

Effingham County Sheriff Office Radio Development Study 2007-Present
(Report prepared by Ted Heath Effingham County 911 Board Member)
October 7th, 2013

Around 2004

Effingham County Sheriff's Office (SO) received a Star Com consolleto from ILEAS valued at approximately \$16,000

February 26, 2007

Sheriff John Monnet sends letter to Congressman John Shimkus stating Star Com 21 will be Effingham County's primary communication system but that they also wish to develop a VHF High band components for the purpose of talking with Fire Departments. SO requested approximately \$500,000. In the letter to Shimkus the Sheriff makes the following assurances:

"By adopting StarCom 21 as Effingham County's primary dispatch system, we will have met the interoperability requirements as outlined by StarComm."

October 15th, 2007

Sheriff John Monnet signs agreement letter with SCIRP office (South Central Illinois Regional Planning and Development who is the office who coordinated the second grant) in which he assures Fred Walker director of that office that the Effingham County Sheriff's Office will use the PSIC grant money for developing a Star Com system. In fact Fred Walker sent the Sheriff an template commitment letter and the Sheriff copied the language word for word onto Sheriff's Office stationery and signed it. The SCIRP office was responsible for helping with the grant application for law enforcement agencies in 5 counties. The grant came from DHS to ITTF (Illinois Terrorism Taskforce) who distributed it to the SCIRP office. SCIRP would then pay the bills for the departments using the grant money. The Sheriff's Office received 45 Star Com portable radios from the SCIRP office in mid 2010 in which the SCIRP office paid the invoice to Motorola using the PSIC grant money. In his letter to SCIRP Monnet assures the following:

"Our department agrees to utilize any forthcoming proceeds of the PSIC grant to facilitate the use of Star Com 21 system and the State of Illinois 700 MHZ bandwidth in order to achieve greater interoperability between inter-jurisdictional and inter-agency communication."

February 12, 2008

Effingham Police Chief Mike Schutzbach and John Loy report to the 911 Board (documented in the 911 Minutes) that they received two grants to go to Star Com 21 system. This would be the SCIRP/ITTF grant and the department of justice COPS grant.

April 8, 2008

Chief Mike Schutzbach reports to the 911 Board that if the County goes to Star Com 21 the City of Effingham will follow (documented in 911 minutes).

April 11th, 2008

Sheriff's Office receives notification that they were awarded \$140,295 COPS grant from the Department of Justice. Unfortunately the Sheriff's Office spent 100% of this money on VHF High Band components. The Sheriff has repeatedly maintained this was all the money he had to build a radio system even though he received another \$150,000 from the PSIC SCIRP grant and had \$170,000 in federal drug forfeiture money.

June 10th 2008

Chief Deputy John Loy notifies 911 Board that the Sheriff's Office received 2 grants for radios and that the system will combine High Band and Star Com mobiles. Unknown why Loy felt he could build a hybrid system with two completely different technologies and limited funds. Clearly Loy is not a radio engineer and not qualified to design and implement complicated radio communication systems. Loy also made a motion for the 911 Board to pay the monthly user fees for both City and County of \$2000 per month which passed with a vote of 9-0. This amongst many other actions by the Sheriff's Office resulted in the 911 Board and City of Effingham believing the Sheriff's Office was going to Star Com 21. Additionally, the Sheriff assert in the Greg Sapp interview that one of the primary reasons they decided not to go Star Com was the user fees knowing full well this was not a factor in that the 911 Board had agreed to pay them.

Chief Deputy Loy then sends the minutes from this 911 Board meeting to the SCIRP office showing that the 911 Board had agreed to pay the Star Com fees. The Sheriff's Office had received permission from SCIRP to allow the Star Com fees the 911 Board agreed to pay to be counted as the their 20% grant match. However, arguably since the Sheriff's Office never went forward with Star Com and therefore the 911 Board never paid the fees, the Sheriff's Office failed to pay the required and agreed upon 20% grant match thereby violating the agreement with the SCIRP office.

