



# CITY OF CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

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## Press Release

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### **The Charleston Police Department Announces a New Tool to Help Solve Gun Crime**

CHARLESTON, WV - The Charleston Police Department has begun incorporating the use of the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) to enhance the investigations of violent crimes involving firearms. Charleston Mayor Amy Shuler Goodwin and Chief Opie Smith today joined representatives from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) in announcing the launch of NIBIN, an on-site computer system that is used to analyze shell casings.

"The integration of NIBIN into investigations of gun-related crimes in our city has already proven to be beneficial in linking cases that otherwise would not have any apparent connections," Chief Smith stated. "We are optimistic that having this valuable investigative tool at our immediate disposal will enhance the solvability of violent crimes by generating timely leads for our detectives."

"The partnership between the Charleston Police Department and the ATF will provide us with valuable tools and resources when investigating violent crimes," said Mayor Amy Shuler Goodwin. "Through the NIBIN technology, we have the ability to tap into a comprehensive, nationwide knowledge base—helping ensure the safety of our communities."

"You can run but you can't hide and never has that been more true than today. NIBIN is a critical investigative tool that can make our communities safer by helping law enforcement link crimes across West Virginia and the nation that we might otherwise not connect," said United States Attorney Mike Stuart. "We have worked closely with ATF to bring this important tool to West Virginia and it's already paying off. We are doing all we can to aggressively pursue violent criminals and NIBIN allows us to quickly link and identify violent offenders in West Virginia to other places that have exported their problems to West Virginia."

"ATF appreciates the strong support from the Charleston Police Department to help make this new NIBIN site a reality," stated Stuart L. Lowrey, Special Agent in Charge, ATF Louisville Division. "This technology can provide critical leads for all participating law enforcement agencies investigating violent criminal activity. Our law enforcement partners are finding NIBIN to be an effective tool in disrupting the shooting cycle and making our communities safer."

NIBIN enables law enforcement agencies to capture digital images of ballistic evidence and match them with shell casings from other gun-related crimes, thereby establishing investigative links that may not have otherwise existed. Similar to a fingerprint, a gun leaves unique microscopic markings on fired bullet casings. Firearms of the same make and model produced on the same manufacturing line will generate different markings. Shell casings recovered at shooting and shots fired incidents, as well those from firearms recovered and test fired by police, are analyzed using the NIBIN system. Recovered shell casings are then entered into the NIBIN system and compared to other casings in the database. Investigators are able to connect multiple crime scenes, oftentimes from different jurisdictions, with the knowledge that the same gun was used.

The NIBIN system was recently installed at the Criminal Investigation Division of the Charleston Police Department. A detective, with specialized training in the use of the NIBIN system, has been assigned to cases in which shell casings or firearms are recovered as evidence. In the short time that the Charleston Police Department has used the NIBIN system, we have received multiple matches or “hits” that have assisted investigators in homicide, malicious wounding, wanton endangerment, and shots fired cases.

Charleston’s NIBIN system was provided by the ATF at no cost to the City. The Charleston Police Department will budget for funds to provide maintenance of the computer and software beginning in the fourth year of the partnership.