

# The Compiler

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

Fall 1998

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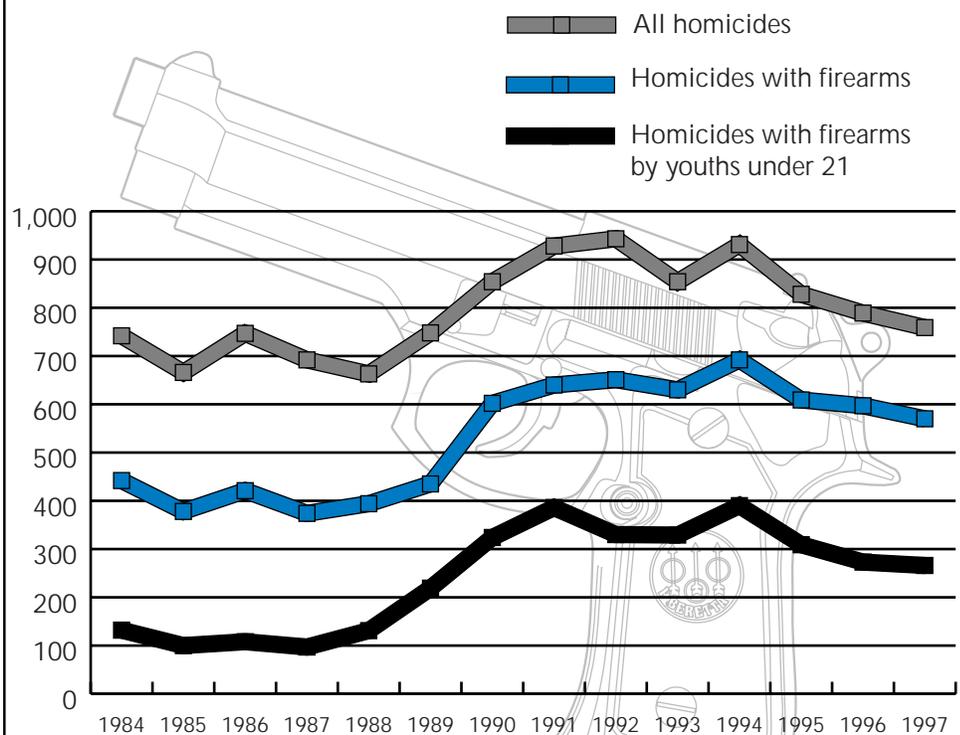
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# Firearms

A look at the criminal use of firearms, and some law enforcement efforts to get guns off the streets

## Chicago homicides



Source: Chicago Police Department

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Created in 1983, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority is a state agency dedicated to improving the administration of criminal justice. The Authority works to enhance the information tools and management resources of state and local criminal justice agencies, and it serves as a statewide forum for criminal justice coordination, planning, and problem solving. It also is responsible for research, information systems development, and administration of federal anti-crime funds. The Authority's specific powers and duties are spelled out in the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Act [20 ILCS 3930/1 et seq.].

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority is governed by a 15-member board of state and local leaders from the criminal justice system, plus experts from the private sector. Authority members help develop priorities and monitor their progress. The agency's day-to-day work is carried out by a full-time professional staff working out of the Authority's Chicago office.

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### Authority director and board member among participants at community policing conference

Authority Acting Executive Director Candice M. Kane and Chicago Police Superintendent Terry G. Hillard, a member of the Authority, were among the participants at a national conference on community policing held in Chicago in August. More than 700 elected officials, community leaders and law enforcement officers participated in the four-day conference.

Superintendent Hillard was a panelist and featured speaker. Speakers also included Mayor Richard M. Daley, formerly a member of the Authority as state's attorney for Cook County. Former Authority Director J. David Coldren also served as a panelist.

The conference, *Beyond the Rhetoric: Facing the Challenges of Community Policing*, included plenary sessions, workshops and neighborhood tours. Dr. Kane facilitated the workshop, *Applying Community Policing Principles Within the Criminal Justice System*.

The conference explored current practices of community policing and strategies for refining them to meet future challenges in law enforcement. Participants toured 10 Chicago police districts to witness community policing in action, while the workshops and plenary sessions examined different community initiatives and strategies.

The conference, held Aug. 11-14, was sponsored by the City of Chicago, the Chicago Police Department, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the United States Conference of Mayors.



Kane

### Symposium held on prisons and offenders

Experts on criminal justice and corrections gathered at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in September to address issues surrounding the growing prison population and the recidivism rate of offenders. The symposium, "A Fork in the Road," focused on public safety, alternatives to incarceration, community resources, and the need for new strategies to deal with offenders.

Among the recommendations:

- Mandatory sentences for some first-time or minor drug offenders should be re-evaluated;
- Long-term prison sentences should be reserved for the most violent offenders;
- Judges should have additional discretion in certain sentencing situations;
- Probation and community-based programs should be expanded; and
- More emphasis should be placed on early intervention measures for juveniles and drug prevention programs.

The symposium organizers plan to pursue these and other recommendations with the governor, the General Assembly, and other organizations.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph Hartzler, of Springfield, delivered the keynote address. Panelists included Authority Chairman Peter Bensinger and Authority member Odie Washington, the director of the Illinois Department of Corrections. The symposium was underwritten in part by the Joyce Foundation and through federal funds granted by the Authority.

### Juvenile justice block grants

About 200 county and municipal units of government will be eligible for \$8.77 million in Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants. The program will be administered by the Authority under the auspices of a board co-chaired by Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission Chairman Dallas Ingemunson and Authority Chairman Peter B. Bensinger. The program is designed to help states and units of local government develop programs that promote greater accountability in the juvenile justice system.

Eligibility is based on a U.S. Department of Justice formula that gives two-thirds weight to criminal justice expenditures and one-third weight to the area's violent crime rate. There is a \$5,000 minimum threshold for disbursement of the grants.

Qualified units of government will be notified in the next few months of the amount of funding they are eligible for and the requirements for use of the funds. Eligible programs include the expansion of juvenile detention and correctional facilities; the hiring of judges, prosecutors, and other juvenile court personnel; and the establishment of court-based programs that target juvenile offenders involved with drugs, firearms, and gangs.

### VOI/TIS funds approved

The Authority, at its Sept. 25 meeting, approved an additional 15 percent in Violent Offender Incarceration/Truth-in-Sentencing funding for local pass through. Requests for proposals for the VOI/TIS funds are expected to be mailed by Jan. 1, 1999. The funds must be used for building or expanding juvenile detention facilities.

### Authority publication wins award

At its national conference in September, the Justice Research and Statistics Association presented the Authority with the Philip Hoke National Award for Excellence in Analysis in the statistical/management report category. The award was for four issues of the newsletter *On Good Authority*, which summarized reports and program evaluations contracted for by the Authority. Staff Research Supervisor Tracy Hahn wrote the summaries.

### Boehmer elected to NCJA advisory Council

Robert Boehmer, the Authority's general counsel, was recently elected regional representative to the National Criminal Justice Association's Advisory Council. The Washington, D.C.-based



Photo by Candice Kane

*Children visiting the Authority's tent at the Illinois State Fair in August were treated to Polaroid photographs with McGruff the Crime Dog.*

NCJA is a nonprofit association that represents state and local governments on crime control and public safety issues.

### Authority research presented at victim assistance conference

Senior Research Analyst Mark Myrent was among the participants at the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Annual Conference in Orlando, Fla., in August. Myrent was on the panel, "Current Research on Victim Services." His presentation looked at the Authority's evaluation of the Cook County State's Attorney's Victim-Witness Assistance Program. The National Institute of Justice is funding the evaluation.

The presentation described the project's comprehensive methodology, which is intended as a model for use across the country in evaluating similar programs. By adopting the methodology, researchers can assess both the implementation and the effectiveness of victim assistance programs.

### Publication looks at sex offender registries and the Internet

The use of the Internet and other electronic means to make sex offender registries available to the public is becoming increasingly popular. Issues surrounding this trend are discussed in the summer issue of the National Criminal Justice Association's quarterly publication *Policy and Practice*.

The issue, "Sex Offender Registries and Community Notification: States' use of Technology for Public Safety," describes states' experiences with the use of technology for sex offender community notification and the advantages and disadvantages associated with available technologies. It also presents information

(continued on page 18)

# A police officer's perspective on gangs, drugs, and guns on the streets of Chicago

By Ray Risley

In 1950, there were an estimated 50 million firearms in the United States. In 1995, there were an estimated 270 million - one gun for every man, woman and child in America. There is no doubt that the availability of firearms has played a significant role in violence rates, both in Chicago and across the nation.

