Tactical Crime Analysis as covered in this book describes the emerging discipline and importance of crime analysis and uncovers the divergent roles and duties of “crime analysts” in law enforcement agencies today. The authors define tactical crime analysis as the, “…comprehensive identification, evaluation, analysis and resolution of specific criminal activity problems.” This type of crime analysis is able to serve administrative, strategic, tactical and operational needs for the law enforcement community. The book includes an interview with a serial offender, case studies of solved serial crimes, a workbook and provides supplemental materials through a website.

This is not a book about crime scene analysis or scene reconstruction. It is a book for those who are either directly responsible for, or want to better understand, the state of the art in crime analysis. This is an area that specialized software and other technological advances have been made to help identify trends in the glut of crime data that pours into police agencies on a daily basis. Because this is an emerging area there is no standard technique or agreed-upon means to identify crime patterns. Today, a number of colleges and universities provide curricula geared toward crime analysis. This was not the case a decade ago. The authors present a method they have developed that has been adopted by many departments around the world.

The book begins with a discussion of criminal behavior from the perspective of rational choice, routine activities theory and crime pattern theory to give the reader a framework to understand and analyze crime series using theoretical principles that have true practical implications. This is then combined behavioral geography, a subfield of geography that focuses on the individual’s spatial decision making. Criminals and non-criminals alike use mental maps and this is explained clearly.

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The authors then explore crime types and, to their credit, do not sensationalize serial murder, but correctly set forth the rarity of that type crime and criminal. They deal with the more common Part One Crimes such as robbery, burglary and motor vehicle theft, as these crimes are more commonly dealt with in tactical crime analysis situations.

The authors discuss approaches to linking criminal events and how to overcome obstacles that sometimes create linkage blindness. They set forth the “IZE” method, i.e. categorize, generalize, organize, minimize and maximize. Inductive and deductive reasoning are discussed as well as the vast potential of “data mining” multiple data bases. The authors point out that crime analysts need to be proficient in statistics, temporal analysis, and spatial analysis, but must also be experts at databases and the means used to mine their data. From there the authors discuss temporal analysis and geographic profiling. This is where the book begins to go deeper into mathematics and statistics. In the chapter on geographic profiling, the authors assume that the reader has a fundamental understanding of such concepts as the “Manhattan distance.” They set forth mathematic algorithms reader such as

$$P_y = k \sum_{N=1}^{C} \frac{(1-\phi)(B^C)}{(2B-d)^4}$$

Discussions follow regarding theoretically-derived coefficients and theoretically-derived mean distance as well as empirically calibrated decay functions, wedge theory and standard deviation of distances. If these issues are important or of interest to you, then this is the book for you.

The authors go on to discuss forecasting and prediction and why some forecasts work and others do not. Once all of this is accomplished, they venture into the intervention strategies, that is how to use the data once it has been established to meet the five objectives of crime pattern interventions; disruption, displacement, development, disintegration and detention.

A unique feature of the book is it’s integration of a website. Readers are instructed to download Automated Tactical Analysis of Crime (ATAC). The authors then walk the reader (student) through the process of opening a sample database in ATAC followed by practice evaluating that crime data using ATAC. They then return to the “IZE” approach to linking crime and take the reader (student) through an exercise using the textbook and the ATAC software. This follows with chapters on applying behavioral dimensions, temporal dimensions and concludes with a chapter on spatial dimensions. A thorough bibliography is included as well.
This book is for the serious student of tactical crime analysis. It is current and offers an exceptional insight into the state of the art of crime analysis as it emerges as a powerful tool for law enforcement. A reader with background in the field of mathematics and statistics will be quite comfortable with the material while those without such a background will be on somewhat of a learning curve. The book lives up to its claim of being an important addition to the reference shelf of analytical professionals. At about $100 per copy you might try to convince your agency that they should spring for a copy. The benefits are many.