

NIBIN NEWSLETTER

Editor: Karen Molina

Call for Articles

We would like to have our users provide an article for the next Newsletter. This is a good way for you to bring attention to your lab or department and highlight your successes or a topic that might be of interest to others. Please contact Karen Molina at the NIBIN Branch or Nanette Rudolph at the Florida Department of Law Enforcement if you would like to provide an article. Email your suggestions or articles to: Karen.Molina@atf.gov or nanetteru-dolph@fdle.state.fl.us

NIBIN "FT" Initiative Results in Lower Backlogs & Multiple NIBIN Hits

In April of 2004 The Florida Department of Law Enforcement's Orlando Firearms Section embarked on an innovative journey in an attempt to decrease an ever growing backlog of cases and to better utilize the current staff within their Firearm's section. The endeavor began by expanding the training of the section's support staff; Forensic Technologists (FT). The current program allowed the FT to work firearms and test fire them but they were not able to write reports or conduct NIBIN correlation reviews. This new program was designed so that they could independently work non-shooting related firearms cases (e.g. carrying concealed, possession by a convicted felon, etc), review the NIBIN

correlation results, write reports and testify in court.

This pilot program began by providing more intensive training to the newest FT in Orlando. The formal FT training program was expanded to include extensive training on the function, safety, assembly/disassembly and minor repair of the various firearms as well as some microscopic work to assist the FT in choosing the best test for entry into NIBIN. In addition, strong attention was placed on the FT's ability to recognize a potential hit within a correlation. Initially, the FT's cases and correlations were reviewed by a qualified examiner. Once significant experience was attained and a competency test successfully completed, the FT was released to conduct independent casework.

The training was very successful and now, 3 years later, the initiative has been successfully implemented by the other three Firearm sections within the state laboratory system with a total of 6 FTs working NIBIN cases. To date, a total of 1694 of the 6825 cases received in the Orlando Firearms Section since January 2005, have been completed by the FTs. In addition to decreasing the backlog of the section, the FTs have been credited with over 30 NIBIN hits linking firearms to unsolved cases. The FTs have also successfully testified to firearm function and NIBIN correlation results in more than 15 cases in Juvenile, County and Federal courts.

Lynn R. Skoglund
Crime Laboratory
Analyst Trainee
FDLE

FDLE and OCSO: Working Together for Greater Efficiency

The Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) recovers hundreds of firearms monthly and due to large number of firearms and the ever increasing backlog of comparison cases to the laboratory, in the past these were not submitted to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) crime laboratory in Orlando to be worked. Members of the OCSO and FDLE Firearms section came together to form a partnership to ensure that these firearms were entered into the NIBIN Ballistic Imaging System. Orange County's Forensic Technician Stephen Smith

designed and equipped a small firearm section with a range and water tank where he could process and test-fire handguns for his agency. The test fired bullets and cartridge cases from the guns are then submitted to the FDLE Crime Laboratory along with a specially designed form for use by the laboratory personnel working the case. The form included all the necessary information for entry into the NIBIN database, including correlation results. It is kept in the laboratory file and a copy is sent back to Steve Smith. The process has helped both FDLE and OCSO work a

greater number of cases in a shorter period of time. In addition to quicker turn around time for the agency, the laboratory has made numerous hits in a timelier manner. In some instances several "hits" have been made to a single firearm, which, if left to the routine laboratory casework protocol, would probably not be worked for months. An example of one of these hits involved an offense of carrying a concealed firearm in December. This case was test fired by Smith and imaged by Crime Lab Analyst Lynn Skoglund. It hit on four

different cases: a drive-by shooting in November, an assault in February, an armed car-jacking and shooting in September and an assault in January. With an ever increasing number of case submissions to FDLE (over 1900 in 2007), inter-agency relationships such as this one is beneficial to all involved.

Amy Siewert
Firearms Forensic
Technologist
FDLE