

Homicide Symposium

Conducting the Neighborhood Canvass

Search Management



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Preplanning

- The most important search and canvass planning was done prior to your call out
- Studies have shown that agencies which have a preplanned response:
 - Are more efficient
 - Get personnel to the field faster
 - Have quicker access to specialized resources and personnel
 - Are more effective



Canvassing Preplan

- Pre-Incident Planning
 - Training of Law Enforcement Officers
 - ◆ Specialized Training
 - ◆ Ready for Call Out
 - Establish Pool of Qualified Volunteers
 - ◆ Specialized Training
 - ◆ ID group leaders
 - ◆ Ready for Call Out
 - ID of Technology
 - ◆ Type
 - ◆ Ability to Operate it
 - ◆ Does it work and is it updated
 - ID of Available Equipment
 - ◆ Location
 - ◆ Who has Access



Canvassing

- Information Gathering
 - Distance of Canvassing
 - ◆ How far should a Canvass extend
 - Analysis of Information
 - ◆ Who does the analysis of the information that the Canvassers are getting
 - Elimination of Suspects
 - ◆ Sex Offenders in Area
 - Specific, trained officers for contact (probation / parole)
 - ◆ Information Provided from Information
 - Centralized Reporting
 - Follow – Up
 - ◆ Re-canvass
 - ◆ When there has been no contact
 - ◆ Next Day / Next Week



Why Pre-Plan

- Facilitates a realistic assessment of incident resources
 - Can the resources on hand get the job done?
 - Do I need additional resources?
 - Where and how do I acquire them?
- Orients personnel to operational procedures and policies
 - Keeps personnel trained and current
 - Preloads personnel so they can work immediately once they are assigned to an incident



A Pre-Plan Contains:

- Checklists
 - Emergency Actions
 - Planning tasks (Who does what)
 - Complex tasks (Detailed instructions)
- Resource lists
 - People
 - Equipment
 - Supplies
 - Food, Transportation, etc.



Summary Question

- What additional kinds of checklists and resource lists – besides the ones mentioned in this chapter – could be added to your preplan?
 - Pre-segmented maps of known search areas, list of current contractors for often used commodities, copies of resource standards, signage for the Incident Base, Pre-planned Medical Plans, Communications Plans, FBI Guidelines for the Investigation of Missing Children, NCMEC checklists, etc.

ICS In the Canvass

Principles for Effective Management of the
Search and Canvass Operation



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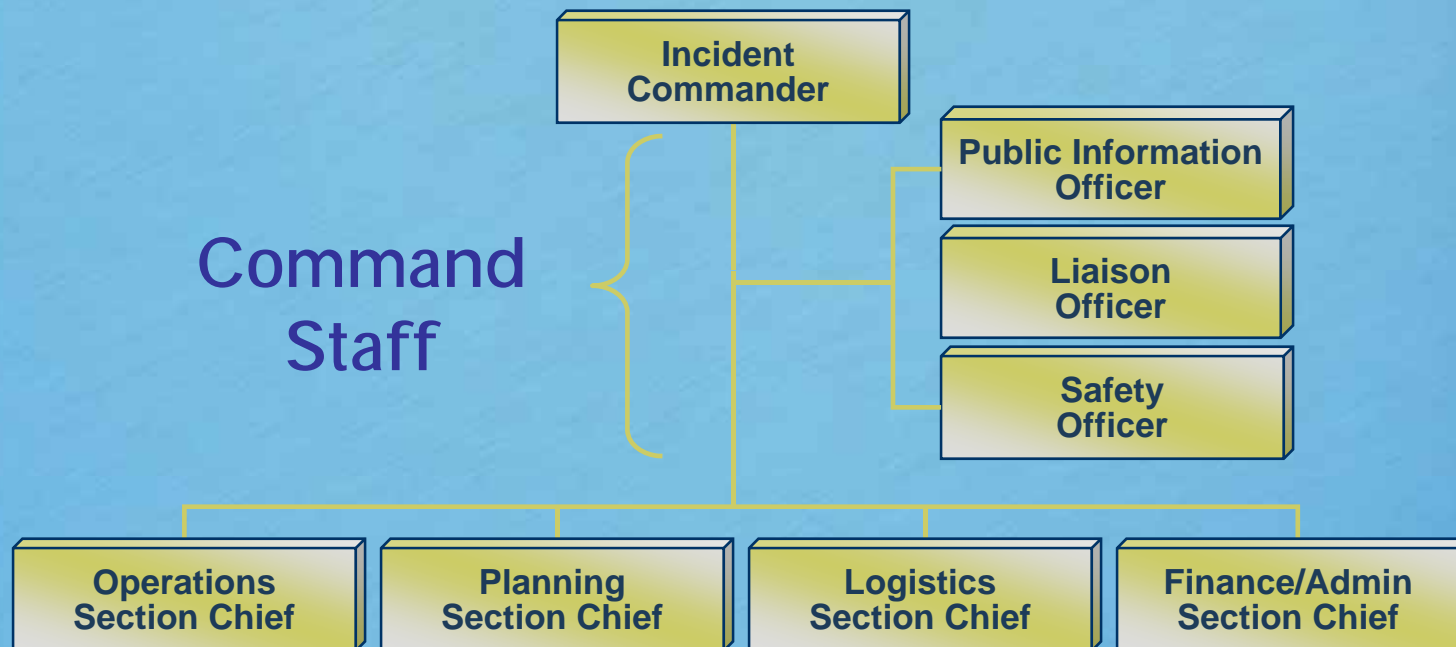


ICS

- The principles of ICS are an effective means of managing a search and canvass operations
- These techniques allow personnel from multiple jurisdictions and varied disciplines to work together
- ICS works all the way down to the street level

