

Ballistics in Forensics - Searching for Hits in Federal Databases

Even though there is only one bullet or shell casing and no suspect bullet or firearm to compare them against, the forensic firearms examiner many times can find out the type and manufacturer of the firearm that fired the projectile. With advances in technology and firearms databases, the forensic scientist can compare ballistic impressions on the crime-scene bullet with the impressions on bullets from firearms used in other crimes. The two major databases of this type are as follows:

Integrated Bullet Identification System (IBIS): The IBIS database is run by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF). If a projectile or shell casing from the same firearm is in this database, a positive match to the crime-scene bullet or shell casing can provide a link between two or more cases thus help in solving them all.

DRUGFIRE: The DRUGFIRE database is run by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Their database specializes in shell casings, but it also maintains a small database of highly individualized projectile striation patterns.

Almost instantaneously, each database quickly compares hundreds of records and spits out any possible matches. Therefore, not everything is cut and dry like you watch on the *CS* TV shows where a "hit" on IBIS will show the exact match on their computer screen. In reality, *several* possible matches to a crime-scene bullet will come up in the end. It is up to the trained eye of an experienced forensic firearms examiner to visually inspect and come up with a positive and definitive match.

About the Author

Fabiola Castillo markets for the website NinjaCOPS Superstore. This virtual store specializes in crime prevention tools where you can buy cheap stun guns, kubaton keychains, [hidden video spy surveillance cameras](#), nunchaku training videos, [hand Tasers](#), expandable steel batons, and many other personal safety products.

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