



**ATF NATIONAL PRESS OFFICE
(202) 927-8500
FBI NATIONAL PRESS OFFICE
(202) 324-3691**

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THE FUTURE OF BALLISTICS IMAGING IS NOW

The Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) entered into an agreement in May 1997 which created the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) Board. The NIBIN Board is comprised of an ATF, an FBI, and a State/local representative. The Board's goal is to unify Federal efforts to deploy ballistics technology.

Today, the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms Director John W. Magaw and the Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Louis J. Freeh proudly announced an important first step in a coordinated effort between the two agencies. The unification of separate automated ballistic technology programs will become a reality, thereby significantly aiding in the identification of violent criminals who commit crimes with guns.

Earlier this month, the ATF and FBI signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which serves as a pledge for the two agencies to work cooperatively by taking advantage of the strengths of ATF's Integrated Ballistics Information System (IBIS) and the FBI's DRUGFIRE system to create one Nationwide Integrated Ballistics Information Network.

Like fingerprints, IBIS and DRUGFIRE, maintain a database of cartridge cases and bullet images. A computer can rapidly compare the images of this database with evidence from a crime scene to identify images that may match. The two systems were introduced in 1993 to help crime laboratories across the country link gun-related crimes. Combined there are more than 800,000 images in 225 sites. Collectively they have produced more than 8,000 matches or "cold hits" in over 16,000 cases. Cold hits are evidence matches made by the computer that would not have been matched in any other way.

The ATF will have overall responsibility for all current and future system sites and the FBI will establish and maintain a high-speed, secure communication network. This single, unified system combined with a nationwide secure communications network will form the backbone of a system eventually capable of identifying the individual fingerprint left by virtually every gun after it has been used in a violent crime.

Director Magaw said, "Computer ballistic imaging technology is the most important forensic advancement since the development of the comparison microscope over 70 years ago. The combining of these two technologies will help ensure that when a firearm is used in any crime, law enforcement will have the best information available to be able to quickly identify it, trace it, and pursue the criminal who used it."

Director Freeh stated, "This joint effort is a key component in ongoing programs aimed at permanently reducing gun crime and increasing everyone's safety nationwide. Cooperative programs like these are law enforcement's most effective tool against crime."

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