



# An Evaluation of the Baltimore Police Department's Crime Gun Intelligence Center

*Executive Summary*

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March 8, 2024



This report was supported by Grant No. 2019-DG-BX-0008 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to the Baltimore Police Department (BPD). BJA is a component of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. Points of view or opinions contained herein do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, or the BPD.

We thank the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, and other law enforcement partners for their willingness to provide data and information regarding CGIC. Their cooperation was invaluable and without it, we would not be able to complete this report.



## Executive Summary

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) received funding by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to implement a Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) in cooperation with the Baltimore Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), the State Attorney's Office for Baltimore City (SAO), and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland (USAO). This CGIC was piloted in the Western district of the BPD and began operations on January 1, 2021. Following the initial pilot, BPD decided to expand CGIC to the Southwest district on June 1, 2022.

Justice & Security Strategies, Inc. (JSS) is the research partner for this project and is responsible for the final process and impact evaluations of the CGIC project. This report presents the findings from this evaluation and provides recommendations to BPD for future directions for CGIC. This executive summary provides an overview of the study and discusses the results and recommendations.

### *CGIC Overview*

CGICs were developed from the joint work of the Denver Police Department, the ATF, and other law enforcement partners in 2012. The purpose of the CGIC model is to enable law enforcement to better leverage ballistics forensic evidence for investigations. Traditionally, this evidence required considerable time and effort to process and was unavailable during investigations. CGIC emphasizes a rapid turnaround of ballistics evidence to generate investigative leads.

The National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) is a main tool used in CGIC. Components of the firearm generate unique markings on casings during discharge. These markings are entered into the NIBIN system for comparison to a federally maintained database of ballistics images. These markings are used to identify when a gun has been used in a previous incident and provides investigators with links between crimes. This information is returned to investigators rapidly, with the operational standard timeframe between evidence recovery and lead return being within 24 to 48 hours.

CGICs involve cooperative arrangements between several law enforcement agencies. In Baltimore, the BPD, ATF, SAO, and USAO share ballistics intelligence information and strategize the processing of cases to apprehend and convict active gun offenders. Strategic meetings and ad hoc communications between CGIC members are encouraged to relay information as well as provide feedback to CGIC partners about successes.

### *BPDs CGIC*

BPDs CGIC was housed in the Watch Center within the Data Driven Strategies Division. Initially, this unit employed one CGIC coordinator and one CGIC analyst. No detectives were assigned to the unit and the analyst and coordinator interfaced with investigators in their home divisions (mainly Homicide, Western, and Southwest detectives) to support investigations with



NIBIN leads. Shortly after a change in the liaison to CGIC, the SAO became uninvolved with CGIC operations and remained for the duration of the grant. The ATF and the USOA continued participating and supporting CGIC. Near the end of the grant, CGIC was relocated to the Anti-Crime Section in the Detective Bureau and a CGIC detective and CGIC sergeant position was added to the unit.

CGIC's main operation was to produce NIBIN intelligence reports to detectives and to conduct follow-ups with detectives and provide assistance with other requests related to NIBIN cases. In addition, CGIC along with the ATF provided training for patrol officers and detectives regarding CGIC procedures. Although the venue, function, and format changed over the course of the grant, CGIC was tasked with providing intelligence information during weekly meetings. Finally, CGIC also maintained an active Facebook page as a method of community outreach.

### *Process Evaluation*

CGIC consistently processed a high number of NIBIN entries and linked a small but consistent number of firearms during the study period. In total, BPD produced 2,753 NIBIN leads across the observation period and the Western and Southwest districts comprised about 51 percent of these leads.

Officer surveys revealed that during the initial phases of the CGIC programs, officers were generally unaware of CGIC or had only worked with CGIC on a limited number of cases. Many officers, however, were involved in work related to CGIC operations. At the second wave, officers reported increased awareness of CGIC.

CGIC maintained an active Facebook page that provided information to the community about gun violence incidents, guns seized, and gun violence arrests. The Facebook page experienced considerable growth across the study period and reached over 3,300 followers by April 2022. There was an interesting correlation between Metro Crime Stoppers tips and Facebook followers, but more research is needed to determine whether this relationship is robust.

There was considerable support for CGIC from both command staff and detectives who work with CGIC. Interviewees discussed the benefit of CGIC provided information and indicated that CGIC lead to improvements in ballistics evidence collection and processing. Respondents also emphasized that CGIC improved collaborations between departments and agencies. However, CGIC has experienced challenges as the workload outpaces the available staff, and that CGIC staff would need to increase to better utilize the information. CGIC, however, continues to evolve and improve moving forward.

### *Impact Evaluation*

Crime report and calls for service trends showed that violent gun crime has been trending downward in Baltimore over the last several years. Hot spot analyses also suggested a reduction in the intensity of gun violence between 2020 and 2022. Gun robbery, however, showed indications of displacement effects between the years as new hot spots emerged. Trajectory



analysis of street segments indicated that shots fired and aggravated assault with a firearm calls for service have decreased over time.

The interrupted time series analysis revealed that CGIC implementation variables were associated with significant decreases in gun violent crime, gun homicide, and shots fired calls for service in the Western district. CGIC was also associated with an increase in aggravated assault calls for service for the Western district, suggesting that citizens were more willing to report crimes that had occurred. Unfortunately, the Mayor's Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) started limited operations at the same time as CGIC, so it was not possible to determine which intervention was responsible for the drop in gun violence observed in the Western district.

In the Southwest district, there was a six-month gap between the implementation of CGIC and the implementation of GVRS, making it possible to assess the separate impact of these programs. However, neither the CGIC variables nor the GVRS variable was significant in any of the models in the Southwest district. It is worth noting that gun crime was decreasing and it is possible that this null finding was a result of the lack of sufficient post-intervention observations.

Finally, for the remaining districts, the intervention variables for the Western CGIC implementation were statistically significant in the models for violent gun crime, suggesting that some of the reductions observed in the Western district could be attributed to citywide drops in gun violence and crime. However, these variables were not statistically significant in the model for gun homicide, indicating that citywide decreases in gun homicide would not explain the reduction in gun homicide observed in the Western district. In sum, CGIC/GVRS appears to have reduced gun violence in the Western, but it is not clear which program is responsible or if the decreases were due to citywide decreases in gun violence.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the current research, we have developed a set of recommendations for BPD for future improvements to the current CGIC:

- Continue CGIC and gradually expand it to the remaining districts using a phased approach.
- Increase staffing and support for CGIC by hiring additional CGIC detectives and CGIC analysts.
- Continue the use of social media by CGIC and expand social media presence by partnering with anti-violence community organizations.
- Require the Firearms Analysis Unit to participate in the NNCTC to assist with processing of NIBIN evidence.
- Re-engage with the SAO and find ways to strengthen the SAO's participation in CGIC.