June 11th, 2008

Sheriff's Office receives quotation from Global Technical for 34 Star Com 21 mobile radios in the amount of \$86,086. The invoice for these radios appeared in the results of a FOIA that was made to the SCIRP office. Apparently the Sheriff's Office submitted the invoice to SCIRP office for payment. However in a second FOIA sent to the SCIRP office, it was discovered that the Sheriff's Office decided not to go forward with the purchase of these 34 Star Com mobiles. Presumably because they decided not to go Star Com.

July 21, 2008

SCIRP Office receives invoice submitted to them by the Sheriff's Office for the 34 Tait Star Com 21 mobile radios. This invoice was found in the documents the SCIRP office sent in response to FOIA request. Apparently the transaction never went forward because the Sheriff's Office had decided not to go Star Com but did not notify the 911 Board or the City of Effingham until approximately 15 months later.

October 16th 2008

Sheriff Monnet sends letter to Motorola's Pat Hughes asking him to activate 45 Star Com mobile radios? It is unknown why Monnet would ask Motorola to activate 45 Star Com mobiles when they never purchased any Star Com mobiles and had apparently decided not to go Star Com.

October 28th, 2008

The Sheriff's Office receives an invoice from Global Technical for purchase of equipment listed below. This was the money from the \$140,295 COPS grant (department of justice) which the Sheriff has maintained was the only money he had. Purchased on the invoice were the following radios:

- 11 VHF High Band mobile radios
- 11 external speakers
- 45 vehicle repeaters (programmed for VHF High Band)
- 45 P25 VHF high band portable radios (VHF High Band)

The total of this invoice is the exact amount of the COPS grant which is \$140,295.

The 45 high band VHF portables were immediately issued out to deputies and have been collecting dust in their homes since fall of 2008 never having been used because the high band system was never implemented or completed with the Sheriff's Office falling an estimated \$250,000 short on funds.

This is one of the most disturbing pieces of evidence that was revealed in the study/investigation. Just a short four months after John Loy convinced the 911 Board to pay the monthly Star Com fees and told the 911 Board and the City of Effingham that the Sheriff's Office is going Star Com, the Sheriff's Office takes 100% of the COPS grant money and spends it on VHF High Band components. Did the Sheriff's Office intentionally mislead the Federal Government just to get the money? It seems logical to assume that they may very well have never had any intention to go to Star Com as a result of spending all their money on High Band. In fact, they received a quotation from Global Communication for the equipment above dated 10/1/2008 just 110 days after they got the City of Effingham and the 911 Board to vote to go Star Com. However, it was not until November 23rd 2009 (well over a year later) that the Sheriff came to the 911 Board and tells them that he is not going Star Com. By this time it was too late for the City of Effingham to change course even though to this day, the Sheriff blames the City of Effingham for the interoperability problem that he was solely responsible for creating and in doing so drastically increased the risk to his officers and the public.

November 6th, 2008

Department of Justice issues 2 checks to the Effingham Co. Sheriff's Dept totaling the amount of the COPS grant which is \$140,295 which was used to buy car repeaters, VHF portable radios and Star Com mobile radios (all VHF high band). Unknown why the VHF portables were purchased in that they are not related to Star Com 21. These checks were used to purchase VHF High Band equipment even though John Monnet assured Congressman Shimkus the Star Com would be their primary system. In fact, the invoice from Global Communication is dated approximately two weeks before the checks from the Department of Justice even arrived suggesting the Sheriff's Office could not get money spent fast enough, all the while deliberately and deceitfully leading the 911 Board and City of Effingham to believe they were going Star Com 21.

2009

Sometime during 2009 Effingham Police Chief Schutzbach and Mayor John Lange meet with John Monnet regarding rumors they have heard that Sheriff's Office is buying VHF high band components behind the scene. Monnet vehemently insisted he was still going Star Com even though the overwhelming evidence suggested they were going VHF High Band.

