Crime Gun Information Sharing: The ATF i-Trafficking Project
Integration of Firearms Trace/Ballistic Data into Fusion Center Intelligence Sharing
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Executive Summary

Firearms violence is one of the top crime challenges facing many police chiefs in America today. Focused enforcement on the interdiction of illegally trafficked firearms to gangs and violent criminals continues to be a priority for all law enforcement. As part of an intelligence-led policing effort, departments can utilize their firearms trace data to reduce firearms trafficking and firearms crime. Unfortunately, firearms tracing, as a law enforcement tool, is underutilized at a time when it can be successfully used as a “force multiplier” to improve investigations during officer downsizing, due to economic decline, positively impacting towns and cities all across the nation. A newly introduced concept by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) drawing support for local law enforcement firearm tracing moves this forward.

In 2008, the ATF initiated a program along the north east I-95 corridor referred to as the “Interstate Trafficking Program” (iTrafficking) to help state and local law enforcement agencies combat the problem. By assigning contractors to key fusion centers in the northeast region of the United States to analyze crime gun data, the ATF sought to develop an innovative, multi-state approach to reducing violent crime through shared resources and increased collaboration. The overarching goal of the program was to implement a regional approach to firearms trafficking investigations through partnerships with state fusion centers in that region.

This project was deliberately piloted in a region of the United States known as the “iron pipeline” - New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland- for having a high volume of illegally trafficked firearms in order to test its viability. The project outcomes, as documented in this report, clearly enhance a fusion center’s ability to leverage investigative resources to support criminal investigations, prosecutions and strategic planning.
Introduction

In December 2010, the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the U.S. Department of Justice awarded a grant to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) to examine the impact of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Interstate Trafficking Program (iTrafficking), launched in 2008, to promote a regional approach to firearms trafficking investigations. By assigning contractors to four key fusion centers in the northeast region of the United States (New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland) to analyze crime gun data, the ATF sought to develop an innovative, multi-state approach to reducing violent crime through shared resources and increased collaboration. Working with ATF contractors and fusion center personnel from those four pilot sites, the IACP conducted an extensive review of the development and implementation of the program.

Objectives of the project included:

- Develop a fusion center survey instrument to identify law enforcement practices on crime gun tracing policies (Appendix B).
- Identify and address statutory issues and barriers to implementing a crime gun tracing intelligence sharing strategy.
- Develop an education and awareness program for law enforcement promoting the tracing of crime guns to prevent and solve crime.
- Develop and/or identify existing technical solutions that support sharing crime gun data.
- Document promising practices by fusion centers that currently examine crime gun tracing data.
- Design and disseminate a state-level crime gun tracing intelligence sharing strategy report.

This report is divided into six different sections.

- Section One discusses pilot site assessments of pilot site fusion centers, as well as results of a survey distributed to non-pilot site fusion centers across the country regarding crime gun tracing.
- Section Two details findings from the project.
- Section Three discusses promising practices that were identified from an evaluation of all pilot sites.
- Section Four provides recommendations/action steps for fusion center directors and local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to consider in their efforts to reduce firearms violence.
- Section Five provides recommendations for fusion centers across the country to use in implementing an iTrafficking project in their centers.
- Section Six provides a summary of the project and its implications for all law enforcement agencies, regardless of jurisdiction.

The information contained in this report and related products will be useful in guiding fusion center personnel, as well as state, local, and tribal law enforcement, in the utility and examination of firearms trace data for intelligence products, criminal investigations and prosecutions.
Background Information

One of the primary missions of the ATF is to protect communities from the illegal trafficking of firearms. Accordingly, a high priority for the ATF is firearms tracing, which is a key source of information to identify leads in firearms trafficking investigations. The trace information allows ATF to link suspects to firearms in criminal investigations for Federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies making the trace requests; to identify illegal firearms traffickers through recurring patterns and trends indicative of illegal firearms trafficking; and provides ATF a means through analysis of the aggregate trace data to help communities develop focused strategies and programs that address specific factors that contribute to armed crime. (ATF FY 2014 budget p. 36)

To that end, the ATF initiated a program in 2008 along the north east I-95 corridor referred to as the iTrafficking Program to help state and local law enforcement agencies combat this problem. By assigning contractors to fusion centers to analyze crime gun data and facilitate inter-agency cooperation, the ATF sought to develop an innovative, regional, approach to reducing violent crime through shared resources and increased collaboration. A primary objective of the program was to ensure the complete tracing of all crime guns, thereby providing additional investigative resources. Fusion centers in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland, were selected to implement the iTrafficking Project based upon several factors, including:

- New York and New Jersey are very often the recipient states of firearms along the Interstate 95 corridor; the so-called “iron pipeline”.

The “Iron Pipeline” refers to illegal trafficking of guns purchased in southern and eastern seaboard states but recovered in northeastern states such as New York and New Jersey.

- Fusion centers in several of the states had existing working relationships with ATF.

In August of 2009, ATF officials and superintendents from various state police organizations met to discuss the role that state fusion centers could play in firearms trafficking investigations. Of special interest was a successful model recently established in the New Jersey Regional Operations Intelligence Center (ROIC) where ATF agents were assigned on a full time basis to work with New Jersey State Police firearms trafficking investigators. This model has achieved a high level of success based on two critical factors – legislation and collaboration. In New Jersey, the tracing of firearms is mandated by a 2007 law originating from the state Attorney General’s office which requires police departments in the state to trace all recovered firearms. Additionally, the ATF and the New Jersey State Police recognized that working together strengthens the ability to combat firearms trafficking and crimes involving firearms. Operating as an “all-hazards” fusion center since 2006, the ROIC had already achieved a high level of participation and cooperation from local law enforcement agencies. Subsequently, the establishment of a joint firearms trafficking task force in the ROIC to investigate leads generated from firearms trace data was a seamless function. ATF officials used information gathered from this meeting to inform the development of the role of the iTrafficking personnel.
Due to limited availability of special agent positions, the ATF hired civilian contractors to work in the four fusion centers to increase firearms tracing capacity, coordinate firearms trafficking investigations, and act as general liaisons to the ATF. Contractors were hired in December 2010 and each received an initial week-long training in eTrace, the ATF’s web based firearms trace request submission system and interactive trace analysis module; nForce, the computerized ATF case management system, the function of ATF National Tracing Center, firearms identification methods, and fusion center operations.

The role of the iTrafficking contractors was to help ensure that all recovered crime guns were traced and that complete and accurate trace information was entered into ATF’s online tracing application, eTrace, and/or the paper based Trace Request Form. The iTrafficking contractors then analyzed the trace data to identify potential firearms trafficking investigative leads, as well as firearms trafficking trends. Mapping of pertinent trace information was also provided in order to assist local, tribal, state and federal law enforcement agencies with strategy development, investigative action plans, and resource deployment.

The ATF collects, reports, and shares information about crime guns through two primary sources: eTrace and NIBIN. In simpler terms, eTrace collects information from outside of the gun (make, model and serial number) while NIBIN collects information from the inside of the gun (ballistics).

**eTrace** is an internet-based system that allows participating law enforcement agencies to submit firearm traces to the ATF National Tracing Center (NTC). Authorized users can receive firearm trace results via this same internet web site, search a database of all firearm traces submitted by their individual agency, and perform analytical functions [reference ATF website https://www.atfonline.gov/etrace/]. It is available to domestic and international law enforcement agencies to assist in the tracing of U.S.-sourced firearms. Through eTrace, law enforcement agencies can electronically submit firearms trace requests, monitor the progress of traces, retrieve completed trace results, and query firearms trace-related data. eTrace includes analytical and download capabilities for the ATF’s firearms trace information, including selective field searches and statistical reporting. eTrace also has a referral list capability that allows participating agencies to learn if the purchaser, possessor, associate, licensed place of sale, and recovery location have been identified in other traces by any other law enforcement agency that is tracing firearms.

To access and utilize eTrace, the only equipment needed is a computer and access to the Internet, allowing even the smallest of agencies to trace their firearms and perform online data analysis. eTrace access is achieved by obtaining a valid user ID and password from the ATF. Each participating agency also enters into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the ATF. The MOU is intended to formalize a partnership among the participating agencies with regard to policy and procedures relative to the access and utilization of eTrace. Once on eTrace, agencies can enter new traces, view existing traces, and run reports on traces that their agency entered. Only ATF users of the eTrace application (this includes ATF employees, ATF task force officers, and ATF contractors) are able to view trace results from all agencies. In accordance with applicable appropriations laws and ATF policy, non-ATF users can access trace data only if the data originated from their particular agency.

