



WHAT IS A CRIME GUN INTELLIGENCE CENTER?

Overview for Local Law Enforcement

The Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) is an innovative approach to combat gun violence by employing cutting-edge technology developed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and a dedicated multiagency investigative team to identify, disrupt, and prosecute violent offenders. The CGIC model allows different agencies and jurisdictions to share information on ballistic evidence recovered from both cartridge casings and test fires and focuses on analyzing and investigating gun crime in a local community. The model is an interagency collaboration led by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) with formal partnerships between state and local law enforcement and other partners such as probation and parole, crime analysts, community groups, forensic laboratories, academic organizations, and state and federal prosecutors who are committed to combatting gun crime using forensic science and dedicated investigative follow up.

The primary objective of a CGIC is to quickly identify armed violent offenders for investigation and prosecution using crime gun evidence, such as cartridge casings, in real time. The model targets are serial shooters—those select individuals committing the disproportionate amount of gun crime in a community.

CGICs rely on the swift processing of data from ATF's National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), which allows law enforcement to link ballistic evidence to multiple incidents in which the same firearm was used, and eTrace (<https://etrace.atf.gov/etrace/>), which allows for the tracing of recovered firearms back to their original manufacturer. ATF's Minimum Required Operating Standards (MROS) for National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) Sites require that all fired or test fired cartridge cases from serviced law enforcement agencies/departments are entered through a NIBIN acquisition machine within 2 business days of receipt. Correlation and a secondary review of any potential NIBIN leads through an approved NIBIN correlation machine should be conducted within 2 business days. Finally, NIBIN leads should be disseminated within 24 hours.

Other crime gun evidence processes, like tracing, DNA, and fingerprints, are also used to determine the origin and history of the firearm.

Essential CGIC Program Elements

According to ATF, successful CGICs have consistently focused on four key elements: Comprehensive Evidence Collection, Timely Turnaround, Investigative Follow-up and Prosecution, and Feedback. Incorporating these elements into a CGIC strengthens the effectiveness of NIBIN and eTrace against gun crime throughout the country.

Further, to build an effective and sustainable CGIC, adopting supportive business practices and policies is required across all levels of participating organizations—from the patrol officers and laboratory technicians, to the detectives and agents, to prosecutors and agency leadership. When fully implemented, a CGIC more effectively deploys resources for investigations, improves communication about issues directly affecting officers and public safety, and increases the number of prosecutions for crimes involving gun violence. The following seven-step process model has been identified as supporting CGIC development. These steps include ATF's four key elements.



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice



CRIME GUN INTELLIGENCE CENTERS

CONNECTING THE DOTS

WHAT DOES AN EFFECTIVE PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

- 1. Comprehensive Collection of Cartridge Casings and Crime Guns (ATF's Comprehensive Evidence Collection).** CGICs are both most functional and effective when law enforcement personnel (e.g., patrol officers, crime scene technicians, investigators) are called to the scene of all gun crimes and collect cartridge casings and crime guns left at the scene. Response and evidence collection policies and procedures must be developed and implemented by law enforcement leadership and communicated to the responding personnel. It is also important for CGIC leadership to meet regularly to evaluate their strategic priorities and operational policies to review performance.
- 2. NIBIN Entry/Correlation and Crime Gun Tracing (ATF's Timely Turnaround).** Within 24 hours of recovery, crime guns are processed for forensic evidence; test-fired cartridge casings and recovered crime scene cartridge casings are entered into NIBIN; and NIBIN correlations to associated crimes are identified. All crime gun trace requests are submitted through eTrace to the ATF National Tracing Center within 24 hours of recovery.
- 3. Crime Gun Intelligence Analysis (Timely Turnaround).** NIBIN leads and eTrace results are received by the CGIC for analysis. The ATF, with support from local law enforcement, conducts a comprehensive analysis of all crime gun data collected from eTrace and NIBIN. These data are rapidly disseminated to investigators to ensure appropriate linkage of crimes to unlawfully used firearms and suspects. Examples of dissemination tools include NIBIN Lead Referral Sheets and CGIC Bulletins that provide valuable information to law enforcement officers.
- 4. NIBIN Lead/Hit Assignment and Analysis (Investigative Follow-Up and Prosecution).** NIBIN leads/hits are triaged and immediately assigned to investigators. All crime gun data generated by NIBIN and eTrace are uniformly examined and investigated by CGIC partners to ensure that information is shared with all CGIC stakeholders. ATF, local law enforcement, the local crime lab, state and federal prosecutors, and parole and probation should be included as CGIC partners to leverage their investigative capabilities. Parole and probation intelligence, including GPS monitoring data in the proximity of firearm-related crimes, should be used to identify violent offenders and unlawfully used firearms in violent crimes.
- 5. Law Enforcement and Prosecution Collaboration and Offender Arrest (Investigative Follow-Up and Prosecution).** All actionable crime gun intelligence generated by the CGIC is rapidly disseminated to all partners and pursued using all available resources in conjunction with state and federal prosecutors. Local and federal prosecutors assist investigators by taking an active role in developing investigative strategies and providing investigators with resources needed to develop probable cause for offender arrest.
- 6. State or Federal Prosecution (Investigative Follow-Up and Prosecution).** A strong partnership and close collaboration between the local prosecuting attorney and the United States Attorney's Office are critical to the effectiveness of CGIC operations. A local and federal prosecutor should be dedicated to work exclusively with the CGIC to consistently support investigators and determine the venue of crime gun prosecutions.
- 7. CGIC Feedback to Process Participants (Feedback Loop).** All CGIC-related activities, such as NIBIN lead development and offender arrest and prosecution, should be tracked to measure CGIC outcomes and the impact on violent crime in the community. Feedback to all process participants, including the responding officers who initially collected the ballistic evidence, must be timely and consistent in order to maintain and sustain the CGIC processes.



CGIC Success Highlight

In 2023, the Miami Police Department (MPD) reported a 33% decrease in homicides compared to 2022. As part of their CGIC program, MPD increased the test fires of firearms by purchasing a shoot trailer through BJA CGIC grant funding. With the increase in ballistic evidence, additional NIBIN leads have provided investigators with intelligence surrounding homicides and shootings. Due to the success of the CGIC efforts, MPD leadership has continued to assign additional resources to their CGIC.

To learn about CGIC success stories, scan or click the QR code

