

The Rutgers University logo, featuring the word "RUTGERS" in a red, serif font. The letter "R" is stylized with a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the left.

# RUTGERS

Miller Center on Policing &  
Community Resilience

## AFTER ACTION REPORT

9th Meeting of the I-95 Working Group

## Abstract

The January 29-30, 2024, I-95 Working Group Meeting focused on the domestic security threat from weapons trafficking and urban gun violence. Presentations included using crime gun intelligence, overcoming bureaucratic obstacles to reduce gun forensic examinations, identifying and focusing on serial shooters, expediting critical information to prosecutors, and working within the spirit of state bail reform protocols to better inform prosecutorial and judicial decisions on bail and detention. To offer an international perspective on this topic, this ninth gathering also included federal and provincial presentations from Canada.

## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance and support received from colleagues in the practitioner, academic, and professional spheres. The I-95 Working Group is grateful for the support of the following sponsors: Axon, Cellebrite, AT&T FirstNet, Flock Safety, Motorola, Truleo, Forensic Technology, the New York City Police Foundation, and the Senator William Gormley Foundation. The authors are also grateful to those who aided in the organization of this event and the research and writing of this report, including NJSP ROIC Investigators Gillian Burkett and Megan McDermott; and Thomas Burns, Miller Center intern, for their hard work on this initiative.

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## Executive Summary

For two days, police executives from agencies along the Interstate 95 corridor met with one purpose in mind: to stop gun violence in their communities. The Rutgers Center on Policing, with the objective of providing value in “what works” for practitioners, facilitated conversations among nearly 160 participants from fifty-five different agencies who were in attendance.

The convening topics included the security threats from weapons trafficking and urban gun violence, reducing targeted violence, using intelligence gleaned from ‘crime guns,’ overcoming obstacles to accelerate gun forensic examinations, identifying and focusing on serial shooters, expediting critical information to prosecutors, and working within the spirit of state bail reform protocols to better inform prosecutorial and judicial decisions on bail and detention.

Common takeaways emerged at the end of these sessions. Information collection, critical analysis, and intelligence sharing among partners is key to success. Collaboration between jurisdictions is integral to the success of the programs that the participants highlighted to stem crime guns and gun violence. Urgency of action, regionality of coordination, and information sharing between partners were the dominant themes that resonated during the conference.

The 10th meeting of the I-95 Working Group will be hosted by the DC Metropolitan Police Department, the New Jersey State Police (NJSP), and the New York City Police Department (NYPD), and will be held in February 2025 in Washington, DC.

## Historical Overview

The ninth gathering of the Interstate 95 Working Group (I-95 WG) took place at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, 1000 Boardwalk, Atlantic City, N.J., beginning on Monday, January 29, 2024, at 8:30 a.m., and concluding on Tuesday, January 30, at 1:00 p.m.

The meeting was co-hosted by the New Jersey State Police, New York City Police Department, and the DC Metropolitan Police Department, and held in collaboration with the Northern New Jersey Urban Area Security Initiative. This event was facilitated by the Rutgers University Miller Center on Policing (COP) and Community Resilience. The COP has a longstanding reputation for identifying practical solutions and evidence-based approaches to solve pressing law enforcement concerns.

The I-95 WG continues the effective partnership of state police agencies and major city police departments addressing critical public safety and domestic security issues of mutual concern along the Interstate 95 highway corridor.

This initiative was established by George Kelling, the founder of the Rutgers Police Institute, the predecessor of the Miller Center on Policing, along with New Jersey Department of Public Safety Administrator Thomas J. O’Reilly, as a response to the September 11, 2001, terror attacks. Their vision was to dramatically improve information-sharing among the major city chiefs and state police superintendents along the Interstate 95 corridor from Maine to Florida.

Also invited to attend were the federal law enforcement agencies, advisory bodies such as the NIJ, BJA and COPS Office, and other information-sharing consortiums such as UASI, RISS, HIDTA, NESPIN, MAGLOCLEN, ASCIA, and the National Fusion Center Association. For the first time, the I-95 WG sought participation from Canadian law enforcement counterparts. I-95 WG was pleased to welcome members

of the RCMP, Canada Border Services Agency, Toronto Police, and VIA Rail Canada to this year's convening.