September 30, 2009

Sheriff's Office purchases 17 VHF high band Kenwood mobiles from Global totaling \$33,091. Clearly the purchase of these radios suggested they had long decided not to go to Star Com but did not communicate this to the 911 Board or the City of Effingham.

October 1, 2009

Effingham Police Chief Schutzbach reports to 911 Board that City and County had both received grants to go to Star Com and that the 911 board had approved to pay the Star Com user fees and that Star Com guarantee 98% portable coverage. Schutzbach says at 911 meeting that he now believes the County is questionable in terms of going to Star Com and will need to make a decision by December 1st. It is suspected at least part of Schutzbach's concern stemmed from the fact that he had heard Sheriff's Office was purchasing high band components behind the scene.

November 4th, 2009

Sheriff's Office purchases a \$100,000 repeater and a \$34,000 antenna from Global Technical for their VHF high band system. The 911 Board and City of Effingham still have not been told that Sheriff is going to VHF high band. It is presumed or very possible this repeater and antenna were purchased with federal drug money that the Sheriff's Office was harshly criticized by the county auditor West & Co for hiding and misusing. The Sheriff's Office opened secret bank accounts in violation of law and policy for the purpose of hiding the drug money from the County Board and the County Treasurer. However, reliable sources indicate that the Sheriff's Office also received \$130,000 from Shimkus office to go Star Com. A FOIA filed with Shimkus by Ted Heath was never answered.

November 23rd, 2009

John Monnet comes to 911 Meeting and reports that he will not be able to talk to fire departments if they go to Star Com 21. However, of course the Sheriff knows that the Fire Department is not his back up on any law enforcement function other than perhaps occasionally directing of traffic in rural areas which is often times handled by two firemen. Rarely is communication needed with fire but prior to the interoperability problem created by the Sheriff's Office, Effingham PD and the Sheriff's Office essentially worked as one department. In addition, there was the option of simply giving each fire department a Star Com portable radio which could have been used to help direct traffic when needed. The idea that talking to Fire Departments that have no law enforcement powers or authority is somehow a priority to talking to Effingham Police Department is simply more of the same deception by the Sheriff that created the whole problem in the first place.

In addition, Loy told the 911 Board they did not have the money to go to Star Com. This may have been true after they had spent all their COPS grant money on VHF High Band. Clearly the Fire Department will never be backing up the Sheriff's Office in any law enforcement situation, only occasional traffic control at the scene of an accident. However, Sheriff's deputies and Effingham Police Dept worked essentially as one unit prior to the SO creating the massive interoperability problem.

May 16th, 2010

Sheriff's Office purchases 46 Star Com portable radios directly from Motorola and the SCIRP office pays the invoice for them with the grant money from ITTF. Sheriff's Office has the radios programed for 800 mhz and issues them to the deputies who are presently using these portable radios. This invoice for \$150,000 was found in the SCIRP FOIA documents and were not included in the Sheriff's Office FOIA documents. Why did the Sheriff's Office not include this invoice for \$150,000 in its response to Ted Heath's FOIA request. The Sheriff has always maintained he only received the \$140,000 from the COPS grant. Was this information purposely excluded from their FOIA response to Heath's original FOIA. Why in July of 2013 when the County Board decided to go to Star Com did the Sheriff not speak up and tell the County Board that he had already purchased a \$150,000 worth of Star Com portables on the SCIRP grant as well as a Consolette from ILEAS but rather sat 5 feet away from Chairman Jim Niemann and allowed the County Board to purchase radios he had already received on grant. Once again, hundreds of thousands in unnecessary spending caused by the Sheriff.

October 2011

Effingham Police Department activates Star Com 21 system according to plan and triggers a massive interoperability problem (created by Sheriff John Monnet) between Effingham PD and Effingham County Sheriff's Office resulting in numerous close call safety incidents and deputies attending both 911 meetings as well as County Board meeting pleading for a solution to the problem. The 911 Board and County start down a two year road of trying to fix the interoperability problem created solely by the Sheriff's Office.

