

Fighting Gang Violence with NIBIN

A Case Study involving the successful use of IBIS and the NIBIN Program by the Santa Ana Police Department to combat violent gang-related crime.

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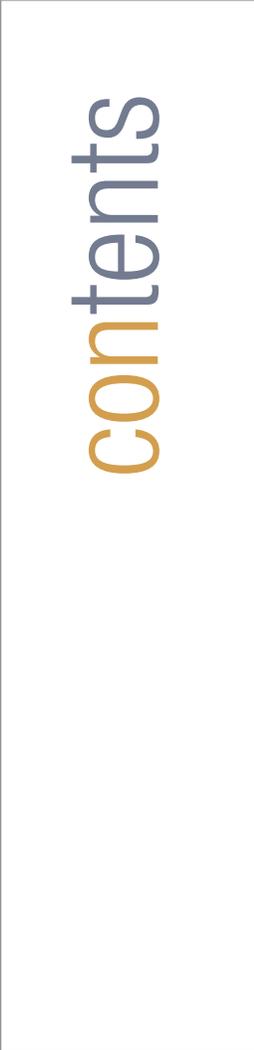
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Case Study:

Fighting Gang Violence with 500 Hits

ABOUT SANTA ANA

Santa Ana, the largest city in Orange County by population covers an area of 27.2 square miles.

The populace of Santa Ana is approximately 349,100 (2000 census) and is comprised of 77.7% Hispanics, 10.3% Caucasians, 10.08% Asians, and the remaining percentage represented by other ethnic groups.

The median age is 27.8 years. Unemployment is 5.8%, translating to approximately 10,360 persons. The number of housing units is approximately 76,000.

Like many cities across the United States, Santa Ana has a gang activity problem and consequently, numerous firearm related incidents.