**NIBIN:** Law enforcement agencies using Integrated Ballistic Identification Systems (IBIS) to acquire digital images of markings made on spent ammunition recovered from a crime scene or a crime gun test fire, use the NIBIN database to match and compare those images with earlier entries by other law enforcement agencies. These matches are commonly referred to as “hits.”
Section I: Fusion Centers - Assessing Capacity to Trace Firearms

Four fusion centers were selected as pilot sites for this project: the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC) in Baltimore, Maryland; the Delaware Information and Analysis Center (DIAC) in Dover, Delaware; the Pennsylvania Criminal Information Center in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and the New York State Intelligence Center in Albany, New York.

Site visits were made to each fusion center by project staff for the purpose of interviewing the iTrafficking contractor, fusion center supervisors, directors, and the iTrafficking contractor’s ATF supervisor. The goal of the interviews was to clarify how the ATF contractor worked in conjunction with fusion center personnel to develop intelligence products that incorporate gun tracing data analysis products. Also of interest was how each pilot fusion center transitioned and received the ATF analyst and how the iTrafficking analytic products were used by local and state law enforcement to improve criminal prosecutions. Project staff were also interested to determine if fusion center intelligence products included crime gun tracing information and, if so, how crime or crime gun tracing was impacted statewide.

To compare ATF pilot fusion center sites to other fusion centers, a survey instrument was developed to gauge the current state of practice with respect to the use of crime gun information at selected non-pilot sites. In order to obtain a wide range of responses, a random geographic cross section of fusion centers across the country was selected for survey distribution: Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Ohio, Oregon and North Carolina. These fusion centers were surveyed to determine how, if at all, crime gun tracing was included in their intelligence products and what benefits, if any, were realized by fusion center or local law enforcement personnel.

Key findings include:
- The majority (71%) indicated that their fusion center has been in operation for 4 to 7 years.
- All respondents cited terrorism activities as their primary focus.
- Secondary activities included violent crimes (71% of respondents), gangs (43% of respondents), drug trafficking (29% of respondents), and fire services (29% of respondents).
- The majority (85.7%) indicated that ATF staff were not assigned to their center.
- 57% indicated that they coordinate investigations with a local ATF representative.
- 29% share data/information/intelligence with an ATF Intelligence Field Office (also referred to as a gun center).
- Only one fusion center had an in-house analyst dedicated to firearms and/or gun violence.
- One fusion center utilized eTrace.
- One fusion center indicated that it used information from the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) in its analytical processes.
- One fusion center routinely examines National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) information to trace firearms purchases.
One fusion center indicated that they utilize a firearm offender database, such as a firearm offender registry, to trace firearms purchases. Survey responses were very revealing about the current state of fusion center practices. While most identified terrorism as their primary focus, violent crime was identified as a secondary focus. Additionally, more than half of the respondents indicated that they coordinated investigations with local ATF offices. Despite these practices, only one fusion center reported the use of eTrace, NIBIN, or the NICS. It is also important to note that the use of crime gun information was not identified as a priority area for any of the centers.

Pilot Site Visit Summaries

Project staff conducted one-on-one interviews with the iTrafficking contractor, fusion center supervisors, directors, and the iTrafficking contractor’s ATF supervisor at each pilot site. Information regarding the integration of information provided by the contractor into analytical products, benefits of the project, and suggestions for improvement were primary objectives of each interview.

Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC)

Created shortly after September 11, 2001, the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center was established as a model facility for the analysis and dissemination of information in statewide support of law enforcement, public health and welfare, public safety and homeland security. Center staff consists of assigned personnel from over 25 federal, state and/or local agencies with homeland security, public safety, public health and/or law enforcement responsibilities. Site visit findings include:

- There was consensus by all fusion center personnel interviewed that crime gun trace data that was analyzed by the iTrafficking contractor enhanced the criminal intelligence products currently being developed by the fusion center and used by local law enforcement.

- The iTrafficking contractor’s work product and presence improved coordination and collaboration between federal and state agencies such as State Police, FBI, US Attorneys, and ATF. For example, the ATF Firearms Trafficking Group deputized several Maryland State Police (MSP) troopers and began coordinating investigative efforts with the MSP Firearms Trace Task Force.

- The design and operation of the City of Baltimore’s Gun Registry is an effective resource in crime gun tracing and information-sharing.

- At the time the interviews were conducted, MCAC was unable to process the various disparate information systems to prepare a comprehensive report detailing firearms related arrests in the state. More than 150 separate agencies provide information to MCAC using a variety of report methods in addition to the firearm trace requests submitted to the ATF through eTrace. Subsequently, there is incomplete analysis of gun trace data. Development of a standardized format for reporting criminal intelligence is sorely needed to better review and process that information.

- Fusion center personnel indicated that gun violence could be strongly impacted if all Federal Firearms Licensees (FFL’s) were required to maintain logs of ammunition sales, and all gun owners were required to report thefts of guns.

- Additional training on the Tiahrt amendment related to gun trace data sharing would benefit local and state law enforcement.

What is the Tiahrt Amendment? Starting in 2003, the U.S. Congress has annually passed language in the ATF’s appropriation that prevents the public release of ATF trace data. The trace data disclosure restriction is commonly referred to as the Tiahrt Amendments after its sponsor, former U.S. Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R-KS).
Generally, the congressional appropriation bill language has prohibited the ATF from sharing or releasing trace data unless the release was for law enforcement purposes. Various iterations of the disclosure restrictions have existed since the original 2003 language. During most of the years, the language limited the sharing of trace data only “in connection with and for use in a criminal investigation or prosecution.” However, since fiscal year (FY) 2010, Congress has removed this provision, and the limitation no longer exists.

Delaware Intelligence and Analysis Center (DIAC)

Established in 2005, the DIAC is staffed by the Delaware State Police and more than 12 other agencies. It has numerous full time components embedded within, that include an analytical section, a Critical Infrastructure Protection Unit, and a statewide WMD coordinator. These full time members of DIAC work in conjunction with each other to identify, prevent, secure and inform Delaware’s Law Enforcement, private sector and public leaders of any and all threats to the security of Delaware. In addition to the above full time partners DIAC works daily with Delaware’s Joint Terrorism Task Force, the FBI, ATF, ICE, The Delaware National Guard, United States Coast Guard, Dover Air Force Base, the US Attorney’s Office, and The Department of Homeland Security to ensure that information is shared and exchanged regularly. Site visit findings include:

- The State of Delaware is unique in that it has only one crime reporting system used by all fifty law enforcement agencies in the state. Subsequently, it is somewhat easier for the DIAC to develop intelligence products that include gun trace data.
- The coordination of intelligence products and investigative leads based on the examination of firearms trace data is extremely effective in Delaware as the iTrafficking contractor is focused full-time on gun trace analysis. Those persons interviewed for this project attribute improved investigative leads resulting in higher prosecution rates as evidence of the value of gun tracing in Delaware.

New York State Intelligence Center (NYSIC)

The New York State Intelligence Center, established in 2003 by the New York State Police and the New York State Office of Homeland Security, is a multi-agency intelligence center designed to collect and analyze information and to disseminate terrorist and criminal intelligence. The NYSIC serves as the State’s Fusion Center, bringing together federal, state and local agencies to analyze and share information related to terrorism and other crimes. Site visit findings include:

- The State of New York is unique among fusion centers, and particularly the pilot fusion centers, because the New York Crime Gun Center conducts the tracing for all law enforcement in the State. This analysis focuses on short “time-to-crime” guns.
- A specific improvement made by the iTrafficking contractor, was to develop a robust Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that prioritizes the tracing and analysis of guns with obliterated serial numbers.

Time-to-crime is the period of time (measured in days) between a firearm’s retail sale and law enforcement’s recovery of the firearm in connection with a crime. REF: http://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/gun_violence/sect08-j.html
Investigative leads obtained from crime gun trace data were reported to have improved since implementation of the iTrafficking project.

Although the iTrafficking contractor has a top secret clearance from the military, her lack of law enforcement experience places her at a disadvantage when working within the NYSIC. Additional training in ATF database systems, policies and procedures soon after initial employment would have been helpful.

State-wide law enforcement training in firearms identification (type, model, manufacturer, etc.) would greatly improve the number and quality of traces in the state.

The Tiahrt amendments continue to hinder the sharing of firearms trace data among agencies at the NYSIC.

**Pennsylvania Criminal Information Center (PaCIC)**

The Pennsylvania State Police, Bureau of Criminal Investigation, established the Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center in July of 2003 in an effort to provide law enforcement agencies throughout the Commonwealth with one central point of contact for their information needs. Staffed by more than 50 personnel, it serves approximately 1200 law enforcement agencies throughout the state. Site visit findings include:

- Working with the iTrafficking contractor and ATF Group Supervisor, the Philadelphia Police Department improved the accuracy of their successful firearms tracing by 45 percent.

- A specific benefit to local law enforcement from the iTrafficking program was an analysis completed by the contractor that showed the recovery of Pennsylvania-sourced firearms in other states, particularly New York. This effort led to the State Police reallocating law enforcement resources to the identified regions in the state that were the source of crime guns that were identified in New York.

