



# MAYORS AGAINST ILLEGAL GUNS

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## TRACING GUNS TO SOLVE CRIMES AND ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY

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The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) makes available to all local law enforcement agencies—at no cost—the opportunity to trace any firearm recovered in a criminal investigation. A recovered firearm that is successfully traced may generate a lead for an ongoing investigation, and the trace result will contribute to the larger body of crime gun trace data that can illustrate intrastate and interstate trafficking patterns—assisting law enforcement across the country in crafting more effective strategies for preventing gun crime.

### WHAT IS CRIME GUN TRACING?

Since 1968, all firearms manufactured in or imported into the U.S. have been required to bear a serial number—which, along with other required markings on the firearm, will generally allow it to be uniquely identified. When a law enforcement agency recovers a firearm, it can submit the serial number along with other details about the gun to ATF, who can use it to attempt to identify the firearms licensee who made the first retail sale of the firearm.

A successful firearms trace will identify the first retail purchaser of the firearm. This individual, or entity, may be the perpetrator of the crime, or else may be otherwise relevant to the case or have further information to contribute about the circumstances of the crime or its perpetrator.

Not only may a firearm trace be useful to solve a specific investigation, but it may also be directly pertinent to the investigation of related crimes—and, when analyzed in the context of other firearms traces, it may also help delineate meaningful patterns in gun trafficking. For example, trace data may indicate that certain gun buyers are responsible for a disproportionate share of purchases of firearms that are later recovered at crime scenes.

The Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative was established in 1996 to promote firearms tracing, and the number of firearms traced by ATF has increased every year since. In 2013, ATF traced more than 245,000 firearms on behalf of law enforcement agencies. To date, the agency has responded to more than 5 million trace requests.

### WHAT IS ETRACE?

eTrace is a secure online portal offered by the ATF as a way for law enforcement agencies to recover traced firearms. Participating agencies receive their results electronically and can use the software to analyze data on all firearm traced by their individual agency.



ATF makes available online state-level data about patterns in the movement of crime guns

## WHY USE ETRACE?

**Solve firearms-related crimes:** Tracing firearms allows law enforcement to identify the original purchaser and the location of the firearms purchase, which may be crucial evidence in solving or prosecuting a case.

**Fight gun trafficking:** Mapping recovered firearms through trace data can help law enforcement combat trafficking by identifying where illegal firearms are coming from, who is trafficking them, and which firearms licensees are the most frequent sources of crime guns.

- In 2014, the Office of the Mayor of Chicago used firearm trace data to identify individual firearms traffickers supplying a disproportionate amount of firearms recovered at Chicago crime scenes. **From 2009-2013, Chicago recovered 22 firearms at crime scenes that were traced back to a single purchaser in Indiana, and 11 firearms that were traced back to a single purchaser in Georgia.**
- Numerous other cities including Boston, Los Angeles, Baltimore, and New Orleans have established programs to obtain and analyze their trace data, which supports their efforts to disrupt firearms trafficking and reduce gun violence.
- Under a new Collective Data Sharing (CDS) program, participating law enforcement agencies that opt in may view and share trace data with other participating law enforcement agencies in their state, effectively enlarging the pool of data from which to develop investigative leads.

**Address firearm suicide:** More than 60 percent of Americans that die each year of a firearm injury were victims of suicide. By tracing firearms recovered at the scenes of these deaths, police can help gather data that may allow public health researchers to design better programs for intervening and preventing these deaths.

# CRIMES SOLVED AND PROSECUTED DUE TO TRACING

In October 2014, detectives in Montgomery County, Maryland investigating a cold homicide case successfully traced a partially dismantled firearm they had recovered on the side of a highway, following the chain of custody through five subsequent owners, and finally leading to the arrest and conviction of the killer, two years after the murder had taken place.

In July 2012, the New York City Joint Firearms Task Force traced a firearm used to shoot at NYPD officers in the Bronx to a man in Maine, who had sold the gun in a private sale arranged online. The buyer turned out to be a convicted felon, who was prohibited from possessing firearms. The trace data was instrumental to securing a conviction for unlawful firearm possession.

In 2006, Chicago Police traced a firearm used to shoot a seven-year-old girl in the stomach on Easter Sunday, and as a result they were able to successfully prosecute and convict a gun trafficker later that year.

In September 2014, police in Phoenix, Arizona used a combination of ATF tracing and ballistic forensics to identify a man who had been shooting at cars on a freeway over a two-week period.