All I-95 WG meetings have focused on an emergent public safety issue. In previous meetings, best practices were shared regarding counterterrorism, transit security, the role of fusion centers, homegrown radicalization and violent extremism, and the utility and effectiveness of license plate readers. Prior meetings were held in Newark, NJ, Boston, MA, Miami, FL, Princeton, NJ, Charleston, SC, Newark, DE, and Jersey City, NJ, the site of the last pre-pandemic meeting in February 2019.

## Topics and Discussion

Day One: Monday January 29, 2024

### Opening Ceremonies

Colonel Patrick Callahan, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police (NJSP), brought the meeting to order recounting the memory of Sequoya Bacon-Jones, a nine-year-old girl from Trenton, NJ, who was killed by a stray bullet in 2022. Col. Callahan emphasized that while many may say she was in the wrong place at the wrong time, he disagrees. She was playing outside in her neighborhood, and she had every right to be there. This working group meeting is aimed at preventing similar tragedies.

"The mission, he said, "is to save lives. Always."

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy spoke next, emphasizing the important lessons on gun violence learned in New Jersey. He referenced the historic progress made saving lives in the state; in 2023, New Jersey saw lowest number of shootings since the state began tracking these statistics— under one thousand (U1K). He credited this success to the innovative solutions utilized by those in the field and noted that more than eighty percent of crime guns have come in from out of state. As a result, law enforcement has cracked down on illicit gun trafficking, holding illicit gun traffickers liable and crushing the iron pipeline.

He also discussed the importance of addressing the roots of gun violence with community leaders in communities most at risk, investing millions of dollars into intervention-based programs to stop violence before it begins. He stressed the importance of keeping law enforcement from being overextended through programs such as "Arrive Together," where social workers go to calls with law enforcement to diffuse potentially dangerous situations.

Chief James Sarko of the Atlantic City Police Department then welcomed the working group to his city and recounted the efforts of his department to reduce gun violence. He noted that ShotSpotter technology currently covers seventy-five percent of the city and will soon cover all of it. He mentioned the license plate readers (LPRs) positioned at access points in and out of Atlantic City, noting that they were partnering with the NJSP to install more. The Violent Crimes Unit in the department has also achieved an eighty percent solvability rate, and a new artificial intelligence (AI) program is being examined for its utility in recognizing guns.

Next, Chief Pamela Smith of the DC Metropolitan Police Department spoke to the struggles facing her city. In 2023 alone there were 984 shooting victims and 3,238 guns recovered in DC. Gun violence is of great concern to the department and the community, and the mayor is supportive of efforts aimed at reducing crime guns and gun violence.

Lastly, Deputy Director Rick Fuentes of the COP opened the meeting session, by reminding all attendees that the purpose of meeting was to collectively review best practices to reduce gun violence, increase public safety, and save lives.

### Crime Gun Intelligence- From Principals to Practice

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Brennan, NJSP Investigations Branch, and Director Ray Guidetti, Hackensack, NJ, Police Department, led the first presentation of the meeting. They began by telling participants that everything they would cover in their presentation was “all replicable, all scalable” to their own agencies. While there is no one cookie cutter solution to eliminating the use of guns in crime (“crime guns”), a consistent mechanism for review and follow-up is helpful for police agencies.

Gun violence is a complicated topic and cycle of violence, and crime gun intelligence information can be collected and used to respond. This information results when crime-related firearms, shooting incidents, and other law enforcement information sources are collated and assessed together. This then develops into timely investigative leads that can help law enforcement disarm criminals, prevent and solve violent crimes, and positively impact communities.

Their presentation emphasized the work of Pete Gagliardi, a consultant on crime gun intelligence, and his seven key principles.

#### 1. **A Shared Why**

To maintain perspective, it is critical that all stakeholders—law enforcement, forensics, prosecutors, and the public—share the same objectives and priorities

#### 2. **Collect Comprehensive Information**

Comprehensive data collection can make a case. Data from NIBIN, DNA, LPR and other sources can and should be utilized. Examples of these initiatives include the Gun Violence Reduction Taskforce (GVRTF)<sup>1</sup>, U1K, and NJSAFE, all designed with an emphasis on action and urgency to disrupt the criminal environment.