- Inability to release trace data due to interpretation of the Tiahrt amendments, was the primary barrier to producing leads for investigations.

- Currently, queries to any system in use at the fusion center has to be done individually which is time consuming and inefficient. The contractor recommended the use of a single software program that would search multiple databases with one query.

- Access to, and training in the use of mapping software was suggested as an enhancement to the ATF contractor’s skill set.

- Additional law enforcement training in eTrace and firearms tracing is needed to improve both accuracy and frequency of local law enforcement tracing.

**Site Visit Findings**

A number of recurring and important themes surfaced during all of the site visits:

- Tiahrt Amendment Confusion: more than anything else, fusion center representatives cited confusion about the ability to share gun trace data with other law enforcement agencies.

- The addition of an ATF contractor in fusion centers improved coordination and collaboration between federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

- Enhanced Criminal Intelligence Products: a consistent finding was that intelligence products based on the analysis of firearms trace data were effective in identifying investigative leads.

- A focus on “time-to-crime” analysis and placing a high priority on tracing guns with obliterated serial numbers helped to identify investigative leads in violent crime cases.

- Additional training in eTrace would improve the frequency and accuracy of firearms tracing by local law enforcement.

These findings highlight the benefits of the iTrafficking project while also identifying future areas of improvement by both ATF and local law enforcement personnel.
A Sample of Case Success Stories:

DELAWARE: an iTrafficking lead surfaced as a result of analyzing Delaware firearms trace data. A local police department in Maryland executed a search warrant for Controlled Substances that resulted in the recovery of eight firearms including a Ceska Zbrojovka, 9mm pistol. The analysis revealed that the pistol had been purchased 51 days earlier in southern Delaware. An iTrafficking intelligence lead was forwarded to ATF-Wilmington for follow-up. The subsequent investigation revealed an individual was potentially dealing firearms without the applicable federal firearms license. Records obtained by ATF indicated that the suspect had purchased approximately 100 firearms. All known firearms purchased by the suspect were entered into the Suspect Gun Database. To date, three suspect guns have been recovered in Delaware.

DELAWARE: an iTrafficking lead was developed following the recovery of a Hi-Point C9 9mm pistol seized by Wilmington Police Department from a prohibited person. A NIBIN ballistics match on the Hi-Point revealed that it was involved in five separate shootings in which several victims were shot. Four of these incidents are being investigated by the Wilmington Police Department and one by the Delaware State Police (DSP). The pistol was traced to an individual living in Georgia and the firearm was part of a multiple purchase. Another Hi-Point pistol, seized by a Police Department in Pennsylvania, was part of the same multiple purchase and had a time-to-crime period of about one year. The iTrafficking contractor was able to link the purchaser to relatives in Wilmington, Delaware, several of whom had extensive criminal records. The U.S. Attorney’s office prosecuted these individuals on federal drug and firearm charges.

NEW YORK: an investigation was initiated after the iTrafficking contractor examined firearms trace data and identified multiple firearms purchased in Ohio by the same person. One of those weapons was recovered in New York with a time-to-crime period of 26 days. Another firearm was recovered 26 days later in Rochester, New York in the possession of a person with 5 additional long guns. In the course of reviewing daily local reports for a possible multiple sale nexus, the iTrafficking analyst linked a New York State Police traffic stop/crime gun recovery to the same Ohio purchaser. The iTrafficking contractor coordinated the case with the New York State trooper and the ATF office in Ohio. Additional support was also provided to the case agent on the purchaser through requests to the Ohio fusion center. The investigation is ongoing.

NEW YORK: following the trace of a Sig Sauer pistol recovered from a convicted felon in New York, analysis by the iTrafficking contractor revealed that the firearm was purchased in Virginia, by an armed services member. The purchaser used a New York Driver’s license and a military ID when buying the weapon. Further analysis revealed that both the purchaser and possessor More than 26 additional firearms traces were linked to the possessor’s last name and addresses, as well as four multiple sale reports involving the purchase of nine firearms. This investigation is continuing.

MARYLAND: an examination of incomplete traces by the iTrafficking contractor revealed numerous Baltimore Police Department traces of firearms with obliterated serial numbers that were not being updated once the serial numbers were raised by the Baltimore Police Lab. Working with the Baltimore Police Lab, firearms with serial numbers that were restored were retraced. Numerous investigative leads were identified including several firearms with obliterated serial numbers that were purchased by the same individual in North Carolina.
Section II:
The Impact of the ATF iTrafficking Program - Project Findings

The iTrafficking Program can certainly be described as having had a positive impact on firearms trafficking investigations and on the frequency and accuracy of firearms tracing. State police and local law enforcement in the iTrafficking states have been sharing firearms trace data with ATF resulting in improved collaborations, especially in task force operations.

Significantly, trace data from the ATF Office of Strategic Intelligence and Information (OSII) confirmed that all of the iTrafficking states except New York (which is an exception because ATF has been tracing all NYPD firearms for several years) experienced an increase in the number of firearms traced from 2010 to 2011. Moreover, the number of firearms successfully traced back to a federal firearms licensee (FFL) increased in all of the iTrafficking states except Delaware. Delaware traces far fewer firearms than the other contributing states due in great part to a lower population.

ATF Trace Data from 2010 to 2011 yielded the following specific results during the study period:

- Increases in the number of firearms traced by state
  - Delaware 12%
  - Maryland 3%
  - Pennsylvania 2%

- Increases in the number of successful traces
  - Maryland 8%
  - Pennsylvania 6%
  - New York 4%

Further, fusion center interviews and etrace records revealed that the iTrafficking contractor in Pennsylvania worked with the Philadelphia Police Department to improve successful firearms traces by 45 percent. A review of the information obtained from all of the site visits also indicated positive outcomes for the ATF, fusion centers, and local law enforcement agencies.

Benefits of the iTrafficking Program to ATF:

The iTrafficking program filters raw information through a number of databases at state fusion centers, resulting in actionable and timely criminal intelligence being disseminated to ATF Field Offices. The location of the iTrafficking contractors at fusion centers provides access to all of the resources and information necessary to provide a broad intelligence package that is both useful and actionable by law enforcement. In addition to the accessibility of the various intelligence databases, another benefit of being located in the fusion centers is direct access to representatives from many other state, local, tribal and federal law enforcement agencies. This access results in stronger relationships and information sharing on breaking cases that may not yet be found in the various databases in use by local law enforcement.
An example of the benefit to ATF of the iTrafficking contractor’s presence at fusion centers was illustrated during a recent ATF-Wilmington, DE Field Office home invasion investigation. Through access to the various databases available at the DIAC, the iTrafficking contractor was able to provide critical assistance to ATF agents in identifying a suspect. The iTrafficking contractor developed information about the suspect, including, 1) a prior traffic stop by the individual in the same suspected vehicle and, 2) his confirmed membership in a known street gang. As a result, the subject was positively identified as the suspect involved in an undercover investigation. This information proved to be critical for the protection of the undercover ATF agents and in determining the threat posed by the suspects.

Benefits of the iTrafficking Program to Fusion Centers

Interviews conducted with fusion center representatives indicated that the majority agree that ATF onsite presence is valuable and supports their capabilities and mission. It is essential to have someone in place in fusion centers for coordination and information sharing that includes firearms tracing. The contractor’s involvement in the development of intelligence products for law enforcement, investigators and prosecutors can be beneficial in providing both tactical and strategic information that builds strong investigative leads, supports successful prosecutions, and assists in the development of crime reduction plans.

Specific benefits included: improved accuracy of firearms tracing by state and local law enforcement (45% in Philadelphia, 6% Pennsylvania, and 8% in Maryland); investigations were made stronger (more facts of the case, witnesses and evidence were discovered); and higher conviction rates were realized by including crime gun tracing and intelligence sharing in the pilot fusion centers.

Benefits of the iTrafficking Program to the State, Local and Tribal Law Enforcement:

Reducing violent crime, identifying and apprehending violent offenders, and keeping communities safe is, and always will be, a priority for law enforcement. This priority is especially focused at the state, local, and tribal law enforcement level, whose members are directly accountable to the citizens they serve. The iTrafficking program is designed to support those efforts through the improved analysis and dissemination of crime gun data available from the ATF. Contractors assigned to the pilot fusion centers reported numerous criminal cases that were solved as a direct result of the addition of ATF resources to fusion center functions. Additionally, firearms traces increased in three out of four pilot fusion centers, a success directly attributable to the efforts of the contractors to improve collaborations, develop operating procedures, establish priorities, and other critical tasks.

