

# 1 — Introduction

This is the third year of ATF's publication of the National Tracing Center (NTC)'s *Crime Gun Trace Reports*. The reports provide extensive analyses of crime gun traces submitted in calendar year 1999 by law enforcement officials in selected cities throughout the country participating in ATF's Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative. The analysis of a large number of individual traces from many similar jurisdictions helps identify consistent crime gun patterns that may not be apparent from information in a single trace or traces from a single jurisdiction or State. With information about patterns and trends, more violent criminals can be arrested more efficiently, more focused regulatory enforcement can be undertaken, and more gun crime and violence can be prevented.

**Two Report Formats.** Crime gun tracing as a law enforcement tool has grown sufficiently to provide the 2000 *Crime Gun Trace Reports* in two formats:

- The *National Report* provides national analysis based on findings from crime gun traces in 32 of the 79 cities in the U.S. with populations of 250,000 or more. These cities comprise 67 percent of the population of cities of this size.
- The 36 separate *City Reports* provide detailed information on the trace results in the 32 large cities and four cities with populations between 100,000 and 250,000. To provide a national context for local information, the *City Reports* also contain the *National Report*.

**Information for Law Enforcement, the Firearms Industry, and the Public.** The *Crime Gun Trace Reports* have three audiences. They provide crime gun information to the *Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies* that submit trace requests, boosting their information resources for arresting gun criminals, responding to gun violence, and establishing a benchmark for crime gun measurements. They inform *federally licensed firearms dealers* of crime gun patterns, allowing them to build sounder and safer businesses. They inform the *public, Congress, and State and local authorities*, building cooperation by communicating what ATF agents, inspectors, and State and local law enforcement investigating violent criminals see in their everyday enforcement operations.

**Reinforcing Law Enforcement Collaboration.** As a result of the collaboration of thousands of law enforcement and regulatory personnel and

the FFLs that routinely respond to the National Tracing Center's inquiries, the *Crime Gun Trace Reports* provide an overview of crime guns throughout the country in significantly greater detail than previously available. ATF's primary operational focus is on the Federal offender. By reporting trace information in standardized form, ATF intends to enable State and local law enforcement officials and FFLs, as well as other Federal officials, to evaluate the information independently and to gain perspective on their local circumstances in order to adjust enforcement and preventive strategies accordingly.

**How Law Enforcement Can Use this Report.** Local law enforcement executives and Federal, State, and local prosecutors and investigators can make many uses of these reports. They furnish information relating to the following questions, among others: 1. *How many crime guns are being recovered from different age groups of offenders?* 2. *What kinds of guns are being recovered in my area?* 3. *What types of crimes are associated with these recovered crime guns?* 4. *Are the source areas in the county or State, or from out of State?* 5. *What types of guns are moving the fastest from the retail seller to recovery in crime?* 6. *Which guns may pose a special hazard to law enforcement officers?*

Using this information, law enforcement managers can decide what aspects of the firearms market deserve priority focus, by age group, by source area, or by type of crime, or any combination of these. Once these priorities are determined, information about specific crime guns and offenders can be obtained using all available investigative resources, including debriefing of arrestees, undercover and confi-

dential informant operatives; Project Online LEAD; Brady background check denial information; stolen firearms information; and special analyses by the Crime Gun Analysis Branch and equivalent analytic services in local police departments.

The combination of strategic information such as provided in these reports and investigative information will allow Federal, State, and local law enforcement officers to make the best use of available resources. Based on these factors, ATF and local law enforcement may decide to undertake criminal prosecution against traffickers, including felons, straw purchasers, firearms thieves, and unlicensed dealers, or regulatory actions against Federal firearms licensees.