From 1985 through 1997, the Chicago Police Department seized approximately 220,000 firearms - an average of almost 17,000 per year. Our seizure rates began to decline in 1994, and we're uncertain as to the cause. One possibility is that those who carry weapons have become more cautious. Another possibility is that aggressive enforcement has left fewer firearms in circulation.

But in spite of these efforts, firearm murders in Chicago rose by more than 80 percent between 1985 and 1994. During that same period, firearm murders by offenders under 21 increased dramatically - by 166 percent from 1985 to 1994, a significant trend (Figure 1). The average age

of a homicide offender dropped by five years between 1985 and 1994.

We have determined that there is an association between the number of firearms we seize and the homicide rate. We haven't drawn any conclusions, but the data does tend to justify any strategy that reduces the number of firearms in a community (Figure 2).

The statistics show an alarming number of young people involved in violent crime, and the forces that encouraged and accelerated that involvement are obvious: narcotics and gangs. In fact, these two factors now control Chicago's murder rate. In

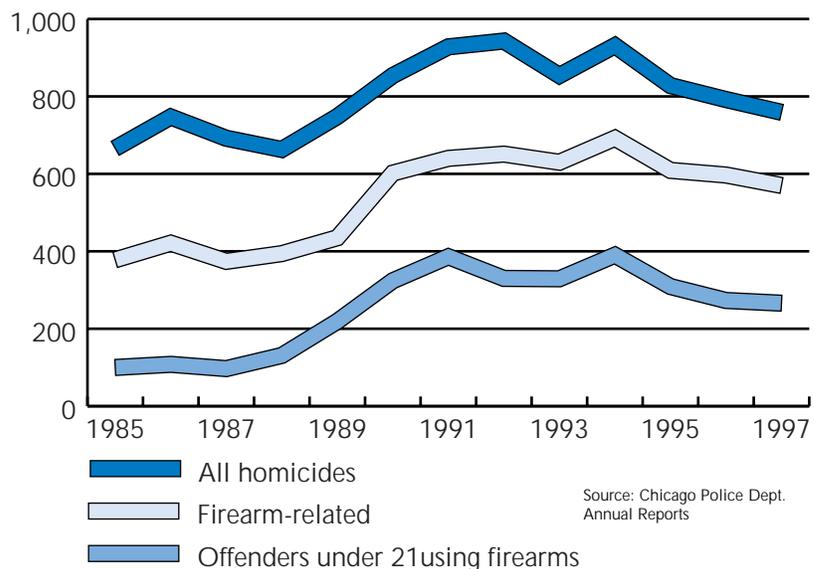
1994, the murder rate rose solely because of the increase in narcotic and gang-related homicides (Figure 3). Homicides in all other categories declined significantly.

By 1994, gang and narcotics-related homicides accounted for more than 45 percent of all Chicago murders.

## Gangs

There are approximately 120 street gangs in Chicago. Sixty percent are African-American, 35 percent are Hispanic, 4 percent are white, and the remainder are Asian. Eighty percent of gang members are below the age of 24 and more than

Figure 1  
Firearm homicides in Chicago



Source: Chicago Police Dept. Annual Reports

Ray Risley is deputy chief of detectives with the Chicago Police Department. This article was adapted from an April 1998 presentation at a symposium co-sponsored by the Chicago Police Department and the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police.

forty percent are 18 or younger. Many join a gang as early as age 11. The Chicago Police Department's Gang Investigation Section estimates that at least 75 percent of all gangs are involved in illicit drug activities.

There are an estimated 100,000 to 130,000 gang members in Chicago. Although we don't have any hard data, the Gang Investigation Section estimates that gang membership has risen significantly since the mid-1980s, perhaps doubling. Gang-related homicides, however, increased even more dramatically, by fivefold between 1985 and 1994, and almost all of those homicides were committed with firearms.

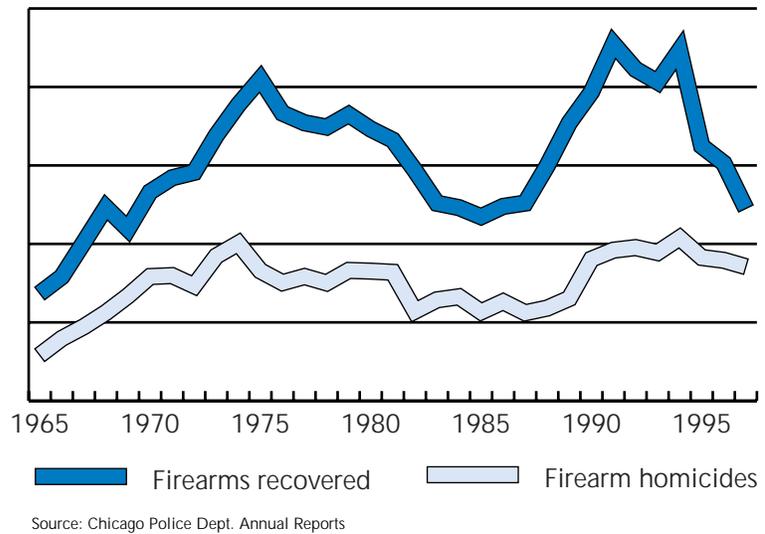
### Narcotics

Prior to 1985 cocaine sales generally took place indoors. There were few street-sale operations, the drug was not available in large supply, and it was very expensive. In the late 1970s and early 1980s cocaine sold for as much as \$80,000 a kilo. That all changed in the mid-1980s when Colombian and other foreign drug lords began exporting large quantities of cocaine.

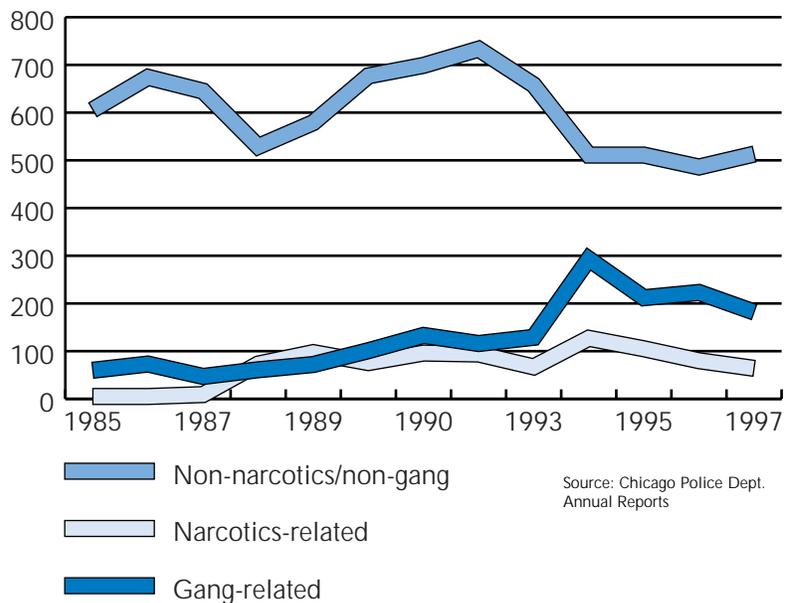
By 1985 five or more metric tons of cocaine were being smuggled into the United States each day. Within three years, the price of a kilo of cocaine dropped to around \$15,000. Estimated street value was over \$140,000, however, and the tremendous margin of profit encouraged narcotics traffickers to attempt to market the drug to a larger clientele at a cheaper price. All they needed was an efficient delivery system, and street gangs responded to that need. Dealing drugs, at that point, was less risky and more profitable than other methods of generating revenue.

Figure 4 provides an indication of the explosion in cocaine use that followed. This data tracks admissions to publicly funded drug treatment programs in Illinois for persons addicted to cocaine. It is estimated that for every person admitted to such a program, three are on a waiting list.

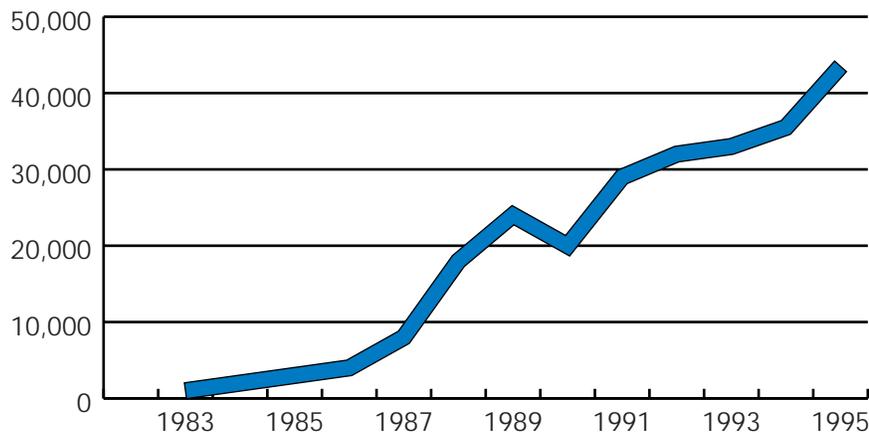
**Figure 2**  
Comparison of recovered firearms with firearm homicides in Chicago  
(Number of homicides adjusted to show scale)



**Figure 3**  
Chicago homicides involving gangs and narcotics



**Figure 4**  
Publicly funded treatment facility admissions for cocaine addiction in Illinois



Source: University of Illinois School of Public Health, 1998

If cocaine jump-started the current epidemic, it was the introduction of crack cocaine that accelerated the increased involvement of young people and generated the violence that followed. Crack appeared in Los Angeles in late 1984 and in New York City in 1985. A small amount of crack may have been present in Chicago in 1988, but it wasn't until 1989 that crack was sold on the street, and that was at one location only.