Improving the frequency and accuracy of firearms tracing at the local level is a primary method of ensuring that crime gun data is available for analysis. The iTrafficking program clearly highlighted the need to improve gun tracing by local law enforcement agencies. Accordingly, the IACP developed a new mobile application (“app”) of the ATF’s Police Officer’s Guide to Recovered Firearms for smartphones. The application provides information on firearms safety, firearms marking identification, firearms tracing tools, and other information to assist law enforcement in tracing firearms. Released in January 2012, it has been downloaded more than 30,000 times.
Section III:
Promising Practices Emerging from the Project

After interviewing the iTrafficking contractors and employees of the pilot site fusion centers who work with and supervise them, several promising practices of the iTrafficking Program were identified including the following:

1. e-Trace training for all collaborating agency personnel at the fusion center.
   One of the primary goals of the iTrafficking program is to increase firearms traces. The entry of accurate information into the eTrace system is a critical first step in that process. Additional training in the e-Trace system for all fusion center personnel improves the rate of successful gun traces.

   In Maryland, the ATF Field Division provided several training classes in 2010 to police departments who used eTrace. In 2011, firearms traces increased approximately 3 percent and successful traces increased 8% in the state. As a result of eTrace by the Philadelphia ATF iTrafficking contractor to the Philadelphia Police Department, their accuracy of successful firearms traces improved by 45 percent.

2. Front-end assessments of the tracing capabilities and practices of the agencies or departments who are the top-firearms tracers in the state.
   Prior to the hiring of the iTrafficking contractor, an assessment of the past trace history of the top tracing departments should be completed. This allows ATF to identify agencies that may be experiencing tracing problems. ATF personnel can then work with the agency to correct those problems to improve the successful tracing of crime guns, criminal investigations, and subsequent prosecutions.

   In the ATF Baltimore Field Division, this review identified a department whose traces had suddenly declined caused by several department retirements and reassignments. ATF then assisted the department in reducing their backlog of firearms traces.

3. Employment of personnel with the necessary level of security clearances and qualifications needed for the iTrafficking project.
   This project reinforced the concept that all fusion centers are unique and have their own hiring requirements for employees. ATF and fusion center directors must work together to identify knowledgeable, experienced, and qualified candidates who have the necessary clearances to immediately integrate into the fusion center process.

4. Crime mapping software and related training are invaluable resources for iTrafficking personnel.
   By mapping their recovered and traced firearms, the ATF Philadelphia Field Division learned that a majority of the firearms recovered in Brooklyn and the Bronx were not from Virginia or Florida, the top out-of-state sources, but from the Eastern Pennsylvania counties around Scranton. Identifying these emerging patterns assisted ATF in working with state and local law enforcement in these areas to combat straw purchasing and other firearms trafficking considerations.
5. Designated personnel to analyze all firearms trace data for their agency or department.

Local law enforcement agencies, particularly ones serving populations of 50,000 and fewer (96% of all US law enforcement agencies) commonly do not have any unit or squad that examines firearms trace data or conducts firearms trafficking investigations. When suspicious trends or patterns were identified, follow-up investigations were much more efficient in law enforcement departments with firearms trafficking units that could immediately investigate the leads. Even if an officer were only assigned part time to firearms tracing, the improvement in investigative leads would likely improve.

6. Short time-to-crime periods and obliterated serial numbers are prime indicators of trafficked firearms. Analysts should focus attention on these key factors in identifying patterns or trends in illegal firearms distribution

The ATF Baltimore Field Division established a system to ensure the traces of all recovered Baltimore Police Department firearms with obliterated serial numbers were followed up on and successfully traced. The Division also established a successful relationship with the Baltimore Police Crime Laboratory whose technicians emailed ATF the serial numbers of such guns in real time—the day the obliterated serial numbers were raised.

The ATF Philadelphia Field Division reviewed the Philadelphia Police Department’s follow-up traces of guns with obliterated serial numbers and discovered the same problem as in the Baltimore Police Department. The iTrafficking contractor in the ATF Philadelphia Field Division initiated a program to ensure that the traces were completed if the serial numbers were successfully raised by the police laboratory.

Obliterated serial numbers are perhaps the best indicator of a trafficked firearm.

7. Training of all personnel regarding the Tiahrt Amendments relating to the sharing of firearms trace data with iTrafficking contractors, fusion center personnel, and all local law enforcement agencies.

Interviews of personnel at the fusion centers revealed that there is still confusion about the sharing of firearms trace data and what can and cannot be shared despite the fact that the Tiahrt Amendments were changed in 2010. Representatives at fusion centers must be trained on the laws related to the sharing of trace data. As an additional resource, each ATF Field Division employs a Division Counsel who can be contacted if specific questions arise about the sharing of firearms trace data.

8. The use of advanced analytical software that enables analysts to search multiple databases with a single query reduces inquiry response times.

Accuracy and speed of query is critical to analysts and others who initiate gun tracing. The iTrafficking contractors at several fusion centers reported that data from firearms traces must be entered into multiple disparate databases in order to produce comprehensive analyses. The repeated entry of the same data into these systems was time consuming and tedious. However, other contractors reported the availability of software that enabled them to conduct searches with a single inquiry, dramatically reducing search time.


The primary purpose for the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) is to provide federal, state and local law enforcement, forensic science, and prosecutors with an automated ballistic imaging system that will aid their investigations. The use of digital images of shell casings to link violent crimes involving firearms subsequently leads to the identification of firearm users or “trigger pullers.”

Philadelphia is among the five cities with the highest number of NIBIN hits; however, no information was being developed regarding
the outcome of the NIBIN hits once they were sent to the Detective Division for further investigation. As a result, the ATF Intelligence Group, the Philadelphia Police Department Firearms Identification Unit, and the iTrafficking analyst collaborated on developing a form that was approved through the chain of command both by the police and ATF to accomplish the following:

- Enable leads from NIBIN hits to be created and disseminated in a timely fashion.
- Ensure that follow-up investigators report results in a timely manner.
- Enable hit information to be collected and analyzed by ATF.

These practices were consistently identified by pilot fusion center personnel as having the most significant benefit to the iTrafficking project. While it may not be possible to implement all of them at the same time, they should serve as a framework for fusion centers to use in future implementations of the iTrafficking project. The implementation of several of these practices do not require any additional manpower, funding, or resources.
Section IV: Action Steps for Stakeholders

Violent crime plagues many communities around the nation. Gun-related crime is a top concern for law enforcement, public health groups, and communities across the nation. Below are the recommended ways that each supporting agency can assist in the fight against gun crimes.

**IACP**

IACP will widely disseminate the findings in this report. Further, IACP will foster national dissemination of the accurate interpretation and protocol for sharing gun trace data with state, local, and tribal law enforcement to dispel misunderstandings.

**BJA**

BJA should continue to support research, education and awareness in the area of crime gun data, illegal firearms trafficking and tracing methodologies for state, local and tribal agencies. One method to accomplish this task would be to provide states and local agencies with funding to ensure that training on the eTrace system is incorporated into law enforcement training academy curriculums.

**ATF**

ATF should continue to partner with fusion centers, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies to combat firearms trafficking, illegal firearms possession and use, and violent crime through their policies, training and resources. ATF should continue to play a vital role in training contractors, analysts, as well as state, local, and tribal officers on current tools and applications that can assist in leads and investigations.

**Department of Homeland Security (DHS)**

DHS should continue to fully support fusion centers and encourage agency participation. Fusion centers foster direct interagency collaborations that lead to better intelligence gathering and analysis that strengthens leads and investigations.

**Fusion Centers**

The ATF iTrafficking Program is a model with numerous promising practices that other fusion centers could replicate. As more fusion centers adopt the all-crimes approach to information and intelligence sharing, crime gun data analysis will likely be a priority in their intelligence cycle. Fusion centers should continue to achieve their core capabilities and consider actively involving ATF in their cadre of in-house experts and analysts. Centers should recognize the strengthened approach toward crime fighting with dedicated and trained staff to trace firearms, analyze firearm data and work with all state agencies to reduce gun violence and increase leads in investigations that have a gun element involved. Further fusion centers should arm their personnel with tools such as mapping software and a unified database system for ease of searching data.

**State, Local and Tribal Law Enforcement**

The firearms tracing tools currently available to law enforcement provide a wealth of information for investigators, prosecutors, and law enforcement
executives. However, in many jurisdictions, that information is being underutilized. State, local and tribal law enforcement agencies should establish comprehensive crime gun tracing practices that emphasize their utility and value in all crime fighting efforts. These practices should also include submitting complete and accurate trace requests to eTrace and ballistic images to NIBIN. These practices were recently cited in a 2012 IACP Resolution that views regionally applied crime gun and evidence processing protocols as a best practice for the investigation of firearm-related crimes (IACP Resolution FC.028.a12). Specifically, the resolution called for agencies to establish protocols for:

- The thorough investigation of each gun related crime including the safe and proper collection of all crime guns & related evidence.
- The performance of appropriate NCIC transactions (e.g. stolen, recovered).
- The timely and comprehensive tracing of all crime guns through ATF & eTrace.
- The timely processing of crime gun test fires and ballistics evidence through NIBIN.
- The timely lab submission and analysis of other forensic data from crime guns and related evidence (e.g. DNA, latent fingerprints, trace evidence).
- The generation, dissemination and investigative follow-up of the intelligence derived from the application of the regional protocols.

