

E-crime investigations hit by specialists doing 'dog work'

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Local police forces lack the resources either to outsource administrative tasks to the private sector or to employ civilian specialists to do the work, said Bob Ayers, former head of the information warfare programme at the US Department of Defense.

"We have a fundamental issue with cybercrime. We are not doing a very good job. The police are technically under-resourced," said Ayers, who has advised companies such as BP, CitiGroup and American Express on their IT security.

Ayers, who will be speaking at the Infosecurity conference, said police forces were making a false economy by using highly trained staff to carry out "dog work".

"It may be cheaper in terms of the impact on their budget, but not on the impact of criminal investigations," he said.

Ayers called for the police to be given funds to invest in technology to automate the initial analysis and copying of hard discs, thereby freeing up officers for more productive work.

He suggested that too many of the UK's high-tech policing resources were directed at fighting online paedophiles, at the expense of investigations into hackers and online fraudsters, and urged the government to make cybercrime a higher policing priority.

"When you choose to prioritise police resources to catch speeders on the M4, you are saying, 'this is more important than cybercrime'. We need to reassess how we allocate resources," he said.

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