#### 3. **Balance the 3-legged stool— People, Processes, Technology**

Leadership needs to convey command intent, and policy can drive process if implemented properly. For instance, in New Jersey legislation mandates data input into NIBIN and eTrace, and the transporting of all recovered weapons to the appropriate forensic laboratory for examination within 8 hours after seizure. Also critical is leveraging the technologies available to an agency, such as doorbell cameras, ALPR, security camera footage, and other complementary information sources.

#### 4. **Consider the regional perspective**

Criminals are not bound in their activities by jurisdictional lines, and as such interjurisdictional connections and collaborations are key.

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<sup>1</sup> This initiative was informed by the ongoing work of the NYPD in this space.

## **5. Ensure timely processing**

All too often guns are processed for purposes of prosecution and not for the potential lead value information that can empower gun crime investigators to expeditiously link and solve violent crimes. One goal of crime gun analysis is to stop criminals before they have time to do more harm. As such, NIBIN results should come back in timely manner, as implemented in the several regional labs in NJ. NIBIN dashboards are also available out of each lab with a one-day turnaround that shows trends and outliers.

## **6. Conduct relentless follow up**

People need to be held accountable for processing and follow up through mechanisms like CompStat (NYPD) and CorrStat (NJSP)<sup>2</sup> to ensure ongoing compliance.

## **7. Review for continuous improvement**

It is important to ask the working group what's working and what's not, and then fix what's not working for their agency.

Information Sharing for Crime Gun Intelligence: Three Models and Perspectives

Moderated by Russ Porter, former Director of Law Enforcement, ODNI, the first panel of the day considered crucial factors when implementing in a crime gun intel initiative.

Captain Michael Smith (Ret.), of the NJSP's Regional Operations Intelligence Center (ROIC) stressed the importance of linking the Real Time Crime Centers (RTCCs) to the ROIC. In New Jersey's conceptual framework, three regional rather than city specific RTCCs are linked to the state's fusion center. He stressed that there were lessons learned with each roll out of an additional RTCC, and that considering the regional perspective was critical.

To do so, however, there needed to be collaborative partnerships in place. He referenced the three-legged stool of the prior presentation: in addition to the people and technologies, processes were key. The goal of this system is to make sure that violent recidivists are detained by focusing on a small group of recidivist individuals and making arguments for their detention using data and intelligence.

He also reviewed potential barriers to success. Processes needed to be expedited to get actionable information, and having one consortium of gun laboratories and the ROIC is a huge step towards that goal. The procurement process is also an issue both internally and externally, and securing funding is a constant need for agencies. Without effective and engaged leadership supporting these endeavors, it is difficult to make headway.

He concluded by saying that everyone must start somewhere, being strategic with the technology and resources that you have and then building from there.

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<sup>2</sup> R. Fuentes (2021, February) "Shared Solutions for Shared Problems: New Jersey's CorrStat and Real Time Crime Center Initiatives" <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/shared-solutions-for-shared-problems/>

Lieutenant Michael Ricupero of NYPD's Real Time Crime Center spoke to the complex environment faced by the RTCC over its nearly 20-year history. It began in 2005 following 9/11 to assess the new concept of restructuring data, making the search of information systems easier. The NYPD brought in IBM to streamline 35 data-sources and harness the experience of warrant detectives who were good at diving into data. Leadership, technology, and policies also play a key role in the NYPD's system, as is the belief that if something in the process is not working, it can and should be fixed. Their process is an evolving, iterative one, and no two RTCCs will look alike.

While NYC-centric, the NYPD's RTCC recognizes the importance of networking and building strong partnerships, not only with a neighboring state like New Jersey, but worldwide, as well. Mentoring amongst these partners can help an agency build and refine their own center over time. These collaborations can help overcome challenges and barriers such as the need to invest in technologies and analysts, highly organized criminal activity, and data silos. When it comes to building an RTCC, thinking outside of the box and collaborating with your partners goes a long way.

