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National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN)

In 1999, ATF established the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) to provide federal, state, and local partner agencies with an automated ballistic imaging system. NIBIN partners can discover formerly impossible-to-identify links between firearms-related violent crimes to identify firearm users or “trigger pullers.”

Partners must use NIBIN to a reasonable degree, share information with other partners, enter as much ballistic information from shooting scenes as possible, provide adequate staffing, fund new user travel to a one-week training course, possess a casing/bullet recovery system for firearms test firing, and have access to a certified firearms examiner. NIBIN success requires four critical steps:

- 1. Comprehensive Collection and Entry.** Integrated Ballistic Identification Systems (IBIS) technology takes digital images of cartridge cases from crime scenes or a crime gun test fires. Multiple casings/bullets may be part of the same case record. In 2001, the Departments of Justice and the Treasury directed their law enforcement components to enter ballistic information into NIBIN.
- 2. Timely NIBIN Hit Dissemination.** In hours, IBIS compares those images against previous NIBIN entries. If a high-confidence candidate emerges, firearms examiners compare the original physical evidence microscopically to confirm the match. This is a NIBIN “hit,” or the linking of two different investigations.
- 3. Investigative Follow-Up and Prosecution.** Linking otherwise unassociated crimes gives investigators a better chance to identify and arrest shooters.
- 4. Feedback Loop.** Without feedback, NIBIN partners cannot know how their efforts are making the community safer, which is necessary for sustained success.

A NIBIN Executive Board and the NIBIN Users Congress advises ATF on NIBIN operations, rules, regulations, and procedures and ballistic imaging technology, standards, applications, and networking.

NIBIN acquisitions are expressly limited to ballistic information from firearms test fires and fired ammunition components pursuant to a criminal investigation. Therefore, NIBIN cannot capture or store ballistic information acquired at the point of manufacture, importation, or sale; nor purchaser or date of manufacture or sale information.

Since the program's inception in 1999, NIBIN partners have confirmed more than 68,000 NIBIN hits, but the true performance metric of NIBIN is the successful arrest and prosecution of shooters.

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

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