**Contents of the Reports.** The *National* and *City Reports* include information about:

- **Highlights:** The *National* and *City Reports* each contain sections with highlights of the findings in the reports, focused on crime gun information relevant to law enforcement officials;
- **Possessors:** the age group and crimes of the crime gun possessors;

- **Crime guns:** the types, manufacturers, calibers, and, in some cities, models of the most frequently traced crime guns, including the most frequently traced crime guns for each city;
- **Gun trafficking indicators:** the time-to-crime and geographic sources of crime guns, multiple sales information, and percentage of crime guns with obliterated serial numbers;
- **Enforcement information:** successful Federal, State, and local investigations of the illegal diversion of firearms;
- **Information for law enforcement executives:** information and responses to frequently asked questions about crime gun tracing and related enforcement operations;
- **Crime gun tracing information:** number of traces submitted, degree of completeness of information provided, disposition of traces, and current and future developments in crime gun tracing; and
- **Technical information:** back-up information about the analysis, figures, and tables in the reports.

**Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative Cities**

Atlanta .....	Georgia	Miami .....	Florida
Baltimore .....	Maryland	Milwaukee .....	Wisconsin
Birmingham .....	Alabama	Minneapolis .....	Minnesota
Boston .....	Massachusetts	New Orleans .....	Louisiana
Bridgeport* .....	Connecticut	New York .....	New York
Charlotte-Mecklenburg .....	North Carolina	Oakland .....	California
Chicago .....	Illinois	Omaha .....	Nebraska
Cincinnati .....	Ohio	Philadelphia .....	Pennsylvania
Cleveland .....	Ohio	Phoenix .....	Arizona
Dallas .....	Texas	Portland .....	Oregon
Denver/Aurora .....	Colorado	Richmond* .....	Virginia
Detroit .....	Michigan	Salinas** .....	California
Gary* .....	Indiana	San Antonio .....	Texas
Houston .....	Texas	San Jose .....	California
Jersey City* .....	New Jersey	Seattle** .....	Washington
Las Vegas .....	Nevada	St. Louis .....	Missouri
Los Angeles .....	California	Tampa .....	Florida
Louisville .....	Kentucky	Tucson .....	Arizona
Memphis .....	Tennessee	Washington .....	District of Columbia

\* City reports were compiled for four cities with populations smaller than 250,000, but trace requests from these cities were not included in most of the tables in the national report. Gary, Indiana and Jersey City, New Jersey were included in the national analysis of the occurrence of specific firearm models because these cities supplied unusually complete data.

\*\* Salinas and Seattle traced too few guns during 1999 to be included in the national report. A small number of trace requests from Seattle were included in the analysis of specific firearm models because this information was unusually complete on the traces submitted by Seattle.

## The Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative

The annual *Crime Gun Trace Reports* began in 1997 as part of ATF's Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative (YCGII), a youth-focused firearms enforcement program that is a component of ATF's overall firearms enforcement program, the Integrated Violence Reduction Strategy. For this reason, YCGII is referred to throughout this report.

**Participating jurisdictions.** While many law enforcement agencies trace some crime guns, agencies participating in YCGII commit to instituting comprehensive tracing of all crime guns, providing the maximum investigative leads for law enforcement officials, and permitting optimal strategic analysis. These cities receive special support from ATF. All 36 cities with *City Reports* participate in YCGII. As more law enforcement agencies acquire crime gun tracing as an investigative tool, or implement State comprehensive crime gun tracing laws, ATF expects to include trace information from these jurisdictions in the annual *Crime Gun Trace Reports*.

**National Tracing Center and Crime Gun Analysis Branch: field support.** The National Tracing Division staff conducts traces, analyzes the results, provides case leads, crime gun mapping, and jurisdictional analysis for ATF agents and inspectors and for other law enforcement agencies, and prepares the *Crime Gun Trace Reports*. The YCGII staff at the National Tracing Center provides trace support for all ATF firearms enforcement programs and locally based gun enforcement initiatives. A national update on crime gun tracing is included in the *National Report*, and city information in each *City Report*.

**In the field: investigations, inspections, trace support, and training.** In the field, YCGII is an enforcement collaboration among Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies, and ATF agents and inspectors. The primary role of the YCGII field staff is to conduct criminal investigations and regulatory inspections. YCGII also provides joint training in tracing, serial number restoration, and gun enforcement investigative methods to ATF agents and their State and local partners. YCGII staff also assist local law enforcement agencies to establish crime gun tracing, with technical support and training.