Detective Sergeant Jonathan "Jay" Stephens of the New Hampshire State Police next spoke to the brand-new initiative of his agency. The state has one fusion center, one RTCC, and one NIBIN machine for 225 agencies. While their approach is regional within the state, his center relies heavily on national databases for information and resources. Accessing national databases, while building strong partnerships with federal, local, and counties agencies, is paramount in a state with an average of one law enforcement officer for every 500 square miles.

Next steps for his agency include using the technologies available to them, improving information sharing, and ensuring useful information is being gathered and disseminated from the centers.

#### NYC Gun Violence Strategies

Deputy Commissioner Chauncey Parker of the NYPD next moderated a panel that included NYPD Chief of Detectives Joe Kenny and Chief of Crime Control Strategies Mike Lipetri to examine gun violence reduction strategies in New York City. He began with a review of the Gun Violence Strategies Partnership (GVSP), which focuses on "trigger pullers" and endeavors to keep them incarcerated.

"The north star," he said, "of this initiative is simple: no one gets shot."

The GVSP was rolled out in August of 2021 as a ninety-day pilot program. After its adoption, they have had nearly 600 daily meetings. Seeking to target the most dangerous offenders, the Gun Recidivist Identification Program (GRIP) List includes people who have pulled the trigger of a gun over the last two years. Currently, there are 600 individuals on this list, all under investigation by detectives.

Twenty-five different agencies participate in the daily meeting. Among the participating agencies are the NYPD, all five NYC county district attorney offices, ATF, both NYC based US Attorneys' offices, NYC Probation, NYS Parole, and correctional department at the city and state level. The meetings highlight between two to four offenders each weekday to facilitate a laser focus on the most problematic offenders. There is also a review of how many people have been shot in NYC in the prior 24 hours. At the meeting, a strict agenda is followed: the group reviews the previous day's cases, there is a look-back to cases that were presented exactly two weeks prior, and a review of one-year old cases. The emphasis is



to minimize barriers to successful prosecution- evidence, testimony, testing. The information sharing at the meetings serves as an opportunity to gain experience on how the entire criminal justice system is treating the most problematic offenders. The district attorneys report what they ask for at the time of arraignment (remand, bail, etc.) and judicial decisions in that regard. To date, ninety-six percent of people reviewed from the GRIP list have either been remanded or were required to post bail.

Next, Chief of Detectives Joe Kenny discussed the anatomy of a gun arrest, from a controlled buy to prosecution. These investigations need to be data driven and carefully controlled, with video from surveillance and body worn cameras playing a key role. Precision policing is used in NYC to focus on areas of shooting, shots fired, and street robberies to identify the most active offenders and frequent locations.

The 4,800 detectives of the NYPD seek to be reactive to crime and proactive in preventing it, as well. To this end, gun cases routinely have all buys conducted in public and on video, include the cooperation of an ADA from the onset, and are planned over time to build rapport with traffickers and increase the number of gun offenses.

A NYPD case study of note is Operation Amazon. The investigation lasted six months and involved ninety-seven gun purchases in NYC and Ohio. Twelve 12 guns were “ripped” from a single seller. This case highlighted not only the prolific number of guns available on the black market, but also the lucrative nature of these crimes. There was an international element to the investigation, as firearms were also being shipped illegally to Africa.

#### COPS Office Resources for Agencies

Director Hugh Clements of the COPS Office spoke to the resources available for agencies looking to reduce gun violence. The COPS Office currently has grant funding totaling \$651 million available to the nation’s 18,000 police departments. Beyond grants, the COPS Office also offers training and technical assistance to law enforcement agencies on a variety of topics, from hiring and retention to research.

The COPS Office strongly encourages agencies to apply for grant funding to support their initiatives.

These communities of practice offer valuable information about what works, what doesn’t, and what still needs to be explored.

#### The FBI and Gun Violence Reduction

FBI Office of Partner Engagement attended and spoke to the way agencies nationwide are trying to address the prevalence of gun violence. To this end, the FBI’s best successes come from task forces built to leverage existing partnerships and resources, increasing connectivity, and information sharing. The Gun Violence Analytic Center was designed for this purpose and focuses on obtaining data and partnering with other federal agencies to provide support to state and local agencies.

