CFSO

Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations

American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
International Association for Identification
National Association of Medical Examiners
Society of Forensic Toxicologists/ American Board of Forensic Toxicology

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REDUCING VIOLENCE THROUGH THE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF FIREARMS RELATED CRIME SCENE EVIDENCE

REQUEST: Establish, fund and enhance the ATF Firearms Examiner Training Academy to increase the number of trained examiners and reduce future crimes by expediting the request from the ATF to build a firearms examiner training center from FY23 to FY22.

PROBLEM: The explosion of violent crime throughout the United States is on the front page and headline of every news report. Reducing violent crime can be accomplished in part by solving the crimes and holding those responsible accountable. Many crimes committed with firearms can be solved by the examination of spent shell casings and bullets. When inter-compared between crime scene evidence, serial crimes can be identified. Submission of evidence to ATF's NIBIN program assists in identifying similar sources of firearms evidence. Evidentiary relationships between shell cases and bullets with a weapon recovered from a suspect can make the link necessary to solve the crime, prosecute the perpetrator, and prevent future crimes after rehabilitation.

State, county and local laboratories, however, cannot keep up with the upsurge of new cases and influx of firearms submitted for examination. Backlogs of evidence items to exam have increased dramatically. For example, the South Carolina State Forensic Services Laboratory has reported a 28% increase in the number of firearms cases and a 31% increase in submitted items. Backlogs exist in many state and local laboratories, such as Rhode Island where their backlog of these cases has risen from zero to 288 cases in one year. The backlog for the New York State Crime Lab increased by 900 cases in one year, and in the last nine months San Francisco's backlog of firearms cases rose 50%. These backlogs bog down criminal investigations and prosecutions, depriving victims of the justice they deserve.

The solution to the backlogs is to expand a training academy that trains new firearms and toolmark examiners. Laboratories that need to hire full-time firearms analysts cannot find trained applicants. When they do find an entry level employee, the laboratory must train that person, which in turn takes the experienced examiner off the bench, adding to the backlog of cases. The ATF has a well-recognized, nationally known training course for firearms examiners called the National Firearms Examiner Academy (NFEA). It is an extensive one-year program that serves state and local laboratories. State and local laboratories collaborate heavily with this training center to facilitate training. Unfortunately, the Academy can only train about 12 examiners a year. Expanding this program would significantly help reduce the shortage of examiners and reduce the backlog of firearms cases. In light of the current shortage of examiners and backlog of cases, it is important to expedite the funding for the ATF firearms examiner training center.

Enhancing ATF's budget for the training academy would allow it to backfill the positions of those ATF examiners conducting the training, acquire space for training larger classes or parallel classes, and provide for the travel and per diem of the state and local students. Upon graduation, these students would return to their state, county and local "home" laboratories ready to engage in firearms examinations.

In addition, supporting ATF's FY22 request for more employees at the National Correlation Center in support of local and state NIBIN entry is important to ensure that NIBIN entries are correlated as quickly as possible throughout the United States to identify and solve gun related crime.

State of Florida (FDLE)

Submissions	FY18/19	FY19/20	FY20/21	% Change
Firearms	9191	8693*	10870	+18%

* COVID would have slowed some submissions explaining a lower than expected FY19 number.

State of New York (NYSP)

	1/1/19- 6/5/19	*1/1/20 – 6/5/20*
FA-Related Violent Crimes	**2683**	**2870**
% Firearms	17.7	23
Murder	44	58
% Firearms	25	24
Agg. Assault	287	375
% Firearms	25	24
Shooting incidents involving injury	**120**	**149**
Shooting victims	**139**	**166**
Individuals shot and killed	*25*	*24*

In 2019, there were 21,753 violent crimes reported in New York State. 3570 of those, or 16.5 per cent were committed with a firearm. 137 of the 237 murders (57.8%) in 2019 were committed with a firearm. 202 statistics are not yet available.

*Encompasses 20 police departments in 17 counties. 13 of these 20 agencies routinely submit cases to the FIC Firearms Unit

Source: *New York State Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) Initiative Crime, Arrest, and Firearm Activity Report Data Reported through March 31, 2020. Issued Date July 1, 2020*

FIREARMS CASE SUBMISSIONS TO NYSP LAB SYSTEM

	TOTAL SUBMISSIONS	HOMICIDES	ASSAULTS	CRIM MISC	RKE	CPW	ALL OTHER
2019	974	86	138	167	203	292	88
2020	1489	150	195	37	423	421	263
2021 thru May	757	56	91	117	222	247	24

Submissions	CY19	CY20	CY 21 (thru May)	% Change
Firearms	974	1489	757	+53%

State of South Carolina

Submissions	FY18/19	FY 19/20	FY 20/21 (thru May)	% Change
Total # Cases	919	1043	1175	+28%
Total # Items	8,214	8,864	10,754	+31%

IBIS: EBA (Entry by Appointment Program)

	FY18/19	FY 19/20	FY20/21	% Change
EBA Entries	4929	6012	6284	+27%
Total Cartridge case Entries	5531	6656	7017	+27%
Lead Generated	590	964	947	+61%

CC = Cartridge Case

State of Texas (DPS)

Submissions	CY19	CY 20	CY 21 (thru May)	% Change
Total # Cases	917	1156	466	+26%

State of Utah (DPS)

Submissions	CY17	CY18	CY19	CY 20	% Change
Firearms	24	42	48	61	+154%
NIBIN	37	272	513	1078	+2813%

State of Virginia (State Lab-DFS)

Submissions	CY18	CY19	CY 20	% Change
Firearms	6699	6911	7855	+17%

State of North Carolina (DOJ)

Submissions	CY17	CY18	CY19	CY 20	% Change
Firearms	395	413	438	503	+27%
NIBIN	1324	1347	1514	1604	+21%

State of Minnesota (BCA)

Submissions	CY19	CY20	CY21 Jan-May	% Change
Firearms	862	998	597 (64% increase from same period last year)	+16%
NIBIN	1324	1347	1514	+21%

*MN BCA is the state lab system that serves 87 counties and over 400 LEAs. There are 2 other labs that perform FA comparisons - one county lab and one large city lab so the data above does not represent the full caseload of the state of MN.

State of Oklahoma (OSBI)

Submissions	CY19	CY20	% Change
Firearms	750	1325	+76%

State of Idaho (ISP)

Submissions	CY17	CY18	CY19	CY 20	% Change
Firearms Cases	39	52	42	88	+126%
Firearms	179	303	242	477	+166%