As participants in the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and

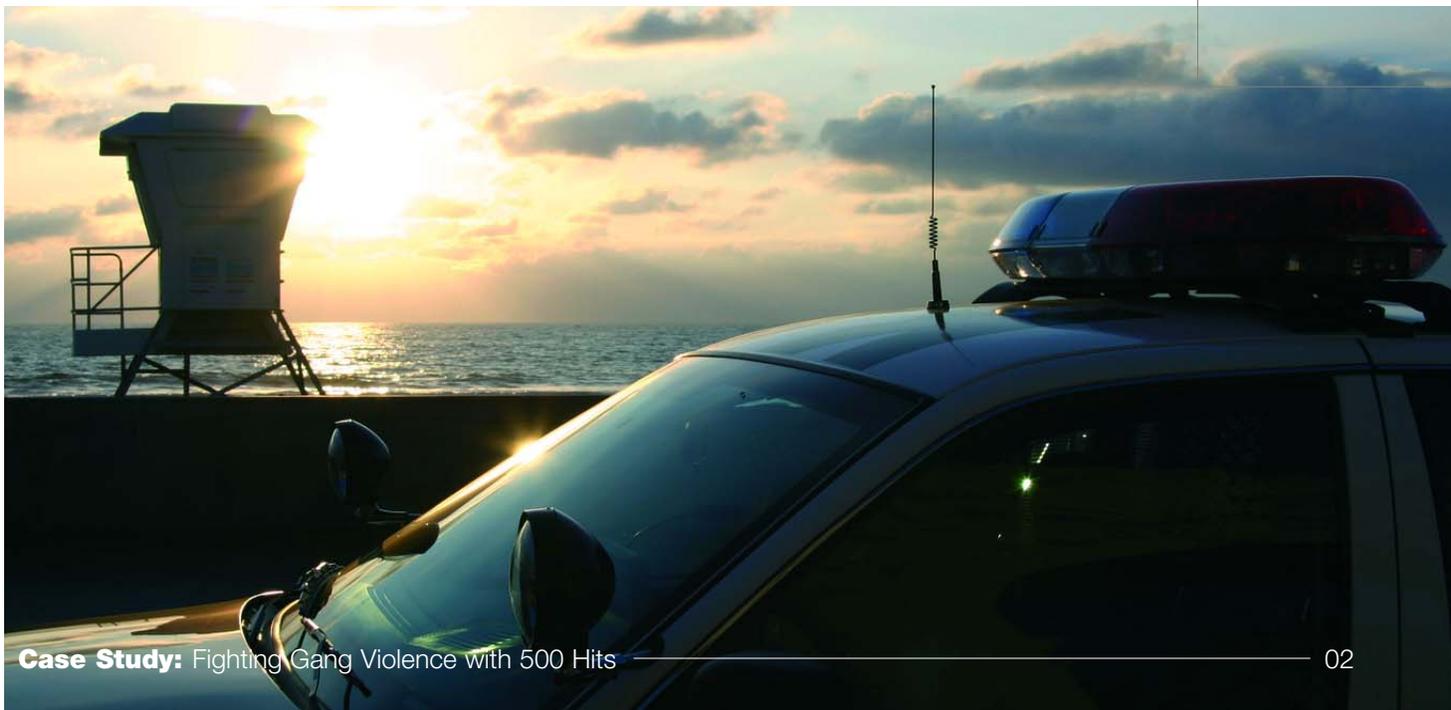


Explosives' (ATF) National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), the Santa Ana Police Department's (SAPD) Firearms Unit (FA Unit), currently has a case backlog of approximately 800 firearm-related cases and averages approximately 400 firearm-related incidents annually.

Prior to August 1996, all firearm-related cases were sent to the County Crime Laboratory. Due to a serious backlog, the turnaround time was sometimes up to one year.

Current staffing of the Firearms Unit consists of one firearms examiner and three part-time personnel.

background



Effectiveness and reasons for success



The Firearms Unit currently has 500 cold case hits with IBIS® (Integrated Ballistics Identification System), 330 of which occurred since March 2005. The productivity of the unit is attributed to numerous factors.

- 1) Constant coordination between detectives and the Firearms Unit.
- 2) Effective coordination between the Evidence Room and the Firearms Unit.
- 3) IBIS trained Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) personnel who process the evidence and then enter the cartridge cases from the crime scene into the NIBIN database.
- 4) A policy supported by the Chief of SAPD who insists that all firearm-related evidence is entered into the NIBIN.
- 5) Effective liaison between the Firearms Unit and TRACKERS (the Orange County Cold Case Homicide Unit).
- 6) Effective liaison between the Firearms Unit and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).
- 7) Expedited report writing
- 8) Mapping System
- 9) Short turnaround time

reasons for success

Effectiveness and reasons for success

CONSTANT COORDINATION BETWEEN DETECTIVES AND THE FIREARMS UNIT

Coordination between detectives and the Firearms Unit is key to understanding what is going on in the streets of Santa Ana, CA.

With continual dialogue the Firearms Unit can provide information to detectives advising them as to what cases are linking together and the type of firearms being sought. This is attributed to numerous factors.

EFFECTIVE COORDINATION BETWEEN THE EVIDENCE ROOM AND THE FIREARMS UNIT

The Evidence Room continually provides information regarding evidence coming into the department.

The Firearms Unit monitors the types of firearms submitted to evidence by patrol, making it possible to recognize an active firearm (one being used continuously in shootings in the city) in order to prioritize the firearms processed.

IBIS TRAINED CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION (CSI) PERSONNEL WHO PROCESS THE EVIDENCE AND THEN ENTER THE EXHIBITS FROM THE CRIME SCENE INTO THE IBIS UNIT

The Crime Scene Investigators (CSI) of the Santa Ana Police



Department have five members of its 10-member team trained by ATF as IBIS technicians. After responding to and processing a crime scene, the CSI personnel return to the lab and process the evidence by entering the cartridge cases from the scene into NIBIN.

This enables the Firearms Unit to check the IBIS correlations and identify any high probability hits with other shootings the next day. The evidence is then pulled and microscopically compared and verified.