Special Agent in Charge Dennehy of the FBI’s Newark Division also underlined that partnerships are most important, and task forces are key. While counterterrorism is the FBI’s top priority, combatting violent

crime is the lowest on their eight-point scale. As such, they rely on local law enforcement for expertise and experience in their jurisdiction.

#### Executive Planning Session Exercise

To create and encourage ongoing dialogue among participants, Ben Haiman, Chief of Staff of the DC Metropolitan Police Department, led a series of interactive exercises. This session took place in an adjacent meeting room, wherein the attendees were divided into teams of ten people. There were four activities designed to encourage teams to quickly identify what works and what does not in their departments. Within these groups, participants worked together to brainstorm solutions to pressing issues in law enforcement.

The first exercise began with a poll asking participants whether their jurisdictions were increasingly experiencing the influx of illegal firearms. Most participants responded that the influx was getting worse. The teams were then asked to identify the “stop, start, and continue” factors of this issue. “Stop” issues included policies, practices, or events that were worsening this influx. Many teams identified bail reform as an ongoing issue contributing to this trend. “Start” items were identified to assess what would help stop this cycle, including the education of partners on available technical assistance and other resources. Finally, “continue” variables identified what works and has been successful in the past, which included ongoing information sharing and collaboration.

The second poll asked participants if non-law enforcement approaches to gun violence were effective. Most participants were unsure or disagreed that these programs helped reduce gun violence. In response, teams were then asked to perform an exercise, a “SWOT” analysis to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats presented by current issues in public safety.

A third exercise used a word cloud to collect the view of the participants on factors contributing to gun violence in their justifications. Many respondents noted a lack of accountability, recidivism, ghost guns, and a lack of prosecution as pressing concerns.

Another poll asked participants whether their agencies had a clear strategic plan for gun violence. Responses were split, with some of the participant agencies having a plan in place and others seeing this as an area for potential growth.

The fourth exercise was a strategic planning activity where each team identified a pressing public safety issue. After identifying a problem, teams asked each other about causation, developing an approach to mitigation, and creating a strategy to overcome the issue. They then discussed a worst-case scenario, and what events and decisions could lead to it.

While many public safety issues were addressed by the teams, difficulties facing officer recruitment and retention were a common theme. Common causes cited were low morale within departments, a lack of support from the public, and the demanding nature of the work. In order to overcome these issues, solutions were offered such as peer mentoring, improving community relations and engagement, and a focus on supporting officer health and mental wellness.

Another topic of discussion was juvenile delinquency and crime. While a complicated issue, one commonality amongst teams was a perception of a lack of consequences for young offenders. Rather

than be held accountable for their actions, team members felt juveniles received little to no punishment for many offenses. In order to respond to this, law enforcement must work with prosecutors and the families of juveniles to ensure accountability in the short and long-term.

The final exercise asked the teams to write three headlines based on the working group meeting—one for the next day, one for the next year, and one on the fifth anniversary of the meeting.

For a next day headline, one team suggested “Police Leadership Working Group Seeks to Stop Gun Crime—and Save Lives.” For a one year follow up, another suggested “One Year Later, and Gun Crime is Still a Focus for Police Executive Working Group.” Finally, a fifth-year anniversary headline offered read “Gun Violence Down 50% After Five Years of Hard Work.”

Participants reported that the interactive nature of these exercises, polls and activities were engaging and interesting, and that the diverse teams allowed for networking and collaboration during and after the session.

#### A Canadian Law Enforcement Perspective on Gun Crime

Moderated by Paul Goldenberg of the Rutgers Miller Center on Policing and Community Resilience, the next panel focused on Canadian perspectives on gun crimes.

Assistant Director Abeid Morgan, Canada Border Services Agency Information, shared that attachés and liaisons across borders were critical to investigating transnational gun trafficking. Cross border law enforcement groups include HSI, US Customs and Border Patrol, US Coast Guard, and others, as well as a regional management team that meets quarterly to support the region through the redeployment of resources, and the assignment of liaison officers to allow for advancement in investigations. AD Morgan expressed optimism that these collaborations can be expanded across national boundaries to increase and aid in joint investigations.

