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# Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection

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## Connecticut is a Model for the Nation in Tracing Guns Used in Violent Crime

MERIDEN – Every firearm has a precise fingerprint and now Connecticut investigators are using an expanded computer database of ballistics images to provide new tools for police investigating violent crime.

At an Aug. 1 news conference, DESPP and law enforcement investigators explained how Connecticut has expanded resources from the State Forensic Laboratory across the state, allowing rapid testing of ballistic crime scene evidence using the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network, known as NIBIN.

The result is a model for the nation that provides real-time leads through comparing digital images of shell casings for police investigating gun crimes, generating thousands of new investigative leads for law enforcement.

"This electronic fingerprint is making it easier to hold people accountable," **said Gov. Ned Lamont.** "You use a gun in a crime in Connecticut, it's a lot more likely we are going to catch you."

"This is a new age for making our streets safer, where we use real time data, from ballistics, computer images, video, social media, ShotSpotter technology, to solve crimes and catch criminals faster," said **DESPP Commissioner Ronnell A. Higgins.** "In Connecticut, we are leading the way among states with a statewide network of NIBIN kiosks accessible around the clock, providing real-time leads to local investigators."

A system of kiosks at seven locations allows investigators to receive rapid leads after entering evidence, including shell casings from crime scenes, into NIBIN, a database consisting of thousands of digital images. NIBIN is administered by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives.

The recent expansion of kiosks to police departments in Bridgeport, Waterbury, Hartford, Meriden, and New Haven, as well as the Troop E State Police barracks and a mobile van in New London, allows for rapid analysis of digital images of shell casings, which can determine whether a gun was used in different crimes.

“We are trying to reduce gun crimes by using NIBIN, which gives you leads to other crimes that are associated with the same gun. It gives you the story of the gun,” **said Lucinda Lopes-Phelan, Deputy Director of Information** with the forensic lab.

A new state law will take effect Oct. 1 that requires local police departments to submit crime scene evidence to NIBIN. This will create a larger databank.

NIBIN “links firearms to actual crime scenes. Connecticut has stood out as a model. It has allowed us to solve crimes and bring individuals who are terrorizing our communities to justice,” said **James M. Ferguson, Special Agent in Charge with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives**.

In New Haven, NIBIN helped in recent cases make critical connections between unrelated shootings that will help investigators, said **New Haven Assistant Police Chief Bertram Ettienne**. “The most important thing is that within 24 hours we are getting this information and it puts us in a very good investigative position to solve that case.”

“It helps our state’s attorneys allocate resources to the most serious offenders,” said **Chief State’s Attorney Patrick Griffin**. “It is an essential tool for the investigators.” It also provides scientific evidence for prosecutors who are corroborating statements by witnesses, he said.

The NIBIN kiosks, which cost about \$250,000 each, are paid for with state and federal funds, said **Division of Scientific Services Director Guy Vallaro**, who has overseen the expansion of the NIBIN network in Connecticut. This has led to a 500 percent increase in the number of leads generated by NIBIN over the last five years, he said,

NIBIN evidence has been instrumental in recent gun crime investigations, including:

**Waterbury:** Leads generated by NIBIN helped to lead to convictions in Waterbury, where a united effort by local police, the FBI, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives led to the [arrest and conviction of 14 members and associates of the 960 gang](#). The indictment in the case charged gang members with racketeering, narcotics trafficking, firearm possession, murder, attempted murder and assault, and obstruction of justice offenses.

**Guilford:** Police used shell casings from two shootings that were entered into NIBIN to arrest a local man who was [allegedly using a hit list to target graduates of Guilford High School](#). NIBIN images helped link a Glock handgun to the shootings.

**New Haven:** A former researcher from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was arrested and [pleaded guilty](#) to the murder of Yale graduate student Kevin Jiang. There was an extensive three-month search where NIBIN leads provided crucial leads in the case.

Watch the press conference [here](#).