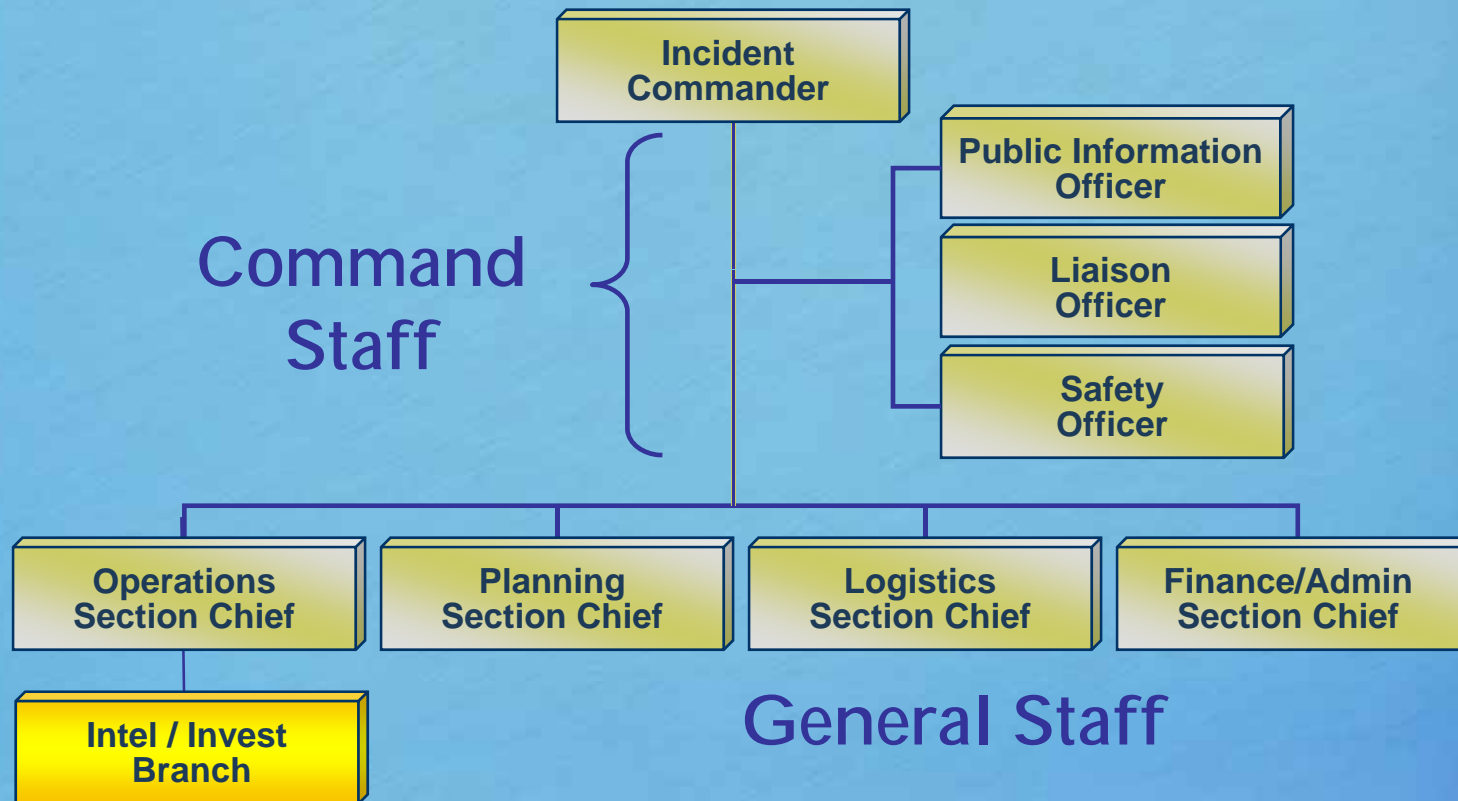


Incident Management Structure



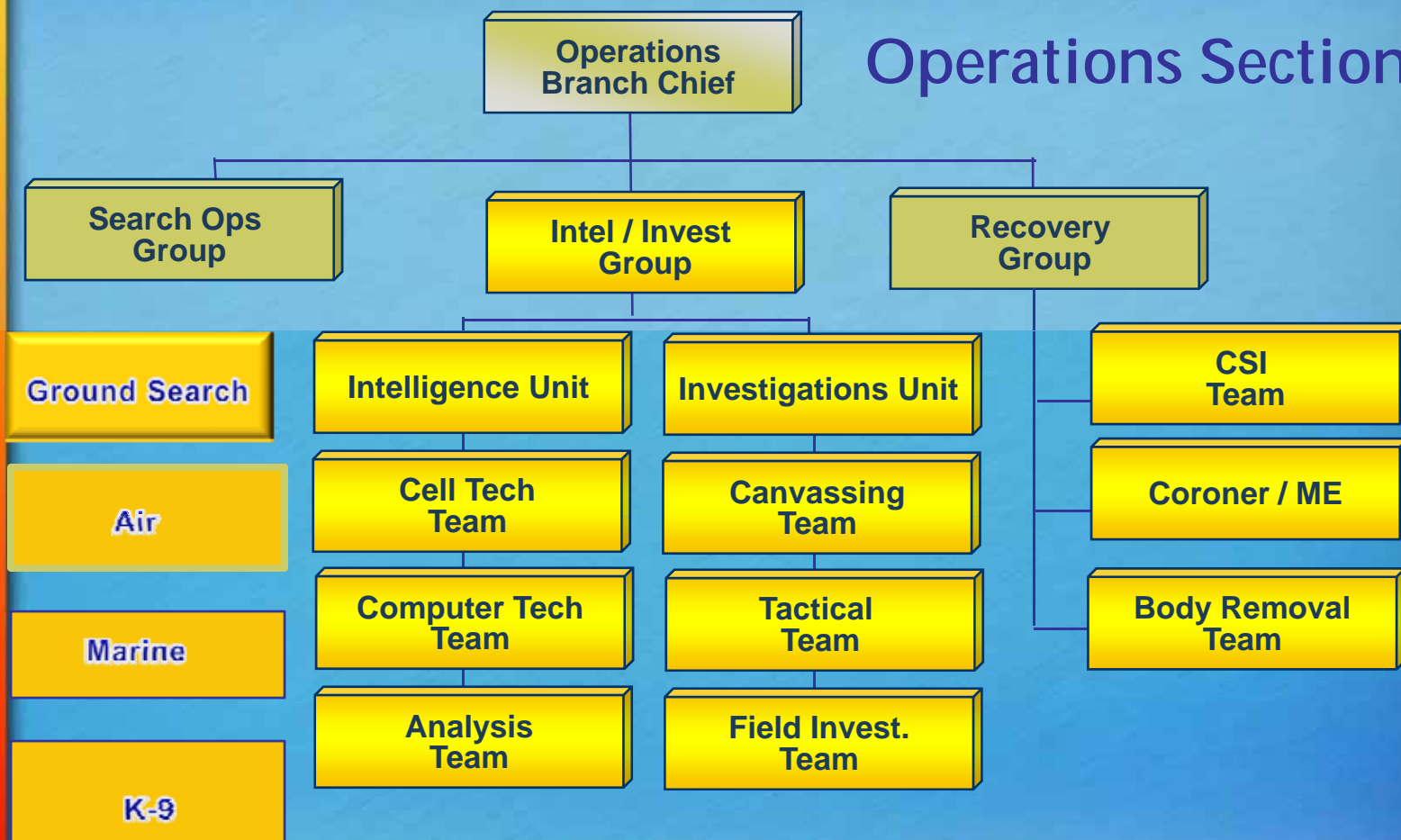


Incident Management Structure





Incident Management Structure





Delegation

- Assigning level of decision making authority to subordinates
- Important component of ICS because of the fluid manner in which management grows to match the incident
- Need to avoid *micro-management*



Span of Control

- There is always a limit to the number of people one person can supervise
- Ideal span is 5:1
- It fluctuates depending on the tasking and its complexity
- ICS is designed to meet the incident needs



Unity of Command

- No individual must have more than one direct Supervisor
- Especially important when:
 - More than one agency
 - All required to work together
 - Unusual circumstances



History of Issues

- No systematic gathering, processing and dissemination of intelligence
- Inappropriate actions or lack of action by first responders
- Poor briefing of responding personnel
- Containment personnel being drawn off post
- Poor media/information management
- Information disseminated without verification
- Poor documentation
- No structured chain of command



History of Issues (Cont)

- Poorly trained/inexperienced commanders
- Interference or disruption by higher ups
- Failure to delegate operational authority to subordinates
- IC trying to "remote control" field ops
- IC or Ops commanders unfamiliar with department SOP
- Outdated or conflicting plans, policy and procedure



History Issues (Cont.)