Mandating the e-Tracing of all firearms recovered can identify organizations of actors involved in gun smuggling. The Provincial Street Gang Joint Analytical Working Group also looks at the operational landscape from each participating agency to contribute to a greater understanding of the risk landscape, and to feed the gun crime intelligence process.

However, there are still gaps in the process that need to be closed. During joint investigations, Canadian partners found that, upon making inquiries concerning crime guns, partners in the United States occasionally did not respond to these requests. This can be the result of a high workload of ongoing investigations. The JTTF model and RISS system has been proposed as a solution in this regard.

Julien Chalifour of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) noted the regionality of gun crime and how borders were no impediment to transnational gun trafficking. Information developed regionally is shared nationally, guiding resource deployment and the work of liaison officers. This approach has established a common threat picture identifying specific land and water routes.

Challenges to this approach remain. Embedding agents can mitigate risk, aid in communication, and effect information sharing, but recruitment and retention in specialized units can stymie this process. Basic tools and technologies such as ArcGIS are sometimes inaccessible to these units. Without these

tools, an effective information exchange about guns and trafficking among partners is significantly more difficult.

Det. Sgt. Robert DiDanieli of the Toronto, Ontario, Police Service spoke to the importance of information sharing through attachés and liaisons on cross-border arms trafficking. Straw gun purchasers from the United States crossing into Canada constitute a very lucrative criminal enterprise. Targeted states and cities for weapons trafficking investigations include Ohio, Atlanta, Florida, and now Arizona.

Technology, or the lack of, is a challenge for law enforcement. Traffickers utilize software applications for communication that are either encrypted or otherwise inhibit interception, for example, WhatsApp. Collecting data from communications devices can be challenging, as communications carriers and social media companies resist or internally prohibit sharing with law enforcement. Aggravating this condition, many agencies don't have ability and/or resources to sufficiently analyze mega-datasets.

There are also conflicting priorities between partners. The ability to exchange information with contributors needs to be a stronger consideration among local and federal governments. While joint investigations between the U.S. and Canada are in place, U.S. connections do not place the same time-sensitive priorities on Canadian open investigations. Disclosures and deadlines should be respected on both sides.

Overcoming these obstacles can be achieved by working hard at improving collaborations. Personal contacts and networking cannot be replaced by generic emails and cold calls.

#### Gun Violence Reduction Initiatives in the Nation's Capital

Assistant Chief Ramey Kyle of the DC Metropolitan Police Department presented on ongoing gun violence reduction initiatives in his department. He began the discussion with a review of the rise in the proliferation of guns and gun violence in DC, noting that guns were primarily being trafficked from the southern states including Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia.

One initiative focuses on social media evidence and virtual observation posts, monitoring accounts for firearms and targets in real time on communications platforms such as TikTok and Telegram.

Operation ATLAS (Action Teams Leaving Areas Safer) has sought to decrease crime, leading to an increase in arrests and gun recoveries. The purpose of this initiative was to reduce fear, disrupt crime, arrest violators, and increase traffic safety while enhancing quality of life for communities. Operation ATLAS resulted in a sixteen percent decrease in crime and a twenty-two percent decrease in violent crime. The highest reduction observed was in robberies, with a decrease of twenty-six percent.

Assistant Chief Kyle also reviewed the collaborative efforts to facilitate these initiatives. He highlighted both the NIBIN Investigation Unit and the units of the Violent Crime Suppression Division, which includes the robbery suppression unit, narcotics enforcement unit, criminal apprehension unit, firearms trafficking unit, Violent Crime Impact Team, and the firearms investigation unit.

## Federal and State Gun Legislative Updates

Presented by Ron Brooks and Ben Bawden, founding partners of Brooks, Bawden, Moore in Washington, DC, the first day of the working group meeting concluded with a review of the current federal and state gun legislation.

They stressed that there are grant funding opportunities available for departments and agencies from BJA, the COPS Office, and NIJ. There is current interest in evaluations of Project Safe Neighborhoods programs and crime gun intelligence centers. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) also offers supplementary funding to participating agencies.

Other opportunities discussed included eTrace digitation of ATF records, HIDTA reauthorization, the VICTIM Act introduction to expand investigative capacities, and the new White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention. The expansion of NIBIN also offers important insights to agencies; however, Brooks and Bawden noted that few departments use this resource to its full capacity.