Agencies should also foster relationships with local fusion centers to fully understand the scope of the center’s work, their capabilities, their challenges and how they can collaborate for the common goal of detecting threats, identifying leads and enhancing investigations of criminal activity. In addition to local fusion centers, agencies should also establish close working relationships with their local ATF field office to increase their capability to trace firearms (with greater accuracy and success), analyze trace data to identify hot spots and other actionable intelligence, and collaborate with other agencies to combat intra-state or inter-state illegal firearms trafficking.

Law enforcement should adopt the philosophy of “trace every gun, every time.”

Unfortunately, firearms tracing, as a law enforcement tool, is underutilized at a time when it can be successfully used as a “force multiplier” to improve investigations during officer downsizing, due to economic decline, positively impacting towns and cities all across the nation.
Section V: Future of the iTrafficking Initiative

The core mission of any fusion center is the sharing of information and intelligence products among law enforcement agencies to support homeland security and investigate criminal activity. The iTrafficking project supports this mission by providing timely and actionable intelligence to fusion center personnel, state and local law enforcement agencies, and ATF enforcement groups to investigate and reduce violent firearms crime.

The iTrafficking project was deliberately piloted in a region of the United States known for having a high volume of illegally trafficked firearms in order to test its viability. The project outcomes, as documented in this report, clearly enhances a fusion center’s ability to leverage investigative resources to support criminal investigations, prosecutions and strategic planning.

Unfortunately, as of October 1, 2013, all iTrafficking contractors were released from the ATF and the pilot fusion centers due to a lack of continued funding. Despite this loss of personnel, the iTrafficking project did not end with the departure of the contractors. Given the relatively short period of involvement with the iTrafficking project, fusion center personnel quickly recognized its benefit and continued to include crime gun data in their analytical processes. Fusion center personnel agreed that expansion of the project to other fusion centers is a logical next step to increasing the use of crime gun data in investigations.

However, during the project period it became apparent to project staff that many law enforcement agencies, and some fusion center personnel, were unfamiliar with the use of crime gun data in criminal investigations. Surprisingly, law enforcement personnel and fusion center analysts in some states were completely unfamiliar with the eTrace system. Unfortunately, these discoveries were consistent with the findings of the survey distributed to fusion centers early in the project. That survey revealed that only one fusion center, out of the seven surveyed, used eTrace and NIBIN data in their analytical functions.

Subsequently, project staff became very aware of the need to educate a broad spectrum of law enforcement and fusion center personnel about the benefits of incorporating eTrace, NIBIN, and other crime gun data into investigative functions. From the basics of properly submitting crime gun information into eTrace to generating investigating interviews or developing complex crime reduction strategies, thorough and frequent educational programs are needed for a variety of law enforcement personnel.

Simultaneous to the educational efforts regarding crime gun data analysis functions, the iTrafficking model should be incorporated into fusion center operations. Specifically, fusion centers in certain regions of the country that have experienced historically high volumes of illegal gun trafficking and violent firearms crime should be early adopters of the project. Those regions include:

- Central- Illinois, Indiana
- West – California, Nevada, Arizona

Additionally, fusion centers in “source states” could combat violent firearms crime by examining crime gun data. Those states generally include Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida along the I-95 corridor.
**Milwaukee Frontline Initiative**

The Milwaukee Frontline Initiative, MFI, is a collaboration to reduce gun crimes through coordinated, focused investigations, coupled with prevention and suppression efforts in partnership with Milwaukee Police Department, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), and regional law enforcement partners. The core premise is the coordination of activities of law enforcement, corrections, prosecution, and state crime lab partners on a federated information-sharing platform that will maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of all efforts. MFI will utilize a combination of existing and new technological tools (ATF eTrace and National integrated Ballistics System (NIBIN), iBase, GIS Mapping, Shotspotter (SST), Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR), and touch DNA) to improve the timely identification, apprehension, and prosecution of targeted gun offenders. Launched in October, 2013, the project is in the early stages of development. It also incorporates an existing partnership between the MPD and ATF, launched in September 2013 to reduce gun violence.

Building upon the success of a previous joint initiative, ATF and MPD formed the Regional Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) in January 2014, and began using NIBIN as its primary investigative tool. The CGIC was a logical extension to the “Follow the Gun” strategy and other elements used during the aforementioned initiative. The success of this is initiative is based on the pilot installation of NIBIN technology directly into the Milwaukee Police Department where officers are functioning as NIBIN techs, entering evidence into the system with near real-time results.

The CGIC fills a strong need in Wisconsin for a proactive, intelligence-based targeting of criminal offenders in the Eastern District of Wisconsin. The CGIC is producing timely, precise, and objective intelligence data to focus resources on the most violent offenders in Milwaukee and surrounding jurisdictions.

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**Creating New iTrafficking Programs Nationally**

The survey of non-pilot fusion centers during this project indicated that the primary goals of fusion centers are to prevent terrorism and combat violent crime. Incorporating the iTrafficking program into current practice supports those goals and is a logical decision for fusion center directors. Initial actions require little more than the establishment of an eTrace account. Since the eTrace database is internet based, no additional software or hardware is needed. Secondary actions include securing support and collaboration from task force agencies to share crime gun trace data and NIBIN hit confirmations. Therefore representatives from all law enforcement agencies participating in the fusion center should be incorporated into the planning process as early as possible.

A major concern about the introduction of any new task or program will certainly focus on the need for additional personnel. While this is an expected and reasonable concern, it should not become the central focus. As demonstrated in this project, no additional personnel were needed to perform basic analytical functions in the pilot fusion centers after the contractors were gone. That is not say that the addition of a full time analyst would not be beneficial – it would, absolutely.

Other early considerations include:

- Establishing an MOU with ATF to access the eTrace online system
- Establishing liaisons with local agencies that have NIBIN equipment, to ensure that NIBIN “hit” information is shared and investigated in a timely manner
- Training in the use of eTrace and NIBIN for all personnel
- Establishment of protocols to ensure that crime gun trace data and NIBIN hit confirmation data is shared promptly by all participating agencies
- Development of policies to describe how crime gun data will be used for tactical and strategic purposes

These considerations are not all-encompassing but do provide basic resources needed to implement an iTrafficking program.

Additionally, the IACP has designed a state-level crime gun tracing intelligence sharing strategy, as part of the iTrafficking project, to help state and local agencies implement an iTrafficking project. The intelligence sharing strategy outlines the investigative benefits of crime gun data, important factors to consider in the analysis of the data, and other ATF resources available to investigators. The intelligence sharing strategy is also included in this document in the appendix.
Firearms violence is one of the top crime challenges facing many police chiefs in America today. Focused enforcement on the interdiction of illegally trafficked firearms to gangs and violent criminals will always be a priority for law enforcement. As part of the intelligence-led policing effort, departments can utilize their firearms trace data to reduce firearms trafficking and firearms crime.

The ATF iTrafficking Program, launched in 2008, implemented a regional approach to firearms trafficking investigations in fusion centers located in the northeast region of the United States. This region, commonly referred to as the “iron pipeline,” has a historically high volume of illegal firearms trafficking and violent crime involving firearms. As a result of the addition of ATF contractors to selected fusion centers, improvements in both the quantity and quality of investigative leads, analytical capacity, and relationship development with other law enforcement agencies were clearly realized. Subsequently, core features of the iTrafficking project have become permanently integrated into normal functions of several fusion centers despite the fact that the ATF no longer provides a full time analyst.

Law enforcement agencies and fusion centers across the United States could significantly benefit from the implementing an iTrafficking model in their jurisdictions. The lessons learned and the promising practices identified in this report will help to serve as a platform to get started.
Appendix A: References, Resources, and Tools


Ross Arends, “The ATF’s iTrafficking Program: Linking Firearms Trace Data with State Fusion Centers,” The Police Chief 79 (September 2012): 50–53


Fusion Center Guidelines: Developing and sharing information and intelligence in a new era. Department of Justice.

ATF Firearms Tracing Guide
Appendix B: Non-Pilot Site Center Survey and Results

The IACP conducted a survey to collect information about gun tracing methods employed by Fusion Centers in Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, North Carolina, Ohio, and Oregon. The purpose of the survey was to examine the operational conditions of the Fusion Centers, as well as the steps taken to identify and properly process the intelligence gathered at each center. The seven centers that participated offered valuable information that is systematically outlined in this report. This report lists the questions and responses, taken directly from the online survey forum, as well as graphs and charts to outline specific data comparisons between the Fusion Centers.

