

MINIMUM REQUIRED OPERATING STANDARDS AUDIT FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATED BALLISTIC INFORMATION NETWORK SITES

In accordance with the Minimum Required Operating Standards (MROS) for
National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) Sites.

(Effective July 2018)

Audit of:

Date of Audit:

Auditors:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>

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I. MINIMUM REQUIRED OPERATING STANDARDS (MROS) - INTRODUCTION

Background

Since 1999, ATF has administered the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) program working and coordinating with many State, local, and federal law enforcement and forensic partners nationwide. Over the years, the program has prospered as the value of NIBIN in combatting violent crime was recognized. In 2012, ATF shifted NIBIN's focus to a real-time intelligence tool under the Field Operations directorate and placed emphasis on quickly disseminating reliable leads to investigators. This proactive approach disrupts violent criminals before they offend again.

There are 186 NIBIN partner sites, and each is crucial to the program's overall success. Many sites have invested significantly to establish and maintain successful NIBIN programs. Each site rightfully expects a consistent and effective national network. Moreover, ATF maintains the network, using funds allocated by Congress. Thus, there is inherent responsibility and oversight for ATF to uphold and strive to improve the overall performance and effectiveness of NIBIN.

As the concept of crime gun intelligence (CGI) has evolved, the ATF now understands that NIBIN, like many other federal forensic programs, is a valuable tool for the law enforcement community. Thus, access to NIBIN and a robust crime gun strategy must be based on the balance of responsible fiscal stewardship combined with operational utility.

Minimum Required Operating Standards (MROS)

Until now however, ATF has not implemented standards for access to the network. Each site currently uses NIBIN as it sees fit, regardless of the impact on the network or ability to generate actionable intelligence for criminal investigations. ATF and the National Crime Gun Intelligence Governing Board realized this was unsustainable, as a lack of consistency and standards degrades the value of the NIBIN program, leaving violent criminals free to commit more crime.

The MROS, listed below, are rooted in ATF's "Four Critical Steps for a Successful NIBIN Program" – comprehensive collection, timeliness, investigative follow-up, and feedback. They identify the practices that best allow NIBIN to provide comprehensive and timely crime gun intelligence. All NIBIN Sites will:

1. Enter all fired or test fired cartridge cases from serviced law enforcement agencies and/or departments through a NIBIN acquisition machine within two business days of receipt.
2. Enter accurately all required information during the acquisition process on the NIBIN acquisition machine.
3. Correlate and conduct a secondary review of any potential NIBIN leads through an approved NIBIN correlation machine within two business days.
4. Disseminate NIBIN leads within 24 hours.
5. Designate and maintain a NIBIN Program Administrator.
6. Have no policies that inhibit or restrict NIBIN submissions by serviced law enforcement agencies and/or departments.
7. Operate with only Qualified NIBIN Users.

Please note that Standards 3 and 4 are not applicable to NIBIN Sites using the NIBIN National Correlation and Training Center (NNCTC) for correlation reviews of ballistic images.

Compliance Audits

ATF will audit NIBIN Sites based on the MROS. ATF audit teams will conduct an initial NIBIN Site visit to assess each site's performance based on these standards. Audit teams will consist of trained MROS assessors. They will review the site's overall NIBIN process, current data, and its acquisition, correlation, and NIBIN lead statistics.

For sites failing to meet the MROS standards upon the initial visit, the ATF Firearms Operations Division (FOD) and the local ATF Field Division/Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) will work closely with the site to develop a plan to meet the MROS. By December 31, 2020, ATF will complete these initial audits, and each site must be in full compliance with the standards in order to maintain access to NIBIN. After December 31, 2020, all NIBIN Sites will undergo an ATF audit once every two years and must be MROS compliant to maintain access to the network.

The NIBIN program is a cooperative community, so ATF will invest significant resources both nationally, from the Firearms Operations Division, and regionally, from the local field divisions, to partner with any NIBIN Site to assist in their compliance with the MROS. These standards will create a viable, sustainable network, reduce violent gun crime, and create safer communities nationwide.

Conclusion

We look forward to working with you to ensure that your site is MROS-compliant and to continue to build a highly successful, national NIBIN program. Together, we will improve the capability to use crime gun intelligence to combat violent crime and create safer communities.

II. AUDIT DOCUMENT

In conjunction with the National Crime Gun Intelligence Governing Board, ATF has established MROS and compliance processes to assure the consistency, integrity, and success of NIBIN. These standards were implemented and issued to all NIBIN Sites in July of 2018. A site must be in compliance with these standards by December 31, 2020, to access NIBIN. In order to ensure these standards are met, ATF will conduct site audits. The purpose of this document is to further define the requirements outlined in the MROS document and detail the audit process.

Since the issuance of the original MROS, the lack of a defined, uniform interpretation guide for such standards presented a potential problem between NIBIN Sites and auditors attempting to determine levels of compliance. In an effort to satisfy the responsibilities assigned through the MROS and attempt to minimize interpretation variability, ATF developed this audit document for assessing compliance with the required standards.

Recognizing the broad application of such an undertaking, ATF solicited input from multiple NIBIN Sites, when developing the original audit document. This input included collaboration with members from the National Crime Gun Intelligence Governing Board.

The audit document defines and interprets each standard, with added discussion points clarifying the criteria necessary for compliance. Additionally, the structure of the document is such that criteria, which may overlap between the ATF issued MROS and the corresponding accreditation elements, share a consistent interpretative view.

The rating system for assessing the NIBIN Site with respect to each standard contains the choices of "Yes," "No," or "Not Applicable (N/A)." As indicated earlier, discussion sections follow standards, as appropriate, and serve to clarify the interpretation necessary for compliance. A comment section is also provided following the discussion areas, affording auditors the opportunity to reference information that may have value in the audit process (such as listing the reason for a "No" or "N/A"). In Appendix A, the findings associated with the audit will be detailed and summarized by the auditor, with an area available for response to such findings by the site. Notes or comments, including observations and recommendations are better suited to be mentioned during the exit briefing with site personnel or in a separate document to the site so that these comments are not confused with comments relating to a finding or an explanation of why a particular standard is not applicable.