- Commanders not aware of capabilities and limitations of their personnel and resources
- Supervisors becoming "participants"
- Tendency to rush into undefined actions without a plan
- Uncontrolled response of personnel/resources
- Lack of call out procedures
- Poor tracking of resources

Conducting the Canvass

Search and Canvass Operations



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Importance of the Canvass

Washington State Attorney General's Report on Victim Abduction Homicides:

- Studies show that the victim's last known location is usually very close to the site of the initial contact between the killer and the victim
- When police did not know the initial contact site, the solvability rate dropped to 23.9%
- When the initial contact site was known, the solvability rate increased to 79.7%



Search and Canvass Management

- Managing search and canvass operations in the aftermath of an abduction can be amongst the most difficult challenge the investigator may ever be asked to undertake
- Normal investigative procedures and tactics are complicated by the need to quickly locate and recover the suspect, victim or evidence
- Tactics must account for containment, travel routes, subject behavior, geographical barriers, evidence handling, and a dangerous suspect



Special Considerations for Kidnap or Victim Abductions

- There is a greater exigency present in an abduction search than the typical lost or missing person search
- Searches are for locating the missing/abducted victim **AND** for locating evidence
- Searchers must know what to do when locating evidence
- Security of searchers must be considered if the suspect is still at large



Before You Start...

- Document the name and ID of the person assigned the task
- Check off each assignment as completed
- Annotate the date and time the task was completed
- Assignments requiring follow up should be annotated with the name/ID of the person making the assignment
- Standardized forms should be attached to checklist for documentation



Conducting the Search and Canvass

- Clearly define parameters for the neighborhood as to what areas are to be included, thus avoiding any confusion as to areas of responsibilities
- Be specific use maps, aerial photos and actual addresses to make sure nothing is missed
- Avoid "seams" in the search



Search Operations Coordinator (SOC)

- SOC should be involved in the investigation from the onset
- This will allow the SOC to evaluate the extent of likely search parameters
- To identify and safeguard items belonging to the victim that may aid scent dogs
- By being present as the case develops the SOC may establish preliminary contact with additional resources and arrange for their immediate response, if needed



Search Operations Coordinator (SOC)

- When the operation is underway, it is recommended the SOC remain at a central location, most likely the command post, and coordinate the activities of those involved in the actual search
- By doing so the SOC is able to evaluate any new information coming in from investigators or other search components and direct search operations accordingly
- The SOC works closely with investigators



When the Search and Canvass Starts

- Search and Canvass operations should start as soon as possible
- At this point some actions should have already been taken:
 - Containment
 - Protection of crime scenes and PLS
 - Victim/Suspect Descriptions broadcast
 - Mobilization of resources
 - Preplanning
 - A search of the victim's home
 - Hasty Checks (At the minimum started)



Emergency Rescue

- Initial planning must include an emergency plan of action for immediate rescue should the victim/suspect be located





First Responder Actions

- The actions taken by first responders are the most important aspects of the investigation
- In cases where first responders failed to secure crime scenes, missed evidence or suspect information, the success rate plummeted



Initial Response to the Incident Location

- The initial response to the incident location should be rapid
- Priorities
 - Protection of the scene(s)
 - Quick analysis of the area to be searched
 - Alert investigators of the situation
 - Move to quickly confine the movement of the subject/victim



Initial Response

- Units should be deployed rapidly, day or night, leaving investigations and the implementation of a more structured management team to develop in parallel to the initial field response
- Don't get caught up on having all of the pieces in place before deployment to contain and isolate



Containment

- First responders should *immediately* setup roadblocks and check all vehicles leaving both the local area and the region
- This may cause considerable traffic congestion
- It may also have the major benefit of capturing the abductor and recovering the abducted victim



Strategy of Containment

- If some time has elapsed since the crime roadblocks will need to be set up both locally and at some considerable travel-distance away from the PLS
- Notify the media that a major search is underway and announce that vehicles leaving the area are being searched
- This may discourage the abductor from attempting to leave the search area or cause him/her to release the victim



Strategy of Containment (cont.)

- Provide the media with a description or photos of the missing victim, abductor and vehicle if possible
- This information should be distributed by the media as soon as possible, as the public often provides the first clues as to an abducted person's whereabouts
- It familiarizes residents with the purpose of your search and encourages cooperation



Strategy of Containment (cont.)

- A highly visible police presence should be maintained within the local neighborhood of the abduction as this may force the abductor to stay 'holed up' within the area
- *One young girl's life was saved because the abductor was too scared to move out of his house into a police and searcher-filled neighborhood*



Exit Routes

- A common theme of abduction cases is the rapid transportation of the victim, by vehicle, away from the location of the abduction
- The abductor and for some time, the victim, may be driven rapidly away from the PLS
- Main highways or more remote secondary roads may be used by the abductor attempting to quickly leave the abduction site



Exit Routes (Cont.)

- These 'Exit Routes' should be quickly identified and, if possible, road blocks rapidly set up to prevent the abductor from leaving the region
- Given the estimated lead time the abductor may have it may often be necessary to set up these containment road blocks at a considerable distance from the PLS, perhaps even a few hours drive away



Exit Route Survey & Search

- In addition to setting up road blocks on all the 'Exit Routes' these routes should also be carefully examined, by assigned search teams, to identify:
 - All likely turn-offs the abductor might have taken, that are visible from the road, and that appear to lead to secluded 'concealment and disposal' locations
 - All buildings, bushes, creeks, bridges etc, visible and easily accessible from the road, where an abductor may choose to conceal a person or dispose of a body



Disposal Sites

- It is a sad truth that the suspect of an abduction may resort to homicide
- The abductor may take the abducted victim to a preplanned murder/disposal site
- He may have previously "scouted" a place of concealment for his activities
- By checking these areas at the onset of the investigation, officers may locate the suspect "before" he can commit the murder of the victim



First Responders Should;

- Protect the crime scene, PLS and:
 - The victim's home
 - Personal articles such as hairbrush, diary, photographs
 - Items with the victim's fingerprints/footprints/teeth impressions
- Determine if any of the victim's personal items are missing
- If possible, photograph/videotape these areas



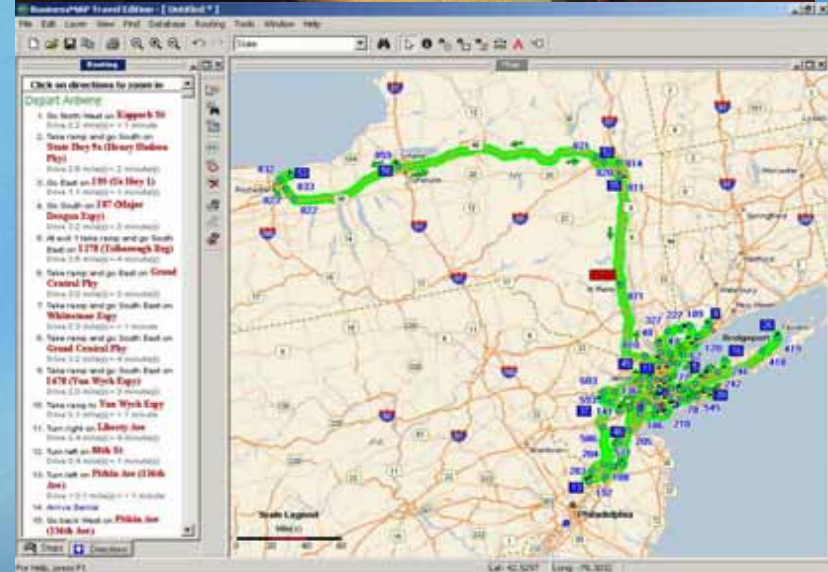
Command Post

- A field command post (FCP) should be established in each neighborhood or geographic area to be searched
- Consider placing the command post at the outer-perimeter of the area to be searched
- The command post should contain sufficient supplies to support search efforts
- Emergency response teams, CSI and other specialized resources may be staged at the FCP



