

Forestry Law Enforcement Manual

Crime Scene Exploitation for Firearms and Ballistics

Guide to evidence collection and management



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Front cover photographs: Weapons seized in August for Nicaragua Operation on Illegal Timber trade

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INTRODUCTION

The illegal extraction of natural resources by armed groups militarizes ecologically important and sensitive areas. These militia groups reduce the potential for conservation, while also creating the conditions leading to severe human rights abuses. In the short term, large-scale environmental crime threatens human populations located close to valuable resources. The destruction of natural resources exacerbates inter-communal violence, fuels crime and corruption, and instability. Small arms and light weapons proliferate in areas targeted by armed groups.

Logging gangs may carry weapons for a range of reasons, such as to hunt bushmeat when operating in remote areas or for personal protection, to more sinister reasons such as to intimidate local communities or carry out strategic assassinations of environmental activists and others who stand in the way of their illicit activities. Illegal logging and the trafficking of illicitly sourced timber is also a key source of income for some militia and terrorist groups.

During patrols, forestry rangers may come across logging operators, or their camps, where firearms are located. Knowledge of the appropriate precautions and procedures involved in collecting evidence and information regarding the use of firearms and ballistics is imperative.

The aim of this report is to provide practical guidance to law enforcement officers on the subject of firearms and ballistics in order to ensure that when firearms are found, investigations are conducted with a strong awareness of the best practices.

The INTERPOL Environmental Security Programme, in collaboration with the INTERPOL Firearms Programme, have developed this guide on how to exploit the crime scene evidence gathered from the firearms and ballistics

Armed gangs involved in illegal logging

In 2017 INTERPOL facilitated a regional operation focussed on illegal logging in the Mekong basin (Operation LEAD). During this operation, information was received regarding a logging gang involved in illegal logging in protected forest areas in the Lam Dong province. Police seized a large number of weapons from the gang leader, including firearms and ammunition.

left at a crime scene. To better assist investigators in making the proper identification and comparison necessary to link suspects, victims and crime scenes, and provide that information to a court of law, it is critical that the discovery, documentation, collection, marking, preservation, packaging, transportation, and managing of the relevant evidence be done by investigators in a proper and universally-accepted manner. This guide will assist investigators in properly collecting and managing items of physical evidence – focusing on ballistics and firearms – and then successfully presenting them as evidence in a court of law.

This document is intended to act as a guide for forestry law enforcement agencies that may not have used the techniques, tools and services that INTERPOL provides.

These guidelines are written in a general manner, with the expectation that individual investigators will find it necessary to adapt varying parts according to the laws of their countries and the inherent realities of their environment. Additionally, this briefing is not intended to be exhaustive. It is presumed that the reader will already have knowledge or experience in conducting interviews, searches and a range of other investigative techniques needed to deal with criminals, evidence and the preparation of cases for prosecution.

1 CRIME SCENE EXPLOITATION

Since the firearm and fired ammunition components (bullets and cartridge cases) are often a common denominator that link multiple crimes together and link a suspect's gun to a series of crimes, the implementation of a firearm tracing system can help authorities develop and share actionable intelligence across borders in an efficient manner to address transnational crimes. As a result,

internationally mobile criminals who use firearms to further their illicit activities will find escaping detection increasingly challenging.

If firearms are found in the possession of a logger or at the site of a logging camp, the investigation should be expanded to include firearms ballistics. Support can be provided by INTERPOL's Firearms and Environmental Security (ENS) programmes. The incorporation of INTERPOL's Firearms Programme tools, such as *INTERPOL's Ballistic Information Network (IBIN)* and *INTERPOL's illicit Arms Records and tracing Management System (iARMS)*, will support an intelligence-led policing approach.

With the collection of firearms and fired ammunition at the scene, INTERPOL's Firearms Programme tools can contribute to firearm-related criminal investigations by facilitating the international tracing of firearms and ballistics, conducting and disseminating research and analysis on firearm-related crime trends and techniques, as well as intelligence on firearm trafficking routes and methods.