First, the survey asked demographic information, followed by questions concerning funding, areas of concentration, and more operational questions, before exploring more specific topics. That demographic information has been removed from this report for privacy purposes.

1. Demographic Profile
   a. Name:
   b. Address:
   c. Mailing Address:
   d. State, City, Zip:
   e. Phone:
   f. Fax:
   g. Email:

   Responses: 100% of respondents indicated that Fusion Centers serves a state.

2. How long has this Fusion Center been operational?
   a. Less than one year
   b. 1-3 years
   c. 4-7 years
   d. Over 7 years

   Responses: The majority (71.4%) indicated that their Fusion Center has been in operation for 4 to 7 years. Two other options, 1 to 3 years, and over 7 years each accounted for 14.3% of the respondents.
3. Who is the lead agency for this Fusion Center?
   a. State Police
   b. City/Municipal Police
   c. FBI
   d. DEA/HIDTA
   e. DHS
   f. State Department of Justice
   g. Other (Please specify)

   **Responses:** The majority (57.1%) indicated State Police, followed by 28.6% who indicated the State Department of Justice as their lead agency for their Fusion Center. One Fusion Center indicated “Other.”

4. How is the Fusion Center primarily funded?
   a. State funding
   b. Federal funding
   c. City Funding
   d. Other (Please specify)

   **Responses:** The majority (71.4%) indicated that they were funded by the state, while the second most popular choice was federal funding (57.1%). One indicated other, and specified that it is funded half federally and half by the state.

5. Please select the top three (3) focus areas of this Fusion Center:
   a. Terrorism (To include domestic terrorism-sovereign citizens)
   b. Gangs
   c. Violent Crimes
   d. Firearms Trafficking
   e. Fugitives
   f. Drug Trafficking
   g. Missing Persons
   h. Public Health
   i. Fire Services
   j. Immigration

   **Responses:** 100% of the survey takers indicated that their Fusion Center focused on Terrorism, while the second most popular answer (71.4%) was Violent Crimes. Other popular responses included Gangs (42.9%), Drug Trafficking (28.6%), and Fire Services (28.6%). The least popular answers were Fugitives (14.3%), and Immigration (14.3).
6. How many agencies staff this Fusion Center?
   a. 1-5
   b. 6-10
   c. 11-20
   d. More than 20

   Responses: 28.6% indicated that 1-5 agencies staff their Fusion Center, followed by 28.6% who indicated that 6-10 agencies staff their center, 28.6% who indicated that 11-20 agencies staff their center, and lastly, only one Fusion Center indicated that more than 20 agencies staffed their center.

   Please select the top three (3) focus areas of this Fusion Center:

   ![Bar chart showing focus areas]

   Terrorism (To include Domestic Terrorism - Sovereign Citizens)
   Violent Crimes
   Firearms Trafficking
   Drug Trafficking
   Fugitives
   Missing Persons
   Public Health
   Fire Services
   Immigration

7. Does the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives have staff assigned to this Fusion Center?
   a. Yes
   b. No

   Responses: The majority (85.7%) indicated that ATF staff was not assigned to their center.

8. How many law enforcement agencies does this Fusion Center serve?
   a. 1-12
   b. 13-50
   c. 51-100
   d. 101-250
   e. 251-500
   f. Over 500

   Responses: 42.9% of respondents indicated that 101-250 agencies serve their Fusion Center, and another 42.9% indicated that 251-500 agencies serve their center. Only one respondent indicated that their center served over 500 law enforcement agencies.
9. How many law enforcement agencies regularly contribute information to this Fusion Center?
   a. 1-12
   b. 13-50
   c. 51-100
   d. 101-250
   e. 251-500
   f. Over 500

   Responses: 42.9% of respondents indicated that 13-50 agencies contribute information to their Fusion Center, while 28.6% indicated 51-100 agencies contribute information.

10. How many NON law enforcement agencies regularly contribute to this Fusion Center?
    a. 1-12
    b. 13-50
    c. 51-100
    d. 101-250
    e. 251-500
    f. Over 500

   Responses: The majority of respondents (50.0%) indicated that 1-12 non-law enforcement agencies contribute to their Fusion Center. 33.3% indicated that 13-50 agencies contribute, and only one respondent indicated that 101-250 regularly contribute to their center.
11. How many dedicated staff does this Fusion Center employ?
   a. 1-10
   b. 11-15
   c. 16-25
   d. 26-30
   e. Over 30 (please specify)

Responses: Two centers indicated that they have **1-10** employees. One indicated that their Fusion Center has over 30 staff members, while another responded over 30 and specified, “The Fusion Center is comprised of members from the Collections and Development Unit, Research and Development Unit, Domestic Security, Critical Infrastructure, Counter Terrorism Intelligence Center, and the Financial Crimes Assessment Center.

Following the demographic questions, the second portion of the survey, entitled, “Information Gathering,” examined how Fusion Centers collect intelligence. The survey questions pin-pointed exact databases used by the Fusion Centers to gather information. The results showed a trend in the use of similar databases among the different Fusion Centers.

Information Gathering Questions:

12. Please indicate how law enforcement agencies contribute information to the Fusion Center:
   a. Batch Upload of RMS Reports
   b. Fusion Center Created Form
   c. NCIC or State Criminal Information Center automatic transfer
   d. Paper Reports
   e. Telephonic Reports

Responses: The majority of respondents (85.7%) indicated that law enforcement agencies contribute information through a **Fusion Center Created Form** and through **Telephonic Reports**. 71.4% of respondents indicated **Paper Reports** were also a popular method used by law enforcement agencies. Only one center indicated that **NCIC or State Criminal Information Automatic Transfers** were used.
13. Please indicate which of the following databases this Fusion Center routinely utilizes:

a. eTrace  
b. Online LEAD  
c. National Integrated Ballistics Identification System (NIBIN)  
d. National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NCIS)  
e. CODIS (DNA)  
f. AFIS (Fingerprints)  
g. State Incident Based Reporting (IBR) data  
h. A Firearm Offender Database  
i. Concealed Weapons Permits  
j. NCIC  
k. State Criminal Information Network  
l. A Recovered Firearms Database  
m. Pawn shop records  
n. Long gun registry  
o. Hand gun registry  
p. National Firearms Act (NFA) registry  
q. National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)  
r. Bureau of Prisons database  
s. Other and/or Database created by this Fusion Center (please specify)

Responses: The majority of respondents (85.7%) reported they used NCIC and Other databases created by their Fusion Center.

14. Does this Fusion Center share data/information/intelligence with any regional analytic centers (non-Fusion Centers)?

a. Yes  
b. No

Responses: The majority of respondents (85.7%) indicated yes, that they shared intelligence and information.
15. **What information do you collect from the identified centers [in question 15]?**

**Responses:** One indicated they collect BOLO’s, Domestic Terrorism incidents and issues. A second indicated they collect only suspicious and/or criminal activity which may have a nexus to terrorism. A third response indicated they collect Intelligence, Bulletins, and Deconfliction. And lastly, one indicated, “… analytical assistance when needed and receives bulletins for dissemination.” Three respondents did not reply to this question.

16. **Does this Fusion Center share data/information/intelligence with any of the following (mark all that apply):**

   a. OCDETF Fusion Center
   b. Regional HIDTA intelligence centers
   c. Your regional RISS center
   d. An ATF gun center
   e. A collaborative state and/or local law enforcement RMS system

**Responses:** 100% of respondents indicated that their Fusion Center shared information with Regional HIDTA intelligence centers. The next most popular choice, which accounted for 85.7% of respondents, was “your regional RISS center.”

17. **Do you coordinate with a local representative of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF?)**

   a. Yes (please specify)
   b. No

**Responses:** 57.1% indicated yes.

18. **Do local federally recognized tribal law enforcement agencies contribute information to this Fusion Center?**

   a. Yes
   b. No

**Responses:** 71.4% of respondents indicated “No.”
The next questions examined how each Fusion Center analyzes the intelligence and information they collect at their Center.

**Intelligence Collating and Analysis Questions:**

19. *Is there an analyst dedicated to firearms and/or gun violence at this Fusion Center?*
   
a. Yes
   
b. No (If No, is there an analyst who has identified a firearm offender as a potential target for law enforcement action?)
   
   **Responses:** 85.7% of respondents indicated “No.”

20. *What intelligence Software and Mapping tools are being utilized to speed analysis?*

   **Responses:** One indicated they used lBase, Analyst Notebook, and Analyst Workstation. Another indicated, “Currently we use Fusion Core Solution but will be switching to Memex in the upcoming months which will be using and ARC GIS mapping component.” A third indicated they use ARC GIS, internal mapping system, and several commercial mapping solutions. The other four survey respondents did not respond to this question.