As the popularity of powder cocaine and crack cocaine grew, the number of persons under 18 who were arrested for narcotics offenses increased by 263 percent from 1985 to 1996. In 1985 there were approximately 3,000 arrests in this age group. By 1994 there were more than 11,000. At the same time, narcotics related murders began to increase. We recorded one narcotics-related murder in 1985; in 1994 there were 127 (Figure 3). Firearms were used in more than 95 percent of the drug-related murders in 1994.

### Explaining the violence

The years 1988 and 1994 were significant turning points for the rise and fall of violence in Chicago. This can be explained by the connection with gangs and drugs. As the supply of cocaine increased during the mid-80's, larger numbers of young people

were drawn into narcotics activity and the number of street drug markets increased dramatically. The introduction of crack accelerated those trends.

During that same period, gang membership rose rapidly, and the age at which young males became involved with gangs dropped. In addition, most gangs abandoned their previous means of generating revenue (extortion, property crimes, etc.) in favor of dealing narcotics. And finally, the increase in street drug markets operated by gangs made up of younger persons led to territorial conflict. This conflict created an arms race that was funded by the profits made from narcotics sales. That arms race led to an increased number of gang and narcotics-related homicides.

Narcotics and gang-related homicides, firearm-related homicides, and the number of homicide offenders under age 21 began to decline after 1994. The average age of all homicide offenders, which had dropped rapidly from 1985 through 1994, began to climb again (Figure 5).

While the police can claim some credit for some of these reductions, strong social forces were also involved.

### Social forces

First, many young people have changed their habits. They have seen what has hap-

pened to their friends: the overdose deaths, drive-by shootings, young persons just out of their teen years sentenced to prison for decades. Having witnessed these outcomes, some of our young people have decided to choose a less risky lifestyle.

Second, it is possible that crack may have been a generation-specific drug. Those who were addicted to crack may now be dropping out of the system, due to death, incarceration, rehabilitation, or for other reasons. There is some evidence that the popularity of crack is decreasing. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in the use of marijuana, and a slight increase in the use of white heroin.

Third, we have experienced a booming economy. That, coupled with the fact police have made narcotics trafficking riskier and less profitable, has encouraged many young people to shift to legitimate work.

And finally, society has responded to the crime trends of the past fifteen or so years by building more prisons, supporting funding to hire more police, increasing penalties, and passing truth-in-sentencing laws. Locking up criminals reduces crime rates.

### Chicago police strategies

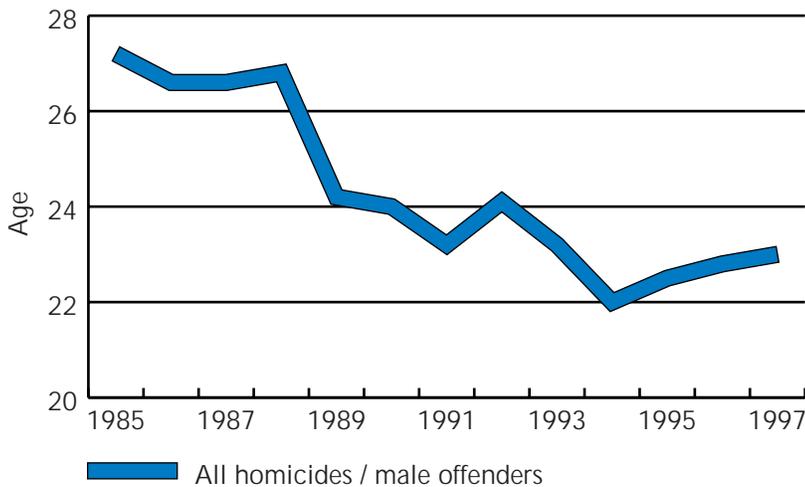
There can be no doubt that the police responded aggressively to the rise in violent crime rates. That response was delivered in large part through programs that attacked all aspects of the narcotics, gangs, and guns problem. And because so many of those programs were effective, urban America may continue to enjoy declining crime rates in coming years.

### Narcotics

All of our narcotics enforcement initiatives are designed to increase both the cost and the risk of involvement in any aspect of the narcotics trade. We believe that the best way to increase these risk factors is to be as visible as possible. There might have been a time when a single strategy such as demand-reduction may have worked. But the current epidemic is so global in nature that the only

Figure 5

Average age of homicide offenders in Chicago



Source: Chicago Police Dept. Annual Reports

effective approach is to attack every existing component of the narcotics trade.

The most important component of our strategy is our street enforcement programs. These programs reduce the number of locations where street drug markets operate. This forces would-be purchasers increasingly to deal with persons they don't know. Dealing with a stranger can be risky and costly because that stranger may turn out to be an undercover police officer.

### Gangs

Our approach to the gang problem in Chicago has been to attack it on two fronts. We reorganized our Gang Crime Section in 1993 and assigned all 120 gang specialists to the Organized Crime Division. Specialists were instructed to conduct long-term conspiracy cases against the leaders of the major Chicago street gangs. More than 380 police officers were reassigned to our district stations as district gang tactical officers. Their mission was to engage in gang-suppression activities.

Gang specialists began by concentrating on the most violent gangs. Fifteen conspiracy cases were concluded during 1994 with the arrest and successful prosecution of approximately 250 gang leaders.

Those arrests, incidentally, temporarily increased gang-related violence. We now know that when we destabilize a gang, in-fighting breaks out over leadership positions. At the same time, rival gangs attempt to expand their turf, and the result is an increase in gang-related violence. This may explain the sharp rise in gang-related homicides in 1994 (Figure 3).

We responded to that development by initiating additional conspiracy investigations against the same gang. We now arrange for our District Gang Tactical units to saturate the territory of any gang whenever we close a case by arrest. This approach may help explain the decline in gang-related homicides since 1994.

### Guns

In late 1994 we entered into a joint agreement with the ATF called Operation CAGE, (Chicago Anti-Gun Enforcement). This program targets individuals who are making multiple firearm purchases and illegally selling those weapons on the streets of Chicago. The program was expanded at the beginning of 1998 and offers great opportunities for removing weapons from the streets (For more information on the CAGE program, see the article on page 8.)

### Community policing

We have just completed the fifth year of the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) program. Many police officers originally thought community policing would have little or no impact on crime. Some suspected it would actually be "soft" on crime. Our experience, however, has been that CAPS actually helps to reduce crime.

When the police work aggressively to regain control of the streets, concerned residents get involved. More importantly, when the police initiate programs that purposely seek to involve them, citizens become empowered and work actively and openly to help the police fight crime.

The Organized Crime Division alone receives more than twice the amount of information from citizens that we received before CAPS. More important, it is reliable information, much of which has led to the arrest and conviction of offenders who might otherwise have avoided detection.

In 1997 there were 39,000 fewer victims of serious crime than in 1992. We attribute much of that change to the relationship that has developed between the community and the police.

Basically, we feel confident that the investment we have made in community policing has resulted in a decrease in our overall crime rates.

### Conclusion

Most police executives have been involved with law enforcement for decades. During that entire time, for the most part, violent crime has increased. It's encouraging to think that those trends may finally be changing. It is clear that Americans have both demanded and supported efforts to end this carnage, and the police have played an important role in bringing about that change. The challenge before us is to continue to move forward with effective strategies. ■

## CAGE

# Chicago police/ATF unit targets gun-runners

By Daniel Dighton

The prevalence of firearms in Chicago defies a near total ban on the possession of handguns in the city. Yet most of the 12,257 firearms seized by police in 1997 were handguns, and the most common firearms used in homicides were handguns.

Sixty-four percent of the city's 759 murders in 1997 were committed with handguns. Of the 570 murders committed in the city using firearms, 489, or 86 percent, involved handguns. It has been illegal since 1984 for civilians to register handguns in Chicago.

