



Fact Sheet



Public Affairs Division - Washington DC

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www.atf.gov

NATIONAL INTEGRATED BALLISTIC INFORMATION NETWORK (NIBIN)

The National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) provides federal, state and local law enforcement, forensic science, and attorney agencies with an automated ballistic imaging system that will aid their investigations by using digital images of shell casings to link violent crimes involving firearms and subsequently identify firearm users or “trigger pullers.”

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, forensic science, and attorney agencies in the United States that have entered into a formal agreement with ATF to enter ballistic information into NIBIN.

Partners use Integrated Ballistic Identification Systems (IBIS) to acquire digital images of the markings made on fired ammunition recovered from a crime scene or a crime gun test fire and then compare those images (in a matter of hours) against earlier NIBIN entries via electronic image comparison. If a high-confidence candidate for a match emerges, firearms examiners compare the original evidence with a microscope to confirm the match or what is often called a NIBIN “hit.” 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 or investigations, 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.

By searching in an automated environment either locally, regionally, or nationally, NIBIN partners are able to discover links between firearms-related violent crimes more quickly, including links that would never have been identified absent the technology.

NIBIN partners must enter into an agreement with ATF to use the IBIS systems 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 systems, 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.

ATF oversees a NIBIN Executive Board, as well as the NIBIN Users Congress 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.

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

NIBIN acquisitions are expressly limited to ballistic information from firearms test fires and fired ammunition components taken into law enforcement custody pursuant to a criminal investigation. 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.

A NIBIN hit typically starts with fired ammunition components recovered from a shooting scene. They are then imaged onto the network. Firearms recovered from a suspect and test-fired are entered into the system. NIBIN identifies possible hit and a microscopic comparison confirms the hit. Lastly, a NIBIN partner notifies law enforcement agencies of the hit.

NIBIN partner's milestones include ATF certifying more than 1,000 NIBIN users to use the network. In addition, NIBIN partners have confirmed more than 50,000 NIBIN hits.

The top 10 cartridge cases acquired by NIBIN systems are listed below:

1. .9mm
2. .40 S&W
3. .45 auto
4. .380 auto
5. .22 caliber
6. .25 auto
7. .32 auto
8. .223 (5.56) caliber
9. .12 gauge
10. 7.62 X 39 mm

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

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