June 11th, 2013

911 Board member Ted Heath files FOIA request with Effingham County Sheriff's Office requesting all documents and invoices for the Sheriff's Office radio purchase activity since 2005. Anticipating that the Sheriff's Office may very well short him documents, Heath files FOIA with 5 other federal government agencies and discovers that the SCIRP purchased 45 Star Com portables (paid the invoice) for the Sheriff's Office. This document was not included by the Sheriff's Office to Heath's request perhaps because the Sheriff maintained he only received the \$140K from the COPS grant and never mentioned he received \$150K from ITTF/SCIRP (see Greg Sapp interview on YouTube).

July 2013

The Effingham County Board at their monthly meeting take a vote to enter a contract with Motorola to purchase a Star Com consolette, 25 Star Com mobile radios and 25 Star Com portable radios in an effort to finally fix the interoperability problem created by the Sheriff's Office. John Monnet had previous said several weeks earlier he had no problem going to Star Com. When the vote was taken, the Sheriff was sitting approximately five feet away from County Board Chairman Jim Niemann. The Sheriff failed to tell the County Board that he already had 45 Star Com portable radios and a consolette that he received on a grant from the SCIRP and ILEAS office (the radios were only two years old and cost \$150,000) and allowed the County Board to purchase another \$250,000 in radios and consollette. The Sheriff had been at previous board meetings regarding purchasing the Star Com system.

Analysis of Sheriff John Monnet interview with Greg Sapp
(available on YouTube)

May 2012

Sheriff John Monnet conducts interview with Greg Sapp of XFM radio (available on YouTube by doing a search for “Sheriff John Monnet) and makes the following statements in the 20 minutes interview.

1:07 (one minute seven seconds) The Sheriff acknowledges that the that Effingham City Police Department and the Sheriff’s Office essentially work as one department constantly backing each other up and “that’s the way its always been”. Sheriff repeatedly acknowledges that being able to back each other up is a officer and public safety issue which is the most important thing.

2:39 Sheriff says he applied for \$500K grant but only received \$140,000. Sheriff has repeatedly maintained as recently as the July 2013 county board meeting that the \$140,000 (the COPS grant) is all the money he received however knowing full well that they had \$170,000 in federal drug forfeiture money as well as \$149,000 in radios from the SCIRP/ITTF grant.

3:24 Sheriff suggests importance of talking to the rural Fire Department is high priority however, knowing it is a minor priority to talking to Effingham PD. Will the rural fire departments back up Deputies in any law enforcement situation? Fire Department communication is a luxury occasionally on traffic control. The Sheriff had the option of giving each rural fire department a Star Com portable for the occasional times fireman assist with traffic control. However, EPD and EFSO work as one department especially on midnight shift. As the Sheriff knows, talking to fire is a low priority compared to being able to talk to EPD which he acknowledge is the only reliable back up to his officers.

3:58 Sheriff suggests lack of Star Com coverage was another reason they went high band however Sheriff knows Motorola guarantees 98% coverage as part of their contractual obligation. Sheriff spent close to \$600,000 on high band and needed another \$250,000 to finish high band because an estimated 5 additional repeater towers were needed because high band portable coverage was so poor.

4:39 Sheriff insists talking to fire departments out in the rural county is priority knowing that they are not trained, authorized or equipped to take any law enforcement actions but that Effingham City Police are deputized to act in a law enforcement capacity when they come into county to assist Sheriff deputies. Rural fire does not even have authority to detain a person which of course the Sheriff knows. Imagine if for example, Shumway Fire Department was battling a large dangerous structure fire that was raging out of control and threatened to spread to other structures and they were yelling on the radio for

backup. Would they want the Effingham County Sheriff's Office to hear their radio traffic (who by the way has no training or equipment to fight fires) or would they want Effingham City Fire Department to hear their requests for assistance?

5:18 Sheriff insists Star Com coverage is inadequate in county even though State Police communicate routinely with portable radios in the county with use of vehicle repeaters 45 of which the Sheriff purchased with his COPS grant money.