But efforts to crack down on the illegal use of firearms in the city may be having an impact. The number of firearms seized by police in 1997 was 19 percent lower than in 1996, and 42 percent lower than the 21,243 firearms recovered during 1994, according to the Chicago Police Department's 1997 Annual Report. The report pointed out that the decline coincided with a state law that went into effect in January 1995 making unlawful use of a weapon (UUW) a felony on first offense.

### Joint effort

Among the Chicago police initiatives to curb the flow of firearms onto the streets is a program that tracks the history of recovered weapons. The Chicago Anti-Gun

Enforcement (CAGE) program is a joint effort with the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

The primary focus of CAGE is to trace recovered weapons and bring charges of illegal gun trafficking against multiple purchasers of firearms who are illegally transferring them on the street, and "straw" purchasers. Straw purchasers are individuals who purchase firearms for other individuals who cannot legally obtain a Firearm Owner's Identification (FOID) card necessary to purchase or possess a gun in Illinois. Straw purchasers use their FOID card to fill out the paperwork, and typically are accompanied at the gun shop by the actual purchaser, who picks out a gun.

The CAGE team's efforts were given added muscle in July when Gov. Jim Edgar signed legislation cracking down on gun-running. Gun-running is the unlawful transfer of three or more firearms to a person ineligible to possess a firearm. The new law makes gun-running a nonprobationable offense, carrying a mandatory prison sentence of four to 15 years.

CAGE was started in 1994 with two Chicago Police Department gang specialists and an ATF special agent. The unit was expanded in January of this year to include eight Chicago police gang specialists and two ATF agents. Chicago police Sgt. Ken Barnas supervises the unit. In the first eight months of this year, the unit made more than 50 arrests and recov-

ered about 130 guns. Another 330 guns that were registered to the individuals arrested remain unaccounted for, Barnas said.

Because they can speed up the time it takes to trace the ownership of a weapon from the typical two-week period to about 24 hours, CAGE officers are being called upon more frequently to assist other units, particularly the narcotics unit, Barnas said.

"This program is really taking off," Barnas said. "Other units are finding out what we do and using us."

The unit was called upon to assist in the investigation of the fatal shooting of Chicago police officer Michael Ceriale in August. Ceriale was shot by alleged gang members while conducting a drug investigation. Three teenagers were charged in connection with the shooting.

With the help of the CAGE unit, another man was arrested on a charge of felony gun-running for allegedly having sold guns, including the one used to shoot officer Ceriale, to the gang members. The CAGE officers traced the ownership of the weapon within eight hours. Within 48 hours police arrested the man who originally purchased the gun and then resold it on the street.

### Tracking multiple purchasers

When they are not working on tracing weapons from specific cases, the CAGE officers are looking for multiple purchasers and straw purchasers of firearms who are possibly transferring the guns in the city illegally. The officers provide the ATF with the serial numbers of all firearms recovered. The ATF's National Tracing Center identifies the purchasers and provides their FOID numbers.

The police give their attention to multiple purchasers of weapons. If the purchasers don't have the weapons, or can't explain what happened to them, they could be facing gun-running charges.

"It's a positive thing. We're making arrests, getting guns," Barnas said.

The bottom line, he said, is that the unit is helping to get guns off the streets before they are used in a crime. ■

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*Daniel Dighton is a public information officer with the Authority.*

# For some inner-city kids, guns and violence are a way of life



By Cristin Monti

Casper was only 11 when her teenage cousin pointed a gun at her head one summer afternoon as they sat on the front porch of her Princeton Park home.

“He was drunk,” she recalled. “He got mad and said I had a smart mouth. He was like, ‘What—you think you’re bad? How bad are you now?’ and pulled the trigger.”

The gun jammed, and Casper quickly pulled it away from him. That same cousin was shot and killed two years later, a victim of gang violence.

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*Cristin Monti is a technical editor with the Authority’s Office of Public Information.*

Now a senior at Curie High School in Chicago, Casper has spent most of her life immersed in America’s gun culture. At 17 years old, she has lost countless friends and family members to gun violence, six this year alone.

When inner-city teens in youth groups and high schools around Chicago were asked to share their experiences, many said they have witnessed or been directly threatened by gun violence. Dodging bullets has become a way of life for Casper and thousands of other children and teens growing up in Chicago. They see their peers walk the streets carrying firearms every day. And they are filled with stories of gun violence in their own neighborhoods.

“We hear gunshots morning through night sometimes,” said Joey, a Lincoln Park High School senior, of life in his South Side Dearborn Homes community. “Especially when it’s war” – meaning when rival gangs turn his neighborhood into a battleground.

Another Curie student, Toyia, can recall the first shooting she’d witnessed years ago like it had happened yesterday.

“I heard a pow, pow, pow, then I saw a dude laying on his steering wheel,” said Toyia, 17.

The incident occurred as she sat on a school bus headed down a South Side street. “The guy who shot him just stood there shaking. Then we watched him run away.” Toyia went home that afternoon in tears. “I was hurt by that,” she said.

## Widespread problem

The use of handguns by America’s youth has received increased attention in recent months following school shooting rampages in Arkansas, Kentucky, and Oregon. Closer to home was the murder of a young Chicago police officer, Michael Ceriale, who was shot to death by a teenage gang member during a stakeout.

Two hundred sixty-six youths under the age of 21 were accused of using firearms to commit murder in Chicago in 1997. Experts say gang involvement coupled with power and survival tops the list of reasons why kids resort to guns to solve problems. Teens believe possessing a gun increases personal intimidation levels while providing a heightened sense of security, said Det. Rose Gordon, a Chicago Police Department gang specialist.

“A lot of them today want to be tough, in charge, number one,” said Gor-





Photo by Daniel Dighton

***Robert Kos, outside Chicago's Curie High School, where he leads a peer counseling program, says students have grown accustomed to violence.***

don. "But it also may be fear of something that is going on."

Teens often resort to firearms when running from or with a gang, Gordon said. Also, individuals who are "flipping on" fellow gang members, or providing police with information about them, typically seek guns for fear of retaliation.

In addition, unfavorable family settings force many teens to play a protective role in their households, often leading them to acquire firearms, Gordon said.

### **False sense of security**

Community activists who are trying to curb gun violence have voiced concern over how easily youngsters take comfort in the false sense of security that guns provide.

"They think it's the most secure way to mediate conflict in their favor, figuring it will get the job done, and that the end result of the confrontation is going to be swift," said Michael Robbins, a retired Chicago police officer who heads the Handgun Epidemic Lowering Plan (HELP), an organization for survivors of gun violence.

Robbins has been on disability since 1994, when he was shot point blank 12 times by a young male during a gang investigation. As the director of HELP,

Robbins offers anti-gun violence presentations identifying positive conflict-resolution scenarios to youth and community groups around the city.

"People say they need guns for protection," he said. "That's a myth. If guns protect people, then why are there so many homicides in Chicago? Why are there so many homicides in Texas? Why are there so many homicides in California?"

Of the 570 people who lost their lives to gunfire in Chicago last year, about one third had not reached the age of 21. While gang violence may be to blame for many of these deaths, experts say accidental shootings also account for a large number of them.

Casper described another close call that occurred when a gang member she knew misidentified her as she walked down a neighborhood street.

"He was in a car and he shot right at me," she said. "I just stood there in shock. When he realized it was me, he drove off."

"I see him every day," Casper added. "I just don't bring it up."

### **Easy access**

An overwhelming number of illegal gun sales have only exacerbated Chicago's epidemic of gun violence.

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**"Students say, 'No one is going to protect me. I have to do it myself.'" —**

**Robert Kos**

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Teens interviewed said illegally purchasing a firearm requires simply "making a phone call," and estimated most guns sell for about \$30. The nearly effortless accessibility of firearms is bittersweet for some living in the heart of gun culture, especially young males.

"I have a lot of enemies," Joey reluctantly admitted. "I've got to protect myself. For me, (the availability) is good. But for others, it may not be so good."

Casper agreed. "The way it is now, if you're a male and you go into a neighborhood where nobody knows you, they jump you first and ask questions later," she said.

### **Prevention efforts**

For police, activists, and educators, convincing kids that firearms will not quell their fears, provide protection, or resolve conflicts with others is the toughest challenge in halting gun violence.

"Students say, 'No one is going to protect me. I have to do it myself,'" said Robert Kos, coordinator of Curie High School's peer counseling program promoting open discussion, honesty, and an oath of confidentiality. "There is a street justice out there. The justice system is slow. Street justice is expedient. When crimes occur, students have told me, 'That

won't happen in my neighborhood again.”

Kos noted many of his students have grown accustomed to the violence in their communities, and most have attended a number of funerals for shooting victims.

“Several of our students have been shot, at least one a year for as long as I've been here,” said Kos, a Curie teacher for almost two decades. “The kids have become very apathetic toward it. In the program, we try to focus on the value of human life, and the potential that has been wiped out.”