The next section of questions examined how Fusion Centers disseminate the information and intelligence they gather at their Center.

**Intelligence/Information Dissemination Questions:**

21. *Does this Fusion Center release information regarding case deconfliction?*
   
a. Yes
   
b. No
   
   **Responses:** 51.7% of respondents indicated “Yes.”

22. *Does this Fusion Center release information on event deconfliction to improve officer safety? (Please specify).*
   
a. Yes
   
b. No
   
   **Responses:** 100% of respondents indicated “Yes.”

23. *Please indicate how law enforcement accesses information/intelligence from this Fusion Center.*

   **Responses:** One indicated law enforcement can access information through verbal/email requests, or “push from the fusion center to the agency,” and by HSIN and OSIN. A second indicated, “The SAIC’s primary method of dissemination is the Contact Information Management System (CIMS). This is a secured web-based application where any of our 8000 users can enter the portal and see intelligence reports, bulletins, etc. as they as they have the proper need and right to know. For example, if the SAIC has a law enforcement sensitive bulletin (such as the theft of firearms from a local gun store), it will be posted solely for law enforcement and our public/private sector partners will not be able to view it. Outside of CIMS, most contact is done simply through email or phone call. A law enforcement agency will contact the center at which point the SAIC will verify if the information can be released as provide what information that it can. In addition, any information developed by the center for a specific agency...*
will result in the SAIC contacting that agency and providing them with the information they need.” A third indicated that law enforcement is required to attain a secure email address (i.e., .gov, law enforcement agency, or LEO account). A fourth stated, “Partner agencies access Fusion Center information through the statewide intelligence database, an Automated Information Management system, statewide bulletins and briefs and through the Fusion Center Regional Intelligence Agents. The state also maintains the state Fusion Center Network to connect the state fusion center with the seven regional fusion centers.” And lastly, a fifth responded, “Via formal RFIs submitted to the Center.”

24. Identify hotspots?

Responses: One reported that, “The SAIC contacts weekly suspicious activity report meetings where we focus on new reports, follow-up on previous reporting, and trending. We look at this information to determine where these are occurring at as well as other patterns.” Another reported, “Violent crimes, terrorism, thefts against property, gangs, drugs.” The other five survey respondents did not answer this question.

The last and final portion of this survey examined miscellaneous information that did not fit specifically into the other sections of the survey.

25. Do agencies participating in this Fusion Center have internal policy directives for collection and submission of data at the Fusion Center?

Responses: The majority of Centers answered “Yes.”

26. Does this Fusion Center have a policy directive in place for data collection, analysis, and actionable information dissemination and after action reporting follow up?

Responses: 100% of respondents indicated, “Yes.”

27. Does this Fusion Center hold periodic efficiency and effectiveness reviews with all partners to gauge what is working and what is not?

Responses: 100% of respondents indicated, “Yes.”
Appendix C:
Site Visit Questions

Integration of Crime Gun Trace Data into
Fusion Centers’ Criminal Intelligence Sharing Process

National Justice Information Sharing (JIS) Initiative - Pilot Site Assessment Questionnaire

Introduction: In 2010, the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance partnered with the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to initiate a pilot program that brought ATF contractors into Fusions Centers to improve the way recovered firearms data is included into the Fusion Center process. This questionnaire and the subsequent site visit is intended to inform the IACP/ATF project team as to the business process and outcomes of that pilot project to assist in identifying best practices or barriers to anticipated outcomes. Thank you.

Project Background:

1) Summarize your position and how it relates to ATF’s iTrafficking Initiative.
   a. Who is your supervisor?
   b. How do you communicate and how often?
   c. How long have you supported this effort?

2) Summarize your understanding of ATF’s iTrafficking Initiative.
   a. What are the overall goals?
   b. What is expected of you in support of these goals?

3) Describe the training you received to perform your job?
   a. What was the most important part of the training?
   b. What type of training would you need to increase your performance?

4) Was the goal of your work clear as well as achievable and did you feel your Fusion Center peers/colleagues had shared goals?

Implementation - Lessons Learned:

5) What is the one thing that has really worked that you would like to share with your peers performing a similar role?

6) What is the one thing that didn’t work that you would suggest that your peers avoid?

7) Describe some lessons you have learned that have contributed to your performance as well as positive outcomes.
   a. Are there any technologies that you can imagine that would help share crime gun data or investigative leads resulting from analysis of crime gun data?
   b. Are there any unique partnerships that you have developed that have helped prevent or solved crimes?
8) Name a few barriers that have held you back from implementing the strategy the way you would like.
9) If you could change one thing about the iTrafficking program or about your role in support of the program what would it be?
10) How do federal, state or local laws impact the effectiveness of the program or how you approach your job?

Outcomes and Best Practices:

11) What has been your greatest success to date?
12) What do you believe are some promising practices you would suggest could be shared with others starting a similar program?
13) What would you say is the measure one should use to describe the value of the program?

Partner and Agency Specific Issues:

14) Are there any Fusion Center policies that either help or hinder your work?
15) Are there any ATF policies that either help or hinder your work?
16) What are some ways that police departments have contributed to the success of your initiative?
17) Were there any SOP’s or departmental practices that inadvertently hindered the program?
18) How do you see police departments benefiting from iTrafficking?
19) What tools/resources/training are needed to assist police departments from better benefiting from iTrafficking?

Concluding and Summary Discussion:

20) Were there any results (good or bad) from the program that really surprised you/that you had not anticipated?

Thank you for your time.
Appendix D: Analyzing Firearms Trace Data: A State-Level Crime Gun Tracing Intelligence Sharing Strategy

Introduction
The most recent mass-casualty shootings and subsequent plan from the White House to reduce firearms crime, have led to a renewed focus on firearms trafficking and firearms used in crimes.

To prevent firearms from getting into the hands of criminals, a new focus by every law enforcement department must be instituted to combat illegal firearms trafficking. Illegal firearms trafficking is the movement of firearms from the legal to illegal marketplace through an illicit method for an unlawful purpose, usually to obtain profit, power, or prestige or to the furtherance of criminal activity.

Depending on the state or locality, firearms traffickers must contend with a number of laws that attempt to prevent the trafficking. Federal law prohibits individuals from purchasing handguns in a state where they do not reside. In addition, some states have more stringent laws governing the purchase of firearms than other states; therefore, firearm traffickers cannot always easily obtain handguns where they live. Often in interstate firearms trafficking cases, traffickers cannot purchase the firearm legally because they live in another state and cannot provide identification needed to establish residency and to complete the necessary forms that document handgun purchases and information regarding the purchaser.

Firearms move from the legal to illegal marketplace in a number of ways such as theft or straw purchasing. Interstate firearms traffickers frequently use a straw purchaser, an individual who purchases a firearm and completes the required paperwork for the purpose of concealing the true identity of the intended receiver of the firearm.

Firearms Purchasing and Tracing
To fully combat illegal firearms trafficking, it is necessary to trace all firearms recovered in crimes. Firearms tracing is the systematic tracking of a recovered firearm from its manufacturer or importer and subsequent introduction into the distribution chain (wholesaler/retailer) to the first retail purchase. A firearms trace is conducted when a law enforcement agency recovers a firearm at a crime scene and requests that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) provide information on the original purchaser of the firearm from a Federal Firearms Licensee.

The Gun Control Act in 1968 required records to be kept in the acquisition, possession, and disposition of all firearms. The law required that individuals or businesses who sold guns obtain licenses and keep records on all purchases. Various crime bills of 1984, 1988, and 1994 further amended the Gun Control Act.
The Gun Control Act and subsequent amendments affect the interstate transportation of firearms leaving the majority of gun control to state and local jurisdictions.

The success of a firearm trace depends heavily on the ATF Firearms Transaction Record, Form 4473, which purchasers must complete and sign at the time of purchase. This form must remain in the dealer’s possession. If the dealer goes out of business, the law requires that these forms be forwarded to the ATF for storage. After law enforcement recovers and traces a firearm, ATF contacts the dealer, who examines this record for information concerning the final disposition of the firearm.

ATF Form 4473 consists of four sections: Section A contains a full description of the buyer of the firearm including name, residence, and date of birth; and several questions to which the buyer must answer yes or no, including if the buyer is prohibited from purchasing a firearm (e.g., a convicted felon, an illegal alien, an individual with a documented history of mental illness, a drug user, or an individual under a court-issued restraining order). One question also asks if the buyer if he/she is the actual transferee of the firearm. Not answering this question correctly would make the buyer a “straw purchaser”. The straw purchase serves as another method often employed by a firearm trafficker who cannot legally purchase guns. Most traffickers use a series of straw purchasers directed to various firearms licensees. A common scenario entails the firearm trafficker accompanying the straw purchaser into the FFL to pay for the purchase while the straw purchaser completes the paperwork. The second section, Section B, is completed by the FFL and includes information about the National Instant Criminal Background check results. Section C is a signature block for the buyer if the firearms transfer takes place on a date different from that in Section A. Section D contains a full description of the firearm being transferred. The term “lying and buying” refers to falsification of any question in this section of ATF form 4473 in order to obtain a firearm.