5:38 Sheriff says the **only** people on Star Com in the County is Effingham PD and State Police even though these are his primary law enforcement back up.

6:38 Sheriff continues to insist that talking to fire departments and "other counties" is a priority to talking (or listening and monitoring) to Effingham PD when he knows full well only rare non-emergency radio traffic is needed with rural fire but that EPD and ECSO essentially work as one department. Sheriff knows that the State of Illinois has radio channels such as IREACH and ISPERN (installed in virtually every squad car in the state of Illinois) for the purpose of communicating with other counties on such issues as the rare cross county pursuits.

7:04 The Sheriff asserts that "when the City decided to go Star Com" the interoperability problem started, knowing full well, he is the one who told the City that he was going Star Com but and they simply followed him and he waited approximately 15 months before telling them he changed his mind. Sheriff states he can no longer hear their radio traffic and that "the connection is gone".

7:40 Sheriff suggests again that he did not go to Star Com because he could not pay the user fees knowing full well that in April 2008 the 911 Board voted to pay the user fees for him, in fact it was his Chief Deputy John Loy who made the motion and the Chief Deputy sent the minutes of that meeting to the SCIRP office asking them to count the Star Com fees paid by the 911 board as their 20% grant match which they agreed to do with the understanding that the County was going Star Com (which the Sheriff knew they were not).

8:25 Sheriff acknowledges that he can no longer hear EPD traffic and as a result is not in a position to back them up on such potentially dangerous calls as domestic disputes. Sheriff acknowledges that this is a "sad" situation and he can no longer hear what is going on with EPD. (editorial comment: its sad and dangerous and very bad for morale and John Monnet is solely responsible).

8:45 Sheriff acknowledges that State Police are essentially EPD's only back up and specifically states they are spread so thin they (State Police) can not be counted upon as back up. Sheriff states that his deputies are much more likely to be able to back city officers than State Police. Sheriff states ECSO can no longer hear "what's going on" and that "direct communication that we use to have is gone".

9:35 Greg Sapp challenges Sheriff saying that all agencies agreed to go Star Com but that the economics stopped it ? (?)

11:15 Sheriff says his goal was “98% coverage for the county”. There is a good chance this number came from Motorola because that is the very number that they guarantee with their system which is stated in documents that the Sheriff’s Office had and were in the FOIA response they provided.

11:24 Sheriff says that they put up “additional towers” with the high band system and that they are now “getting that coverage” with high band. Again a knowingly false statement made by the Sheriff. The Sheriff knows full well that they only have one tower on top of Siever milling and that they needed another \$250,000 to erect 5 more towers (based upon Global Technical’s recommendation) and that the portable coverage of the high band system in rural county areas is very poor. Once again, many knowingly deceptive statements made by Sheriff Monnet.

12:23 Sheriff says they added a tower on top of Siever milling which really helped the VHF high band system. Sheriff knows that this is the only tower they erected at a cost of \$134,000 which is believed to have come from Federal drug Seizure money which the auditors harshly criticized the Sheriff for hiding from the county board.

12:35 Sheriff again asserts high priority of talking to rural departments knowing full well that most radio traffic with fire can be handled through telecommunicators. For example a dispatcher saying to a deputy “fire department wants you to close off traffic to an intersection etc”.

13:30 Greg Sapp asks the question that the Sheriff was clearly not prepared for and likely did not want to answer and that is “once the VHF high band system is finished, will ECSO and EPD be able to talk to each other on their portables when they are out of their cars or will the interoperability problem still exist”. The Sheriff acknowledges that the interoperability problem will still exist and is clearly a bit stunned by the question.

14:36 Sheriff discusses trying the “Bridge” devise. Bare in mind this is 8 months after the City went Star Com and the Bridge was not implemented for many months after city went Star Com.