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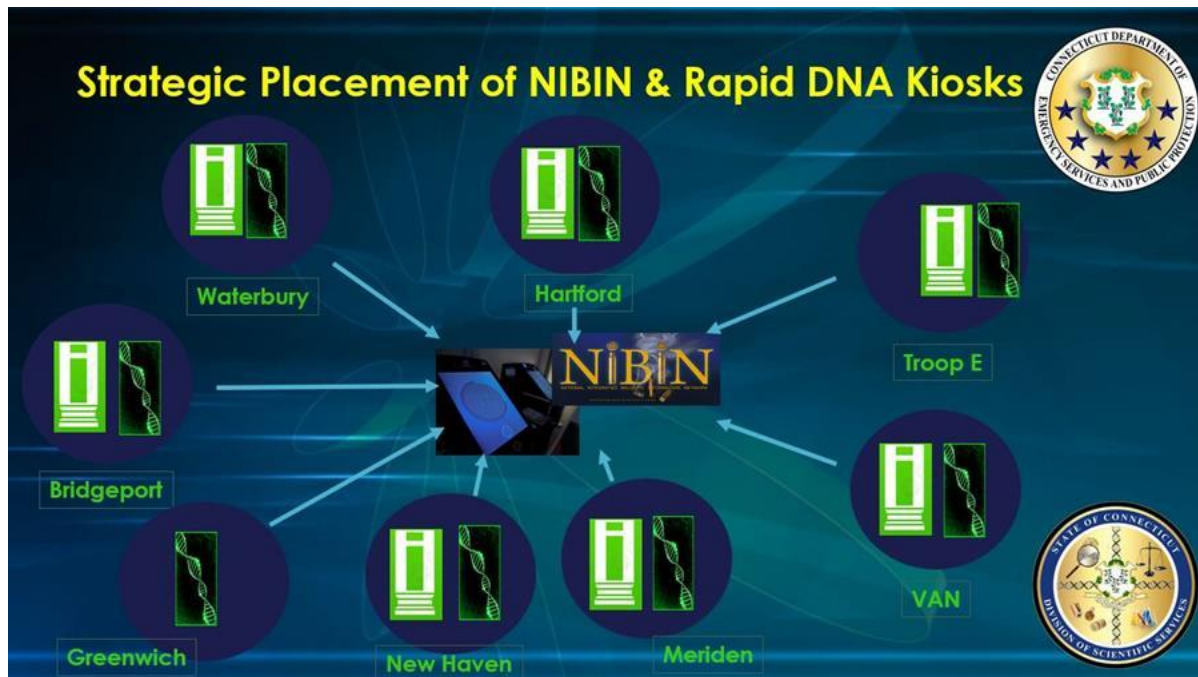
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