The ATF National Tracing Center (NTC) is the country’s only crime gun tracing facility. As such, the NTC provides critical information that helps domestic and international law enforcement agencies solve firearms crimes, detect firearms trafficking and track the intrastate, interstate and international movement of crime guns.

ATF’s web-based firearms tracing system, called e-Trace, is available to accredited domestic and international law enforcement agencies to assist in the tracing of U.S.-sourced firearms. eTrace is a paperless firearms trace request submission system and an interactive firearms trace analysis tool that provides an electronic exchange of crime gun incident-based data in a secure web-based environment. Through eTrace, law enforcement agencies can electronically submit firearms trace requests, monitor the progress of traces, retrieve completed trace results and query firearms trace-related data. eTrace includes analytical and download capabilities for ATF’s firearms trace information, including selective field searches and statistical reporting.

Upon being entered into e-Trace, the trace is usually completed (if the trace is requested in a routine non-emergency manner) within two weeks.

**Analysis of Crime Gun Trace Data**

The analysis of the cumulative trace histories of traced crime guns can produce information for state, local, and tribal police departments that, through data mining, and can assist law enforcement in developing strategies to address firearms trafficking and firearms crime. The examination and analysis of firearms trace data enables law enforcement to identify the individuals who are purchasing the traced firearms; the Federal Firearms licensees from where these individuals are purchasing these firearms; and the states which are the source of these traced firearms.
The examination of firearms trace data begins with a review of firearms trace results over a given period of time, involving firearms possessed by someone other than the original purchaser. Trace results, as well as multiple sales reports, involving the purchaser of the firearms should be examined if possible. As required by federal law, Multiple Sales Reports are forms completed by Federal Firearms Licensees that are sent to ATF and the Chief Local Law Enforcement Officer (CLEO) to report all transactions in which an unlicensed person acquires two or more pistols or revolvers or any combination of pistols or revolvers totaling two or more at one time or during five consecutive business days.

After reviewing trace results of a given period, certain trends may surface regarding the most frequently recovered firearms in an area. In many high-crime urban areas, inexpensive, easily concealed, high-powered, semiautomatic pistols in 9mm, and .40 calibers are common. Activities frequently associated with these weapons include drug- or gang-related crimes. Depending on the type of firearm recovered, profiles of criminal groups can also emerge. In most major cities, the most common weapons used by criminals are the cheaper semi-automatic handguns. Along the southwest border, it is the semi-automatic AK-47 and AR-15 variables.

The most important factors in the examination of trace data are the following:

- Time to crime (the period of time (measured in days) between a firearm’s retail sale and law enforcement’s recovery of the firearm). Although only through conducting interviews can it be revealed whether a crime gun was trafficked, as opposed to the gun being sold to someone who recently moved into the state. A short time to crime is still a key indicator of a gun being trafficked and should be used by law enforcement to develop firearms trafficking cases.

- Purchaser/possessor associated with multiple sale(s) and other recoveries with a short time-to-crime.

- Gender. Investigations have revealed that young females are often coerced into making straw purchases of firearms.

- Known gang affiliations of associates of purchasers/straw purchasers

- Age of purchaser/possessor

- Out-of-state place of birth for purchaser (particularly if recovered in that state)

Firearms with a short time to crime, purchased by the same individual, or purchased at the same FFL, should be thoroughly examined.

Every effort should be made to raise the serial numbers of firearms with obliterated serial numbers as there is no better indication of a trafficked firearm. Similarities of make, model, purchaser, FFL, etc., should be reviewed for possible leads.

The types and number of firearms purchased, the individual or individuals involved in the purchases and recoveries, and the source areas or states where the purchases took place provide information that indicate firearms trafficking patterns. The number of firearms that are recovered and traced determine the ability to identify firearms traffickers. It may be necessary to interview each of the possessors of the recovered and traced firearms for information about source of the firearms.

Departments can benefit from Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of firearms trace data to identify hot spots of recovered and traced firearms as well as the sources of illegal firearms.

With firearms trace results, Local law enforcement executives and Federal, State, and local prosecutors and investigators can make many uses of the data. The data can provide information relating to the following questions, among others:
1. How many crime guns are being recovered from different age groups of offenders?
2. What kinds of guns are being recovered in my area?
3. What types of crimes are associated with these recovered crime guns?
4. Are the source areas in the county or State, or from out of State?
5. What types of guns are moving the fastest from the retail seller to recovery in crime?
6. Which guns may pose a special hazard to law enforcement officers?

The Sharing of Firearms Trace Data

Over the last ten years, the U.S. Congress has annually passed language in ATF’s appropriation which prevent the public release of ATF trace data. The trace data disclosure restriction is commonly referred to as the “Tiahrt Amendments,” after its sponsor, former Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R-Kansas).

During many of the first years, the language limited the sharing of trace data only “in connection with and for use in a criminal investigation or prosecution”. However, since FY2010, Congress has removed this provision and that limitation no longer exists. With FY2010 change to the trace data disclosure restriction, the sharing of trace data for criminal investigative purposes and to identify jurisdictional trends or patterns should have ceased to be an issue.

One factor in the sharing of firearms trace data is that ATF has entered into thousands of eTrace MOUs, many of which were signed before FY2010, which have the following provision:

“The parties agree that premature disclosure of certain firearms trace information can reasonably be expected to interfere with pending or prospective law enforcement proceedings. This law enforcement sensitive information includes data that can link a traced firearm to: the location of a crime; the Federal firearms licensee; retail purchaser or possessor of a traced firearm; or to firearms trafficking patterns involving a traced firearm. It is agreed that the law enforcement sensitive firearms trace information generated pursuant to this agreement shall not be disclosed to a third party without the consent of both parties of this agreement, or as required by a court of law.”

With this language, and without an updated MOU, ATF will generally not share one agencies trace data with another agency. However, there are still ways in which multiple agencies can work together using trace data. Multi-jurisdictional trace data is utilized by ATF and shared with fellow law-enforcement agencies to identify firearm-trafficking trends and leads. Also, in certain circumstances depending upon state law and guidance, and individual agency agreements to share data within fusion centers, there are instances where trace data may be shared with other state and local law enforcement agencies within the fusion center for the purposes of producing fused intelligence products and investigative leads. Additionally, nothing prohibits ATF from releasing aggregate reports that analyze trace-data trends that could be used by law enforcement.

Finally, ATF is unable to disclose any trace data to any organizations other than law enforcement organizations. State, local, and federal law enforcement are also prohibited from sharing the results of their own firearms traces with anyone other than other law enforcement agencies.

ATF Resources

ATF possesses the following data resources which can assist in the firearms trafficking investigations:
1. Multiple Sales of Firearms Data--FFLs are required by statute to report to ATF the sale of two or more handguns to the same purchaser within five consecutive business days. These reports are submitted to the NTC on a standard ATF form. The NTC receives an average of 194,756 reports of multiple sales from FFLs each year. These reports, when cross-referenced with crime gun trace information, serve as an important indicator in the detection of illegal firearms trafficking. They also allow successful tracing of older firearms that have re-entered the retail market.

2. Interstate Theft of Firearms Records--ATF maintains the Interstate Theft Program, which is a voluntary reporting program that handles the theft or loss of firearms from interstate shipments. Since there is no legal reporting requirement regarding such activity, there is a risk that these thefts will not be reported or investigated because of questions regarding jurisdiction. ATF provides a standard form and process by which the shipper, carrier and/or consignee can report such losses. Under the program, hundreds of reports of thefts and losses from interstate shipments are received, managed and disseminated to ATF offices around the country for investigation each year.

3. Records of Thefts from FFLs--FFLs are required by law to report to ATF the theft or loss of firearms inventory. In turn, ATF investigates such thefts, seeks prosecution where appropriate and manages the recovery of firearms. Each year, thousands of firearms are reported as lost or stolen. The Stolen Firearms Program works to identify and track firearms recoveries. ATF’s program ensures that appropriate notifications are provided, firearms are identified, and support is available. The program supports affected FFLs and investigators of firearms thefts, including those within ATF, the U.S. military and domestic and international law enforcement agencies.

**Conclusion**

Firearms violence is one of the top crime challenges facing many police chiefs in America today. Focused enforcement on the interdiction of illegally trafficked firearms to gangs and violent criminals will always be a priority for law enforcement. As part of the intelligence-led policing effort, departments can utilize their firearms trace data to reduce firearms trafficking and firearms crime. ATF will continue to partner with state, local, and tribal law enforcement to combat firearms trafficking, illegal firearms possession and use, and violent crime.