III. INSTRUCTIONS TO AUDIT TEAM LEADERS AND AUDITORS

Thank you for participating in this important process intended to evaluate compliance with minimum standards for a quality program for performing NIBIN analysis.

Once an audit has been scheduled, the audit team leader should provide the NIBIN Site being audited with the checklist contained on the following pages and a request to provide this information as soon as possible.

As a general rule, compliance with a standard is assessed through a review of the site's documentation and interviews with staff. Documents may be in hard copy, electronic or a combination of both formats.

When conducting an audit, please keep in mind the following general guidelines:

- Potential issues concerning compliance should be directed to the site's NIBIN Program Administrator or designated points of contact.
- Comments on the site's operations should be reserved for the audit document if a "No" or "N/A" is marked and/or the exit interview with site management; comments should not be made to site staff.
- Contested or contentious issues should be brought to the attention of the audit team leader for follow-up, as necessary.

As a general rule:

- Issues deemed minor by the audit team that are addressed during the course of an audit (e.g., date or position revisions of a site's organizational chart) may be determined by the auditor to satisfy a noncompliance so that a "Yes" is marked for that standard.
- Comments should not be included for standards marked "Yes."
- Comments are required for standards marked "No" or "N/A."
 - For a standard marked "No," the comment shall describe the noncompliance with sufficient detail so that the site can develop an appropriate corrective action for compliance.
 - For a standard marked "N/A," the comment shall describe why it is not applicable to that site.

Questions concerning this audit document or a specific standard should be directed to ATF's Firearms Operations Division, Audit and Training Branch.

After the audit is completed, the audit team leader or auditor(s) shall brief the NIBIN Site management and the NIBIN Program Administrator regarding the results. This briefing should verbally detail specific findings (instances of noncompliance) and observations (general comments and/or recommendations), as well as recognize commendable performances. The written report should be prepared by the audit team leader and/or auditor(s) and sent to the site within 30 days of the audit. The audit document report consists of the completed audit document checklist, with any areas of noncompliance listed under the findings section of

Appendix A. All findings must be clearly identified and referenced to the appropriate Standard. The NIBIN Site will have 30 days from receipt of the final report to provide any responses to any finding(s) of noncompliance under the responses section of Appendix A. Responses to findings should be filed through the Branch Chief, Audit and Training Branch, Firearms Operations Division in ATF Headquarters.

Recommendations, also known as opportunities for improvement, must not be included in the audit document report. Notes or comments, including observations and recommendations are better suited to be mentioned during the exit briefing with site personnel or in a separate letter/memorandum to the site so that these comments are not confused with comments relating to a finding or an explanation of why a particular standard is not applicable.

IV. CHECKLIST OF GENERAL SITE INFORMATION

1. Date			
2. Name of NIBIN Site			
3. Type of NIBIN Site	Federal	State	Regional
	County	Local	Other:
4. Program Administrator			
5. Technical Administrator <i>(if applicable)</i>			
6. Was this Site provided the Scope?	YES	NO	
7. Was this Site provided the Definitions?	YES	NO	

V. SECTION 1: SCOPE

The standards describe the minimum operating requirements that sites accessing and utilizing NIBIN shall follow to ensure the quality and integrity of the ballistic data shared on the Network. These standards apply to all sites accessing the NIBIN network.

VI. SECTION 2: DEFINITIONS

Accreditation - Status achieved by an agency that indicates they meet a minimum level of performance mandated by the accrediting agency.

Accuracy – The degree of conformity of a measured quantity to its actual (true) value.

Acquisition – The digital imaging of various firearm-related markings present on cartridge cases into NIBIN.

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) – ATF is the Federal agency administering the NIBIN network.

Association of Firearm and Tool Mark Examiners (AFTE) – AFTE is the international professional organization for practitioners of Firearm and/or Toolmark Identification and has been dedicated to the exchange of information, methods and best practices, and the furtherance of research since its creation in 1969.

Audit – An inspection used to evaluate, confirm, or verify activity related to quality.

BrassTrax HD3D – The current acquisition station developed by Forensic Technology that captures highly detailed images of cartridge cases, to include firing pin impressions on the primer, breech face, extractor and ejector markings. Also referred to as ‘Trax’ and ‘Cartridge Case Acquisition Station.’

Business Day – The days of operation of the NIBIN Site, this excludes holidays, weekends, or other days of closure.

Correlation – The automated comparison of an acquired digital image to other images in the databases using an algorithm that provides a list of ranked, possible matches.

Correlation Review – The on-screen comparison of digital images by a trained technician/specialist to determine the potential for two cartridge cases to have been fired from the same weapon.

Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) – An ATF-led interagency collaboration focused on analyzing and investigating gun crime in a local community. CGIC unites cutting-edge technology and a dedicated multiagency investigative team to identify, disrupt and prosecute serial shooters and their sources of crime guns.

Employee – A person either in the service of the applicable Federal, State or local Government, subject to the terms, conditions and rules of Federal/State/local employment and eligible for the Federal/State/local benefits of service; or formerly in the service of a Federal, State, or local Government who returns to service in the agency on a part time or temporary basis. For purposes of a vendor laboratory, an employee is a person in the service of a vendor laboratory and subject to the applicable terms, conditions and rules of employment of the vendor laboratory.

Evidence – Any item or object, collected from a crime scene or as part of a criminal investigation that has been submitted for forensic examination.

Firearms Examiner – A forensic scientist who is an expert in evidence regarding firearms and ballistics. They perform forensic comparisons and analyses, serve as expert witnesses, and prepare

courtroom evidence. They may provide training to law enforcement personnel. Also referred to as a Firearms Examiner.

Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS) – An automated **ballistics** imaging and analysis **system** that populates a computerized database of digital **ballistic** images of bullets and cases from crime guns. Technology that enables the imaging and identification of large quantities of **firearm evidence** across a network of sites, as well as the automated identification of likely matching bullets or cartridge cases.

MatchPoint Plus – Current system developed by Ultra Electronics - Forensic Technology, Incorporated that stores the ballistic images and contains the algorithm program for correlation reviews.

Microscopic Comparison – The process employed by a trained firearms examiner to determine whether or not fired cartridge cases came from the same firearm. Also referred to as a ‘Scope’ and ‘Confirmation.’