Status Mapping

- It imperative that very detailed assignment forms and status maps be kept, to ensure that their information can be accurately tracked





First Steps in the Search and Canvass

- Review and evaluate all available information and evidence collected so far
- Collect article(s) of the victim's clothing for scent-tracking purposes
- Secure the victim's latest medical and dental records
- Conduct a criminal-history check on all principal suspects
- Begin assigning teams to each suspect
- Begin victimology



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Victimology





Victimology

- Cohen & Felson's (1979) Routine Activities Theory –
- Popular among victimologists today
- Briefly, it says that crime occurs whenever three conditions come together:
 - (1) suitable targets - and we will always have suitable targets as long as there are offenders
 - (2) motivated offenders - and we will always have motivated offenders



Goals

- "Victimology," or the study of victims:
 - An examination of every facet of their lifestyle, background, health, and physical characteristics
- It is hoped that through an in-depth examination of the victims, we may know the perpetrator a little better



Benefits

- Victimology is important in the overall investigative process because it not only tells us who the victims were but also tells us:
 - their health
 - personal history
 - social habits
 - personality
- Also provides ideas as to why they were chosen as victims



Things We Want to Know

- Physical traits
- Relationships (boyfriends/girlfriends, etc.)
- Personal lifestyle away from the family
- Activities
- Education history
- Medical history
- Criminal history



Things We Want to Know

- Last known activities, including a timeline of events
- Personal diaries (if known and available)
- Map of travel prior to offence
- Drug and alcohol history
- Friends and enemies
- Family background
- Employment, of parents and others



Information Gathering (cont.)

- Investigators should:
 - Search computer data base for solved and unsolved cases involving similar M.O.
 - Prowler, peeping tom, and night burglary cases occurring in the area should be researched and receive close scrutiny
 - Vehicle, Pedestrian Stops, Suspicious Person or Vehicle Calls, or On-View Events that occurred in a similar time frame and location should be explored



Initial Actions

- Contact landfill management and request they segregate garbage and dumping containers from areas associated with the investigation





Initial Actions (cont.)

- Establish a leads-management system to prioritize leads (and help ensure each is followed up on) prior to deployment of search teams





Perimeter Control

- Prior to initiating the search and canvass of a particular area
- Made up of Traffic Control Points, Road blocks, mobile patrols and observation points



Purposes

- Conduct door-to-door searches, neighborhood canvasses, and vehicle checks because/to:
 - People may have information they do not know they have
 - Search for potential witnesses
 - Search for potential clues or evidence
 - Check for inconsistent and consistent information being provided
 - Search for the victim being concealed in the area
 - Identify potential suspects

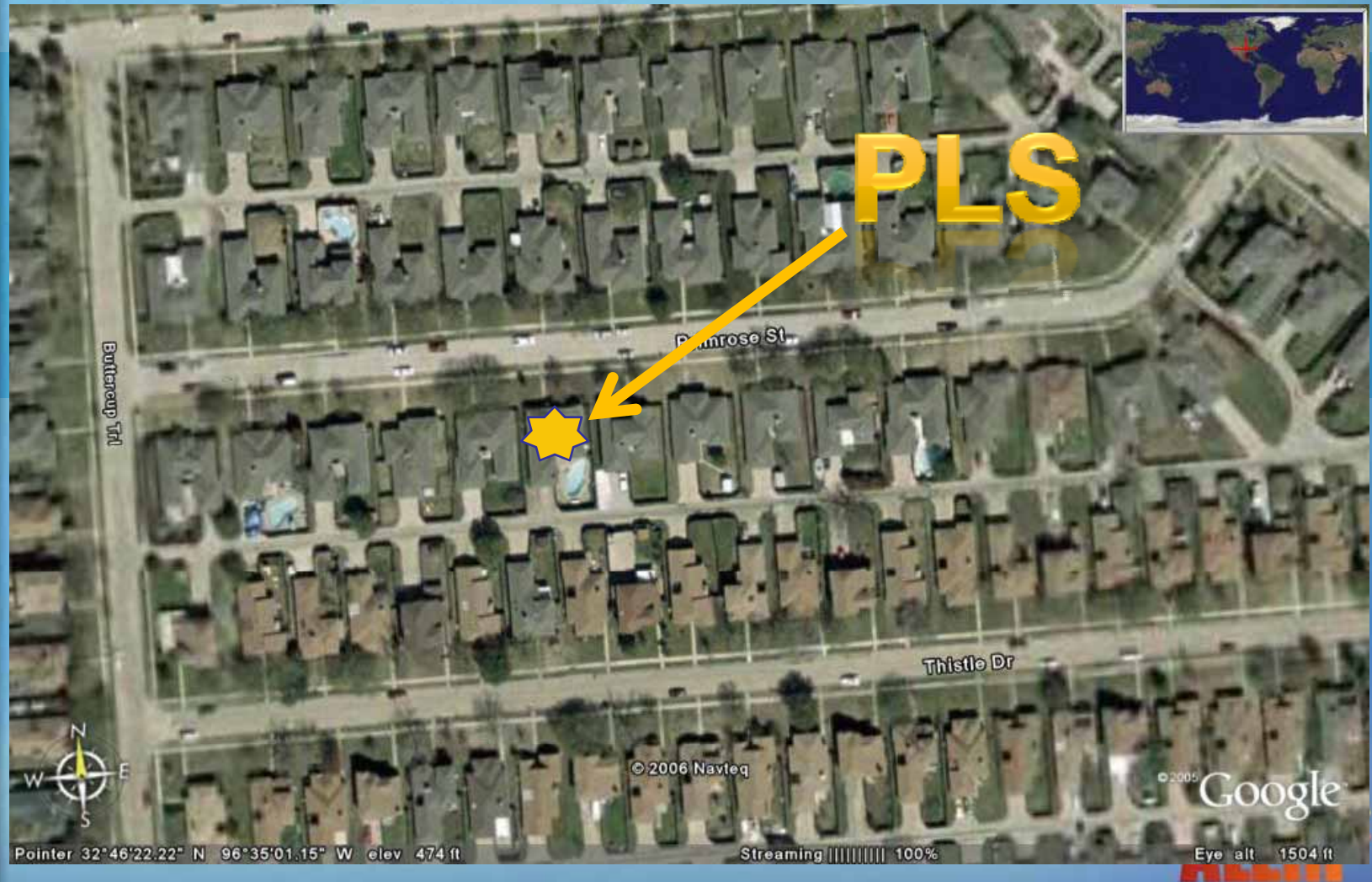


Steps

- Define the area to be searched
- Establish perimeter control
- Establish field command post
- Set up traffic control/vehicle canvass
- Document all vehicles in search area, entering and leaving
- Document the neighborhood
- Conduct questioning door to door
- Conduct searches