2 CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION (CSI) TECHNIQUES

The basic elements of a crime scene investigation are:

- Arrival at the scene
- Noting and addressing any safety concerns
- Setting initial scene perimeter
- Scene security
- Initial scene photography
- Initial walk-through
- Preservation of fragile evidence
- Re-assessment of equipment or additional personnel needs
- Briefing of other scene processors
- Scene search (this continues throughout the scene processing)
- Visualizing the locating evidence items at the scene
- Evidence location tagging
- Evidence location list
- Crime scene photography
- General CSI photography guidelines
- Mapping the location of evidence items
- Crime scene sketch
- Marking evidence items
- Packaging and sealing evidence items
- Methods of sealing evidence packages
- Tagging evidence items and packages
- Evidence receipts
- Chain-of-custody record
- Evidence submittal form
- CSI report
- Specific evidence collecting /packaging issues
 - Firearms
 - Bullets and cartridge casings
 - Tool marks
 - Friction ridge evidence
 - Footwear and tire tracks
 - Trace evidence

This guide will focus on the investigation techniques that pertain to the crime scene evidence exploitation of firearms and ballistics.

3 FIREARMS

National, regional, and international actions to identify and eradicate firearm-related crime rely upon the prompt and timely communication of relevant information by law enforcement agencies and, in particular, effective international firearm tracing. These activities require close cooperation between a broad range of organizations such as police, customs, and border protection agencies as well as regulatory services.

The INTERPOL illicit Arms Records and tracing Management System (iARMS), part of the INTERPOL Information System, is an information technology application which facilitates information exchange and cooperation between law enforcement agencies on firearm-related crime.

3.1 Firearms Collection

All firearms and ammunitions are dangerous. Treat all firearms as if they are loaded, and all munitions as if they are live, until you have personally confirmed otherwise. If you do not have specialist knowledge, never assume that firearms or ammunitions are safe to handle until they have been inspected by a relevant expert. You should not approach, handle, move, operate, or modify firearms and ammunitions unless explicitly trained to do so.



Figure 1: Arms and weapons seized in September 2017, together with illegal logging equipment, during a Brazilian law enforcement operation (Source: Diario Digital 26/09/2017 http://tinyurl.com/ybdzt224)

In the specific example of loaded firearms found at the scene, these firearms should be unloaded at the scene, using caution to preserve possible latent fingerprint evidence on the item and the ammunition and removable magazines.

Before handling any firearms make sure all firearm evidence items are unloaded and ACT safely:

- **A** Assume every firearm is loaded.
- **C** Control the muzzle direction at all times.
- **T** Trigger finger must be kept off the trigger and out of the trigger guard.

Verify that the firearm is unloaded and **PROVE** it safe:

P – Point the firearm in the safest available direction

R – Remove all cartridges

O – Observe the chamber

V – Verify the feeding path

E – Examine the bore

Do not scratch initials or item numbers into the stock, receiver or barrel of firearms. Record the <u>make</u>, <u>model</u>, <u>calibre</u>, <u>manufacturer and/or importer</u>, and <u>serial number</u> and attach a tag with the item number.

Do not shoot black powder firearms to unload them. Remove the cap/primer/flint and have a person with the proper expertise in handling such weapons to unload them by pulling the projectile.

Place firearms in a padded plastic case for shipping. Cardboard boxes are not sufficient for protection as the firearms may shift and break out of the boxes in transit and stocks and scopes may be damaged.

Leave unloaded detachable magazines in or with the firearms.

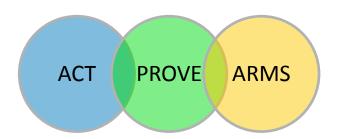
If you encounter any unexploded ordnance (UXO) or explosive remnants of war (ERW), always remember the "ARMS" acronym:

A - AVOID the area

R – RECORD all relevant information

M - MARK the area to warn others

S - SEEK assistance from the relevant authorities



3.2 Firearms Exploitation

3.2.1 INTERPOL illicit Arms Records and tracing Management System (iARMS)



The INTERPOL Illicit Arms Records and tracing Management System (iARMS) facilitates information exchange and cooperation between law enforcement agencies on firearm crime. This web-based platform:

- provides a centralized system for the reporting and querying of lost, stolen and trafficked/smuggled firearms by law enforcement agencies globally;
- facilitates the submission of, and responses to, international firearm trace requests, and the monitoring of the status of these requests.

iARMS is an information technology system to aid global information and intelligence exchange and law enforcement cooperation on firearms crime. iARMS can be divided into three functional components.

The Firearm Records Management Module enables authorized law enforcement officers to:

- create, manage and share records of lost, stolen or trafficked/ smuggled firearms rapidly and securely;
- notify a country quickly and easily when a recorded firearm is seized;
- generate reports and analysis on lost, stolen, or trafficked/ smuggled firearms.

The Trace Requests Management Module provides an easy-to-use platform to facilitate international firearm tracing activities. iARMS enables authorized law enforcement officers to:

- submit a Trace Request;
- read, monitor and export incoming and outgoing Trace Requests;
- respond to or comment on an incoming Trace Request;
- update the status of a Trace Request;
- generate and analyse reporting on incoming and outgoing Trace Requests.

The Statistics and Analysis Module allows INTERPOL member countries to analyse national data information on firearm-related crime through tracing, and to generate tailored reports.

3.2.1.1 Benefits of iARMS

The INTERPOL illicit Arms Records and tracing Management System (iARMS) was designed to track the recovered firearm's transaction history and identify the firearm's stolen or lost status. In other words, iARMS optimal use helps answer the question: "Who has had contact with this firearm?"

iARMS is a state-of-the art tool that facilitates information exchange and investigative cooperation between law enforcement agencies in relation to the international movement of illicit firearms, as well as licit firearms that have been involved in the commission of a crime.

iARMS is the first centralized system for reporting and querying lost, stolen, trafficked and smuggled firearms. Authorized users can query the iARMS database and instantly determine whether the firearm they seized had been reported to INTERPOL by another member country. It also provides member countries with the capacity to statistically chart their requests and responses for international

assistance. iARMS assists INTERPOL member countries to analyse national data information on firearm-related crime and tracing, and to generate tailored reports.

iARMS database tracing module gives leads on recovered firearms and related criminal investigations by facilitating the international tracing of firearms. This information will enable the investigators to determine how the firearm has moved through the chain of legal custody to become illicit. This will lead the investigator to determine who are the possible firearms traffickers and the possible trafficking routes and trends. This information will enable investigators to connect the dots in the investigation that would not have been easily detected if firearm tracing had not taken place using iARMS.

It is an integral part of the international strategy and operational framework to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.



Figure 2: Weapons seized in August for Nicaragua Operation on Illegal Timber trade. (Source: Nicaragua Environmental Protection division. Criminal File 18012-2017-01435.)

3.2.2 INTERPOL Firearms Reference Table (IFRT)

The INTERPOL Firearms Reference Table (IFRT) is an interactive online tool for authorized law enforcement users that was created by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to help the global police community identify firearms. The IFRT provides a standardized methodology to identify and describe firearms, and enables an investigator to obtain or verify the details of a firearm — including the make, model, caliber, country of origin and serial number.

The IFRT contains:

- more than 250,000 firearm references;
- more than 57,000 firearm images;
- extensive information on firearm markings including trademarks, logos and insignias;
- thousands of useful definitions and terms for firearm parts, accessories, functions and processes;
- company histories;
- acronyms;
- manufacturers' codes.

The IFRT is a comprehensive reference system designed to keep the needs of international users, or investigators in mind with policing, importation and exportation control or checkpoints, firearm tracking and counter terrorism initiatives.

The IFRT is an interactive online tool which can assist authorized law enforcement users to obtain or verify the make, model, calibre, and country of origin of a firearm. The IFRT contains more than 250,000 firearm references and more than 57,000 firearm images, as well as extensive information on firearm markings.

This information is regularly updated in consultation with firearm experts. INTERPOL also welcomes input from the law enforcement community to identify additional firearms for inclusion in the IFRT.

The purpose of the IFRT is to provide the global police community with an easy-to-use investigative tool. Additionally, the IFRT is designed to supplement system user information. For example, in the event of a firearms seizure in which all firearm information is missing, the IFRT serves as a reference tool for expert investigators and non-expert investigators.

The accurate identification of a firearm in iARMS requires the five unique identifiers of any five key pieces of information about that firearm:

- The serial number
- The country of origin and/or country of last known legal importation
- The make (what it is known as)
- The model, and
- The calibre/gauge.

To maximize international law enforcement outcomes, it is recommended that all iARMS users consult the IFRT as appropriate to verify the unique identifiers of a firearm for which a search will be conducted, or for which a trace request will be created.







Figure 3: Different identification on firearms. Source: INTERPOL Firearms – Strategic Plan 2013-2015.

3.2.2.1 Benefits of IFRT

The IFRT and iARMS are very complimentary in nature and are useful tools to law enforcement communities for the proper identification and tracking of weapons.

4 BULLETS AND CARTRIDGE CASINGS

Every firearm leaves unique microscopic markings on the surface areas of fired bullets and cartridge cases — a sort of "ballistic fingerprint." By utilizing technology that can read and catalogue these ballistic fingerprints, such as Ultra Electronics Forensic Technology's Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS *), users are able to share and compare thousands of ballistics exhibits in a matter of hours within national boundaries.

To advance international police cooperation in the use and exchange of ballistics data using IBIS, INTERPOL has introduced a direct access autonomous database to compare ballistics data across international borders: the INTERPOL Ballistics Informational Network (IBIN).

4.1 Ballistics Collection

It is useful to research the same initial area from the opposite or different direction as lighting changes may make evidence items such as cartridge cases visible later in the day as the sun changes direction.

If DNA processing is not needed, gently wash the blood off the bullets and then air dry. Package the bullets in paper envelopes.

Additionally, moisture can also degrade and destroy DNA evidence.

Cartridge cases often pick up latent fingerprints when being loaded into rifle or pistol magazines.





Figure 4: Cartridge casings often pick up latent fingerprints when being loaded into rifle or pistol magazines

Do not store bullets in plastic bags or plastic or glass vials, since any moisture, combined with blood and tissue, will putrefy and form acids that will etch the surface of the bullets and destroy fine detail needed for comparison purposes.

Do not use pliers or forceps to remove bullets, as those instruments can scratch the surface that is important for microscopic comparisons.

Do not scratch marks on bullets or cartridge cases. Mark the outside of the container with the item number and initials.





Figure 5: Use available materials to avoid adding your own prints, or smudging the ones already there when you collect and ship the casings

Try not to add your own prints, or smudge the ones already there, when you collect and ship the casings.

Dry wet cartridge cases or shot-shells, and place them in paper containers.

Always consider the possibility of latent prints, and preserve/protect the items accordingly.

Important note: the newly discovered items of evidence (e.g. a pile of expended cartridge casings) and/or objects of interest should be visualized as to location with bright flags or tape. Items that will actually be collected (e.g. expended casings) can be additionally identified with numbered signs. Once this is done, a few 'over-all', 'mid-range', and 'close-up' photos will clearly show the distribution of located items and objects of interest at a crime scene. Additionally, a list should be made of <u>all</u> objects of interest and evidence items documented (by a photograph and sketch) and/or collected at a specific crime scene.

*It is better if one investigator collects, marks, packages and tags all of the located evidence items at a crime scene. Also, a located evidence list can be incorporated into a more comprehensive crime scene investigation (or evidence collection notes) report.

4.2 Ballistics Exploitation

4.2.1 INTERPOL Ballistics Informational Network (IBIN)

IBIN is a platform for the large-scale international sharing and comparing of ballistics data. In partnership with Ultra Electronics Forensic Technology, this network connects member countries or territories that use IBIS and enables the cross-border exchange of ballistics data, taking the IBIS system from a national to an international level. More specifically, IBIN enables INTERPOL member countries using IBIS technology to submit ballistics data to a centralized database for effective cross-border comparison enabling international 'potential hits' while providing maximum flexibility and security.

Just like fingerprint data can link crimes and criminals across international borders, so too can the international sharing of ballistics data. IBIN will find connection between separate crimes that would otherwise have gone undetected. In addition, initiating searches between two or more IBIN participating countries where there are known links between criminal entities or groups will generate the greatest possibility of success. Over time, we anticipate that analysis of the shared ballistics data will reveal illicit firearms trafficking routes and provide police with critical information about firearms traffickers, and transnational organized crime.



Figure 6: IBIN member economies as for August 2016. Source: INTERPOL IBIN website

Note: When an IBIN user uploads ballistics data into the national IBIS system, a copy of the data is automatically sent to one of the IBIN servers unless the reporting officer indicates otherwise. Copied data are not automatically correlated into the system. A ballistics expert must manually request a search in IBIN and indicate which countries and/or regions to correlate the data against according to the investigative leads of the case. A ballistic expert only correlates against the entire database under rare circumstances, as doing so creates additional workload for the ballistics expert.

An INTERPOL member country that is not a member of IBIN yet possesses the IBIS technology, an INTERPOL member country without the IBIS technology, or an INTERPOL member country with a different technology can still benefit from IBIN's reservoir of international ballistics data. Coordination is made between INTERPOL member countries through NCBs for assistance in international ballistic searches. Through this service, test fires or double-casts of ballistics evidence are processed for entry into IBIN and correlations performed. Correlation results are sent to the requesting country and INTERPOL General Secretariat. The requesting country will also receive a list of the IBIN countries ballistic national databases searched.

The procedure for submitting exhibits for entry into IBIN is as follows:

- **1. Contact your national INTERPOL NCB and an INTERPOL IBIN representative** to inform them that you have ballistics exhibits that you wish to submit for entry into IBIN. A case by case study will determine the process.
- **2.** Test fire the weapon in question or, if the exhibits are from a crime scene, use the double-casting techniques to create casts of evidence.
 - For more information on how to create a double-cast, please refer to the INTERPOL Ballistics Information Network: Handbook on the Collection and Sharing of Ballistics Data.
- **3.** We recommend that you complete the **Casted or Test Fired Ballistics Evidence Transmittal Form (or similar form)** to ensure all submitted exhibits remain accounted for throughout the process. Attach your official laboratory report.

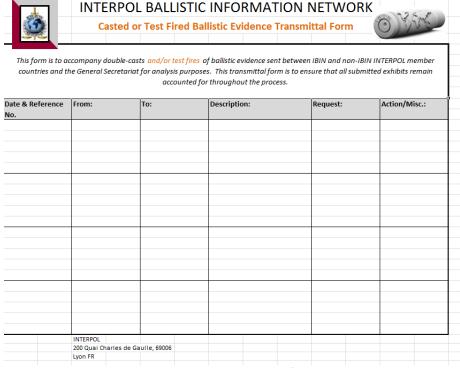


Figure 7: Casted form. Source: INTERPOL Firearms website/Available on request.

4. The following information must be supplied:

- Which regions or countries within IBIN would you like the exhibit(s) to be searched?
 (Where does the investigative information and intelligence lead?)
- Will you need the exhibits returned to you?
- What was the offense?
- What was the date of occurrence of the offense?
- Is the date of the occurrence unknown?
- Is there a time constraint? (Is there a defendant in custody?)
- Were there additional bullets or cartridge cases recovered that have not been submitted?

4.2.1.1 Benefits of IBIN

The IBIS technology has enabled countries to detect links between previously unknown crimes on a national scale. IBIN allows police to detect these links in an international arena. By joining IBIN, member countries become part of an international network, giving participating countries the opportunity to search their ballistic data against those of another IBIN participating country. Bullets fired from the same gun used in multiple countries can be searched (correlated) with data from other countries. Hits within IBIN can provide essential leads for making connections between crimes and crime scenes in other countries and for locating criminals who escape prosecution by jumping borders. Over time, as IBIN grows, it will also provide statistics and intelligence about the movement of illicit firearms.

The success of this database, like any other, is dependent upon the inclusion of records and active searches against its records. The more participants, the greater the probability of discovering links between countries and investigations.

5 EVIDENCE MANAGEMENT¹

5.1.1 Marking Evidence Items

Whenever possible, all collected evidence items (or at least the evidence packaging) should be <u>permanently</u> marked for later identification with:

- The investigative case number
- The unique item number
- The investigator's name (or initials) or badge number
- The date of collection

5.1.2 Packaging and Sealing Evidence Items

As appropriate, evidence items should be packaged into <u>new</u> and <u>clean</u>:

- Paper envelopes
- Paper bags
- Cardboard boxes
- Plastic jars or vials
- Metal cans

The package should then be sealed in such a manner as to prevent undetected access into the package by unauthorized persons. The purpose of a sealed evidence package is to ensure that the contained evidence items have not been switched or altered in any manner during storage and prior to presentation in a court of law.

5.1.3 Tagging Evidence Items and Packages

All sealed evidence packages and all loose (non-packaged) evidence items should be tagged for identification with an Evidence Seizure Tag which is attached to the exterior of the evidence package or loose evidence item, and contains the following information:

- A unique seizure tag number
- The agency investigation (case) number
- The date and time of seizure
- The seizure location
- A description of the evidence item(s)
- The name and badge number of the investigator making the seizure

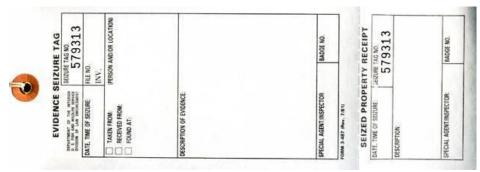


Figure 8: An example of an Evidence Seizure Tag

¹ For further background reading see the INTERPOL Handbook on Ballistics Information: https://www.interpol.int/content/download/14683/102876/version/16/file/14Y0277%20E%20INTERPOL%20BALLISTICS%20INFORMATION _pdf available October 3, 2017

Some Agency Seizure Tags also include a removable 'Seized Property Receipt' (which can be filled out, torn off and given to the owner of the property at the time of seizure) and a chain-of-custody record (usually on the back of the tag).

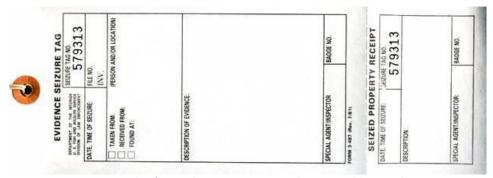


Figure 9: An example of an Evidence Seizure Tag with a removable Seized Property Receipt

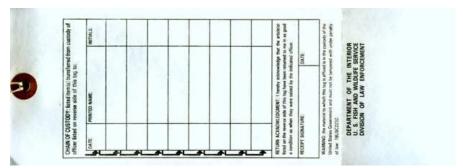


Figure 10: An example of an Evidence Seizure Tag with a Chain-of-Custody record on the back

5.1.4 Evidence Receipts

As a general rule, if an investigator takes custody of an item of evidence, that investigator <u>must</u> either 1) remain in possession of that evidence (ideally in a sealed evidence package, and placed in a locked storage area), or 2) possess a receipt for the transfer of that evidence to another person or storage facility.

An evidence receipt can be:

- A copy of a signed Chain-of-Custody Record
- The torn-off receipt (signed) from an Evidence Seizure Tag
- The signed back of an Evidence Seizure Tag
- A separate evidence receipt form
- A hand-written and signed receipt

5.1.5 Chain-of-Custody Record

A Chain-of-Custody Record documents the possession (custody) of evidence items from time of seizure to the time of final release or disposal.

Important note: the original Chain-of-Custody Form (bearing original signatures) should accompany the sealed and tagged evidence packages and/or loose tagged evidence items.

Persons releasing custody of evidence packages and/or loose evidence items to another individual or evidence storage facility should keep a copy of the completely signed Chain-of-Custody record as a receipt for the released evidence.

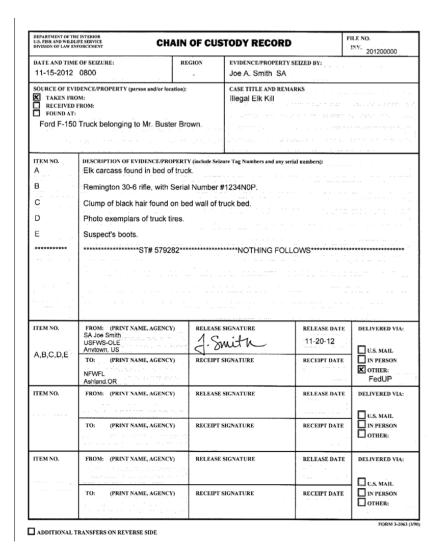


Figure 11: An example of a Chain-of-Custody Record form

5.1.6 Evidence Submission Form

When submitting items of evidence to a forensics laboratory for analysis, the use of an Evidence Submittal Form will clarify what evidence items were submitted and what examinations were requested.

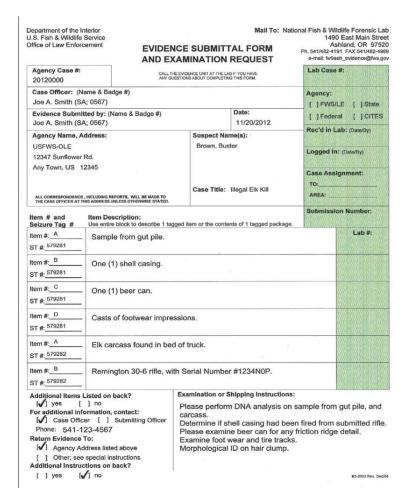


Figure 12: An example of an Evidence Submittal and Examination Request Form

5.1.7 The Crime Scene Investigation Report

A Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) report is a compilation of all activities performed, and all evidence items located, documented and collected by the CSI team or other persons.

Note: CSI notes and reports can be made in any format (including on blank sheets of paper); but preprinted forms help ensure that all necessary information is recorded at the scene (an important consideration when investigators are tired or working under stressful conditions).

Important note: CSI reports and all other crime scene forms must be filled out in ink, never in pencil. If a mistake is made, draw a line through the error and initial the correction.

6 MAKING CONTACT

For additional information or questions on iARMS, IFRT, and/or IBIN, please visit the INTERPOL Firearms Programme information page on the dashboard or e-mail iARMS@interpol.int or visit the website: https://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Firearms-trafficking/Firearms-trafficking

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global challenges in policing and security.



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