In his classroom, Kos focuses on anger management and peer mediation skills, and discusses the consequences of using violence to resolve conflicts. He asks the questions: What do you want out of life? Do you want a future? Do you want that future to be stolen from you?

“We talk about who is going to suffer as a result of acts of violence,” Kos said. “There are multiple victims in each violent act.”

Metal detectors have been installed in schools throughout the state to prevent guns and other weapons from penetrating what should be one of the safest environments for children. The detectors at Curie are randomly utilized. Police are notified when a student is caught with a firearm, an occasional, if not rare, occurrence, according to school officials.

In addition, students are quick to tell a school authority figure when they eye an individual with a gun on or near school grounds. “They are afraid of getting hurt,” Kos said.

## Uphill battle

While police are active in their fight against gun violence, residents of troubled neighborhoods say police efforts to remove firearms from the streets appear to be futile.

“They are trying,” said Joey. “But even if they bust one neighborhood and get 250 guns, the more they (confiscate), the more people are going to buy to replace them.”

“They'll just do a better job of hiding them,” Toyia added.

Robbins, a 10-year veteran of Chicago's police force, said tougher regulations that address gun trafficking are necessary to combat the problem.

“Many laws on the books were put into effect long before the epidemic we are experiencing now,” he said. “A lot of existing laws are not applicable to the situations that occur today.”

Laws that enforce the accountability of gun owners and restrict purchases of several guns at a time would be favorable additions to the books, Robbins said. He noted Maryland and Virginia have insti-

with peer pressure that could lead to violent situations.

“We have to teach children how to use rational thought and behavior in their every day lives so they can make safe choices whether they are at home or on the streets,” Robbins said. “If they stick to the books, sooner or later they will break the cycle and lead very productive and responsible lives, away from gangs and guns.”

Robbins also criticized the media for making guns seem glamorous. Not only are children and teens exposed to gun violence in their neighborhoods each day, but also on television and in movies, he said.

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**“We have to teach children how to use rational thought and behavior in their every day lives so they can make safe choices whether they are at home or on the streets.” — Michael Robbins, retired Chicago police officer**

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tuted the One Gun a Month Law, disallowing multiple firearm purchases.

Robbins also argues that laws already in place to regulate firearm trafficking are not adequately enforced. He calls the epidemic of gun violence in Chicago communities a public health issue.

“If gambling can be considered a disease, then why not the gun violence we're experiencing on a daily basis?” he asked.

Making the public aware of the dangers of firearms is another challenge, Gordon said. Often parents are not educated on gun violence and are unable to warn their children of the risks, she said.

Experts agreed that encouraging children and teens to stay focused on education would help them when faced

“By getting many of those who have suffered gun violence to speak out, demanding more response from the entertainment industry, and taking more responsibility ourselves to get involved in the many community organizations that exist, we can help reduce gun violence,” Robbins said. “Don't wait until you become a victim. Don't wait until you lose a child, or find your child in a wheelchair, before you decide you want to do something to stop this violence. Do something now.”■

*(Some of the juveniles' names in this article were changed at their request.)*

# New forensics technology facilitates tracing bullets and cartridge cases

By Tracy Malecki

Several months ago, a gun was discovered in a dumpster in a Tennessee alley. Authorities had no related evidence or reason to believe the weapon was transported across state lines. Yet, in less than a day, it was linked to three shootings in Alabama. And when an armed robbery suspect's .380 semiautomatic pistol was recovered in Chicago last year, it was traced within hours to a 1996 aggravated battery case.

A decade ago, neither case would have been cracked. But today, new forensic technology assists in solving nearly a dozen such cases every month in Chicago, and dozens more statewide.

In 1992 the FBI created Drugfire, a computerized identification system for gun cartridge cases that facilitates a time-consuming evidence comparison process by combining a database with a wired network and a microscope. Three years later, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms introduced its own system, the Integrated Ballistics Imaging System (IBIS), which allows examiners to analyze bullets as well as cartridge cases. Together these systems have revolutionized firearm forensics by abridging the arduous analytical process, simplifying an archaic storage system, and creating leads in a matter of minutes.

Conceived by the FBI and manufactured by Mnemonics Systems, Drugfire was initially implemented in Maryland and Virginia. By 1996 — when the FBI introduced the Automated Projectile Matching System, an optional bullet-imaging component — there were 68 firearm laboratories either operating with Drugfire or in the planning stages. Today, 115 firearm labs nationwide are using the system.

IBIS, manufactured by Forensic Technology Inc., a division of the Walsh Group, is the only single computer system that

matches damaged and fragmented projectiles as well as cartridge cases. The system was developed by the ATF under the Ceasefire program, a law enforcement strategy combining ballistic technology and investigative experts with the department's National Tracing Center, to which IBIS provides a built-in connection. Twenty-one states now employ IBIS as well as 10 countries, including South Africa, China, and Russia.

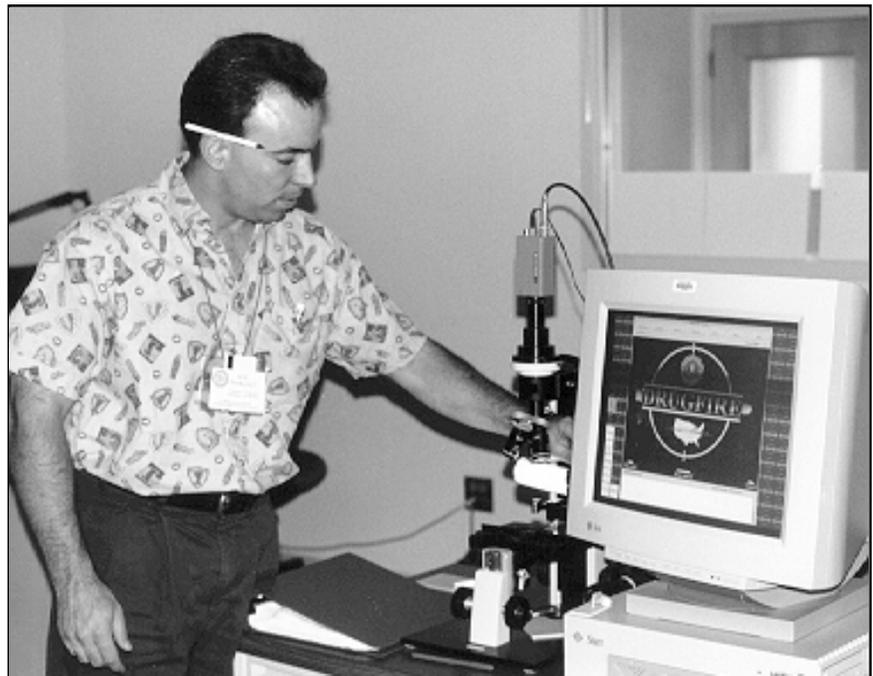


Photo by Cristin Monti

*Tracy Malecki is an intern with the Authority's Office of Public Information.*

***Forensic scientist Joe Thibault at a Drugfire station at the Illinois State Police's Forensic Science Center at Chicago.***

## How the systems work

Although there are mechanical and programming differences, Drugfire and IBIS work in the same manner. When a bullet or cartridge case is salvaged from a crime scene or victim, or produced from a test firing of a recovered weapon, it is placed on a seemingly standard microscope attached to a computer monitor. Both systems make a computerized image of the evidence's breech face marks and firing pin impressions (Drugfire uses a line-scan camera, IBIS uses a video camera). The electronic picture is committed to the systems database where it can be compared to other evidence entered into the network.

To register a match, the computer identifies similarities in the bullet's or cartridge case's striations or breech marks. When two previously unrelated pieces of evidence are traced to the same weapon, and the two unsolved cases are linked, both systems register a "hit."

In Drugfire, hits are further divided. "Cold hits," which account for almost 80 percent of Drugfire's total hits, refer to an identification made with no prior or additional knowledge of the evidence. "You throw [the evidence] into the system, and let the system do what it's supposed to do" said Joe Thibault, a forensic scientist at the Illinois State Police's Forensic Science Center at Chicago.

What the system is supposed to do, explained Jim Gainer, chief of the criminalistic section at the Forensic Science Center, is trace two apparently unrelated pieces of evidence — entered weeks to years apart, and often hundreds of miles away — to the same weapon, thereby linking two or more criminal cases or homicides.

A "warm hit" by comparison is when examiners are given a case by investigators and led toward a possible match. If two specimens hit on screen, the examiner will retrieve the physical evidence and perform a standard laboratory examination for confirmation.

"It's not making an identification for us," Thibault said. "All it is doing is giving

*Confiscated handguns and other ballistic evidence are stored at the ISP's Forensic Science Center.*



a list of possible matches from best to worst, so we can look at the evidence on screen and say, 'Okay, that looks good. Now let's view the evidence.'"

