



## Fact Sheet



Public Affairs Division - Washington DC

Contact: Scot Thomasson  
Chief, Public Affairs Division  
202-648-8500

April 2009  
[www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov)

### **ATF'S NATIONAL INTEGRATED BALLISTIC INFORMATION NETWORK (NIBIN)**

#### **Purpose**

In 1999, ATF established and began administration of the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN). In this program, ATF administers automated ballistic imaging technology for NIBIN Partners: Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies. NIBIN allows NIBIN Partners to acquire (enter) digital images of the markings made on spent ammunition recovered from a crime scene or a crime gun test fire. The images are then correlated (in a matter of hours) against earlier entries via electronic image comparison. If a high-confidence candidate for a match emerges, the original evidence is compared via microscope to confirm the match or NIBIN "hit." By searching in an automated environment either locally, regionally, or nationally, NIBIN Partners are able to discover links between crimes more quickly, including links that would never have been identified absent the technology. NIBIN also makes it easier to search investigative information across jurisdictional boundaries.

#### **Authority**

In 2001, U.S. Department of Justice and Department of the Treasury directed that their law enforcement components enter ballistic information into NIBIN.

NIBIN acquisitions are expressly limited to ballistic information from crime scenes or crime guns.

Since 1979, ATF's annual appropriations have prohibited the expenditure of funds for consolidating or centralizing Federal firearms licensee acquisition and disposition records. Therefore, NIBIN cannot be used to capture or store ballistic information acquired at the point of manufacture, importation, or sale; nor can it be used to capture purchaser or date of manufacture or sale information.

#### **Goals**

Coordinate the comprehensive NIBIN entry of all ballistic information (suitable for NIBIN entry) taken into Federal, State, and local law enforcement custody in order to identify all possible links to violent shootings.

Refer NIBIN-generated investigative leads to NIBIN Participants in order to solve, reduce, and prevent firearms-related violent crimes

Record the investigative/prosecutive results of NIBIN-generated investigative leads in order to measure performance

Provide the best NIBIN ‘best practices’ training for all NIBIN participants.

Provide the best NIBIN user training for all NIBIN Partners.

Provide the best NIBIN technology for all NIBIN Partners.

### **Strategy**

ATF considers itself in the final stages of NIBIN equipment deployment. However, ATF is preparing to offer NIBIN services to any Federal, State or local law enforcement agency that does not have access to NIBIN via an existing NIBIN Partner. Once this service is available, agencies that fall under this category will be able to submit their NIBIN entry requests directly to one of the three ATF Forensic Science Laboratories.

ATF is preparing to develop, summarize, and refer all viable NIBIN hits for Federal, State, and local law enforcement investigation, and request that the receiving agency report back to ATF the investigative/prosecutive results.

ATF is preparing a NIBIN best practices guide to distribute to all NIBIN participants and prospective participants.

In March 2008, ATF posted a Request for Information on [www.fedbiz.ops](http://www.fedbiz.ops) seeking to revise and modernize existing NIBIN technology. To date, the search is continuing.

In December 2008, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, posted an announcement on their website offering a grant award to applicants that conduct research and development to improve existing NIBIN technology. To date, applications are being reviewed.

### **NIBIN Partners**

ATF has certified training for over 1000 NIBIN users to use the network.  
214 NIBIN (IBIS) systems (201 ATF-procured) deployed at 199 NIBIN locations to 162 NIBIN Partners

### **NIBIN Partner Locations**

75%: law enforcement agency administered  
15%: forensic science agency administered  
10%: attorney agency administered

NIBIN Partners must enter into an agreement with ATF to use the equipment to a reasonable degree, share hit information with other NIBIN participants, enter as much ballistic information from shooting scenes as possible, provide adequate staffing to operate the equipment, fund new user travel for a one-week training course, possess a casing/bullet recovery system for firearms test firing, and employ or have access to a certified firearms examiner to complete microscopic comparisons.

### **Statistics**

NIBIN Partners have completed over 1.5 million acquisitions

NIBIN Partners have confirmed over 28,000 NIBIN hits.

#### **Most Successful NIBIN Partners:**

New York City Police Department: over 2100 hits

IL State Police-Chicago: over 1500 hits

Allegheny County (PA) Medical Examiners' Office: over 1500 hits

Santa Ana (CA) Police Department: over 1000 hits

Newark Police Department: over 1000 hits

### **Hit Definition**

A hit is a linkage of two different crime scene investigations by NIBIN participants where previously there had been no known connection between the investigations. A hit is a linkage between cases, not individual pieces of evidence. Multiple casings/bullets may be entered as part of the same case record. In this event, each discovered linkage to an additional case constitutes a hit. The NIBIN Partner that confirms the hit in NIBIN is credited with the hit.

### **NIBIN Executive Board**

ATF oversees a NIBIN Executive Board comprised of Federal, State, and local law enforcement representation that recommends and provides guidance to ATF regarding NIBIN operations; rules, regulations, and procedures; ballistic imaging technology, standards, applications, and networking; contract matters, procurements and expenditures; software and hardware upgrades; and deployments, moves, and removals.

For more information on NIBIN go to [www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov). or [www.nibin.gov](http://www.nibin.gov)