National Crime Gun Intelligence Governing Board – The group consisting of members of ATF, police departments, and forensic laboratories that oversees implementation and function of NIBIN program. Formerly referred to as the NIBIN Executive Board or ‘NEB.’

National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) – The program managed by ATF that automates the imaging of the unique identifiers of cartridge cases fired from firearms and stores the digital images into a database for comparison across a national network of participating sites.

NIBIN Authorized Trainer (NAT) – A technician trained and authorized by ATF to train others in the acquisition of ballistic images.

NIBIN Hit – The result of two or more firearms ballistic evidence acquisitions that have been confirmed as a match by a firearms examiner. NIBIN Hits are based on correlation review of digital images using MatchPoint Plus™ and microscopic confirmation by a firearms examiner. This information/intelligence can be used for investigative purposes and is suitable for court purposes.

NIBIN Lead – An unconfirmed, potential association between two or more pieces of firearm ballistic evidence based on a correlation review of the digital images in the NIBIN database by either a firearms examiner or a trained NIBIN technician. A NIBIN Lead is intended to provide a lead for investigative purposes.

NIBIN National Correlation and Training Center (NNCTC) – The ATF facility located in Huntsville, Alabama that performs timely correlation reviews for multiple NIBIN Sites and also provides training for Qualified NIBIN Users.

NIBIN Program Administrator – An individual the NIBIN Site has designated to communicate with all parties (i.e., submitting law enforcement agencies, ATF CGICs, etc.), involved in the NIBIN process. The NIBIN Program Administrator must be a Qualified NIBIN User and full-time employee of the NIBIN Site. The NIBIN Program Administrator should be responsible for implementing and directing policies and procedures of the NIBIN Site.

NIBIN Site – Location at which NIBIN acquisition and/or correlation technology is present. NIBIN Sites are located in forensic laboratories, police departments, etc. Also referred to as ‘Site.’

NIBIN Technician – A trained technician/specialist able to use IBIS equipment. A NIBIN Technician may be trained for the acquisition or correlation review of digital images of firearms ballistic evidence. NIBIN Technicians trained for acquisition only must have the appropriate level of training for those duties and be able to capture and submit digital images into the system. NIBIN Technicians trained for both acquisition and correlation must have training in both areas, are able to determine potential links of two or more cartridge cases fired from the same weapon. Also referred to as an IBIS Technician.

Notification – A written or electronic communication to the submitter of firearms ballistic evidence indicating the results of an acquisition/correlation review. Notifications are not Laboratory Reports.

Originating Agency – The agency that recovered the firearm and/or fired cartridge case and submitted the items for NIBIN entry.

Procedure – Protocol, Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) or other equivalent – The established practice to be followed in performing a specified task or under specific circumstances.

Qualified Auditor – An individual trained by ATF to conduct NIBIN Site audits for compliance to minimum required operating standards.

Qualified NIBIN User – A technician and/or firearms examiner trained by ATF, Forensic Technology, and/or a NAT program to perform acquisition and/or correlation reviews of ballistic images on the national network.

Rank Sort Function – The function of Ultra Electronics - Forensic Technology, Incorporated software on MatchPoint machine that lists all potential matches of ballistic images to item under review in order of score across all images of regions of interest.

Receipt Date – The date evidence for NIBIN entry is first submitted and/or delivered to a laboratory/NIBIN Site for any forensic analysis.

Secondary review – The process that ensures the work performed meets quality standards, and requires two qualified individuals to concur on the finding. For NIBIN, ATF defines secondary review as a second correlation review or examination by a trained IBIS technician and/or firearms examiner using MatchPoint.

Service – The performance of those adjustments or procedures specified which are to be performed by the user, manufacturer or other service personnel in order to ensure the intended performance of instruments and equipment.

Suitable ballistic evidence – All fired cartridge cases recovered by law enforcement as well as test-fired cartridge cases from firearms recovered by law enforcement that were illegally possessed, used in a crime, or suspected by law enforcement officials of having been used in a crime.

Technical NIBIN Administrator – A Qualified NIBIN User at the NIBIN Site designated to assist the NIBIN Program Administrator with technical operations. This is required in the event the NIBIN Program Administrator does not meet the training requirements of a Qualified NIBIN User.

Test Fires – Cartridge cases known to be fired from a specific firearm in law enforcement custody.

Triage – The process of assessing cartridge cases to determine the best representative sample from a group of cartridge cases having similar firearm produced markings for NIBIN entry. This is not, nor should it be interpreted as a comparative examination to determine how many firearms may have been responsible for firing the cartridge cases.

Work Product – Materials produced internally by the NIBIN Site/laboratory, such as notes, diagrams, photographs, computer printouts and other supporting documentation of the evidence submitted to the NIBIN Site/laboratory for any forensic analysis.

Ultra Electronics - Forensic Technology, Incorporated – Company that created the IBIS System in 1991. Also referred to as FT and FTI.

VII. SECTION 3: MROS STANDARDS

STANDARD 1. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM

	YES	NO	N/A
1. Does the NIBIN Site establish, follow and maintain a documented quality system that is appropriate to the NIBIN acquisition and correlation processes?			
1. Is the quality system equivalent to or more stringent than what is required by these Standards?			

Discussion

To successfully satisfy **Standard 1**, compliance must be demonstrated with all of the subcategories of **Standard 1.1**.

A NIBIN Site must have and follow a documented quality system.

A quality system is the organizational structure, responsibilities, procedures, processes, and resources for implementing quality management. This system must be appropriate to the testing activities performed by the NIBIN Site. Various approaches may be used to demonstrate how a NIBIN Site may accomplish this, as long as the system is clearly defined.

A NIBIN Site may have any of the following: (1) a system-wide quality manual; (2) multiple manuals that address individual elements of the quality system; or (3) a unit-specific quality manual that may reference the elements that are not contained within its unit's quality manual, but are contained within the system-wide manual. A NIBIN Site may choose the format in which it maintains its quality system, as long as it is readily available.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
1.1 Is the quality system documented in a manual that includes or references the following elements?			
1.1.1 Goals and objectives			
1.1.2 Organization and management			
1.1.3 Personnel			
1.1.4 Facilities			
1.1.5 Acquisitions, Correlation, NIBIN Lead Dissemination Procedures			
1.1.6 Evidence Control			
1.1.7 Validation			
1.1.8 Equipment Calibration			
1.1.9 Reports			
1.1.10 Review			
1.1.11 Corrective Action			
1.1.12 Audits			
1.1.13 Training Records			
1.1.14 Safety			
1.1.15 Outsourcing			

Discussion

Each NIBIN Site must document and/or reference the elements listed in **Standard 1.1** in their quality manual(s). The following are the definitions and key components of each element. Additional requirements for each element are located within the corresponding standard.

