



Fact Sheet



Public Affairs Division - Washington DC

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ATF'S NATIONAL INTEGRATED BALLISTIC INFORMATION NETWORK (NIBIN)

Purpose

In 1998, ATF established and began administration of the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) Program. In this program, ATF procures and deploys ballistic imaging and comparison equipment to federal, state and local law enforcement agencies that have a need for the technology. The equipment allows firearms technicians to acquire digital images of the markings made on bullets and/or cartridge casings by a firearm that was unlawfully possessed and/or used in a crime. The images are then correlated (in a matter of minutes) against earlier entries via electronic image comparison. If a high-confidence candidate for a match emerges, firearms examiners compare the original evidence via microscopic comparison to confirm the match. By minimizing the amount of non-matching evidence that firearms examiners must inspect to find a confirmable match or "hit," NIBIN enables law enforcement agencies to discover links between crimes more quickly, including links that would have never been identified without the technology.

Goals

The goal of NIBIN is to fight violent crime. The success of NIBIN depends largely upon the cooperation of NIBIN partners and ATF as a whole through the work of ATF's NIBIN regional coordinators, NIBIN field division coordinators, intelligence group personnel, special agents and NIBIN firearms crime analysts (FCA) field contractors. Additionally, the importance of aggressively pursuing field investigation of NIBIN-generated leads cannot be overstated. Shooting-related crimes are ultimately solved by law enforcement officers, not ballistic imaging technology.

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Strategy

ATF purchases and deploys NIBIN equipment to agencies deserving of ballistic imaging technology, provides for regular upgrades and service, offers ATF forensic laboratory expertise and summarizes all hit information in a database. Also, ATF funds and oversees a weeklong training course in data acquisitions for new NIBIN users. In return, NIBIN partners agree to support the program with adequate staffing and resources, to enter as much crime gun evidence as possible onto the network, to share evidence and intelligence information with other law enforcement agencies and to abide by ATF policy for use of the network.

In funding and supporting this program, ATF provides federal, state and local law enforcement agencies with an effective intelligence tool that many could not afford on their own. The system also makes it possible to share intelligence across jurisdictional boundaries, enabling federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to work together in the fight against violent crime. Additionally, NIBIN is an integral part of Project Safe Neighborhoods, a Department of Justice initiative to fight gun violence.

Locations

At present, NIBIN equipment is deployed and operational at 203 sites (mostly state and local forensic laboratories), with 174 partner agencies participating in the program. Since NIBIN was created, partners have completed data acquisitions for over one million items of evidence. From these acquisitions, firearms examiners have confirmed nearly 25,000 hits, many of them yielding investigative information not obtainable by other means.

Hit Definition

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

For more information on NIBIN go to www.atf.gov.

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