**YCGII's special focus on juvenile and youth gun crime.** As the *National Report* shows, juveniles (ages 17 and under) accounted for 9 percent of traced crime guns, and youth (ages 18-24) accounted for 34 percent of traced crime guns. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)'s *Supplemental Homicide Reports* show that gun homicides committed by juveniles and youth have declined 41 percent, from 11,657 in 1993 to 6,863 in 1998, but they still accounted for 57 percent of all gun homicides in 1998. ATF agents and inspectors participating in YCGII have a special responsibility for developing investigative information and carrying out enforcement actions involving juveniles and youth. Because juveniles are prohibited from acquiring and possessing handguns without parental involvement, some form of illegal diversion is almost always implicated in an investigation involving a juvenile's possession of a handgun, making crime handgun tracing especially critical. The *Crime Gun Trace Reports*, therefore, focus throughout on the variations in the crime guns and sources of illegal supply to juveniles, youth, and adults.

## Following the Gun to Successful Firearms Enforcement

**Crime gun tracing.** Crime gun tracing is a law enforcement tool developed by ATF to investigate violations of the Nation's firearms laws. A crime gun trace identifies the Federal firearms licensee (FFL) who is the original retail seller of the firearm and the firearm's retail purchaser by tracking the manufacturer, caliber, and serial number on transfer documentation from the manufacturer or importer through the wholesaler to the retail seller and first purchaser. *A crime gun trace alone does not mean that an FFL or firearm purchaser has committed an unlawful act. Crime gun trace information is used in combination with other investigative facts in regulatory and criminal enforcement.* Crime gun tracing has three primary purposes:

- **Identifying individual armed criminals for prosecution.** Like a fingerprint or other identifying evidence, a crime gun trace is used in individual cases to link a firearm offender to his or her weapon, or identify the illegal supplier of a firearm to the criminal, juvenile, or other person prohibited from possessing a firearm. Such investigative work is conducted by local officials and by ATF.
- **Proactive local investigative and strategic analysis to target armed violent criminals and gun traffickers for prosecution.** When officials in a jurisdiction trace all recovered crime guns, law enforcement officials are able to detect patterns in the buying and selling of crime guns in their areas (pattern and trend analysis). This information combined with other indicators leads to the arrest of additional traffickers and armed felons and to regulatory enforcement actions against Federal firearms licensees violating the firearms laws and trafficking illegally. Analysis and mapping of local crime gun patterns is done by ATF at the Crime Gun Analysis Branch and in the field and by State and local law enforcement officials with access to ATF's Online LEAD crime gun information system, or using State firearms information systems.
- **Crime Gun Trace Reports to assist law enforcement officials in placing local crime guns in a regional and national strategic enforcement context.** Analysis of all available comprehensive trace information, locally and nationally, informs Federal, State, and local authorities of the source and market areas for crime guns, and other regional patterns. This information enables ATF to target criminal and regulatory resources, and assist Federal, State, and local law enforcement officials to develop national, regional, and local strategic responses to gun crime. ATF is uniquely qualified to conduct such analysis because it is the repository for crime gun traces and related information from all jurisdictions that trace crime guns.

**Ballistics identification in relation to crime gun tracing.** Many agencies are now using both crime gun tracing and ballistics identification to support firearm investigations. An expended cartridge or bullet may be recovered in addition to or in the absence of a crime gun. Once entered in an imaging database, the recovered cartridge or bullet can be matched to previously entered ballistics images to identify repeat uses of the same firearm. Currently, ballistics images also can provide the basis for a crime gun trace only if the firearm with which they are associated has been previously traced and a cartridge or bullet from that firearm entered into a local database of the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network. Ballistics Imaging technology does not automatically submit the crime gun to be traced through the National Tracing Center. In the future, expansion of the crime gun tracing system to include trace information derived from ballistics images as well as recovered firearms will allow additional firearms crimes to be solved and a more complete understanding of how violent offenders and prohibited persons illegally obtain firearms.