- 1.1.1 Goals and objectives must define, establish, and/or reference the goals and objectives for the site.
- 1.1.2 Organization and management must define, establish, and/or reference the organization and management structure of the site, the interrelationship of the various NIBIN positions, as well as the responsibilities of personnel.
- 1.1.3 Personnel must define, establish, and/or reference the training and qualifications required for each position within the site and describe the continuing education program for the NIBIN Site.
- 1.1.4 Facilities must define, establish, and/or reference the site's practices or procedures for security and its approach for maintaining the integrity of ballistics analyses and evidence examination.
- 1.1.5 Acquisitions, correlation, NIBIN lead dissemination procedures must define, establish,

and/or reference the Site's processed processes and procedures for entering and reviewing ballistic evidence submitted to NIBIN.

- 1.1.6 Evidence control must define, establish, and/or reference the NIBIN Site's procedures for handling and preserving evidence as well as the Site's definitions for what constitutes work product and evidence.
- 1.1.7 Validation must define, establish, and/or reference the practices and procedures for implementing new methods used by the site and the process for incorporating those new procedures.
- 1.1.8 Equipment calibration and maintenance must define, establish, and/or reference the site's program for conducting performance checks and calibrations of equipment and instruments and the NIBIN Site must maintain a list of its critical instruments and/or equipment.
- 1.1.9 Reports must define, establish, and/or reference the site procedure for how it maintains its case files, how it generates its reports, and its policy for describing how the NIBIN Site maintains confidentiality and privacy when applicable to reports, case files, and NIBIN records and databases
- 1.1.10 Reviews must define, establish, and/or reference how the NIBIN Site performs its technical and administrative review of all case files, the qualifications of personnel who perform reviews.
- 1.1.11 Corrective action must define, establish, and/or reference the site's process for corrective action in casework and proficiency testing.
- 1.1.12 Audits must define, establish, and/or reference the site's program for participation in internal and external NIBIN audits.
- 1.1.13 Training records must define, establish, and/or reference the site's process for maintaining records of all Qualified NIBIN Users accessing NIBIN at the site.
- 1.1.14 Safety must define, establish, and/or reference the site's safety program.
- 1.1.15 Outsourcing must define, establish, and/or reference the site's procedures for outsourcing samples and ensuring the integrity of those samples. Sites shall address this element, regardless of whether or not the site outsources. For example, outsourcing may be referenced in the quality manual as "Not Applicable or N/A" if the site does not outsource any analyses.

Comment

STANDARD 2. ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL

	YES	NO	N/A
2.1 Does the NIBIN Site have managerial staff with the authority and resources needed to discharge its duties and meet the requirements of the standards in this document?			
2.2. Does the NIBIN Site have designated NIBIN Program Administrator?			
2.2.1. Does the NIBIN Program Administrator meet the following two qualifications:			
2.2.1.1. A full time employee of the site or a full time contractor with employee privileges?			
2.2.1.2. A qualified NIBIN User that has completed acquisition and correlation training?			

Discussion

Sites may be in compliance with Standard 2.2.1.2 if the NIBIN Program Administrator does not meet the training requirements of a Qualified NIBIN User, but the site has a designated Technical NIBIN Administrator to assist the NIBIN Program Administrator with the technical operations and procedures?

A Technical NIBIN Administrator is only required in the event the NIBIN Program Administrator does not meet the training requirements of a Qualified NIBIN User. The Technical NIBIN Administrator is a Qualified NIBIN user at the NIBIN Site designated to assist the NIBIN Program Administrator with technical operations and procedures.

Correlation training for the NIBIN Program Administrator or NIBIN Technical Advisor is not required for sites that do not possess a NIBIN correlation machine and do not perform correlation reviews.

Agencies or departments with multiple NIBIN Sites may designate a single NIBIN Program Administrator; however, if a single NIBIN Program Administrator is designated for multiple sites, each individual site must also designate a Technical Administrator to assist with specific technical operations.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
2.2.1. Does the NIBIN Program Administrator:			
2.2.2.1. Oversee the site (as it relates to NIBIN) and successes of the NIBIN program?			
2.2.2.2. Have the authority to initiate, suspend, and resume NIBIN operations for the site or technicians?			
2.2.3. Does the NIBIN Program Administrator:			
2.2.3.1. Evaluate and document approval of all methods (as they relate to NIBIN) by the site and propose new or modified procedures as needed?			

Discussion

The approval process for procedures of the site may require multiple layers of approval; this is acceptable provided the NIBIN Site Program Administrator is part of the approval process. For example, an accredited laboratory may require that all procedures receive final approval by a laboratory supervisor or director. A NIBIN Site with this policy is in compliance as long as the NIBIN Site Program Administrator is included within the technical approval process of the procedures being submitted for final release.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
2.2.3. Does the NIBIN Program Administrator:			
2.2.3.2. Review the training records for newly Qualified NIBIN Users and approve their qualifications prior to them performing acquisitions or correlations within the IBIS system?			
2.2.3.3. Coordinate with the ATF Audit team regarding NIBIN Site audits?			
2.2.4. Does the site and/or ATF have access to their NIBIN Site Program Administrator to provide onsite, telephone or electronic consultation as needed?			
2.2.4.1. Does the site have a documented contingency plan in place, approved by management, for a vacancy in the NIBIN Program Administrator and/or Technical Administrator?			
2.3. Does the site ensure that all personnel at their site utilizing the IBIS system have the proper level of training and experience for their position and that all individuals performing acquisitions and/or correlation reviews are Qualified NIBIN users?			
2.3.1.1.1. Have all the NIBIN Users performing acquisitions completed ATF-approved acquisition training administered by ATF, FT, and/or NAT?			
2.3.1.1.2. Have all the NIBIN Users performing correlation reviews completed ATF-approved acquisition and correlation training administered by ATF, FT?			