Also reviewed were threats to law enforcement, covering a wide array of current events. Legislation such as the 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment is Not for Sale Act has the potential to strictly curtail investigative tools routinely used by law enforcement through legislation seeking to prevent overreach on privacy data. And while civil asset forfeiture reform is also under consideration, there is a real concern that the program will be eliminated completely. Other concerns for law enforcement include cuts to federal grant funding levels, and the ongoing national issue surrounding police recruitment and retention.

With all these issues in mind, Brooks and Bawden encouraged agencies to communicate their needs, asking for participants to identify the highest priorities for their agencies, what support is most needed, and exploring what resources are available at the local, state, and federal levels. They also stressed the importance of leveraging their professional associations and networks to effect change.

## Day Two: Tuesday January 30, 2024

### Leveraging Capacities of the ATF

Tuesday morning's first session highlighted the capacities of ATF, and upcoming advances in their technologies and support.

Assistant Director James McDermond and Deputy Assistant Director Katherine Eberhardt began with a historical review of firearms examination, including the work of Dr. Calvin Goddard. In 1925, Goddard noted that "science has shown that bullet markings are as valuable as fingerprints." During the investigation of the 1929 Valentine's Day Massacre, his work highlighted the importance of using bullet casing markings to solve crimes.

A review of recent history emphasized that NIBIN has and can serve in many roles. From 1990, and over the next two decades, NIBIN leads were primarily viewed as a forensic tool that would support gun prosecutions. From 2010 through the present, NIBIN is increasingly being used to for its lead value in supporting ongoing investigations and investigators in the field. In the future, NIBIN data will also serve as an analytic tool, as well, a process that is already underway in some departments, such as the New Jersey State Police.

A discussion of eTrace was also included in the presentation. From the data collected as part of this program, annual trace studies with an emphasis on patterns and trends are available to law enforcement. These reports examine trends over time regarding recovered or seized firearms, allowing the ATF to provide trend analysis of a department's submitted gun data. This comprehensive, tailored analysis can offer insights into firearm patterns within a specific jurisdiction and can be used to guide policy and practice.

The presenters also reviewed the numerous resources available through the ATF. In addition to two NIBIN National Correlation Training Centers, the ATF also has a mobile NIBIN command center and vans that can travel to departments needing their services. There is also the NIBIN Enforcement Support System (NESS), which includes NIBIN, eTrace, and RMS data for analysis and use. This is the only direct database of NIBIN, with over 6 million NIBIN records and 2 million e-trace records.

The ATF also oversees the National Crime Gun Intelligence Center of Excellence. Integrating practitioners with academia, this Center brings together experts in the field and researchers to work together to analyze available data. Training is also available through this Center, using applied learning opportunities to foster research and innovation. The Crime Gun Intelligence Center Certification is one such program, providing participants with the most up to date information, best practices, and additional resources for their use.

Also announced was the opening of National Firearms Trafficking Center in Washington, D.C., a facility that provides leadership, best practices, research support, and training.

At the end of the presentation, Eberhardt reminded the audience that there is no one size fits all solution, but "it can be done; it just has to be done differently."

### Federal Funding Programs

The morning continued with a moderated panel examining the federal programs and funding available to departments for ongoing research and projects.

National Institute of Justice Director Nancy La Vigne began with an overview of NIJ priorities, including research, forensics and technology, and evaluation and development. She said that while most research asks "why" a phenomenon occurs, evaluation research asks, "what works." To that end, NIJ's CrimeSolutions website offers insights into what works, what's promising, and what programs and practices have no effect on crime. These rigorous evaluations offer meaningful, actionable information to practitioners in the field and policy makers, as well.

She also encouraged a problem-solving approach using an agency's own data to examine the nature of a problem in each jurisdiction. This conversation dovetailed with a review of upcoming grant solicitations, one of which focuses on field-initiated action research using this approach.

Among other topics of interest this year, there will also be a focus on this nexus between money laundering, drugs, human trafficking, and guns.