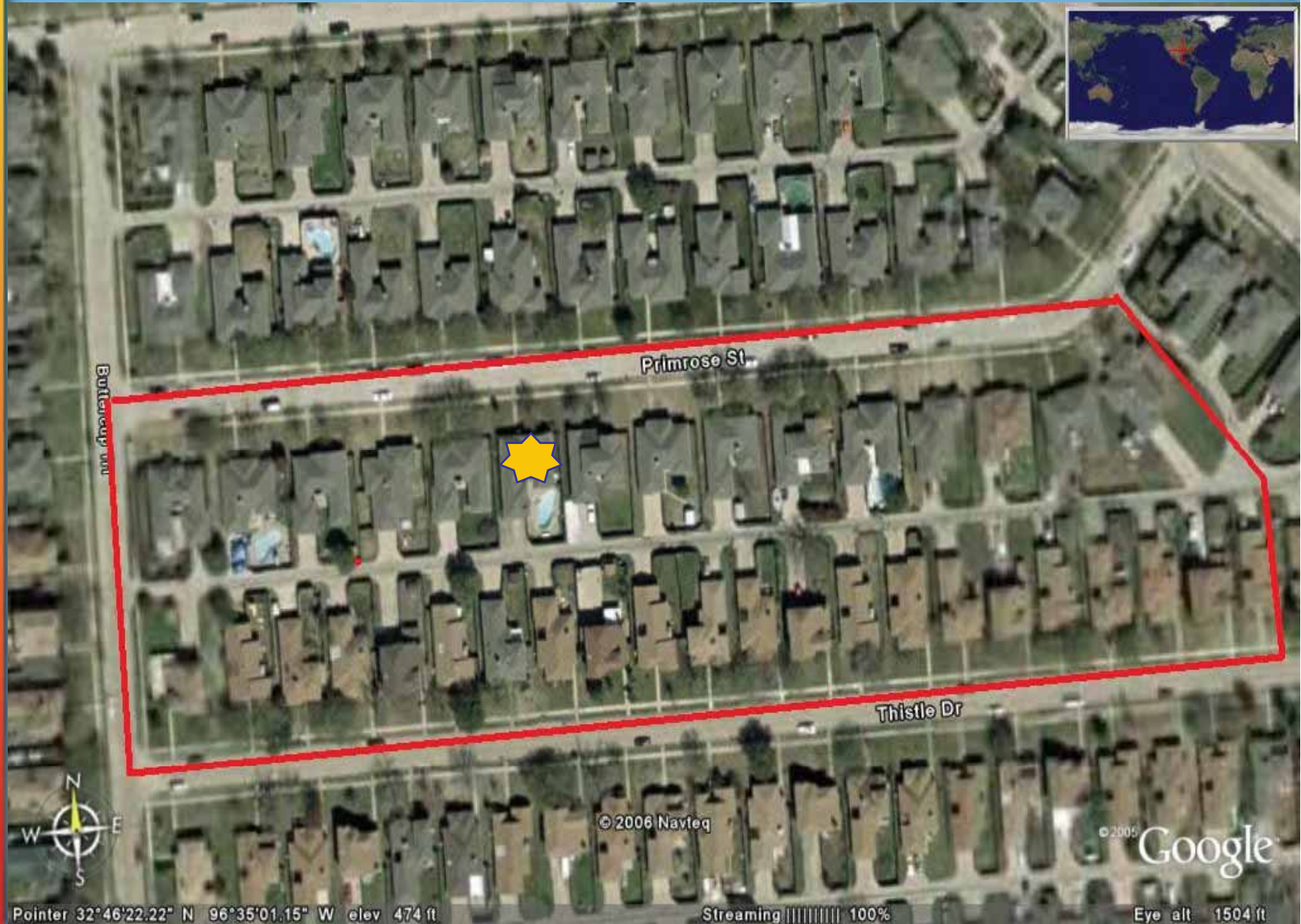
The Neighborhood Canvass



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Define The Area



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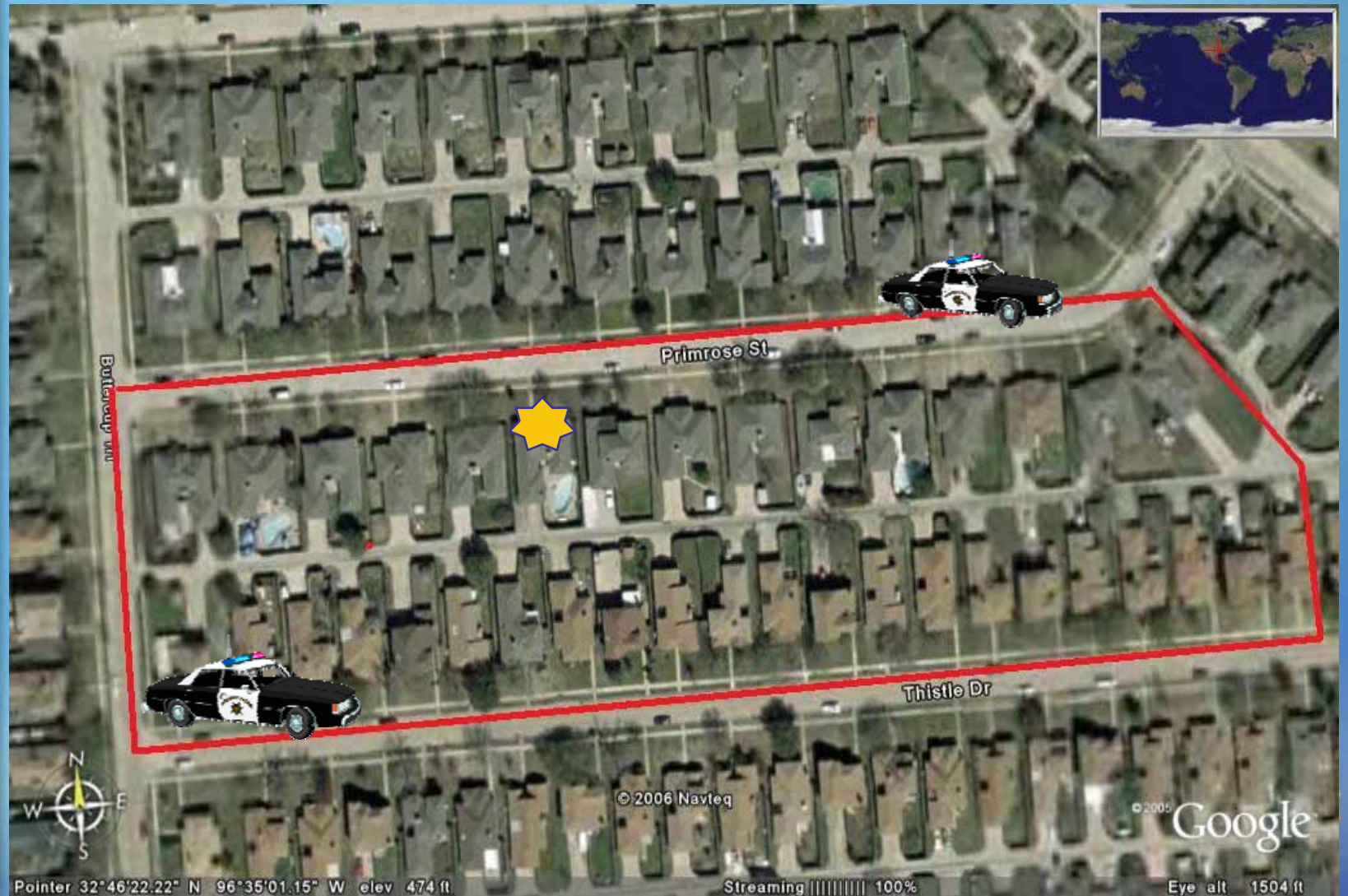
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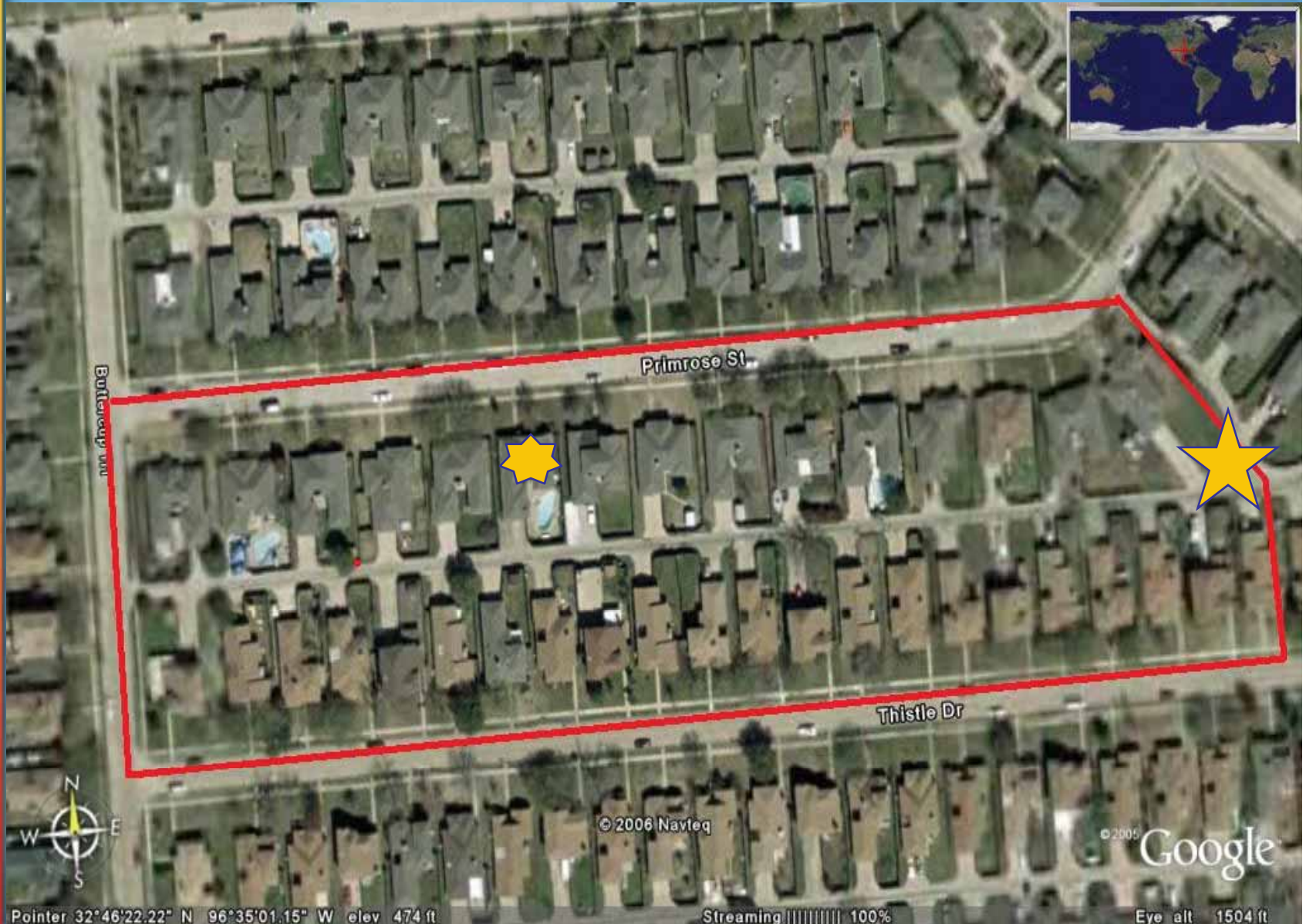
Perimeter Control



