



ATF News

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ATF SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH GERMANY TO TRACE CRIME GUNS

WASHINGTON – The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) announced today that it has signed an agreement with the German Federal Police (Bundeskriminalamt or BKA) that will allow the Germans to use ATF's eTrace system to electronically trace crime guns seized in their country.

The agreement, signed this week by ATF National Tracing Center Chief Charles J. Houser and Jürgen Maurer, head of the BKA's Division of Serious and Organized Crime, will now make the Internet-based system available to a second major European U.S. ally. Britain has had access to eTrace since participating in a pilot program.

"This agreement expands ATF's international cooperation, and allows us to share information with our German law enforcement partners in real time," ATF Assistant Director Lewis P. Raden said. "It will increase our mutual effectiveness in combating firearms trafficking and violence."

eTrace allows participating law enforcement agencies to submit, via the Internet, firearms tracing requests in real time and directly to the computer at ATF's National Tracing Center. For Germany, this means the BKA will be able to submit firearms tracing requests for crime guns recovered there and believed to be manufactured in or imported from the United States.

The ability to trace a firearm used in a crime is critical to law enforcement because it allows investigators to trace the history of the weapon from the manufacturer, through the dealer to the original purchaser. Data gained and analyzed from thousands of such traces also provide useful leads in firearms trafficking investigations.

eTrace significantly reduces the turnaround time required to process a trace request, and increases the overall number of crime gun traces by providing a user-friendly mechanism for entering trace data.

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Germany is the 10th country with which ATF shares or is planning to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to share eTrace. The others are Australia, Britain, Bahamas, Canada, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Japan and Mexico. ATF also has an eTrace MOU with Interpol.

ATF's Comprehensive Crime Gun Tracing Initiative is the largest operation of its kind in the world. ATF's National Tracing Center (NTC) processed 284,443 trace requests of crime guns in 2006. The NTC stores information concerning multiple sales of firearms, suspect guns and firearms with obliterated serial numbers and is the only repository for all records of federal firearms licensees that have gone out of business.

More information on ATF and its program to deter terrorism, reduce violent crime and protect the nation is at www.atf.gov.

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