The Gang Unit is then supplied with information regarding the shooting and they provide information to patrol as to where the hot spots are and what type of suspect weapons are being used as well as any suspect vehicle information.

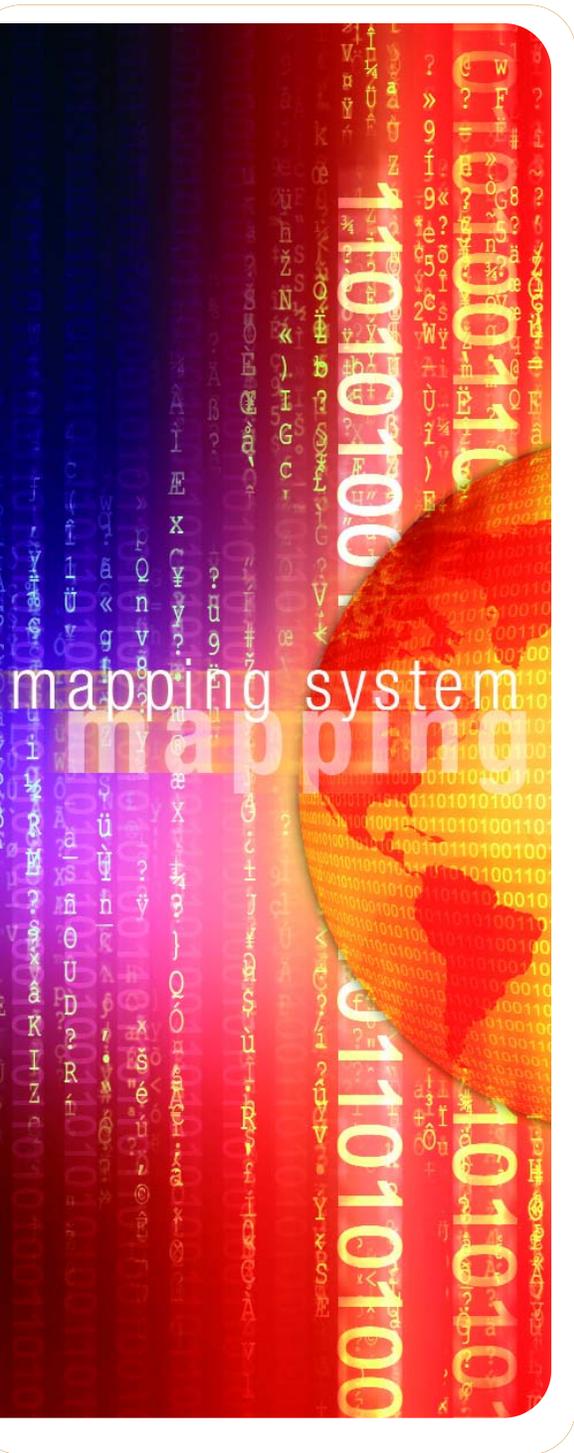
A POLICY SUPPORTED BY THE CHIEF OF SAPD WHO INSISTS THAT ALL FIREARM-RELATED EVIDENCE IS ENTERED INTO NIBIN

All firearms related evidence (with the exception of firearms seized for safekeeping or domestic violence) is entered into NIBIN. If it is not imaged in the IBIS machine, it is not destroyed or released.

EFFECTIVE LIAISON BETWEEN THE FIREARMS UNIT AND TRACKERS (THE ORANGE COUNTY COLD CASE HOMICIDE UNIT)

The Firearms Unit is constantly in contact with the Orange County Trackers Unit. The Trackers Unit is responsible for tracking cold homicide cases. Any links and information obtained through IBIS pertaining to homicides seven years or older are given to the Trackers Unit as well as the appropriate Homicide or Gang Homicide Unit for follow-up.