Discussion

A site may be in compliance with Standards 2.3.1.1.1. and/or 2.3.1.1.2. if any of the NIBIN users are not Qualified NIBIN Users who have attended authorized training, but have been granted an authorized user's waiver from ATF.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
2.4. Does the site maintain records on the relevant qualifications, training, skills, and experience of the NIBIN Program Administrator and Qualified NIBIN Users?			

Discussion

The training requirements for the NIBIN Program Administrator, Technical Administrator, and Qualified NIBIN User are the minimum training standards and do not preclude or limit further or advanced trainings.

Current and experienced NIBIN Users as of July 2018 who do not meet training requirements outlined above may request a waiver from ATF to continue operating and accessing NIBIN. Please contact the ATF Firearms Operations Division for instructions and waiver form. Note that these waivers are portable and a NIBIN user may transfer an authorized waiver from one NIBIN Site to another. However, if there is more than 1-year of absence of use from NIBIN operations, an individual must seek a new waiver or attend qualified training.

To successfully satisfy **Standard 2** compliance must be demonstrated with all of the subcategories of **Standard 2.2**.

The role of a NIBIN Program Administrator and/or Technical Administrator does not preclude, for example, the existence of additional program or technical leaders, each of whom may be assigned a subset of clearly defined duties (e.g., Training Program Manager, Quality Assurance Program Manager). However, a single NIBIN Program Administrator will retain the ultimate NIBIN-related authority and oversight responsibility. **Standard 2.2.3** and its subcategories must be satisfied in order to demonstrate that the NIBIN Program Administrator and/or Technical NIBIN Administrator are accountable for the technical operations. This does not preclude any additional oversight or levels of approval and authority.

Standards 2.3 and **2.4** and its subcategories must be satisfied in order to demonstrate that the NIBIN Qualified Users are qualified and properly trained.

The site must have a documented contingency plan in place, approved by management, for a vacancy in the NIBIN Program Administrator and/or Technical Administrator. This plan may be a single policy or a combination of several policies. A contingency plan shall include or address the appropriate notifications naming an individual who may serve in this position, the time period that individual may serve, and how the site will proceed if no one is qualified.

A list of the individuals in compliance with **Standard 2** and the position with which they are in compliance will be incorporated by the auditor into Appendix C. Appendix C shall be completed by auditors conducting external MROS audits. The credentials for those individuals found to be in compliance with **Standard 2** after two successive external audits are not required to be reviewed in subsequent audits, if there are no breaks in service for more than one year. However, this in no way prohibits the auditor from performing such additional reviews as that auditor(s) may deem appropriate or necessary.

Comment

STANDARD 3. FACILITIES

	YES	NO	N/A
3. Is the site designed to ensure the integrity of the analyses and the evidence?			
3.1. Does the NIBIN Site comply with all ATF, DOJ, and/or other federal security requirements related to the NIBIN program, network, or systems to ensure the integrity of the program?			
3.2. Does the site house NIBIN equipment in monitored, physically-restrictive environments and clearly identify the restricted areas?			
3.2. Is the NIBIN equipment in a room that is locked and monitored?			
3.3. Does the site ensure building facilities are secured outside of normal working hours and monitored 24 hours or locked and alarmed when no one is at site?			
3.4. Ensure security alarm systems (e.g., motion, thermal) in the building that houses NIBIN equipment or on-site security?			
3.4. Test the security systems quarterly?			
3.4. Maintain test records for review?			

Discussion

Note that the security alarm does not have to be installed in the NIBIN room and can be part of the overall facility. For example, a NIBIN instrument housed in a secure (locked) room that has controlled access without a room specific security system is still in compliance, if the facility has a security system (alarm) that covers unauthorized access to the facility.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
3.5. Does the Site control and limit access to the site in a manner to prevent access by unauthorized personnel but to allow for the timely submission of evidence by serviced police departments/agencies?			
3.6. Do all exterior entrance/exit points require security control?			
3.6. Does the site safeguard access to NIBIN equipment areas via key, magnetic card, or cipher lock?			
3.7. Is the distribution of all keys, combinations, etc., documented and limited to the personnel designated by NIBIN Program Administrator?			

Discussion

These requirements are generally satisfied at the time the NIBIN Site Survey was completed. The requirements of this section are consistent with those requirements outlined in the NIBIN Site Survey. A site will be in compliance if the NIBIN location is secure, even if the overall building is secured. The NIBIN Site must be within a secured zone, which may be the entire building or a sub-section of the building.

The NIBIN Program Administrator is not required to physically distribute keys, access cards, etc. to the NIBIN Site. There may be additional approval processes in place and further levels of approval provided that the NIBIN Program Administrator is part of the approval of those individuals accessing the NIBIN Site and/or equipment. The NIBIN Program Administrator must have knowledge and a record of all individuals with approved access.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
3.8. Does the site have procedures in place to collect and/or change access into NIBIN room for personnel no longer directly using NIBIN equipment? (Either change lock and/or collect keys used for access.)			
3.9. Does the site document visitor procedures to restrictive areas and maintain and update a restrictive area authorized personnel roster?			

Discussion

To successfully satisfy **Standard 3**, the site must demonstrate compliance with all of the subcategories of **Standard 3**.

Comment

STANDARD 4. EVIDENCE CONTROL

	YES	NO	N/A
4. Does the site have and follow a documented evidence control system to ensure the integrity of physical evidence?			
4.1. Is evidence marked with a unique identifier on the evidence package?			
4.1. Does the site clearly define what constitutes evidence and what constitutes work product?			
4.1. Does the site have and follow a method to distinguish each sample throughout processing?			
4.2. Is chain of custody for all evidence documented and maintained in hard or electronic format?			
4.2. Does the chain of custody include the signature, initials or electronic equivalent of each individual receiving or transferring the evidence, the corresponding date for each transfer, and the evidentiary item(s) transferred?			
4.3. Does the site have and follow documented procedures designed to minimize loss, and/or deleterious change of evidence?			
4.4. Does the site have secure, controlled access areas for evidence storage and work product in progress?			

Discussion

To successfully satisfy **Standard 4**, the site must demonstrate compliance with all of the subcategories of **Standard 4**.