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Command Post



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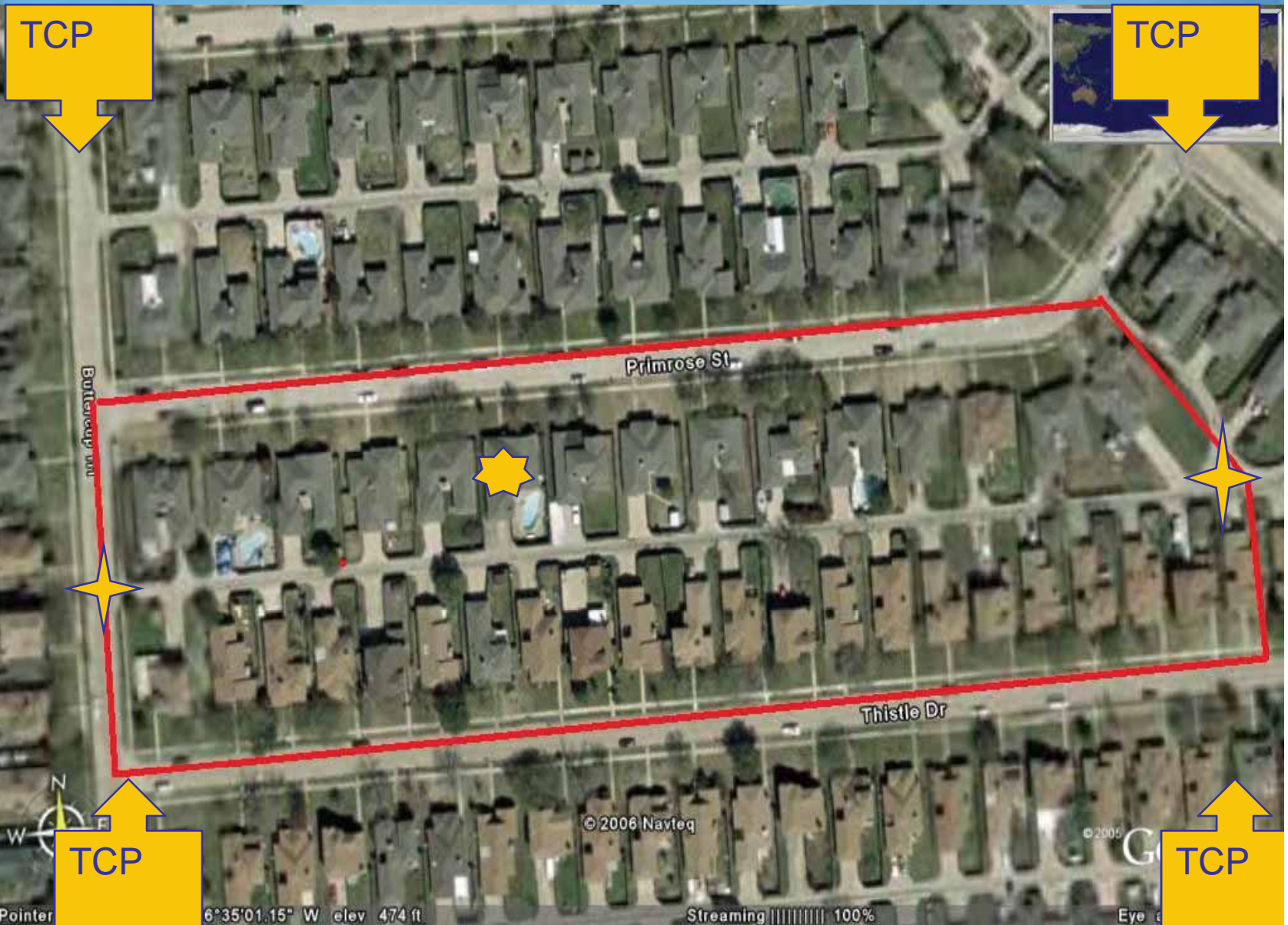
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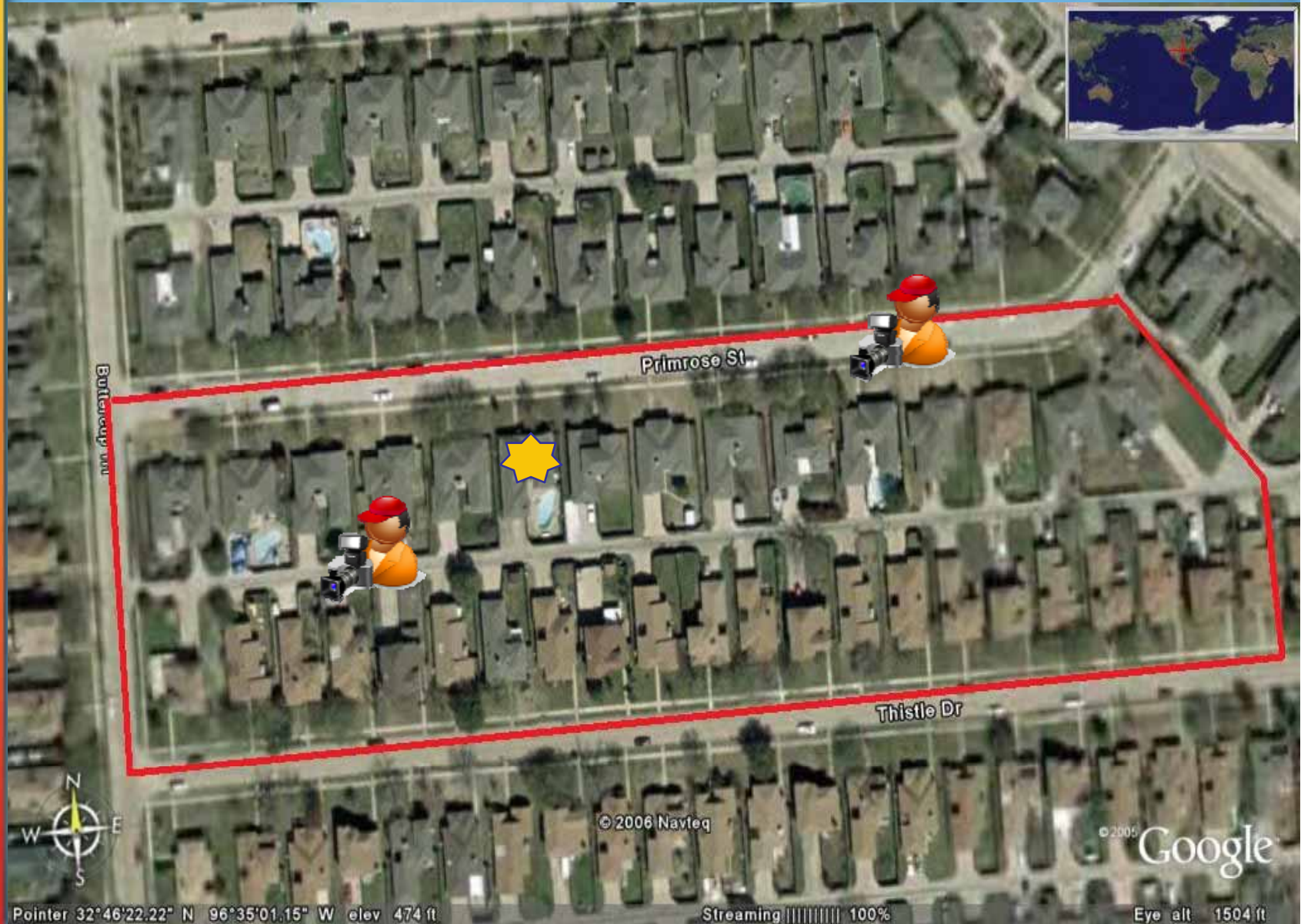
