

# Sole Source Justification – Ultra Electronics Forensic Technology Inc.

## 1. Description

The objective of the project funded by the **2016 National Gun Crime Intelligence Center Initiative Grant** through the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) is to establish the Los Angeles Crime Gun Intelligence Center in the 77<sup>th</sup> Street Division (77<sup>th</sup> CGIC). The 77<sup>th</sup> CGIC is a collaboration that focuses on the collection, management, and analysis of crime gun data and seeks to reduce gun-related crime in this specific area of the city of Los Angeles.

Under this project, the laboratory will make expenditures in the equipment category with the vendor Ultra Electronics Forensic Technology Inc. (Forensic Technology). The purchases are budgeted at \$352,733.75, which is over the \$150,000 threshold. Forensic Technology will provide Integrated Ballistics Information Network (IBIS) equipment that is used to support the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN). This equipment is necessary for the laboratory to meet project goals (increase the production of timely and actionable information regarding violent and gun-related crimes) through increased use of the NIBIN database.

The LAPD proposes to purchase the following hardware, installation, and training from Forensic Technology:

IBIS BRASSTRAX Acquisition Station (one unit)	\$130,000.00
IBIS MATCHPOINT Analysis Station (four units)	\$180,000.00
Travel & living expenses for installer and instructor	\$8,580.00
Shipping & Handling (non-taxable)	\$6,278.00
Tax (8.75%)	<u>\$27,875.75</u>
Total	\$352,733.75

## 2. Explanation for Sole Source

The NIBIN is a national digital image database of spent bullets and cartridge casings that were collected at crime scenes or test-fired from confiscated weapons. A variety of digital images are acquired of the various tool marks imparted onto the cartridge case and projectile at the moment of discharge from the involved firearm. The NIBIN program is operated and maintained by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); however, Forensic Technology sponsors the only IBIS equipment that is used to support NIBIN. No other technologies are compatible with the NIBIN network.

The Los Angeles Police Department (Department) recognized the need to obtain accurate and timely intelligence on gun crimes and began a program to fast-track evidence into NIBIN in 2003. The program involved any crime where ballistic evidence from a shooting was recovered, then handled by the Forensic Science Division (FSD), Firearm Analysis Unit (FAU), every week on Wednesday (Walk-in-Wednesday), and later expanded to every day of the week. The Department has had thousands of investigative leads (“hits”) matching evidence from crime scene to crime scene and from confiscated firearms, which are test-fired daily and documented into NIBIN.

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In a more recent effort and collaboration with our federal partners, the Department obtained a grant through the BJA to establish the 77<sup>th</sup> CGIC. The funding will support the purchase of additional IBIS equipment, overtime funding and some personnel costs. Detectives from the 77<sup>th</sup> Area have unlimited number of walk-in submissions, without constraints on the types of crimes being investigated. Although 77<sup>th</sup> Area NIBIN cases are prioritized by FAU, all walk-in submissions are required to be completed within 48 business hours.

The BRASSTRAX Acquisition Station (BRASSTRAX), which is the IBIS system used to capture and correlate images of fired cartridge cases, is the primary component of the FAU's NIBIN workload. Currently, FAU operates two ATF-owned BRASSTRAX and, in 2016 alone, images of nearly 900 evidence items and 3300 exemplars from confiscated firearms were uploaded into NIBIN, resulting in over 500 investigative leads. Typical image acquisitions require 15-60 minutes to complete, depending on the amount and variation of the evidence submitted. An additional BRASSTRAX is required to fully support the prioritization demands of the 77<sup>th</sup> CGIC while still managing the regular NIBIN workload for the rest of the Department.

The MATCHPOINT Analysis Station (MATCHPOINT), which is the IBIS system used to evaluate potential match results returned by the database server, is the supporting component of the FAU NIBIN program. Currently, FAU uses six ATF-owned MATCHPOINT to thoroughly evaluate the multitude of potential matches (typically several hundred to a few thousand) returned by the database server *for every item uploaded*. The MATCHPOINT provides advanced digital image manipulation tools which allow the user to screen the returned images, rapidly eliminate non-matches, and determine if a high-confidence match exists. Typical image review requires 30-90 minutes to complete, depending on the quality and type of tool marks observed. Four additional MATCHPOINT are required to fully support the prioritization demands of the 77<sup>th</sup> CGIC while still managing the regular NIBIN workload for the rest of the Department.

The work done using BRASSTRAX and MATCHPOINT together significantly reduces the effort required to develop useable investigative leads and increases the likelihood of discovering investigative leads between seemingly un-related incidents. Because of the proven success that FAU and the Department have had with NIBIN since 2001, continued and focused increase of NIBIN for the 77<sup>th</sup> CGIC is expected to reduce firearm-related crime, as well as other violent crime incidents from the same offenders, in and around the 77<sup>th</sup> divisional area.

The FAU currently has 13 dedicated NIBIN staff, three new NIBIN trainees, along with an additional 14 experienced firearm examiners also trained to use NIBIN. The additional IBIS equipment and overtime funding are critical to handling the 77<sup>th</sup> CGIC workload increase at current staffing levels. During this expansion of our current NIBIN operations, it is imperative that we maintain continuity and consistency by purchasing the same equipment from Forensic Technology, the sole source company, as we currently utilize.

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### **3. Time Constraints**

The project period for award of the **2016 National Gun Crime Intelligence Center Initiative Grant** is 10/01/2016 – 09/30/2018, and the purchases will be made during this time.

Without the ability to purchase the IBIS equipment from Forensic Technology within the project period, the goals of the project would not be met.

The partners involved in the 77<sup>th</sup> CGIC include the Department's Forensic Science Division, Operations South Bureau, 77<sup>th</sup> Street gang units and homicide detectives, the Gangs and Narcotics Division, the ATF, United States Attorney's Office, the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, and the Department's Research Partner, Justice and Security Strategies, Inc. Additional assistance is provided by Parole and Probation agents assigned to 77<sup>th</sup> Division and ATF. All of these partners are relying on timely NIBIN intelligence to solve shooting crimes, apprehend and convict violent individuals, and ultimately reduce violent crime in and around the 77<sup>th</sup> Area. Failure to procure additional IBIS equipment would negatively impact timeliness of investigative leads, reduce the number of solved crimes, and allow violent individuals to remain free to terrorize their communities.

The financial impact resulting from not meeting the project goals cannot be determined.

### **4. Uniqueness**

The IBIS products use proprietary technology covered by a number of patents protected in the United States and around the world. Forensic Technology is the only company that can provide their proprietary IBIS products and these IBIS products are the only equipment and technology that will work on the NIBIN network, as other technologies are not compatible.

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### **5. Other Points**

The Department's NIBIN program has been successful because of ATF's willingness to loan IBIS equipment to the Department. During a previous hardware upgrade, ATF replaced only two of three acquisition stations which immediately diminished our NIBIN capacity. To expand our NIBIN operations, the Department must purchase additional items.

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### **6. Declaration**

The proposed expenditures with Forensic Technology are in the best interest of our agency because they will allow us to expand our NIBIN operations to meet project and program objectives. If these purchases were not allowed, not only would the objective of the project not be met, but the safety and well-being of Los Angeles residents would be significantly affected.

### **7. Conflict of Interest Review**

The Department has no financial relationship with Forensic Technology. No Department employees have ties to this vendor.