## Investigative tool

If the physical evidence can, in fact, be traced to the same weapon used in another criminal case, examiners notify the detective assigned to the case in the form of a written report. The hits provide detectives with an investigative lead, "a direction to go in," Gainer said. The weapon, once confiscated, can also be examined and compared to other evidence in the network, and perhaps connected to additional crimes, he added.

The last operation performed by the systems, the correlation of entered evidence against the database, distinguishes IBIS from Drugfire. IBIS produces a list from which the top five case images are checked for possible hits. The correlation results from Drugfire are displayed in the form of pictures, with no specific limit on the number to be examined before it can be determined that no hit exists. Therefore, examiners may look at hundreds of images with Drugfire while trying to find a match.

"IBIS is more user friendly, less labor intensive," said Gainer. "It provides a lot less for the tech to look at."

According to Forensic Technology Inc. representative Donna McLean, the disparity in performance stems from a difference in the systems' philosophies. Drugfire was created to computerize the comparison process, which not long ago was based on pictures of the bullets and cartridge cases posted on a laboratory corkboard, she said.

Drugfire enabled examiners to take a digital picture of a cartridge directly through a microscope and feed it into a database system. The process then relies on sort tools that search by categories, such as size, type, dimensions, and diameter. Each piece of information is recorded by the examiner during the analysis and later manually entered into the database. A much simpler process is expected after Drugfire's first upgrade early next year.

Because a cartridge case must be examined before its proportions can be entered into the computer, Drugfire users must also have a suitable background in firearms or law enforcement training. Although the data entry can be performed by anyone with a basic knowledge of computers and the week of technical training both vendors provide, examiners with firearm experience are better able to discriminate between suitable evidence. Inputting better evidence to the system typically yields better results, Thibault said.

IBIS was created not only to improve the storage and management of ballistics information, like Drugfire, but also to provide greater efficiency in microscopic analysis, a crucial and time-consuming operation. The image analysis system uses automated vision technology to record and immediately sort the microscopic, signature striations of a bullet or cartridge case, allowing the computer to analyze evidence as accurately as examiners only faster.

"[IBIS] relies on robotics," McLean explained. "The computer does the sorting. It's more automated...more efficient."

IBIS is also a much more expensive system. A networked Drugfire unit costs between \$45,000 and \$50,000, while an IBIS unit runs nearly \$330,000. The ISP's Forensic Science Center at Chicago is the only lab in the state, and one of only 10 labs in the country, to have both.

Drugfire is used exclusively in the ISP labs in Joliet, Rockford, Springfield, Fairview Heights, Carbondale, and Morton. These labs share information on a network linked to the Drugfire database in Chicago. The database also is linked to laboratories operated by the Indiana State Police in Lowell, Ind., the Wisconsin State Police in Milwaukee, and the Michigan State Police in Grand Rapids.

The incompatibility of the Drugfire and IBIS systems has been a concern of the FBI and the ATF. Different programming languages, dissimilar lighting and imaging equipment, and different databases cripple the systems' ability to communicate with each other.

The agencies met in May 1997 to address interoperability issues and created the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network. The program's goal is to promote interoperability between Drugfire and IBIS with cooperative research and redevelopment. Dom Denio, systems manager for Drugfire and a member of the technical working group assigned to developing protocol, said the two systems should be able to fully communicate by late next year.

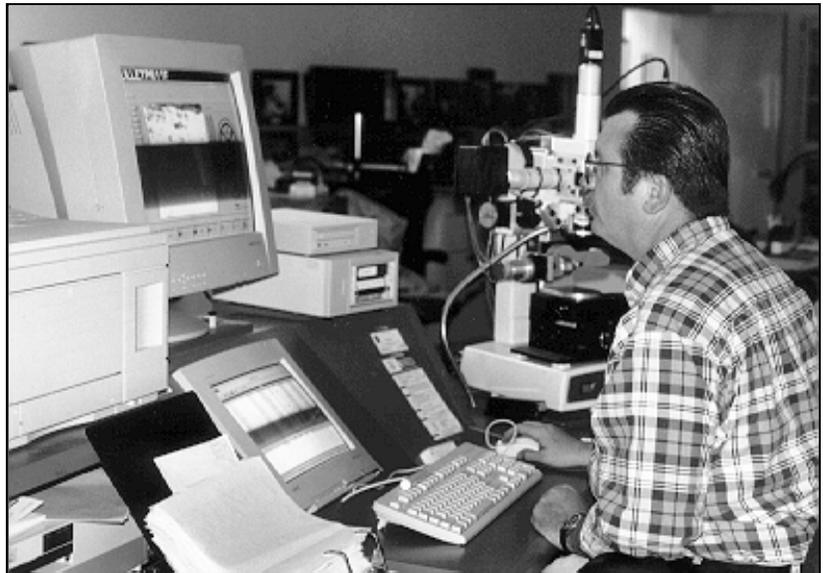


Photo by Cristin Monti

***John Rusten, an evidence technician with the ISP's Forensic Science Center at Chicago, trains on the IBIS Data Acquisition Station.***

Meanwhile, ISP officials at the Forensic Science Center are working on a plan for an extensive IBIS network throughout the northern half of Illinois. If the Northern Illinois IBIS Network (NIIN) plan is approved, crime labs in Rockford, DuPage County, the ISP's Forensic Center at Joliet, and the Northern Illinois Police Crime Lab, which serves a consortium of municipalities, will be outfitted with an IBIS data acquisition station and viewing apparatus, and able to perform searches through Chicago's system, which serves as the "hub," the only site with a database.

### **Measuring "hits"**

Of the almost 90,000 cases entered into the Drugfire system nationwide, including multiple images of both cartridge cases and spent bullets, there have been 2,543 cold hits and 684 warm hits. More than 250 of those hits are from Illinois' eight crime labs over the past four years. And of the 724 cartridge cases entered into

Drugfire in Illinois between January and July 1998, 75 cases were linked.

IBIS is producing nearly a dozen hits every month at the Forensic Science Center, Gainer said.

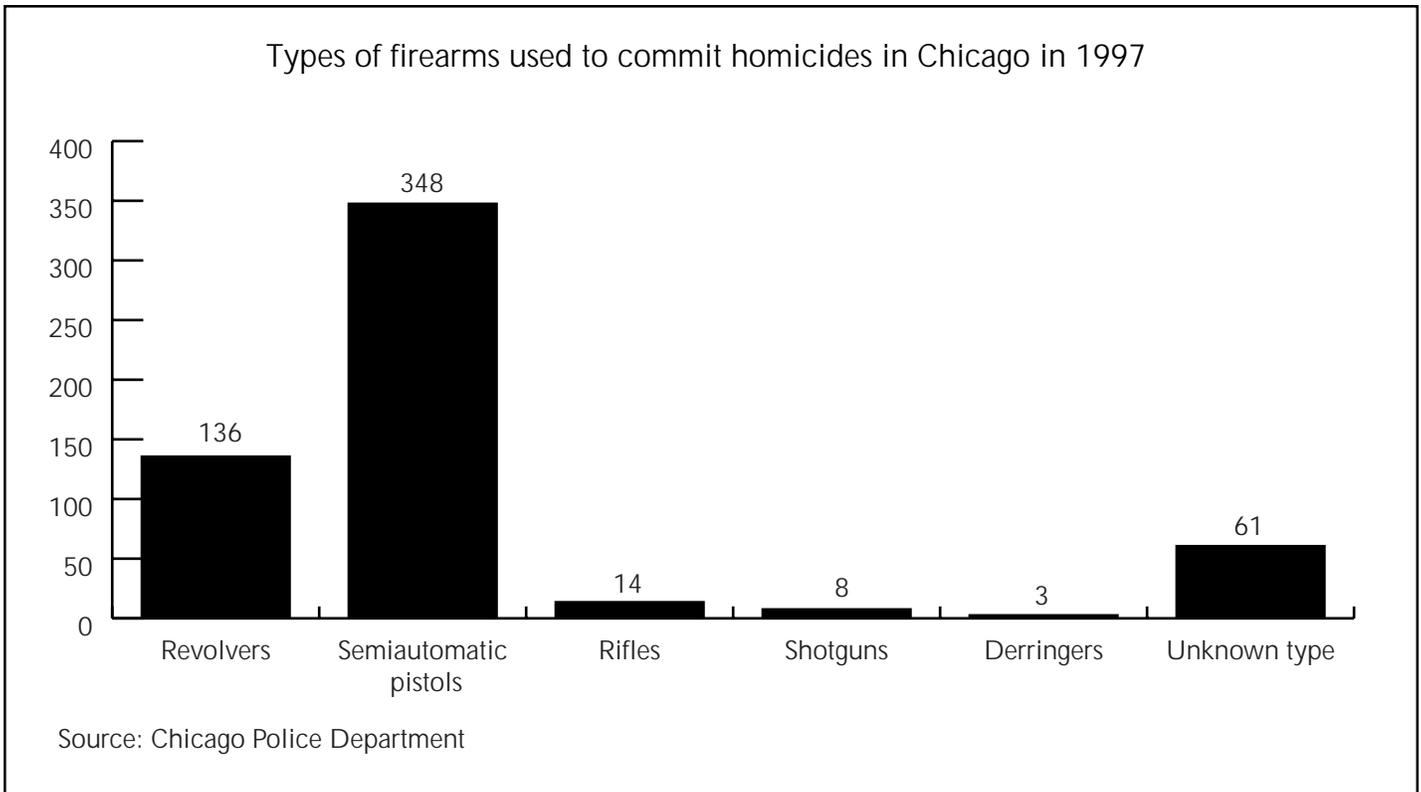
As the number of Drugfire and IBIS hits increase, so do the number of users throughout the country and around the world. With these highly advanced systems becoming more efficient and integrated into wider networks, the process of ballistics identification will continue to improve. Right now, Denio said, examiners are just happy to have access to the technology available today. "They're thrilled," he said, "because they have tools like this and can be more productive in putting bad guys away." ■