Traffic Control/Vehicle Canvass



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Document Vehicles & Area



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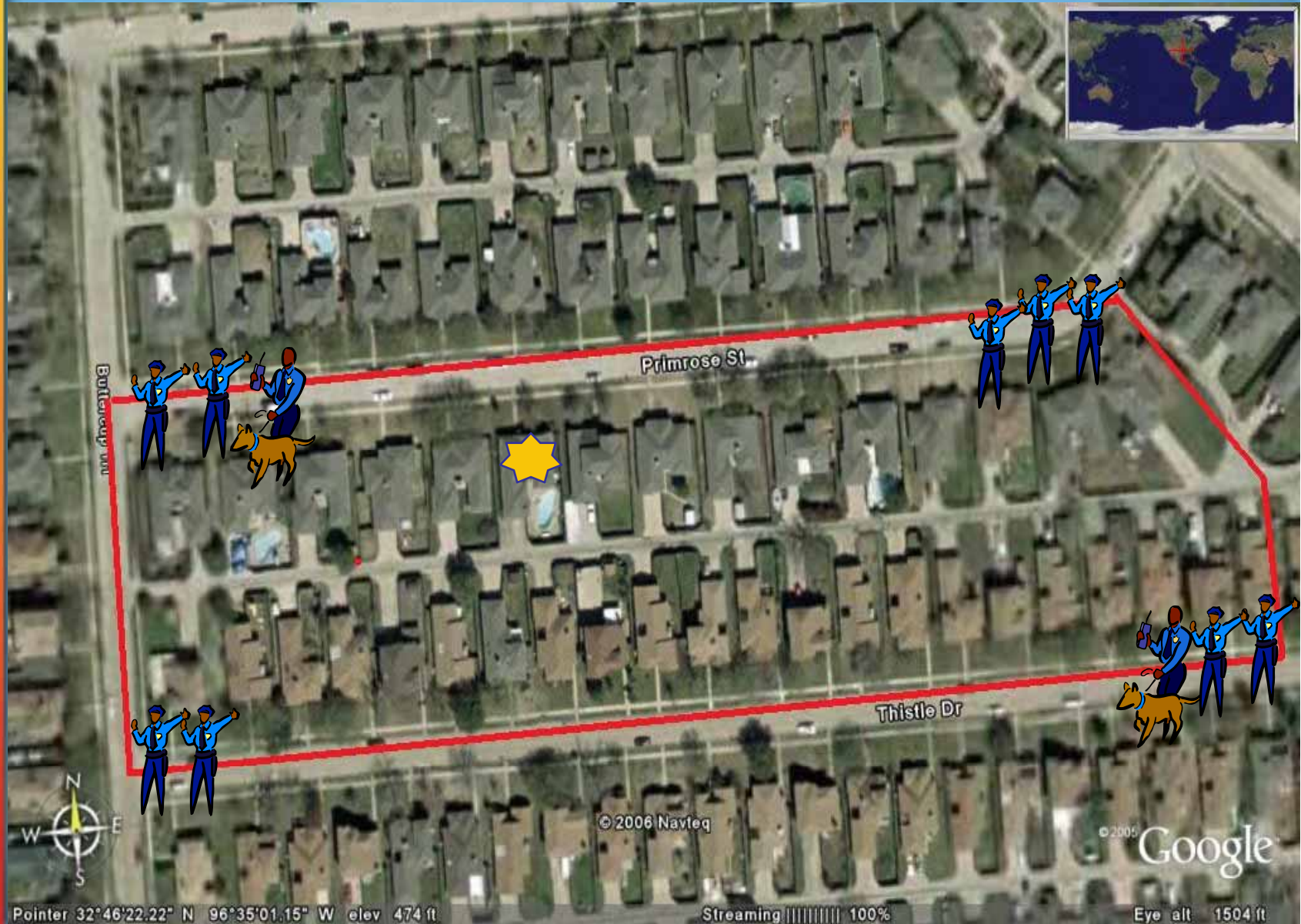
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Door to Door & Searches



