

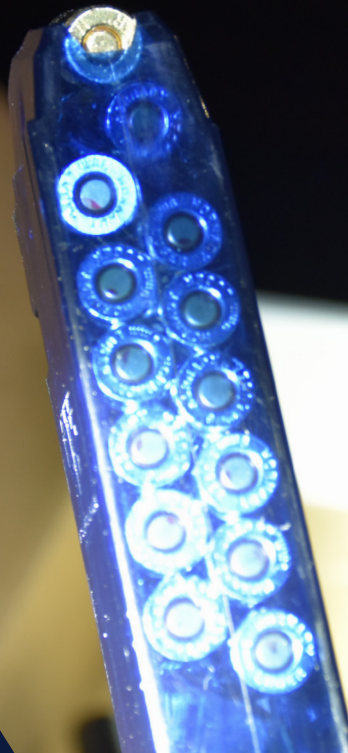
2022 Gun Crimes Report



PF940
POLYMER80

Bed room closet top shelf

POLYMER80



155



ATTORNEY GENERAL
PETER F. NERONHA

The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi

The Honorable Dominick J. Ruggiero

Re: Annual Gun Crimes Report for 2022

Dear Speaker Shekarchi and President Ruggiero:

At the core of the Attorney General's mission, and one of my top priorities, is ensuring the safety of Rhode Island's communities. To that end, our Office continues to wage the battle against gun violence and violent crime on two primary fronts. We are focusing our collective law enforcement efforts on the true drivers of violent crime—in particular, through our ongoing Urban Violent Crime Initiative. At the same time, we have also successfully advocated for stronger laws and tools that we know we need to prevent gun violence in Rhode Island. And as the record will show, we are using the laws on the books, both old and new, to make Rhode Islanders safer and promote justice and accountability.

While I submit the enclosed report consistent with the Office's statutory duties under R.I.G.L. § 42-9-12.1, to provide certain statistics involving firearms offenses on an annual basis, I am also pleased to take this opportunity, as I have in previous years, to share with you the bigger picture—what we are seeing on the ground and in our communities, and what our Office, in partnership with our colleagues in law enforcement, is doing about it.

Any way you look at it, this year's report will again demonstrate that, like so many other parts of the country, our communities continue to be inundated with guns. Law enforcement is seeing it firsthand—we are seeing ghost guns, assault weapons, and high-capacity magazines, and we are seeing them in every corner of the State, both rural and urban. The report will also demonstrate what should be very clear to you by now—how seriously this Office takes these cases. We are prioritizing our investigatory and prosecutorial resources both toward identifying the perpetrators and drivers of violent crime and toward bringing them to justice.

This report will provide an overview of our 2022 data and our recent efforts to combat gun violence and violent crime, through the Office's Urban Violent Crime Initiative. The report will then provide a summary of recently enacted gun violence prevention legislation and the ways in which our Office is already using these new laws to make Rhode Islanders safer, as well as some highlights of our efforts to robustly and aggressively enforce all of Rhode Island's gun laws—new and old.

Sincerely,
Peter F. Neronha

Pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-9-12.1, the Attorney General is required to provide the General Assembly with an annual report, providing certain data and information involving firearms offenses.

In 2021, the General Assembly amended the statutory reporting requirements in R.I.G.L. § 42-9-12.1 to expand both the categories of information that we are required to report, as well as the sources of data from which we are authorized to pull information. As our new reporting requirements did not take effect until this year's report, last year's report was only able to provide a preview for the last few months of 2021. This year's report will be the first full report with the expanded criteria. Our report, along with accompanying data, goes well beyond the newly expanded criteria to ensure that we can paint a more fulsome picture of gun violence in Rhode Island and the response from the criminal justice system.



Combating Violent Crime in Rhode Island

In 2021, the Office launched an important initiative to reduce violent crime—and particularly gun-related crimes—in Rhode Island’s urban communities. The Urban Violent Crime Initiative is a prosecutor-led partnership with the Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls Police Departments, the Department of Corrections, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. Working together, prosecutors, investigators, and analysts at these law enforcement agencies are gathering data and intelligence, analyzing the information to identify patterns of criminal activity to support investigations and prosecutions, and setting violent crime enforcement priorities.