The site must have clearly written, well-understood procedures that address handling and preserving the integrity of evidence. Key components of such an evidence control procedure include proper labeling and sealing of evidence, a documented chain of custody record, and a secure area designated for evidence storage. Each item of evidence (and/or its container) must be marked with a unique identifier.

The site shall clearly define what constitutes evidence and what constitutes work product. Work product (i.e., test fires) is the material that is generated as a function of analysis.

A written chain of custody record must include the signature, initials, or unique identifier (written or electronic) of each individual or storage location receiving or transferring evidence, with the corresponding date for each transfer and a corresponding identifier that specifies each evidentiary item. This record must provide a comprehensive, documented history for each evidence transfer over which the NIBIN Site has control.

Electronic tracking of evidence is an acceptable alternative to a written record as long as the computerized data are sufficiently secure, detailed, and accessible for review and can be converted to a hard copy when necessary.

The site must ensure that evidence stored under its custody is properly sealed and protected from loss, contamination, and/or deleterious change. An evidence container is sealed properly if its contents cannot escape readily and if opening the container results in a detectable alteration to the container or seal. The seal must be labeled in a manner that identifies the individual responsible for sealing the evidence. The immediate container need not be sealed (but securely closed) if it is enclosed in a larger container that meets the requirements of a proper seal. In such instances, the container must be closed securely such that its contents are protected from loss, contamination, and/or deleterious change.

Secure areas for evidence storage must exist within the NIBIN Site and/or lab facility.

Evidence storage procedures that are in compliance with ISO 17025 or 17020 standards and the supplemental accreditation standards for forensic laboratories that are used within an accredited NIBIN Site are considered in compliance for this standard.

Comment

STANDARD 5. PROCEDURES

	YES	NO	N/A
5. Does the site have and follow written procedures for all steps of the NIBIN process?			
5. Are these procedures approved by the NIBIN Program Administrator?			

Discussion

The approval process for procedures of the site may be layered and have multiple layers of approval provided the NIBIN Site Administrator is part of the approval process.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.1. Does the site have any policies that inhibit or restrict NIBIN submissions of suitable ballistic evidence to the Site by any serviced law enforcement agency/department?			

Discussion

In order to optimize the comprehensiveness of ballistic information on the NIBIN network, a site will not implement policies that restrict the submission of suitable ballistic evidence for NIBIN analysis. Limiting submissions of suitable ballistic evidence based on specific crimes, firearm calibers other than specified below, or other restrictions is prohibited.

Suitable ballistic evidence is considered all fired cartridge cases recovered by law enforcement as well as test-fired cartridge cases from firearms recovered by law enforcement that were illegally possessed, used in a crime, or suspected by law enforcement officials of having been used in a crime. These firearms are considered “crime guns.”

NIBIN test firing is required for all operable “crime guns” that meet the following criteria: centerfire, semi-automatic pistols including 22 caliber and larger, .223 and 7.62 semi-automatic rifles, 12 gauge shotguns and long guns that use handgun ammunition under the aforementioned guidelines.

Firearms that are not typically test fired include revolvers, single shot or bolt action rifles, shotguns in other gauges, weapons never fired, or firearms deemed unsafe, inoperable, or

incomplete. This Standard does not preclude the entry of test fires from these firearms, however.

Similarly, NIBIN entry of fired cartridge cases recovered from crime scenes is required for all cartridges consistent with centerfire, semi-automatic pistols including 22 caliber and larger, .223 and 7.62 semi-automatic rifles, 12 gauge shotguns and long guns that use handgun ammunition under the aforementioned guidelines.

Ballistics information and/or evidence from firearms taken into law enforcement custody through a Gun Buy Back Program, property damage crimes involving firearms, found or abandoned firearms, and domestic disturbances are permitted for entry in the NIBIN database. It is noted that some jurisdictions may have local regulations or policies that prohibit some of these items to be included in NIBIN. Therefore, firearms from these submission types, while acceptable for NIBIN entry, are not required under the standards.

Sites must not have a case acceptance policy that limits the submission of all suitable ballistic evidence outlined above from submitting agencies. For purposes of this Standard, sites are not required to accept suitable ballistic evidence if more than one year has passed between evidence recovery and submission to the site. Nevertheless, entry of all suitable ballistic evidence regardless of timeliness of submission is certainly permissible. In addition, this Standard does not require sites to actively take on submissions from additional agencies.

Note that these requirements for entry into NIBIN do not require or preclude any other forensic analysis of suitable ballistic evidence.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.2. Does the site document and follow standard operating procedures for the acquisition of all ballistic images?			
5.2.1. Does the site perform acquisitions of all suitable ballistic evidence submitted to the site?			

Discussion

Acquisitions must be done of all suitable ballistic evidence submitted to the NIBIN Site and outlined in the Discussion under **STANDARD 5.1**.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.2.1.1. Does the site document and follow procedure for the triage or grouping of multiple items of ballistic evidence from the same firearm?			
5.2.1.2. Does the site perform acquisitions of the best suitable examples of ballistic evidence following the triage process?			

Discussion

The NIBIN Site need only acquire and enter into NIBIN the best exemplar cartridge case identified from the triage or screening of a group of fired cartridge cases and not all items of evidence. However, the standard does not define or preclude a specific number of acquisitions that may be made, if the user site determines that a grouping requires more than one entry.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.2.1.3. Does the site perform acquisitions of all suitable ballistic evidence within 2 business days of receipt at the site?			

Discussion

The receipt date is defined as the date ballistic evidence (recovered firearm or fired cartridge case) is initially submitted and/or delivered, to the NIBIN Site or its parent laboratory, in the case of those sites that are a component of a larger forensic system, for any forensic analysis (e.g., DNA, latents, NIBIN, etc.).

This Standard applies to all NIBIN Sites (i.e., Sites that are co-located within a forensic laboratory and those sites that are not co-located).

If the receipt date as defined above is not a business day of operation at the NIBIN Site, then the receipt date (for MROS purposes) will be the next applicable business day for the NIBIN Site. Please note that this requirement for NIBIN entry does not preclude other forensic analysis of suitable ballistic evidence, but emphasizes the critical nature of timely crime gun intelligence.