# DATA SHARING

A provision in the federal budget —one of the budget riders commonly known as the Tiahrt Amendments— prohibits the federal government from disclosing “the contents of the Firearms Trace System database maintained by [ATF’s] National Trace Center” **except to law enforcement**, or for national security or intelligence purposes. Law enforcement—and only law enforcement—may request that ATF provide a detailed summary of all firearm traces submitted in their jurisdiction, with data fully compiled on the locations of firearm recoveries, the types of crime committed, the identity of the dealers who sold the guns at retail, and any information about the firearm purchasers. Law enforcement agencies can study that data and share it with other interested parties.

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**  
**BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES**  
**NATIONAL TRACING CENTER**  
 Phone: (800) 788-7133 Fax: (800) 678-7223  
 Print Date: October 22, 2013

**FIREARMS TRACE SUMMARY**

Trace Number: T20130286823 Request Date: October 15, 2013 Completion Date: October 21, 2013

<p><b>PURCHASER INFORMATION</b></p> <p>MATTHEW FAGAN          GRESHAM POLICE DEPT.          1333 NW EASTMAN PARKWAY          GRESHAM, OR 97030          PHONE: (503) 618-2594 Ext:          FAX (503) 665-1639</p> <p>Badge No: 43242          Investigation No: 13-711147</p>	<p><b>FIREARM INFORMATION</b></p> <p>Manufacturer: SMITH &amp; WESSON          Model: 48          Caliber: 22          Serial Number: A722553          Type: REVOLVER          Country: UNITED STATES          Importer:          Obiterated:          Identifying Mark:          Mark:          Gauge/Type: GYPSY JOKERS</p>
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<p><b>PURCHASER INFORMATION</b></p> <p>ROJELIO LOZANO          2319 W TAYLOR          CHICAGO, IL          DOB:          POB:          Race:          Sex:          ID 1: IL FIREARMS OWNERS LIC 2981948          ID 2: :</p>	<p><b>RECOVERY INFORMATION</b></p> <p>Recovery Date: 10/12/2013          Time to Crime: 10147 days</p> <p>CHICAGO POLICE L. BL. APT 1377          GRESHAM, OR 97030</p>
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Contact the local ATF office for additional information.

**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

THIS FIREARM WAS TRACED TO A PURCHASER. HOWEVER, THE FINAL FEDERAL FIREARMS LICENSEE (FFL) HAS ONLY PARTIAL DISPOSITION INFORMATION. THE FFL REPORTS A DISPOSITION OF THE FIREARM TO AN INDIVIDUAL; HOWEVER, NO ATF FORM 4473 FOR THE TRANSACTION COULD BE FOUND. FOR ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT ATF NATIONAL TRACING CENTER, FIREARMS TRACING BRANCH AT 1-800-785-7133.

**Additional Remarks:**  
 DEALER HAS NO 4473'S OVER 20 YEARS, ONLY A&D INFO.

The information in this report must be validated prior to use in any criminal proceedings.

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A sample trace report provided by the ATF.

## HOW DO I SIGN UP FOR ETRACE?

Any local law enforcement agency can sign up for eTrace by requesting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from ATF at <http://1.usa.gov/1K5f4C6>. After completing and signing the MOU, ATF will provide login credentials that allow the agency to access their results via a secure online portal. eTrace is offered at **no cost** to law enforcement agencies.

To trace a firearm, the user enters the serial number, make, model, and other identifying markings and characteristics of a recovered firearm. When details entered are sufficient for ATF to uniquely identify the firearm, a trace will be initiated. If ATF finds that the records of involved firearms licensees are sufficient, ATF will return a successful trace result, which identifies the first retail purchaser of the firearm. The trace result automatically calculates the number of days elapsed between the first retail sale of the firearm and its recovery (referred to as "time to crime"), and other relevant information.



*eTrace is a secure online portal offered by the ATF as a way for law enforcement agencies to trace recovered firearms.*

ATF provides the option to generate statistical reports on the top firearms traced, the average time to crime rates, the number of traces submitted, and other standard query results.

Law enforcement agencies can also download the Police Officers Guide to Recovered Firearms, an app for smartphones designed by the ATF and the International Association of Chiefs of Police to help officers identify and trace crime guns in the field. Go to <http://myappsinfo.com/recoveredfirearms> to download the program.

## WHO USES ETRACE?

More than 5,600 law enforcement agencies in cities and towns across the United States have traced millions of firearms since the system's inception in 2005.