Key components of the initiative include: (i) deputizing officers from law enforcement agencies in Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls to facilitate the investigation of suspects and crimes that cross municipal jurisdictions, (ii) securing a \$340,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to fund the multi-year hiring of a crime intelligence analyst and procurement of data and intelligence analysis tools, and (iii) procuring a National Integrated Ballistic Information Network “NIBIN” machine that analyzes ballistic evidence and plays a key role in solving gun crimes.

In 2022, the most significant development of the violent crime initiative was when the Office’s NIBIN machine was connected to the NIBIN network and became fully operational. NIBIN machines allow us to analyze a shell casing from one shooting and identify connections between that shooting and any other shooting in Rhode Island or anywhere in the Northeast.

Results

In October of 2022, we announced charges against a West Warwick couple, stemming from an investigation into alleged firearms trafficking and ghost gun manufacturing. As a result of that investigation, investigators seized 37 firearms, including 3 machine guns, 5 ghost guns, 23 ghost gun kits, and 1 pistol with an obliterated serial number; 16 silencers and suppressors; 2 binary triggers; various firearm components; tools to manufacture firearms; approximately 223 assorted magazines, including multiple high capacity drum magazines; 3 body armor vests; assorted holsters and tactical gear; and hundreds of rounds of various calibers of ammunition.

National Integrated Ballistic Information Network “NIBIN”

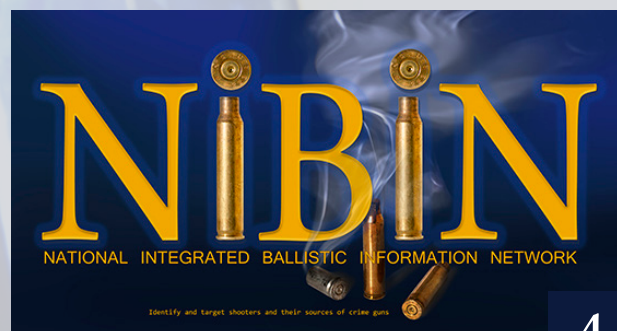
NIBIN machines allow us to analyze a shell casing from one shooting and identify connections between that shooting and any other shooting in Rhode Island or anywhere in the Northeast.

Prior to August 2022, Rhode Island had only ONE of these critical machines for the entire State. Not surprisingly, with NIBIN capacity so limited, the wait time on these critical analyses could take weeks or months. It goes without saying that if you have to wait that long, your ability to generate actionable leads is significantly diminished.

As soon as our newly-purchased NIBIN machine was able to join the network, we also worked to ensure adequate resources for its use and operation. One of our intelligence analysts is now fully trained on processing bullet casings at the terminal. We have also arranged training for detectives from other police departments. We are able to provide access to this machine and assistance from our trained staff on a 24/7 basis, with leads generated in as few as five (5) hours.

Rapid analysis of these bullet casings will certainly generate the critical connections we need to identify perpetrators and bring them to justice. Equally important, by being able to find these connections right away, in the immediate aftermath of a shooting, we can help prevent the all-too-frequent instances of retaliation that lead to extended sprees of gun violence.

Our increased NIBIN capacity is already generating leads that are breaking open significant cases. For example, we have used NIBIN data to link one firearm to four different shooting incidents, which resulted in the June 2022 arrest of three individuals. As part of the investigation, investigators seized multiple firearms, multiple large capacity magazines, ammunition, narcotics (including fentanyl), drug paraphernalia, and evidence of additional firearms.



Putting Rhode Island Law to Good Use

Since the beginning of this administration Attorney General Neronha has repeatedly advocated for common-sense measures aimed at preventing gun violence in Rhode Island. Recognizing that there is no one solution or easy fix, these bills have sought to address the root causes of gun violence in Rhode Island. Our Office recognizes efforts of the legislature for passing important pieces of gun violence prevention legislation during the past four sessions. We have already put these newly enhanced laws to good use, while at the same time, continuing our aggressive enforcement of existing law.

Ghost Guns

In 2020, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed ghost gun legislation, which amended Title 47 Chapter 11 of the Rhode Island General Laws to provide certain definitions relative to “ghost guns” and among other things, prohibited the manufacture, sale and possession of ghost guns, as well as 3D printed firearms. Our prosecutors are seeing a significant amount of ghost guns associated with violent crime in Rhode Island, as they are sought out more and more by those who are otherwise prohibited from lawfully possessing guns in Rhode Island. In fact, our Office has charged approximately 90 defendants pursuant to these prohibitions since they became law in 2020.

