

### 3. Limitations of ISRID Statistics

The goal of the ISRID database is to provide probabilities of where the subject might be located. Currently, the ISRID database provides no guidance (or weight) to local history, decision points or terrain analysis. Clearly all of these factors are critical in deciding probability of area. They also clearly play a role in the subjective and deductive steps of establishing a search area. The project manager looked at every individual case and discarded or modified some data; however, when questions arose, it was not possible to contact 5,000+ incident commanders given the sheer size of the database. There is no doubt that some of the data was entered incorrectly onto data forms. In addition, ISRID suffers from the same problem Syrotuck faced: a limited sample size. Another important caveat is the type of user who utilizes the data. As well, the international nature of the database introduces a new wrinkle: Do cultural differences exist? These topics are explored in this chapter.

The ISRID database is a planning tool. Search planning is both a skill and a science. A planning tool can help with the scientific parts of planning. Skilled planning, however, can only be developed from knowledge, practiced skills, general aptitude, considerable experience, and a willingness to learn from mistakes. The most dangerous planner is one who has seen a situation once or twice and tends to think all future subject behavior will be just like the last one. An experienced planner has had good predictions shattered several times, learns that behavior is all about probabilities and that it is important to involve others in the planning process. Every lost person provides a unique story, often with several plot twists and surprise endings.

#### Local History

In certain localities, people can generally be found in the same place; for example, hikers and hunters often make the same mistakes in a specific area of the woods. After enough subjects have gone missing and then been found, a find location map can be generated. However, actual maps are often not made; rather, search planners share previous search stories and the general find locations are passed on. It would be better to formally make such maps and include them in the preplan. Missing subjects are not randomly distrib-