



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

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DOJ OIG Releases Report on the ATF's Administration of the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network and its Sole-Source Contracts Awarded to Shearwater Systems, LLC

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today the release of a report examining two sole-source contracts totaling approximately \$29 million awarded to Shearwater Systems, LLC (Shearwater) in 2012 and 2017 by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) in support of the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) program. NIBIN compares and correlates ballistic evidence gathered across different violent crimes to connect separate shooting incidents.

The DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that Shearwater generally achieved the contractual objectives of entering ballistic evidence in NIBIN and generating investigative leads, but we also identified deficiencies related to ATF's administration, oversight, and monitoring of its Shearwater contracts , including:

- **Inadequate Acquisition Planning.** ATF's written acquisition plans did not properly describe the technical, management, and business considerations that are characteristic of procurements of this size and complexity.
- **Contract Personnel Security.** We could not verify all Shearwater contract workers had received background investigations, signed non-disclosure agreements, or completed the proper security training as required in the contract.
- **Invoice Review and Unallowable Costs.** ATF's inadequate invoice review resulted in Shearwater improperly billing and ATF paying \$10,982 in unallowable labor costs.
- **Whistleblower Rights.** ATF did not ensure that Shearwater informed contract workers of their whistleblower rights.

The DOJ OIG also found that ATF should further establish meaningful performance measures for the NIBIN program, specifically with regard to tracking successful arrests and prosecutions consistently across different jurisdictions, to demonstrate NIBIN's effect on ATF's overall mission. We further found that ATF needs to continue to deploy the national database to all

NIBIN users, including to state and local law enforcement officials, in order to enhance ATF's ability to help solve cases nation-wide using ballistics information.

Today's report makes 17 recommendations to assist ATF in improving its contract administration, oversight, and monitoring, and its implementation of the NIBIN program. ATF agreed with 16 of the 17 recommendations and disagreed with one.

Report: Today's report is available on the OIG's website under "Recent Reports" and at the following link: <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2020/a20067.pdf>

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