



IACP

PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS:

National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN)

MISSION:

September 2016

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Initiative, with support from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, Department of Justice (BJA) works to improve law enforcement's capacity to interdict firearms trafficking and disrupt gang activity. This is one in a series of Fact Sheets designed to provide law enforcement officers and executives with an overview on topics related to firearms.¹

FAST FACTS: DID YOU KNOW

- In 1999, the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) was formed. The goal of NIBIN was to establish an automated method to capture ballistic evidence from firearms crimes and digitally compare it to similar evidence from other crimes on a national, regional, or local level.²
- Much like fingerprints, firearms leave unique characteristics on bullets and cartridge casings; these toolmarks can link a single firearm to ballistics evidence found at a crime scene.
- Prior to the creation of NIBIN, firearms examiners were responsible for the painstaking, time-consuming process of manually comparing bullets and cartridge casings collected from crime scenes to those obtained from test fires of recovered weapons.
- Data from recovered firearms and evidence from a criminal investigation can be entered by a technician with no previous computer or ballistics experience. Through the Integrated Ballistic Identification System (IBIS) software developed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), the data is then cross-referenced and any potential candidates are identified as a match.³
- While NIBIN produces results that indicate a potential match between two bullets or cartridge casings, a firearms examiner must still manually examine the bullets or cartridge casings before a positive identification is made.⁴
- Since its inception, NIBIN has captured approximately 2.8 million images of ballistic evidence and confirmed more than 74,000 NIBIN hits.⁵
- Currently, there are 158 NIBIN sites across the United States. In fiscal year 2015, 76,534 casings from crime scenes and 130,004 test fires from crime guns were entered into the system. In the same time frame, 7,866 leads were identified.⁶
- ATF provides funding for approximately 72% of the costs for acquiring and maintaining NIBIN equipment.⁷



BJA

Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice



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Strategic Uses:

Research shows that the majority of agencies use NIBIN for tactical purposes, meaning to identify an individual suspect and link him or her to a specific crime. In addition, some agencies have developed unique strategic uses for NIBIN. These include using NIBIN data to

- identify crime involving the same gang;
- develop information on networks of high-rate, violent offenders; and
- geocode firearms crimes, aiding in crime analysis.⁸

For additional information go to: www.theiacp.org/PSNInitiative

END NOTES

¹ For additional information related to the PSN Initiative, to include additional Fact Sheets, please visit www.theiacp.org/PSNInitiative.

² Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), "Fact Sheet- National Integrated Ballistic Information Network," published March 2016, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/fact-sheet/fact-sheet-national-integrated-ballistic-information-network> (accessed July 7, 2016).

³ ATF, "Automated Firearms Ballistics Technology," last reviewed August 3, 2016, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/automated-firearms-ballistics-technology> (accessed September 13, 2016).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ ATF, "Fact Sheet- National Integrated Ballistic Information Network," published March 2016.

⁶ Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), "National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN)," published February 6, 2016, <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/national-integrated-ballistic-information-network-nibin> (accessed September 13, 2016).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ William King et al., "Using NIBIN Ballistic Imaging Hits for the Strategic Targeting of Violent Criminal Networks," Research in Brief, *The Police Chief* 81 (May 2014): 14, http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display&article_id=3348&issue_id=52014 (accessed July 7, 2016).