Regional Integrated Ballistic Information Network RIBIN

Many CARICOM countries have experienced the ravages of violent crimes many of which involve the use of illegal firearms. In a significant number of cases, there is a correlation between the trade in illegal narcotics and that of small arms and light weapons (SALW). In some instances, firearms featured in as many as 70% of all homicides committed in a single year and also lead to injuries and at times, general mayhem perpetrated by gangs and others with criminal intent.

**Approval**

Recognizing the gravity of the situation, the Fifth Council of Ministers Responsible for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE 2008) approved the establishment of a Regional Integrated Ballistic Information Network (RIBIN).

Traditional Firearms Identification involves the use of a comparison microscope wherein a firearm examiner visually compares the ballistic signature of a bullet/casing recovered from a crime scene with those recovered from a crime scene. Not only is this process extremely time consuming but its usefulness as an investigative tool is subject to human error.

RIBIN uses automated ballistic identification systems which involve specialized computer hardware/software combinations designed to capture, store and rapidly compare digital images of bullets and cartridge casings. RIBIN also acts will provide a tool for international collaboration and provide the ability to link with the United States, Canada and Interpol.

The main objectives of RIBIN are to:-

- Improve CARICOM Member States’ ability to identify and trace the use of guns in criminal activities within CARICOM Member States and across the region,
- Provide information on patterns and trends and assist in criminal investigations
- Enable CARICOM Member States to capture, analyse and share ballistic data and increase the efficiency of investigations and significantly improve the conviction rates of persons
- Reduce the level of gun related crimes which are linked to the growth in the illegal trade of small arms and light weapons.
- Establish an automated ballistic information sharing system which supports regional and international exchanges
RIBIN was officially established in 2014 with the linkage of three (3) CARICOM countries, namely, Barbados, Belize and Jamaica on the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) Ballistic Information Network (IBIN).

**Quality management systems for forensic laboratories:**

CARICOM IMPACS partnered with UNLIREC to host a Caribbean Regional Encounter on Forensic Ballistics as part of UNLIREC’s region-wide assistance package (funded by the governments of Canada and the United States) on operational forensic ballistics. The event was hosted jointly by UNLIREC, CARICOM IMPACS and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago from December 5th to 6th, 2016 in Port of Spain. The Workshop was held to highlight the importance of Quality Management Systems in laboratories, as well as to advance and support the Regional Integrated Ballistics Information Network (RIBIN) aimed at tackling rising gun related crimes and the illegal trade of weapons and develop formal relationships at the policy/technical levels among Caribbean States.

Participants included Permanent Secretaries, Directors of Civilian Forensic Laboratories, Heads of Police Crime Laboratories, Senior Firearms Examiners and other policy personnel from: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent, and Trinidad and Tobago. Other Extra Regional Participants include representatives from the ATF, INTERPOL, CARICOM IMPACS and UNLIREC.