Results

In November of 2022, we announced a 15-year sentence, with 8 years to serve, for a Providence drug trafficker who possessed a ghost gun. In that case, investigators seized fentanyl, cocaine, marijuana, cash, drug paraphernalia from his residence, and following a brief foot chase, a ghost gun that he discarded as he fled from investigators.

In August of 2022, we also announced significant sentences for two Providence men on ghost gun and fentanyl trafficking charges—one to 20 years, with 12 to serve, and the other to 15 years, with seven to serve. As part of that investigation, investigators seized fentanyl, cocaine, a ghost gun, a large-capacity magazine, ammunition, and drug paraphernalia.

66

Cases in 2022
- charged
& disposed-
involving ghost
guns. Nearly
every one was
sourced from
Polymer80

Straw Purchasing of Firearms

In 2021, the General Assembly also strengthened our straw purchasing laws. A straw purchaser is one who purchases or obtains a gun for another person, knowing that the other person is prohibited from possessing a firearm. These laws go right to the heart of ensuring that firearms don't fall into the wrong hands in Rhode Island, and our Office continues to put them to good use. Since the beginning of this Administration, we have brought straw purchasing charges against more than 20 individuals, and we are obtaining significant results.

The Office's Urban Violent Crime Initiative is bringing a particular focus to straw purchases and keeping guns out of the wrong hands.

11

**Cases in 2022
involving straw
purchasing of
firearms**

Results

In June of 2022, in separate straw purchasing cases, we announced that a pair of defendants had been charged with multiple felony counts, and a Pawtucket man sentenced to fifteen years with five to serve. The other defendant recently pled guilty and was sentenced to 10 years, with five to serve, for conspiracy to straw purchase firearms, conspiracy to sell concealable weapons without proper paperwork, carrying a Smith & Wesson M&P 9mm Shield and Smith & Wesson .22 compact pistol without a license, possession of a firearm with obliterated serial numbers, and soliciting his co-defendant to sell concealable weapons without proper paperwork.

Large capacity magazines

In 2022, the General Assembly passed three critical pieces of gun violence prevention legislation—a bill banning large capacity feeding devices, a bill banning the open carry of loaded shotguns and rifles, and a bill to raise the age to purchase a firearm from 18 to 21. While some of the provisions of these statutes did not come into effect until late 2022/early 2023, we are already charging cases under the new high capacity magazine ban. In anticipation of this legislation, our Office began tracking this information in 2022.

30

**Cases in 2022
involving
magazines
with a capacity
of 30+ rounds**

77

**Cases in 2022
involving
magazines
with a capacity
between 16-30
rounds**

Results

In June 2022, our Office announced that a Providence man had been sentenced to serve 23 years in state prison for committing an armed assault on a providence police officer and robbery with ghost gun and 27-round large capacity magazine.

Aggressive enforcement of firearms laws

Our Office has continued our aggressive enforcement of all of our firearms laws. Regardless of how long the laws have been on the books, we are using them to focus our resources on those who are truly driving violent crime in our communities and bringing them to justice, with significant sentences that will keep them off the streets and keep our communities safer for as long as possible

Results

- A Providence man sentenced to 45 years, with 37 years to serve, for possessing an illegal handgun and leading police on a vehicle chase through Pawtucket and Providence.
- A double life sentence for the perpetrator of a 2020 New Year's day murder of a 54-year-old Pawtucket woman. His co-defendant was sentenced to serve life in prison, plus 20 years, for her role in the murder.
- In 2022, we also continued to seek justice for the May 2021 Providence shootout that wounded nine—with four defendants sentenced to serve at least 10 years in prison, with one serving 14 years. As part of the investigation into the City of Providence's largest mass shooting in history, investigators seized over 500 rounds of ammunition in various calibers as well as 12 pistol and rifle magazines, four of which were large capacity magazines able to hold over 30 rounds.
- A 45 year sentence, with 25 years to serve, for a Providence man for shooting and seriously injuring a 26-year old with an illegal gun.
- A Central Falls man sentenced to consecutive life sentences, plus 10 years concurrent, for a 2020 murder with an illegal gun.

Instances where each firearm make was involved in a case in 2022

16% Involved a Glock

6% Involved a Polymer80 ghost gun