# Facts on the use and prevalence of guns

## Chicago homicides involving firearms

(Statewide information on crimes involving firearms is not available.)

- About 75 percent of reported homicides in 1997 were committed with firearms (Chicago Police Department).
- In 1997 handguns were used in 96 percent of reported gun-related homicides where the type of weapon was known (Chicago Police Department).
- Between 1994 and 1997 the number of reported homicides resulting from gun violence dropped 17 percent (Chicago Police Department).
- Semiautomatic pistols were used in 61 percent of murders committed with firearms in Chicago in 1997 (Chicago Police Department).



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### Firearms and Chicago's youth

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- In 1997 there were 266 gun-related homicides by offenders under the age of 21 reported in Chicago, a decline of 32 percent from the 390 reported in 1994 (Chicago Police Department).
- Youths under 21 committed 47 percent of reported gun-related homicides in Chicago in 1997 (Chicago Police Department).
- In 1997 in Chicago, 210 youths lost their lives to gun violence, a 19 percent drop from 260 in 1994 (Chicago Police Department).

### Gun seizures in Chicago

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- The number of illegal firearms recovered in Chicago decreased 42 percent between 1994 and 1997. Police seized 21,243 firearms in 1994 and 12,257 in 1997 (Chicago Police Department).

### Illinois gun sales

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- All Illinois residents who buy or possess firearms are required by law to have a valid Firearm Owner's Identification (FOID) card.
- There are approximately 1.2 million valid FOID card holders in Illinois. About 200,000 applications for FOID cards are received by the Illinois State Police annually. In 1997 the FOID program denied more than 6,000 applications and revoked nearly 4,000 FOID cards as a result of an extensive review process (Illinois State Police).
- In Illinois, 1,943 of 171,865 applications were denied for gun sales in 1997, a 1.1 percent rejection rate (Bureau of Justice Statistics).

### National firearm mortality

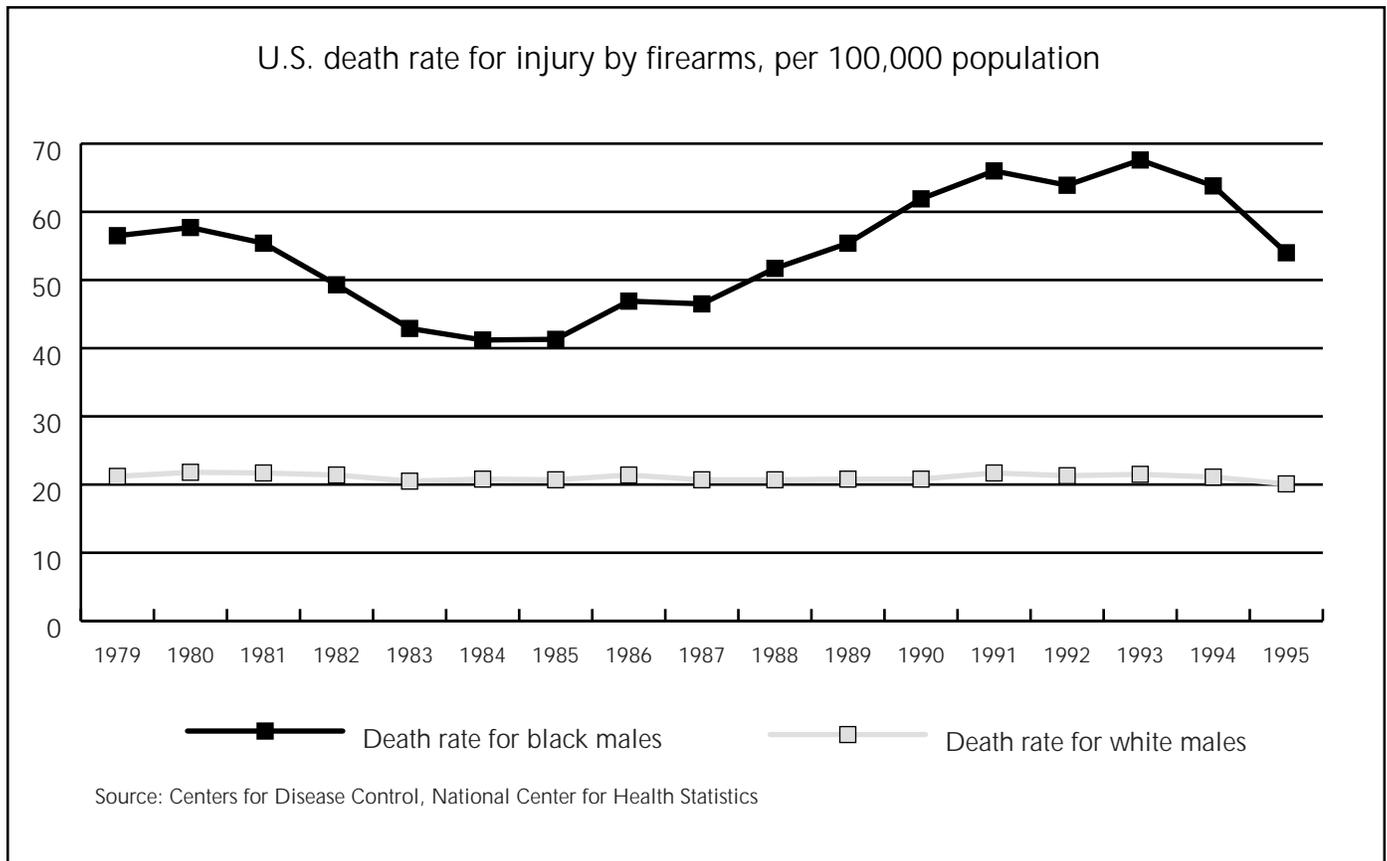
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- Of the 34,234 deaths by firearms in the United States in 1996, 44 percent were homicides (Centers for Disease Control).
- The death rate for males between the ages of 15 and 24 was 47.6 deaths per 100,000 population (Centers for Disease Control).

- The death rate for black males between the ages of 15 and 24 was 140 deaths per 100,000 population (Centers for Disease Control).
- Firearms were used in 10,744, or 67.8 percent, of the 15,848 murders reported in the United States in 1996 (FBI).

### National gun sales

- Presale handgun checks blocked about 69,000 sales nationally in 1997 (Bureau of Justice Statistics).
- Gun sale rejections represent about 3 percent of the estimated 2.6 million applications for handgun purchases nationally in 1997 (Bureau of Justice Statistics).
- More than 60 percent of gun sale rejections in 1997 were based on prior felony convictions or current felony indictments. About 10 percent were based on domestic violence misdemeanor convictions or restraining orders. Another 6 percent of those rejected were fugitives from justice (Bureau of Justice Statistics).



(continued)

## (Gun facts, continued)

- From the enactment of the Brady law in February 1994, through the end of 1997, an estimated 242,000 potential handgun purchases were blocked as a result of background checks. More than 2.5 million background checks in 1997 prevented an estimated 69,000 handgun purchases (Bureau of Justice Statistics).
- After Nov. 30, the waiting provisions of the Brady law will be replaced with a \$250 million instant background check system maintained by the FBI. Background checks will be required for sales of all firearms in the United States, not just handguns (Bureau of Justice Statistics).
- A national 15-year study conducted from 1977-1991 revealed handgun purchasers with a criminal history at the time of purchase were 3.7 times more likely to be charged with a subsequent offense than were purchasers with no criminal history (National Institute of Justice).■

## In Brief

(continued from page 3)

on legal challenges and concerns about vigilante activity directed at sex offenders released into the community.