The NIBIN Site or encompassing facility must record the receipt date for purposes of the MROS audit. This record can be documented in writing or electronically (i.e., intake log, evidence tag or chain of custody, property receipt, spreadsheet, etc.). The receipt date need not be documented in a central record and may be documented with each piece of evidence provided it is available for audits.

In order to meet this Standard, a NIBIN Site must have a written policy to perform acquisitions of all suitable ballistic evidence within 2 business days, and at a minimum achieve this Standard at least 80% of the time.

NIBIN Sites that cannot comply with the Standard outlined above for the prescribed 80% due to reasonable circumstances (i.e., significant other forensic analysis, extraordinary hardships, etc.) may request a waiver through ATF from the National Crime Gun Intelligence Governing Board to continue operating and accessing NIBIN. The waiver will require an explanation of the circumstances and a reasonable deviation proposal. Please note that the waiver is not intended to eliminate the requirement due to standard procedures or circumstances and will be reviewed by the Board. Please contact the ATF Firearms Operations Division at MROS@ATF.GOV for instructions and waiver form. A waiver issued by the Board is not transportable to another NIBIN Site and is determined on a case by case basis.

In the event that a NIBIN Site has been granted a waiver, the assessment shall be based on the timeline described in the waiver. The waiver shall be noted in the comment section below and a copy of the waiver shall be included as an appendix to this document.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.2.1.4. Does the site accurately enter all required information pertaining to the ballistic evidence during the acquisition process?			

Discussion

The NIBIN Site will need to ensure that all relevant information for the acquisition of ballistic evidence into NIBIN is entered properly and accurately. This is critical for the follow-up of investigative leads identified by NIBIN and the automated linking of NIBIN leads to agency Report Management Systems (RMS). For purposes of this Standard, entry of the following fields is required and must be completed accurately during the acquisition process as outlined below:

Case Number – NIBIN Site's (Lab) Case Number. If the lab does not utilize a unique number system, this field should reflect the Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) case number.

Occurrence Date – The date of incident or firearm or cartridge case recovery.

Receipt Date – The date ballistic evidence (recovered firearm or fired cartridge case) is initially submitted and/or delivered for any forensic analysis. This information must be recorded accurately. When a “receipt date” field is included during the NIBIN acquisition process, this information must be entered. A separate record of the date (intake log, evidence tag or chain of custody, property receipt, spreadsheet, etc.) will not be required when the “receipt date” field is available; however, supporting documentation to verify the accuracy may still be requested.

Event Type – the type of incident involving the evidence recovery must be accurately entered from the dropdown menu if available and known at the time of acquisition.

Originating Agency Name – Originating Law Enforcement Agency name from the dropdown menu for the agency submitting the evidence for entry into NIBIN.

Originating Agency Reference – LEA Investigation Number (also referred to as Originating Agency Case Number). This number needs to be entered exactly as it appears on the evidence intake form and in the agency’s reporting management system. This field needs to be completed even if the case number and reference number are the same.

Firearm Exhibit – For all test-fired firearms, the Exhibit Number, Make, Model, Caliber, Type, and Serial Number as well as Importer Name and State (if applicable) under the Firearms Exhibit Details must be accurately entered if available and known at the time of acquisition.

In order to meet this Standard, a NIBIN Site must have a written policy to accurately enter all required information during the acquisition process, and at a minimum achieve this Standard at least 80% of the time.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.2.1. 5. Does the site record the date of the acquisition of each item of ballistic evidence?			

Discussion

The acquisition is currently recorded with the NIBIN acquisition machine and need not be documented separately by the NIBIN Site.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.3. Does the site document and follow standard operating procedures for the correlation review of ballistic images?			

Discussion

A minimum correlation review of ballistic images of the top 30 from the rank sort list is required based on prior study and research (refs. IBIS BrassTrax Correlation Review Techniques, Garten and Burrows, AFTE Journal, Volume 49, Number 2, Spring 2017; Evaluation of Rank Positions within Regions of Interest (ROI) for Published NIBIN Leads, Nichols, November 2016; IBIS BrassTrax Correlation Performance and Review Techniques, Garten, January 2018). Such review has shown to find 96.9 - 97.4% of all potential ballistic image matches and optimizes the balance between identifying NIBIN Leads and timely review and turnaround.

This requirement does not preclude a site from implementing policy and procedure for further review of images beyond the top 30 of the rank sort list or across specific regions of interest.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.3.1. Does the site document and follow procedure for the correlation review of potential NIBIN Leads?			
5.3.2. Does the site perform and document a second correlation review of potential NIBIN Leads?			

Discussion

This Standard requires that a second Qualified NIBIN User conduct a secondary review of each potential NIBIN Lead identified by the initial Qualified NIBIN User prior to the creation and dissemination of a NIBIN Lead. The standard requires that the secondary review is only a review of the potential linked items. It does not require or preclude a review of all results of the correlation, or in the case where no lead is generated.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.3.2. Are both the initial and secondary correlation reviews of NIBIN leads completed within 2 business days of the acquisition of the ballistic images of the item of evidence?			
5.3.3. In the performance of correlation reviews, do the Qualified NIBIN Users at the site examine, at minimum, ballistic images of the top 30 from the rank sort list determined by the ballistics imaging software?			

Discussion

In order to comply with this Standard, a NIBIN Site must have a written policy to conduct all initial and secondary correlation reviews of all NIBIN leads within 2 business days of acquisition, and at a minimum achieve this Standard at least 80% of the time.

Note that this Standard does not apply to NIBIN Sites serviced by the NIBIN National Correlation and Training Center (NNCTC); however, the standard does apply to the NNCTC itself.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.3.4. Does the documentation of any correlation review (primary or secondary) include at a minimum the primary case identifier(s), date of the review, the name of the NIBIN user, the items of evidence involved in the correlation, and the result of the review?			

Discussion

As referenced in this Standard, all users must accurately enter case identifiers, items of evidence, etc., at the time of acquisition. Moreover, it is critical that all NIBIN Sites properly document NIBIN leads. Similarly, when confirmed, a NIBIN hit should be properly documented with the corresponding date of hit confirmation. For purposes of this Standard, the following need to be completed accurately during the correlation review process using an approved NIBIN correlation machine as outlined below:

Creating Leads/Hits in NIBIN:

- A Lead is created when the "crosshairs" icon is activated and the user clicks "OK." This should be completed upon concurrence from the secondary correlation review, which Standard number 5.3.2 states must occur within 2 business days of acquisition.
- A Hit is documented when the confirmation date is recorded in the "Date" field.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.4. Does the site document and follow standard operating procedures for the dissemination of NIBIN Leads?			