Effectiveness and reasons for success



EFFECTIVE LIAISON BETWEEN THE FIREARMS UNIT AND ATF

The Firearms Unit is steadfast in its belief that a strong relationship with ATF is essential for an effective IBIS/NIBIN program. Dealing with issues and problems that occur can many times be corrected or effectively dealt with if you have a good working relationship with ATF.

EXPEDITED REPORT WRITING

All shootings where there are no suspects identified or in custody are handled in an expedited format. The cartridge cases are entered into NIBIN and subsequently documented in a report that reflects that the cartridge cases were entered into NIBIN. An additional paragraph is added to the report that states the following:

"This is an Integrated Ballistic Identification System (IBIS) entry only. If a determination is made that this case will be going to trial, the evidence in this case will need to be resubmitted for further analysis prior to any testimony."

This enables entry of the cartridge cases into NIBIN quickly and efficiently without tying up an examiner. All links, which are identified, are verified as soon as possible.

MAPPING SYSTEM:

The firearms examiner for SAPD has developed a program that maps and monitors all shootings that occur in the city on a daily basis. By constantly monitoring this activity, he is able to see the types of shootings, the caliber of the firearms being used, and the locations of seized firearms.

This helps him determine if there are shootings in a particular area where the activity is occurring that have not yet been entered into NIBIN. The Firearms Unit analyzes the maps of all shootings within the last five years and keeps close tabs on all firearm-related activity in the city.

SHORT TURN-AROUND-TIME

Based on the assistance with IBIS trained CSI, the current turn around time is one day for active firearm-related incidents from the time of shooting to input into NIBIN to examination and confirmation, and the expedited report writing system.

The bottom line is our Gang Unit and Homicide Unit can be actively investigating a case with the answers they need to do an outstanding investigative job on firearm-related investigations.

Examples of success

examples of success

IBIS Hits (or links between crimes that would otherwise not have been made) are hardcore criminal intelligence.

The linking of firearm related crime scenes through positive identification using forensic science methods.

Unlike crime analysis which deals with Modus Operandi and statistical probabilities, the Firearms Unit can unequivocally connect shootings using scientific fact.

In June 2005, a joint RICO investigation between ATF, FBI and Santa Ana Police department resulted in the arrest of multiple defendants charged in a federal racketeering indictment with exercising control over Hispanic street gangs across Orange County.

The investigation benefited from IBIS links provided through NIBIN and hard investigative work by Detectives and Federal Agents to bring the operation to a successful conclusion.

This is what the law enforcement team had to say about the investigation:

United States Attorney Debra Wong Yang.:

"A coordinated effort between local, state and federal authorities has taken down one of the most powerful gangsters in Orange County. I am pleased that my office could assist the Santa Ana Gang Task Force by bringing the federal RICO statute into play. It is my hope that the arrests today will send a message to gangsters that law enforcement is committed to working together to take you off the streets."

Richard T. Garcia, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI:

"This case demonstrates the success in combating gang violence made possible when law enforcement at all levels share intelligence and combine resources. This cooperative effort will continue to be utilized to best serve the community, as we maintain our efforts to thwart violent gangs in our neighborhoods."

Santa Ana Police Chief Paul M. Walters

"The arrest of these dangerous and violent criminals who have engaged in an on-going pattern of organized crime will have a significant impact on narcotic and gang activity throughout Orange County."

John A. Torres, Special Agent in Charge of the ATF office in Los Angeles

"ATF's primary focus remains protecting the public and reducing violent crime. We will continue to participate with local, state and other federal agencies in an effort to disrupt organized crime."

Richard Rimmer, Assistant Director of the California Department of Corrections

"The Department's Special Services Unit works with law enforcement throughout the state to prevent prison gangs from establishing a foothold in our communities. Today, a large, highly organized and violent criminal gang is behind bars. Tomorrow, someone will try to take their place, and all of these agencies will be back out there to stop them."

Conclusion



The Firearms Unit of the Santa Ana Police Department currently has 500 IBIS cold case hits. Of those 500 hits, 330 have occurred in the past eight months (since March 2005) with an average of 50 hits per month. The SAPD has discovered that IBIS and NIBIN are very effective tools in the war on gang violence.