The Cook County Sheriff's Office recently began using its Web site to publish the names of convicted sex offenders in suburban Cook County. Some 25,000 computer users visited the Web site within the first day after Sheriff Michael Sheahan announced the registry was available.

The American Civil Liberties Union has expressed concern about the practice of putting the names of sex offenders on the Web, but Sheriff Sheahan defended it as an important tool for helping parents protect their children.

Copies of *Policy and Practice* are available from the NCJA: 202-624-1440. The publication is free to NCJA members and \$7 for nonmembers.

### Study examines special needs of incarcerated women

The National Institute of Justice recently published results of a survey of state-level correctional and jail administrators, on the needs of incarcerated women.

The survey found that the needs of women in prison are very different from men, due in part to women's disproportionate vic-

timization from sexual or physical abuse and in part to their responsibility for children. Incarcerated women offenders are also more likely than men in prisons and jails to have become addicted to drugs, to have mental illnesses, and to have been unemployed before incarceration.

Among the issues identified in the survey were that women offenders require different management styles from those of men, and the use of alternatives to incarceration should be considered for more women.

Copies of the report, *Women Offenders: Programming Needs and Promising Approaches* (NCJ 171668, 11 pp.) are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) at 1-800-851-3420.

[For related information about female offenders in Illinois, see the Summer 1998 issue of *The Compiler*, "The Rising Number of Female Offenders in the Criminal Justice System." Copies are available from the Authority's Criminal Justice Clearinghouse: 312-793-8550.]■

# Council seeks four-year extension of its mandate to fight auto theft

By Cristin Monti

**M**otor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council members are seeking a four-year extension of the Council's expiration date, to Jan. 1, 2004, despite the failure to pass the extension last spring. At the quarterly MVTPC meeting Sept. 9, the Council directed staff to proceed with the legislation extending the life of the Council, confer with interested parties, and determine whether to pursue the legislation in the fall veto session or in 1999.

Under the sunset clause, the Council will cease operating in 2000. Members are anxious for the bill's swift approval to ensure enough time for grantees to budget and plan for their upcoming fiscal years.

While MVTPC costs have increased over the years, grant-funding mechanisms have remained the same. The Council's proposal does not seek additional funding, but members recognized the need to explore creative and innovative avenues to increase funding.

Council Chairman Gene Marlin, acting director of the Illinois State Police, urged Council members to remain vigilant in their efforts to prevent motor vehicle theft, despite political changes anticipated in coming months. "We should never get into a mode where we just hunker down because of turnover in the government," Marlin said. "We can continue to make a difference, and the people who sit on this Council today can make this happen."

Since the Council's inception in 1991, grant funds have assisted task forces, investigative teams, and other special efforts around Illinois in recovering almost 10,000 stolen and contraband vehicles worth over \$68 million. Also, nearly 8,000 criminal investigations were initiated, more than 4,400 arrests were made, and 1,029 convictions were obtained in motor vehicle theft cases. In addition, about 15,000 vehicle businesses were audited with the help of MVTPC grants.

During the September meeting, the Council recognized former chairman Terrance Gainer for his contributions to the Council and auto theft prevention. Gainer resigned as director of the Illinois State Police in May to become assistant chief with the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department. He served as chairman of the Council for seven years.

Also, Diana Mann announced her resignation in September, after more than five years with the Council. As program analyst,

she monitored grants and helped develop the annual report, the statewide motor vehicle theft prevention strategy, brochures, and other vehicle theft-prevention publications.

In other news, the Tri-County Auto Theft Task Force in Joliet was one of seven finalists for the 1998 Vehicle Theft Award of Merit presented by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the National Insurance Crime Bureau. There were 21 entries in the program this year from across North America. The winners were the Fresno (Calif.) H.E.A.T. Task Force, the Tampa (Fla.) Police Department, and the Tarrant County (Texas) Auto Theft Task Force.

The Tri-County Auto Theft Task Force operates in Will, Grundy, and Kankakee counties in Illinois. ■

From 1991 through 1998, the following trust funds have been awarded by the Council to fight motor vehicle theft:

Law enforcement, including multi-jurisdictional task forces, special investigations, and specialized prosecution units:

⇒ **\$32.7 million**

Infrastructure-supporting law enforcement, including the collection, analysis and sharing of criminal intelligence information regarding vehicle theft, training, and vehicles loaned for theft-prevention programs:

⇒ **\$5.9 million**

Public education, awareness and prevention:

⇒ **\$1.9 million**

Evaluation and research:

⇒ **\$.4 million**

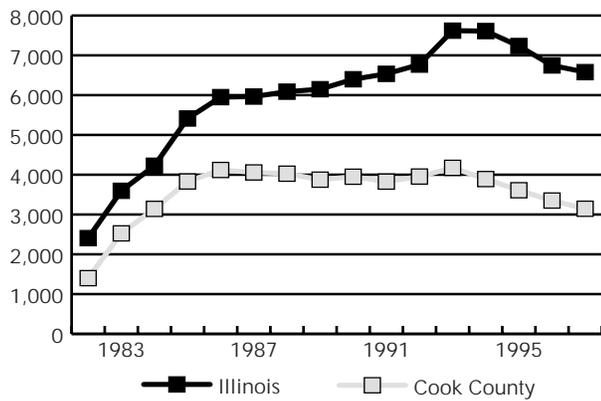
Innovative programs:

⇒ **\$2.4 million**

Total grants for motor vehicle theft prevention programs:

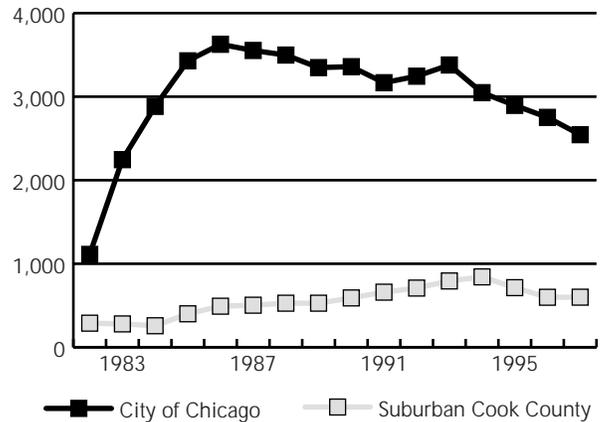
⇒ **\$43.4 million**

Criminal Sexual Assaults – Illinois and Cook County



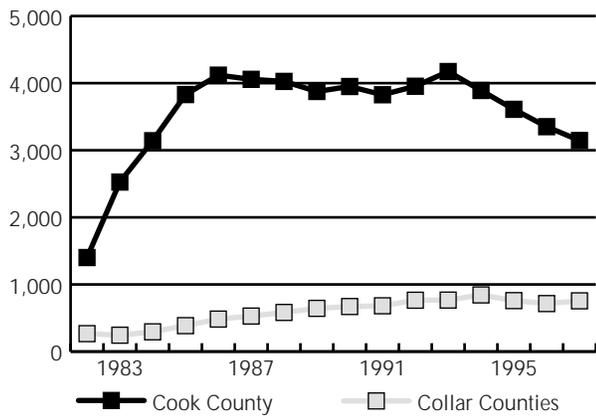
Source: Illinois State Police

Criminal Sexual Assaults – Chicago and Suburban Cook County



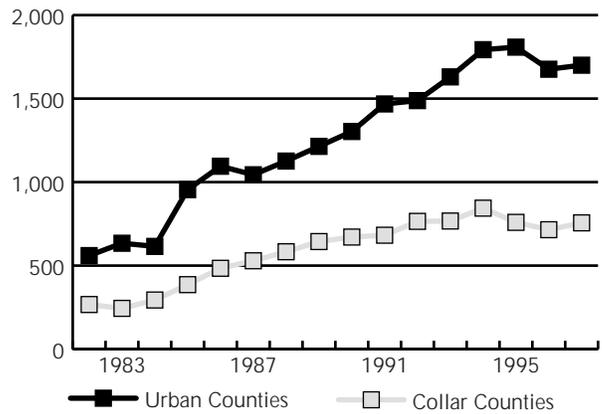
Source: Illinois State Police

Criminal Sexual Assaults – Collar Counties\* and Cook County



Source: Illinois State Police

Criminal Sexual Assaults – Urban Counties\*\* and Collar Counties



Source: Illinois State Police

\*Collar counties are DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will.

\*\*Urban counties are Boone, Champaign, Clinton, Grundy, Henry, Jersey, Kendall, Kankakee, Macon, Madison McLean, Menard, Monroe, Peoria, Rock Island, Sangamon, St. Clair, Tazewell, Winnebago, and Woodford.



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