Discussion

Sites must implement standard procedures for the dissemination of NIBIN Leads to the agency/department submitting the specific ballistic evidence. Such procedures should consider the importance of timely dissemination of NIBIN Leads and intelligence to investigators.

As required by the Standard, NIBIN Leads will be disseminated to the investigating entity of the agency/department submitting the ballistic evidence match. It is further recommended that NIBIN Leads also be disseminated to the local ATF Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC). A submitting agency may implement policies in which the NIBIN Site disseminates all NIBIN Leads directly and solely to the local ATF Crime Gun Intelligence Center. Such policies shall be deemed in compliance with the standard. These steps will facilitate the coordination between investigators and further the collection of critical intelligence pertaining to the linked crimes.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.4.1. Are NIBIN Leads disseminated within 24 hours of creation to the agency submitting the specific ballistic evidence and/or their authorized representative?			

Discussion

This Standard does not dictate the method (email, automated message) of dissemination of NIBIN Leads; however, the emphasis of timely dissemination to investigators is underscored. Note that the dissemination of NIBIN Leads is required within 24 hours and not business day(s). This is required with the necessity of timeliness in mind.

While the standard requires the NIBIN Leads are disseminated to the submitting agency, it is urged that Leads are also distributed to any other involved or affected agency as well as the local ATF CGIC. The CGIC can provide assistance with intelligence, analysis, and investigative follow-up of these NIBIN Leads.

In order to comply with this Standard, a NIBIN Site must have a written policy to disseminate all NIBIN Leads within 24 hours of identifying the lead, and at a minimum achieve this Standard at least 80% of the time.

Sites utilizing the NNCTC for correlation reviews of ballistic images will not be subject to the requirements of **Standard 5.4**; however, the standard is applicable to the NNCTC itself.

Comment

	YES	NO	N/A
5.4.2. Does the site record the date of Lead dissemination of each NIBIN Lead?			

Discussion

Sites are required to record the date of dissemination of all NIBIN Leads for purposes of the MROS audit. This record can be documented in writing or electronically (i.e., e-mail date, spreadsheet, etc.). The dissemination date need not be documented in a central record and may be documented with each NIBIN Lead provided it is available and accessible for audits.

Comment

STANDARD 6. CORRECTIVE ACTION

	YES	NO	N/A
6. Has the NIBIN Site established and followed a corrective action plan that addresses processes and procedures when the MROS are not met?			
6. Does the corrective action plan, at a minimum, address the following?			
6. Identify possible causes for noncompliance with MROS?			
6. Address plans and measures to meet MROS?			
6.1. Prior to implementation do all corrective actions have the documented approval of the NIBIN Program Administrator?			

Discussion

This standard addresses only those corrective actions resulting from NIBIN analysis. The elements listed may be assessed through a review of existing site documentation. Moreover, this Standard does not preclude the site from having additional levels of approval of the corrective action in addition to the NIBIN Program Administrator.

To successfully satisfy **Standard 6**, the site must demonstrate compliance with all of the subcategories of **Standard 6**.

Comment

STANDARD 7. AUDITS

	YES	NO	N/A
7.2. Does the site maintain and make available all required documentation and records of the NIBIN analysis of submitted ballistic evidence pertaining to the accuracy and timeliness of acquisitions, correlations reviews, and NIBIN Lead disseminations?			

7.3. Does the site maintain and make available all required documentation of training and experience for the NIBIN Program Administrator and Qualified NIBIN Users?			
7.4. Does the site maintain and make available all required documentation and records to verify compliance with these NIBIN standards?			

Comment

Appendix A: Findings and Responses

To be completed by the audit team (Findings) and laboratory (Responses).

Auditors shall reference any Standard found to be in noncompliance in the Findings below. Following the Standard, a detailed description of the noncompliance shall be provided.

Comments and/or recommendations shall **not** be included in Appendix A. Additional pages may be attached, as needed.

Findings

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Responses

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Appendix B – Notification Form for NIBIN Program Administrator Contingency Plan

To be completed by the site only in the event of a vacancy in the NIBIN Program Administrator position when there is no qualified individual available to serve as the NIBIN Program Administrator.

This form shall be used to document various actions relating to a vacancy in the NIBIN Program Administrator position in the event that the site does not have an individual qualified to serve as the NIBIN Program Administrator. Under those circumstances, in accordance with the MROS, the ATF Audit and Training Branch shall be notified of such vacancy and provided with the site's contingency plan within 14 days of the vacancy.

Date NIBIN Program Administrator position vacated	Date ATF contacted	Name of ATF personnel contacted	Date contingency plan submitted to ATF <i>(must be within 14 days of the vacancy)</i>	Date ATF approval received

Contingency plan attached? YES NO

ATF conditions for approval attached, if applicable? YES NO

Date new casework started: _____

Site: _____

Signed by: _____
(Name and Signature of Person Completing Form)

Date: _____

Appendix C – Auditor Self-Certification for MROS Audits

To be completed by the auditor who will sign the attestation statement below the questions and (a) for external audits, return to the laboratory prior to the scheduled audit date; or (b) for internal audits, maintain in the laboratory’s files.

Site Being Audited:		
Date:		
Auditor Qualifications:		
Name of Auditor:		
Auditor’s Employer:		
Auditor’s Title or Position:		
Qualified Auditor?	YES	NO
Year Completed ATF Auditor Class:		

I verify that:

- ✓ **I understand the requirements of the above Standards**
- ✓ **I have no conflicts of interest with the site being audited**
- ✓ **The information contained in Section 2 above is correct.**

Signed By _____ **Date** _____

Appendix D – Personnel Meeting Minimum Training Qualifications As Assessed By External Audit

List of Qualified NIBIN Users for Acquisitions:

List of Qualified NIBIN Users for Correlations:

List of NIBIN technicians granted a waiver by ATF:
