

2020

**BURLINGTON POLICE
DEPARTMENT**

**Criminal Investigations
Annual Review**

Sgt. Josh Light
Criminal Investigations
Gang and Violent Crime Unit

267 W. Front Street
Burlington, NC 27215



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Purpose:

Purpose of the Criminal Investigation Division:

The Criminal Investigation Division's (CID) primary purpose is to investigate, identify, and apprehend persons involved in criminal activity in the City of Burlington.

Typically, detectives investigate a vast range of criminal incidents, including violent crime, sexual assaults, fraud, and property offenses. Incidents assigned to detectives often require specialized knowledge, skill sets, training and may take more time to solve than a patrol officer can typically invest during a preliminary investigation. CID serves in both a reactive and proactive function for solving and reducing criminal activity.

This annual review contains information and data from the Special Victims Unit (SVU), the Persons, Property, Financial Crimes Unit (PPFC), and the Gang and Violent Crime Unit (GVCU). The Alamance Narcotics Enforcement Team (ANET) and Victim Assistance are also part of CID, but information from those units is contained in alternate annual reports.

The PPFC unit's primary focus includes investigating individuals involved in organized retail theft groups, property offenses, and financial crimes. PPFC proactively monitors pawn shops, conducts an analysis of criminal activity trends, and periodically manages surveillance details in response to on-going criminal information obtained by the Crime Analysis Unit (CAU).

SVU was initiated in 2010. This unit's primary focus includes investigating sexual assaults, domestic violence, missing persons, and abuse cases. SVU also engages in proactive Internet Crimes against Children cases, prostitution stings, and human trafficking operations.

The Gang and Violent Crime Unit (GVCU) was developed in 2016 based primarily on increased violent crime negatively impacting our community. Internal reviews indicated that violent crime was being committed by persons who had gang affiliations, as well as individuals who did not. As a result, GVCU was created with the overall objective to focus on violent crime, whether gang-affiliated or not. This strategy also focuses on allocating some of our best investigators to handle our most violent crime, leading to a high level of clearance by arrest. The primary offenses investigated by GVCU include homicide, aggravated assault, robbery, and related firearm offenses. GVCU also gathers intelligence regarding criminal street gang members and associates' activity through interviews, social media, and on-scene investigations. The primary goal of GVCU is to reduce violent crime.

Based on the continuation of criminal activity in the community, the need exists for CID to remain.

Overview of the Year – 2020:

Overview:

Throughout 2020, the Criminal Investigation Division faced a set of challenges never before seen in law enforcement. In the earlier parts of the year, CID had to develop a plan to help slow the spread of COVID19 and maintain the highest quality of customer service to Burlington's citizens. CID rose to the challenge and continued to solve investigations and work together during this difficult time.

Criminal Investigations conducted eight homicide investigations during the year, all of which resulted in the arrest of the persons responsible. One of the eight homicides was determined to have occurred in Vance County; however, investigators dedicated an enormous effort to solve this case. A second homicide was determined to have been justified, with no charges being issued. Each major investigation over the year was complicated due to limited staffing, yet detectives worked tirelessly to solve these investigations. Countless other investigations would not have been solved if not for the dedication of these detectives.

Detectives also worked a joint investigation with multiple agencies regarding a violent juvenile auto theft group. This investigation spanned across many counties and jurisdictions. Detectives were successfully able to bring the pieces together to hold those responsible accountable for their actions.

Impact of COVID:

COVID19 presented a new set of challenges for investigators for the year. Interaction with community members through interviews, interrogations, and community contacts is a large part of a detective's technique to gather information on criminal incidents. COVID19 severely hampered interviews causing many contacts to occur over a phone or out in the field. Mandatory mask executive orders made reading non-verbal cues difficult in interviews. The mask order also created issues in identifying criminals from surveillance videos. To help slow the spread of the virus, CID also switched mainly to working an A and B rotation matching that of the Patrol Division. This limited the number of available detectives to respond to immediate incidents. During major incidents, CID essentially worked with half of the detectives we would normally deploy. With all the changes being present, CID was still able to maintain its caseload. Although presenting challenges with staffing, the current schedule has created better communication with patrol teams.

COVID19 has also limited the ability of detectives to conduct joint operations with surrounding agencies and proactive investigations. Typical operations that occurred before COVID19 were human trafficking operations, fugitive operations, and investigations that covered multiple

jurisdictions. COVID19 severely reduced these operations due to the number of staff usually present and to prevent close contact between staff.

Recap of Last Year's Report Recommendations:

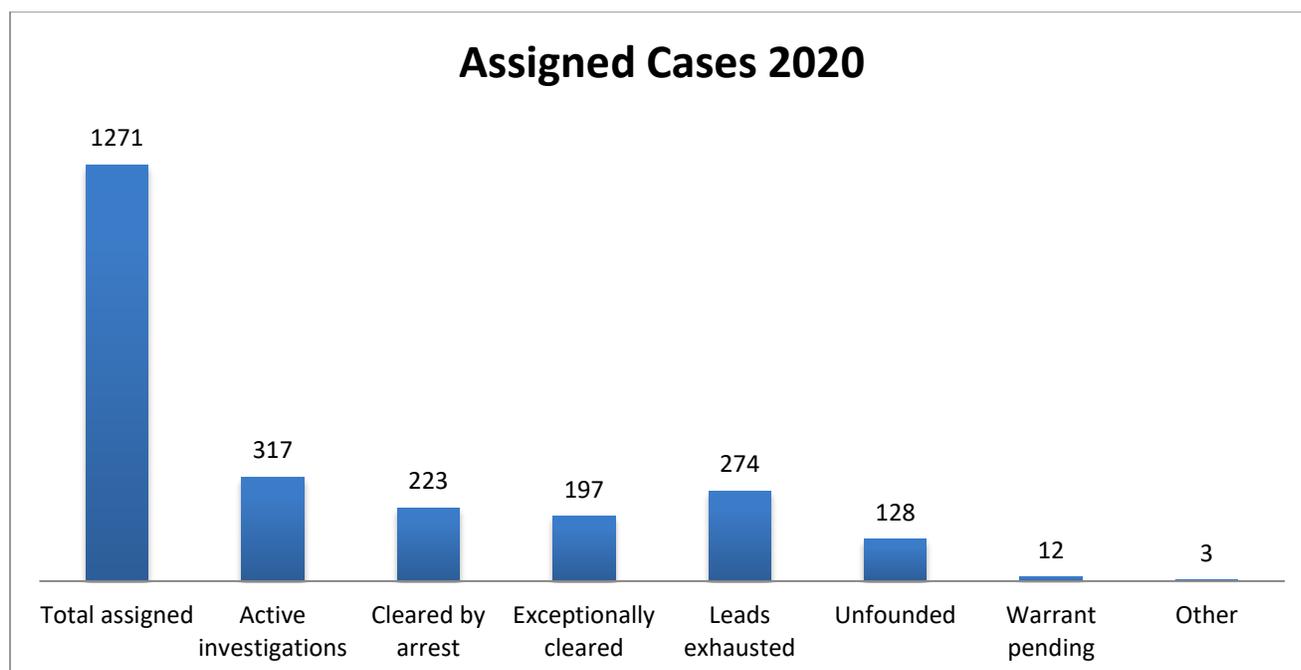
Recommendations for 2020 and Actions Taken:

1. Continuation of the NIBIN program. **This action was completed. Detectives are continuing to use the NIBIN program to assist investigations.**
2. Develop a particular protocol and location for the storage of street-level intelligence that would assist ongoing and future investigations across divisions. **This action was not completed.**
3. Select a second detective to receive Triage and Acquisition training for the NIBIN program. This action was completed. **Two detectives have been selected to attend Triage and Acquisition training in January 2021. This training will occur in Greensboro, North Carolina.**
4. Revise the directives of the Burlington Police Department to include the case management and quality control strategies that were initiated in 2018. These practices have been in place but have not been added to the policy. The practices include major case review of all homicide investigations, quarterly review of the caseload of each detective and quarterly SVU detective counseling sessions. **CID is completing the practices but has determined these are standard operating procedures and should not be listed in the policy.**
5. Continue to formalize CID intelligence gathering and sharing component to include identifying focused patrol offenders and specific locations of criminal activity, increase collaboration with the CAU and collaborate with the other divisions to collect, share, and combat criminal activity. **Completed**
6. Rewrite the BPD offender accountability program to develop a new program that will improve the sustainability and overall effectiveness, with the goal of targeting high risk, repeat DV offenders. **This action was not completed. Currently, the District Attorneys staff and Judges do not support implementation of this program.**
7. Reassign SVU detective(s) to the Family Justice Center (FJC). **This action was completed. SVU detectives are now on a three-month rotation to increase communication and cooperation.**
8. Obtain a vehicle and equipment to develop a bait car program in cooperation with the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) and Nationwide Insurance. **This action was not completed. CID was able to obtain a vehicle for use but is still in the process of outfitting and researching options for vehicle equipment. Due to COVID19 implications, NCIB is no longer supplying equipment for the bait car program.**

Report Data:

Case Assignment:

Last year detectives reviewed 8,604 preliminary report investigations during their routine morning meeting sessions. During these reviews, CID determines the recommended status of the investigation based on numerous solvability factors. Many of these preliminary incidents are assigned to a detective. The detective will continue with the investigation until arrests are made, or no further leads are developed. Below is a graph showing the number of cases assigned by Criminal Investigations in 2020.



Over the course of 2020, CID received numerous cases from the Department of Social Services (DSS) that are sent directly to the division. CID received 222 DSS cases that are reviewed, assigned and investigated. After review, CID generated 161 preliminary incident reports that were assigned to a detective for investigation.

CID also participated in 88 child forensic interviews. A forensic interview is a specific interview protocol used for children to prevent leading questions. This can be a time-consuming process depending on the information officers wish to obtain and the crime at hand.

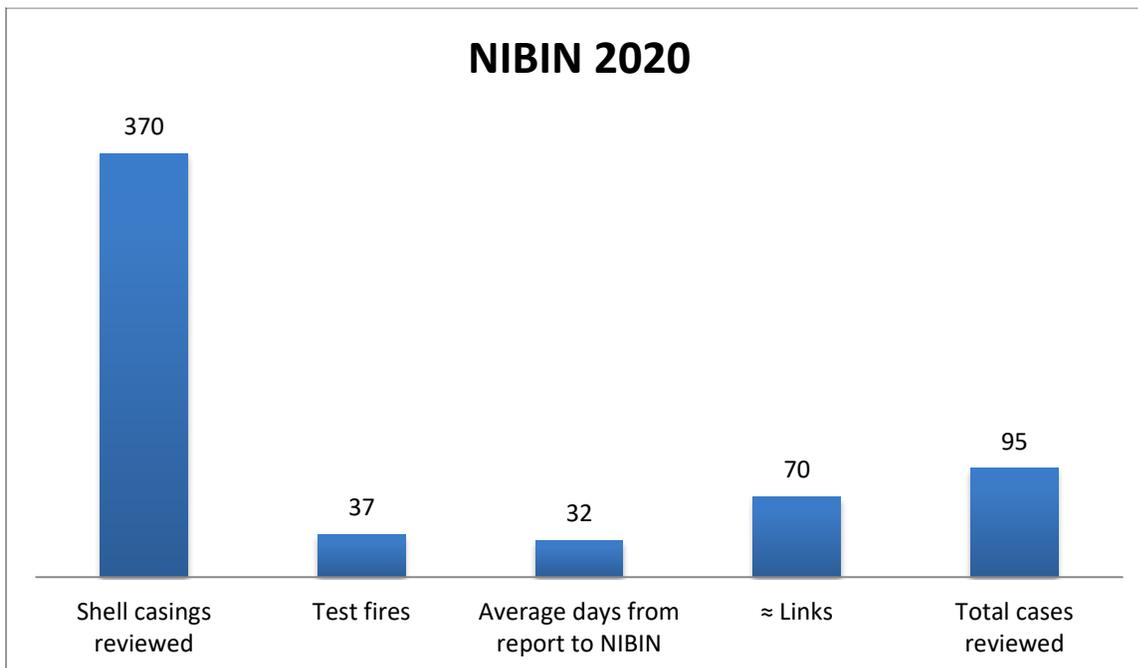
NIBIN Information:

On August 1, 2019, CID initiated participation in the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN). This program has primarily been completed by evidence personnel or crime

scene investigators. Due to the potential leads and information that could be obtained, CID requested to take over the responsibilities of this program as it correlates with violent crime.

This process consists of a detective physically inspecting each shell casing, crime evidence, or test firing of firearms involved in an incident for selection for entry into NIBIN. Once the shell casings have been triaged, they will be transported to the Greensboro Police Department's Western Field Office. This particular substation of the Greensboro Police Department houses the IBIS Trax computer terminal. High-resolution photographs are then forwarded to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) National Correlation and Training Center (NNCTC) located in Huntsville, Alabama. The shell casing images are compared to the previously submitted crime scene and/or test-fired casings sent in by law enforcement agencies nationwide. This can be extremely beneficial for detectives if leads are developed quickly in the investigation.

The information obtained for review mostly consists of case incidents that occurred in 2020. During the last several months of 2020, entry into NIBIN was significantly reduced due to our NIBIN coordinator being unavailable and detectives being reassigned to an investigative task force. Detectives have worked to enter nearly all shell casings recovered, and test-fired most firearms seized in 2020. This review does not consist of firearms that were collected in non-criminal situations such as safekeeping and most found property situations. The following table indicates a brief glimpse to the work completed during 2020 regarding NIBIN:



In reviewing the data collected, the most common firearm used and/or seized during incidents in 2020 is a 9mm handgun. The second and third most used caliber is 380 and 40 caliber. This is consistent with that collected in 2019.

Findings:

Successes or Failures:

CID has seen many successes during this unusual year. In reviewing clearance rates for CID, the rate of cases being closed by arrest to those being closed with no further leads is nearly identical to the prior year, if also factoring in cases with warrants pending. This is an impressive feat given the circumstances of the year. CID has a 100% clearance rate on all homicides this year. Many of these investigations were complex and difficult. One manslaughter investigation, as a result of arson, utilized both local and federal agencies in an effort to bring justice in the incident.

Detectives went above and beyond during a particular missing person case when officers spent multiple days at a large dump site searching for the body of a missing woman in order to bring closure to her family.

One failure during the year was failing to utilize the bait car to its full potential. Some of this is attributed to COVID19. This tool can play a significant role in not only CID investigations but patrol investigations as well. CID has failed to adequately educate patrol of the resource and limitations of deployment if requested.

Training:

Detectives were unable to attend most training in 2020 due to COVID19. However, training conducted prior to COVID along with virtual training during COVID included having several detectives attend advanced assault by strangulation, five officers to RADAR (Recognizing Abuse Disclosure and Responding) school, and two detectives to RADAR for 1st responders. Four detectives also attended the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) virtual conference. CID was also able to send two detectives in late 2020 to drone school. One detective also attended Interview and Interrogation school during 2020. During the year, CID noticed a need for additional training in interrogation. Classes are scheduled for February, 2021.

Equipment:

During 2020, detectives were able to secure a Toyota Tundra, free of charge, for use in insurance-related investigations. This vehicle can be used for crimes with an insurance nexus to include property offenses, stolen motor vehicle cases, and others. CID also purchased cameras to outfit the vehicle with the ability to have a mobile surveillance platform.

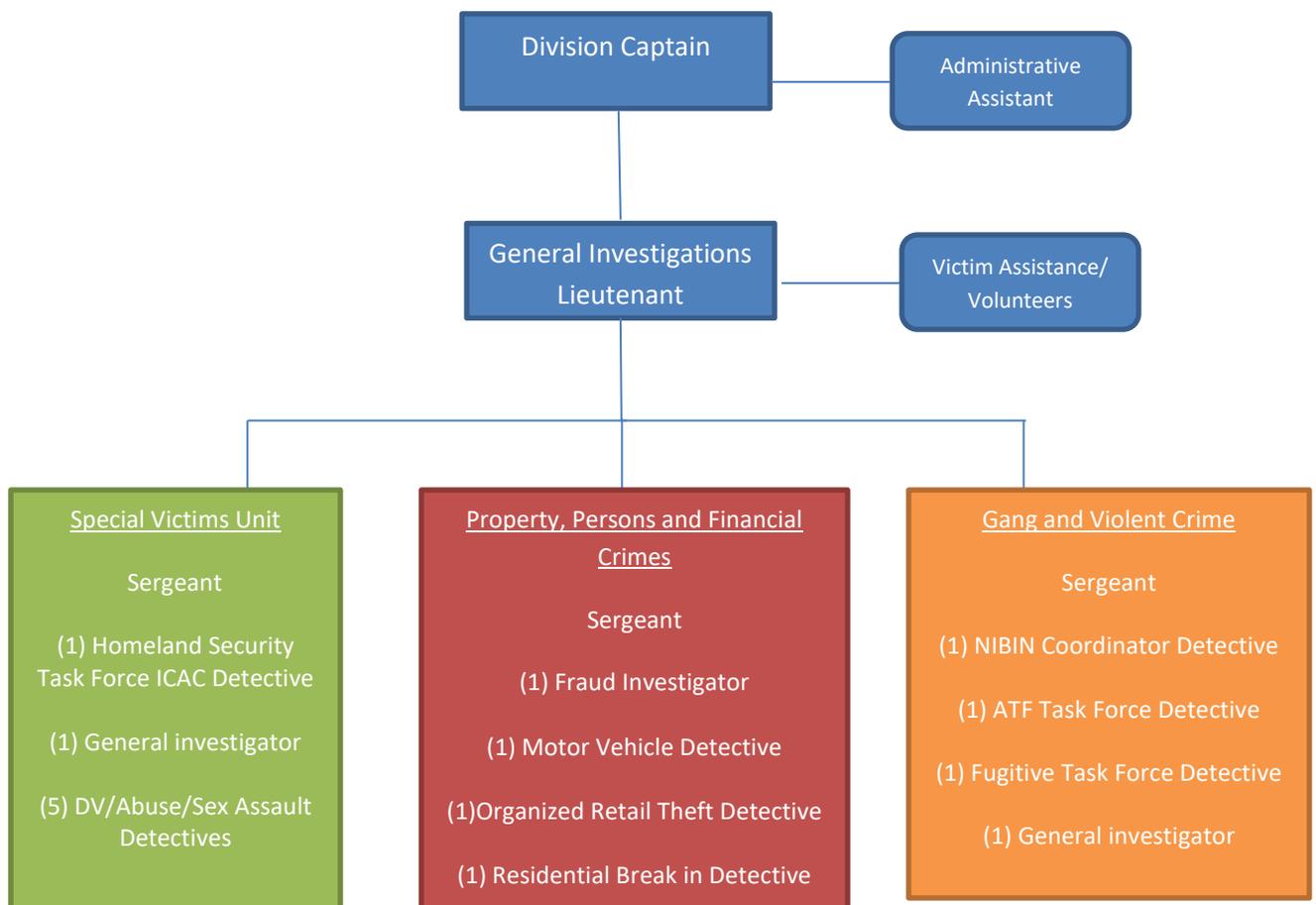
Callyo, an extensive phone system, was also purchased. Both ANET and CID use this system on many platforms. Some include controlled phone calls, the ability to have GPS location, and live drone footage.

