October 24, 2008

Two Metropolitan Police Officers Honored For Linking Weapons to Crimes
Officers Use Technology to Reach Milestone of 300 "Hits"

Two Metropolitan Police Department Officers were honored on Friday, October 24th at Police Headquarters, for their achievement in linking weapons to multiple crime scenes. The National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIIBN), which is administered by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (ATF) honored Officer Eric Larson and Officer Dave Menendez.

Just as we each have unique fingerprints, guns, when fired, leave unique markings on bullets and shell casings. Those "ballistic fingerprints" can be used to determine if a weapon used in one crime, may have been used in other crimes.

Through the NIBIN Program, the Metropolitan Police Department uses special equipment for imaging and comparing the gun evidence from crime scenes. The equipment allows Officer Larson and Officer Menendez to get digital images of the markings that firearms leave on bullets and cartridge casings. The computer system initially compares the images and produces a list of possible matches. Officer Larson and Officer Menendez then meticulously go through those possible matches, comparing images side by side to determine if there is a "hit." Last month, they reached a milestone of 300 "hits", linking guns to crimes throughout St. Louis, St. Louis County and the region. The technology often yields investigative information that wouldn't be obtainable by other means. Officer Larson and Officer Menendez reached the 100 "hits" milestone in 2005.

The Metropolitan Police Department has participated since 2002. ATF purchased the equipment and provides regular service and upgrades. There are currently 174 law enforcement agencies nationwide that participate in the NIBIN Program, working with the ATF in a partnership to reduce violent crime. The system makes it possible to share intelligence across jurisdictional boundaries, enabling Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies to work together. Since ATF and its partner agencies began using this technology, more than 1.2 million pieces of crime scene evidence have been entered and nearly 25,000 "hits" have been logged.

###