Director La Vigne counseled the participants as to what a law enforcement agency should look for in a research partner. While criminal justice programs at local colleges and universities may seem like a good

fit, rigorous research in the field is not necessarily incentivized with agencies. The law enforcement profession and academia often have differing priorities. Research for the sake of publishing is not a priority for the use of limited law enforcement funding. Therefore, it is important for academic researchers and police agencies to find partners willing to be collaborative in the research process. This includes development of research questions that are meaningful for the police agency and for the researcher. Lastly, Director La Vigne stressed the importance of researchers maintaining ongoing contact throughout the research process to ensure an equal partnership.

Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office Deputy Director Cory Randolph also spoke, emphasizing the available resources of that office. In addition to the annual microgrant awards, the COPS Office provides free training and technical assistance to agencies on a variety of topics, from school violence to human trafficking.

Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Associate Deputy Director Vince Davenport advised the participants that while some departments have longstanding loyalty to certain programs, there are few evidence-based studies as to their effectiveness. Therefore, BJA is looking to fund examinations of crime gun intelligence centers and plans to make more microgrants available for smaller and/or rural agencies. They are also looking to fund VALOR Office Safety and Wellness and Safety Initiatives this year.

### Curbing Gun Violence in Richmond

Major Donald Davenport of the Richmond, VA, Police Department presented a case study of what works when combatting gun violence in his agency. He began by emphasizing that partnerships are key when starting any kind of program, and that programs being utilized in his department are often effectively in practice in other departments.

While the summer of 2020 may be over, Major Davenport stressed that “2020 wasn’t done with us.” The consequence upon the Richmond Police Department was a demoralized work force, resulting in a loss of twenty percent of its personnel in 2021.

As a result, the department has had to be very strategic when looking to curb gun violence in the city. Using the Koper Curve analysis, forty hotspots for five distinct kinds of crimes were identified. Using location-based network investigations, the department then focused on small geographic locations and their specific criminal activity to eradicate problems long term. The three-prong strategy utilized deterrence, focused enforcement, and tracking results at these locations.

This practice was complemented by other initiatives, including community walks and pop-up community events to foster positive relationships with members of their community.

Operation Safe Summer 2023 was a multi-partner initiative, which saw Richmond experience a 30 percent decrease in total persons shot during the summer months. Operation Timeout during that summer also bolstered this effort.

Finally, monthly meetings with ATF and their partners help to ensure information and collaboration is ongoing, with continuous process towards to goal of public safety.

## Summary and Findings

In the final session of the meeting, a roundtable discussion led by Ben Haiman, Chief of Staff of the DC Metropolitan Police Department, one participant summarized the ultimate message of the event: no problem is insurmountable.

During this final exchange of ideas, participants shared common observations. While many different departments and agencies were present, most or all faced this same problem in diverse ways. It was commonly held, however, that they were all aligned with a similar purpose: to prevent violence and save lives.

They also praised the work done over the last day and half. Information sharing during the event was repeatedly mentioned as a key takeaway, and the opportunities provided from networking were noted as greatly appreciated and important for future collaborations.

Finally, participants voiced that the next meeting follow on from the first, showcasing more successful case studies from a diversity of departments, to include an increased focus on the roles and responsibilities of sheriff's offices, and to offer insights into the integration of RTCC principles at the state and regional level.

## Overview and Next Steps

While the meeting was hailed as a success by participants, work towards the next event is already underway.

This report serves to memorialize the ninth meeting and continue the important work begun there.

The New Jersey State Police, host agency of the meeting, has undertaken the development of an information-sharing platform dedicated to the Interstate 95 Working Group as part of the DHS Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN). Using the HSIN platform, qualified law enforcement agencies and personnel will be able to share law enforcement sensitive but unclassified information on best practices and initiatives supporting the themes of the I-95WG meetings.

Working group attendees will receive an introductory email from the NJSP to access the platform. This report will be posted in the inaugural release of the HSIN platform, as well as an informative report from the NJSP. This platform will allow for secure inquiries, analytical reports, suggested collaborations, and disclosures on best practices among the working group.

The 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the I-95 Working Group is scheduled for early February 2025 in Washington, DC. While the topic of discussion has not yet been selected, participants suggested a focus on other kinds of trafficking to include drugs and persons.