Fiscal Component:

CID uses several pieces of equipment during investigations with a recurring annual cost. One is Nest Aware, which is used for video surveillance and storage. The annual cost to operate these cameras is \$120 per year. The second is Callyo, with a \$10,228 yearly reoccurring cost.

Operations and Personnel:

Criminal Investigations is currently allotted 17 sworn detectives. As of December 31, 2020, there are 13 sworn detectives with 4 vacancies. The division is currently divided into three units which specialize in specific criminal activity and investigations. Each unit is supervised by a sergeant. The division is commanded by a captain followed by a lieutenant who oversees the sergeants of each unit. Criminal Investigations is also heavily supported by a CID administrative specialist, victim's assistance and two part-time civilian investigative assistants. Many detectives in each unit serve in additional roles beyond that of just investigating specific incidents as shown in the chart below.



Many things have changed since COVID19, one being the operating schedule of CID. Prior to COVID19, detectives worked Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Based on the need for a detective's response to incidents that occur outside normal working hours, detectives and

supervisors in CID work an on-call rotation. Two on-call detectives work 5 p.m. to 2 a.m., which helps reduce response time and overtime for call-out situations. There were 7 on-call teams with detectives being on call once every 7 weeks. The Lieutenant and Sergeants from CID cover on-call once every 4 weeks.

Since COVID19, detectives within PPFC and SUV work an A and B rotation that follows the patrol schedule and hours worked. GVCU still works Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Policy/ Procedure:

The General Investigations Policy (05-01) was reviewed for 2020. During the review of this policy, current practice and operations are consistent with the document.

In April 2019, the policy for the Gang and Violent Crime Unit (05-03) was authored and published. During the review of this policy, we verified current practice and operations are consistent with the procedures outlined. There were no changes to this policy during 2020.

Recommendations for 2021:

Recommendations:

1. Obtain mannequin heads for agency wide training and use in assault by strangulation investigations. The use of the mannequin head was discovered during advanced strangulation training for victims to show officers the way the assault occurred. This would allow for more in-depth interviews and along with a visual component, with the use of a BWC, to aide in prosecution.
2. Outfit current bait car obtained in 2020 with a surveillance platform that can be used in criminal investigations.
3. Focus on a second detective trained in arson investigations. Currently, we have one detective trained in investigating arsons and a second investigator trained in this area would assist in succession planning for the division.
4. Obtain basic and advanced interview and interrogation classes for CID.
5. Obtain certifications for two investigators to operate the drones assigned to CID. Over the past year, the two investigators certified in operating drones left the agency and took employment with the SBI.