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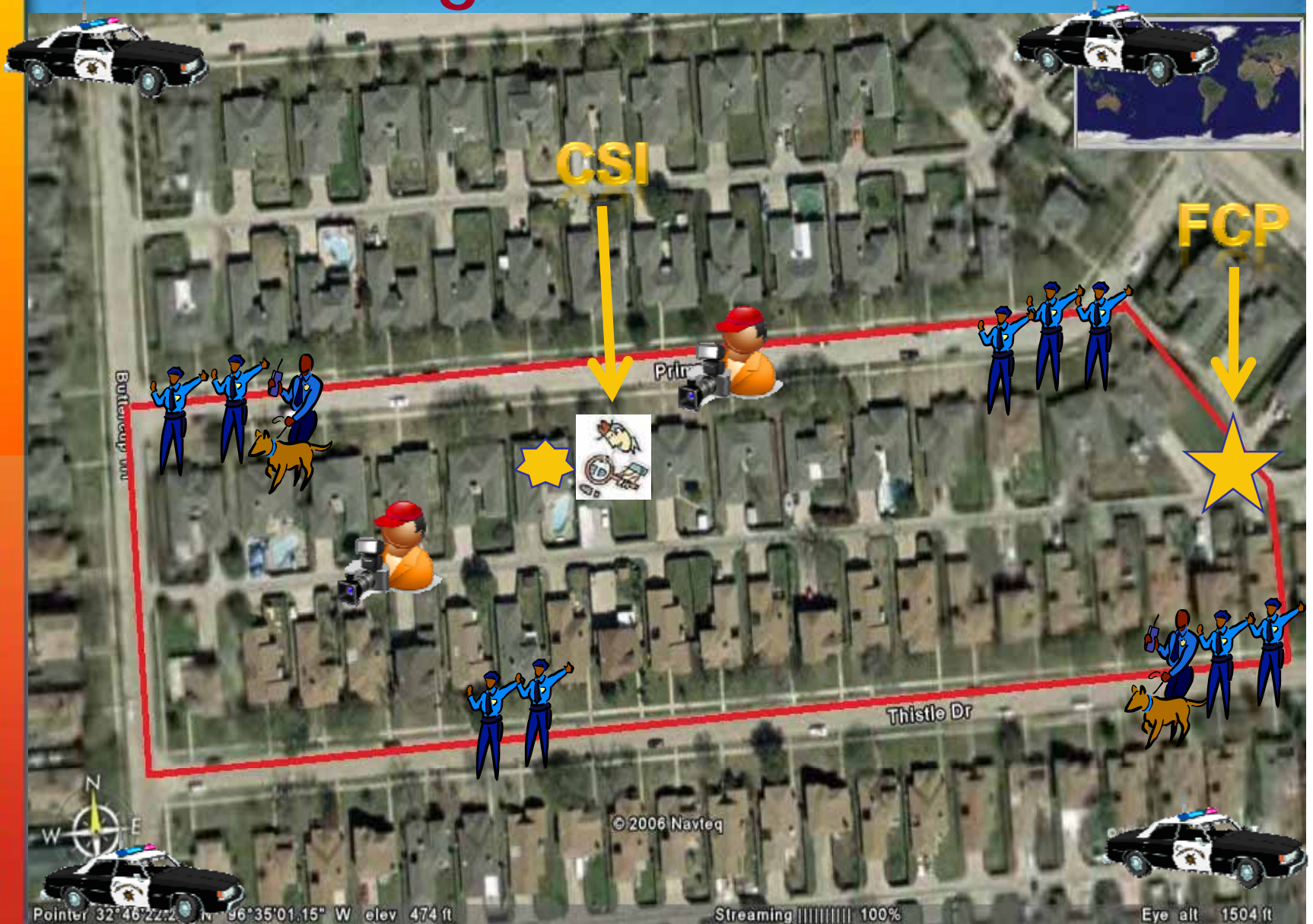
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The Neighborhood Canvass



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The Canvass Team

- Team Leader/Interviewer
- Security
- Searcher(s)
- Recorder
 - Video, camera or written



Search and Interview Tactics

- Interview team request permission to search early on
- Get permission in writing
- Have a plan for limited/qualified permission
- Searchers must have security
- Document with camera/video while you search
- Hold position, freeze the scene if anything is found
- Same goes for an admission during interview



The Canvass Team (Cont.)

- Issue Area Canvass Forms to all teams
- Forms should include:
 - Maps
 - Description of specific area assignments
 - Sample questions
 - Canvass log
 - Vehicle log



Information Sources

- Information Gathering During the Canvass
 - Interviewing
 - ◆ Standardized Questions
 - What questions need to be asked
 - ◆ Documentation
 - All information is kept by one person
 - ◆ Sources of Information
 - Cameras
 - Persons
 - Physical Evidence/Clues
 - Search Dogs
 - Searchers/Trackers
 - Adequate Personnel
 - ◆ Do not under staff your effort
 - ◆ Qualified Personnel



Interviewing

- Interview each occupant of a residence separately from other occupants
- Use a standardized set of questions
- Be prepared to follow up
- Determine who lives in the residence, not simply who is present
 - *This is especially critical if the absent party was present at the time of the crime or matches the suspect description*
 - Record on canvass log



Searching

- Obtain consent to conduct search of the residence
- In an abduction case this is for the victim only, emphasizing this is for the safe return of the victim
- Do so during or immediately following questioning
- Search should be documented
- Have property receipts available
- Be prepared for refusals



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Questions?