15:14 Greg Sapp asks Sheriff about an incident in which deputies and EPD officers were on a scene in which a suspect fled in a foot pursuit situation and the officer was trying to communicate on his portable radio but no one could hear him and poses the question with respect to the danger if the suspect was armed and Sheriff acknowledges it is a problem. Sheriff acknowledges they do not have portable (hand held radio) communication and he hopes the bridge will help but fails to say that he is solely responsible of the problem in fact at the July 2013 County Board meeting the Sheriff uncorks on the county board

saying “why did the city not go high band” as if to blame Chief Schutzbach who played no role and had no control in creating the problem and always did what he said he was going to do.

16:20 Sheriff acknowledges that dangerous situations develop in a very dynamic way and seconds are important.

17:02 Greg Sapp makes the challenging statement “if we had a situation in which officer use to be able to talk and now they can’t that does not sound like progress to me”. Of course the entire purpose of the SCIRP/ITTF grant was to improve interoperability but instead, the Sheriff created a massive interoperability where it did not previously exist so this is a great question. Sheriff acknowledges that “it is not progress” but fails to say he is solely responsible which the evidence overwhelmingly shows he is.

17:45 Greg Sapp tells the Sheriff that the 911 Board maintains that it is not in the radio business and has no control over what radio systems the respective law enforcement agencies use and that the 911 Board only has the responsibility to dispatch calls. At 18:10 Sheriff disputes this claim and asserts that the 911 Board is involved in communications and needs to be involved. However since the filling of various FOIAs by 911 Board member Ted Heath the Sheriff has now back peddled and repeatedly asserted the radios are not the 911 Boards business.

18:15 Greg Sapp again asks the Sheriff if the 911 Board should be involved in the Sheriff’s radios and the Sheriff insists they should be even though he came out in the T-Town newspaper (after the radio investigation started) and now insists radios are **not** a 911 issue.

18:41 Sheriff once again insists that the 911 Board can not opt out of involvement in the Sheriff’s Office radio problems that we must work together to solve the problem even though now the Sheriff does not want 911 involved in radio. He continues to assert that this is a “unity thing and we should not go different directions” even though he led EPD the federal government and the 911 Board to believe he was going Star Com he was behind the scenes deceptively building a high band system which failed and cost between \$500,000 and \$600,000.

18:50 Greg Sapp asks Sheriff is he has a good working relationship with EPD. Sheriff acknowledges that he has had complaints from both county deputies as well as EPD officers that they can not communicate to which the Sheriff says that “we are all one family and there will never be a separation”. Sheriff speaks about the importance of EPD and ECSO “working together” and that they (the road officers and road deputies) “want to work together”

The interview can be watched on YouTube at the following web address

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8MzWVbwoa8>

Conclusion

The Sheriff's Office never finished high band VHF system. It was estimated they needed another approximate \$250,000 for 5 towers. Apparently the Chief Deputy largely designed the VHF system and is not qualified to do so. The VHF high band system was never put out for bid. In fact, even though the Sheriff's Office told everyone they were going Star Com, they never spent a dime on anything Star Com related but spent over \$500,000 on High Band. They were given 45 Star Com portables on a grant that they reprogrammed for their old 800 system.

The purpose of all the grants were to enhance interoperability. Instead of enhancing interoperability, the Sheriff's Office spent approximately \$600,000 (even though the Sheriff has repeatedly maintained he only had \$140,000) and actually created a massive interoperability problem that did not previously exist and in doing so, endangered their employees and the public. They purchased 28 mobile radios and 92 portable radios (does not include the 25 Star Com portables the County Board just purchased) and still failed to complete a functional system. In total there has been 116 portable radios purchased. There is evidence of great deception that was employed by the Sheriff's Office in this effort. The County Board in June of 2013 finally decided to solve the problem by purchasing \$230,000 of Star Com radios to go to Star Com. Why did the Sheriff's Office not tell the County Board they already had a Star Com console as well as 46 Star Com portables they received on grants? Why did they sit by and allow the county board to purchase equipment they already had?

The radio debacle was a catastrophic failure involving great deception and incompetence on the part of Sheriff John Monnet. This deception created a massive interoperability problem between Effingham Police Department and Effingham County Sheriff's Office and a cover up was launched by the Sheriff.