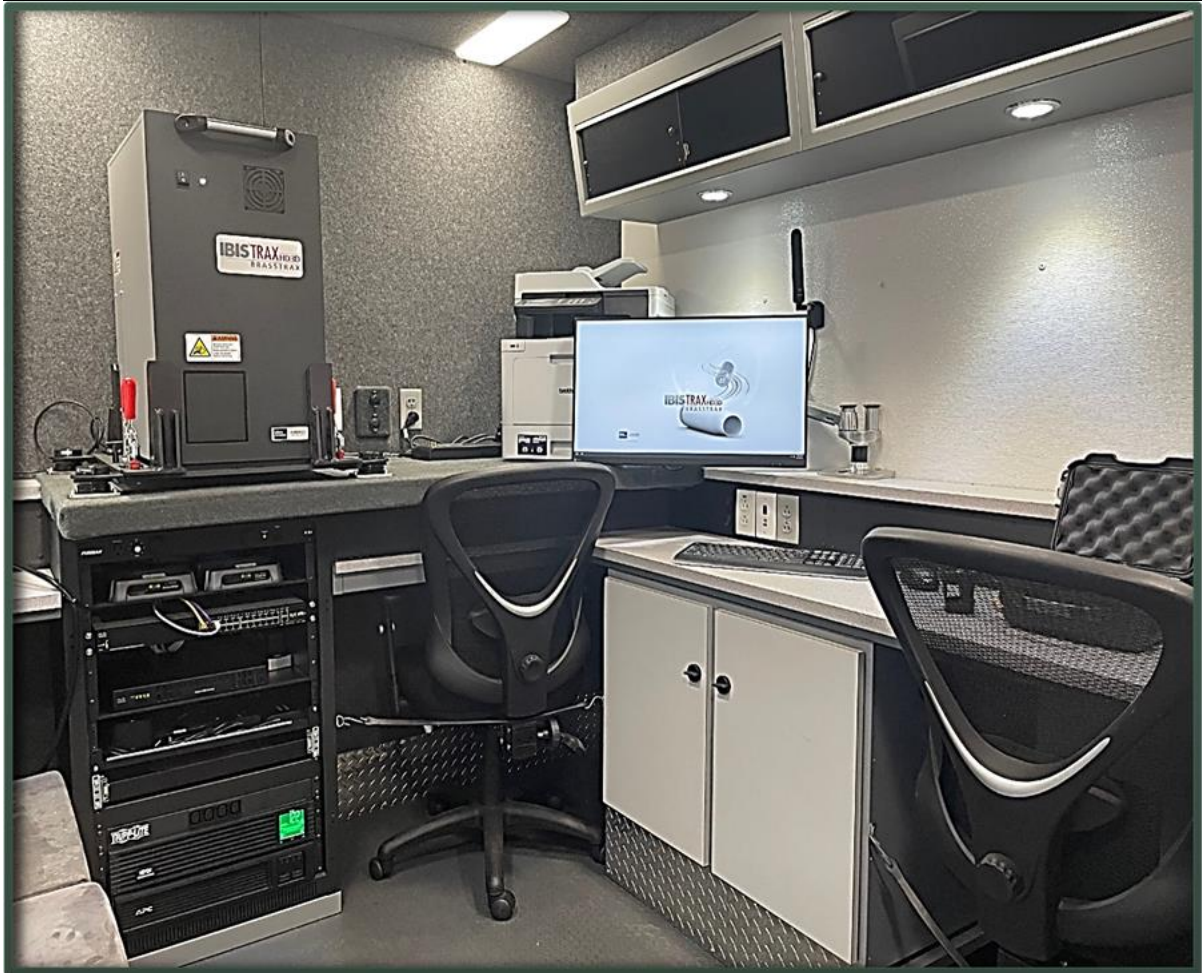
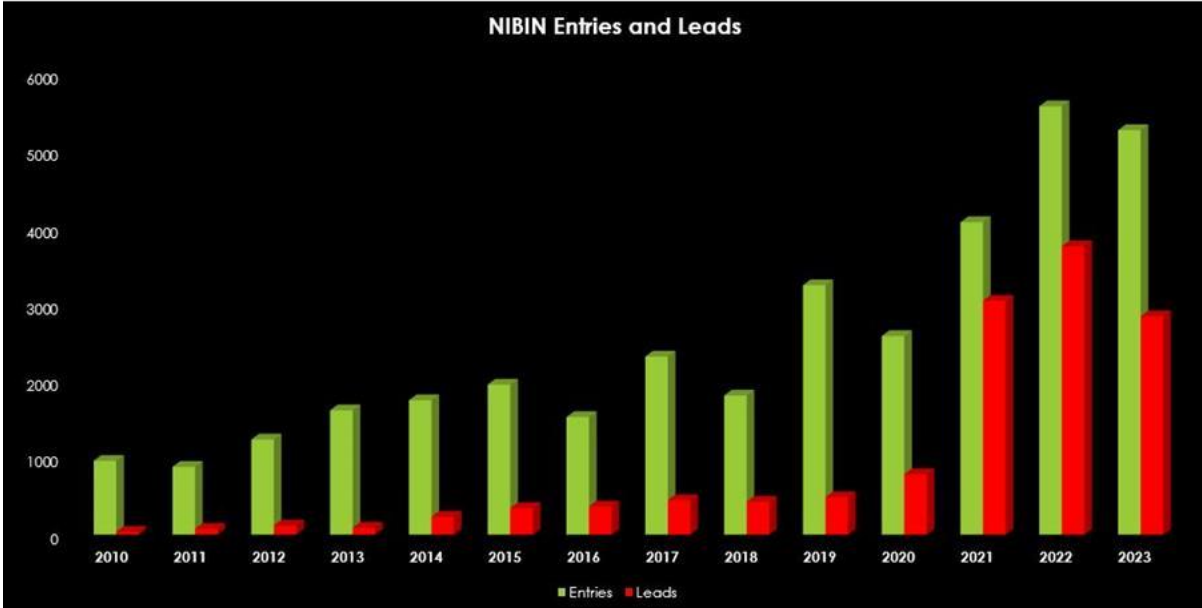
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