requirements and the best strategy to move forwards with the GIS vision for the British Transport Police. Reason enough for the Force to partner with Aligned Assets to create a pioneering solution.

By Job van Haaften

The British Transport Police wants to use the latest and best technology to improve their service to the public.

Whilst many will cite the arrest of Dr. Crippen, apprehended after a wireless message was sent to the ship upon which he was escaping in 1910, as the first use of technology to make an arrest, the British Transport Police can point to an incident over half a century earlier. In 1845, Sergeant Williams of the Great Western Railway was alerted to the imminent arrival into Paddington of suspected murderer John Tawell by a message sent from Slough. This tradition of staying at the forefront of technology continues to this day within the Transport Police and 'location' remains as crucial now as it was in the 19th Century.

Accuracy and Communication

Today, when the British Transport Police respond to an incident, those needing their help are extremely unlikely to consider how the officers arrived at the scene. However, the accuracy and communication of the location could mean the difference between life and death. Because of this level of seriousness it is vital that the data and applications used by the Transport Police are accurate, available and accessible to all their staff. The latest developments that are now planned for their Geographic Information System (GIS) are designed to ensure that the officers of the British Transport Police can respond to any and all emergency situations.

Controlled from their headquarters in Camden (a suburb of northern London) the British Transport Police is divided into seven geographical regions made up of 88 police stations and over 3000 staff. In an organisation so geographically diverse, the Force estimates that over 90% of their data has a spatial component (address and/or postcode, or x, y coordinates of crime and incident information) and therefore the potential to fully exploit a single GIS is tremendous.

Sharing and Accesibility

The way the Force use GIS has come a long way. Having started as a 'mapping tool' that was part of the NSPIS Command & Control System, used merely to present maps in digital format, its use was extended to accommodate the needs of Intelligence Analysts. However other departments and areas of the Force had different requirements and over the years have procured their separate, specific systems. This use of individual applications and data sources could give rise to problems in the future and the Force recognises that sharing and accessibility of data across the whole organisation is vital to meet the current threats.

In 2005 and 2006, a strategic study was undertaken to identify shortfalls, the overall requirements and the best strategy to move forwards with the GIS vision for the Force.

The conclusions of this work include the need to:

- Provide maps and map based searches to the high number of users that daily require them (estimated in excess of 1,000) whether they are in the office or on the street.
- Provide access to GB wide OS MasterMap as well aerial photography to all staff as and when required, this involves the rapid access to terabytes of information held in a secure and robust environment with a 24/7 availability.
- To centrally manage and maintain a single spatial database which will be accessible for all stakeholders in the organisation, giving live updates and immediate availability.
- Eliminate duplicated effort, enabling the more efficient use of resources to develop and enhance the products.

Pioneering Solution

To achieve these ambitious aims the Force has partnered with Aligned Assets Limited whose experienced and knowledgeable staff will work to create a pioneering solution. The Aligned Asset solution will ensure that all the British Transport Force systems integrate with common, centrally maintained and controlled spatial data. With the implementation of this work the Force will have full access to the Ordnance Survey MasterMap dataset as well as other map layers. The project will also see

Way with New GIS

Waterloo Station in London.

the first major implementation that utilises the full value of the National Land and Property Gazetteer data, by an emergency service. Aligned Assets vast experience of working with this data will be of huge benefit to the British Transport Police.

Said Ian Rudd, Senior Sales Consultant for Aligned Assets: "Aligned Assets is very pleased to be starting an exciting new venture with British Transport Police. We will be providing an integrated spatial management solution based upon open solutions, linking all their key systems including Command and Control into an open spatial environment with single address database based upon the NLPG. This is one of the first fully integrated uses of NLPG by the emergency services in the UK. It will be a prime example of the benefits of open solutions bringing the best of breed working together to provide the best solution for the customer".

With the implementation of this project the British Transport Police will continue their proud tradition of using the latest and best technology to improve their service to the public.

Thanks to Helen Lum from Aligned Assets. For more information on this subject visit: www.aligned-assets.co.uk and www.btp.police.uk