Shootings occur daily in our community. It is only through the effective use of resources and constant coordination between investigative units (Gang and Homicide), the crime laboratory and crime analysis as well as surrounding agencies that a blow can be dealt to "domestic terrorists."

The Firearms Unit of the Santa Ana Police Department has discovered a way to effectively use resources and technology in order to combat the gangs in our city. Effective use of resources, coordination, cooperation between departmental agencies and ATF are key to being effective with IBIS and the NIBIN program.

conclusion

About the author

abouttheauthor

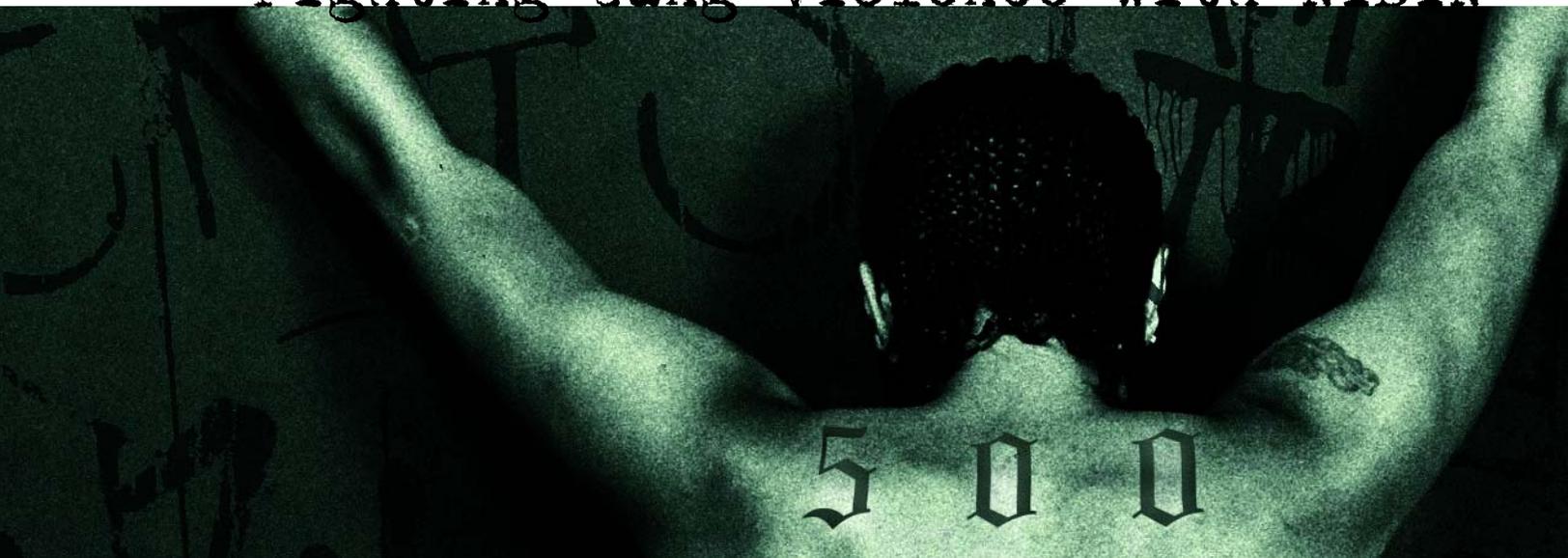
Rocky Edwards **Firearms Examiner, Santa Ana** **Police Department**

As a former Special Agent, US Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID), Edwards was trained in 1989 as a Forensic Firearms Examiner at the US Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory, Ft. Gillem, GA.

In 1995, Edwards became a distinguished member of the Association of Firearm and Tool Mark Examiners. Upon his retirement in 1993 from the Army, Edwards worked as a contractor with the Los Angeles Police Department until 1996 when he was employed by the Santa Ana Police Department as their Firearms Examiner.



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