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August 2008  
[www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov)

## **ATF NATIONAL TRACING CENTER**

### **Purpose**

The National Tracing Center (NTC) of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is the country's only crime-gun tracing facility. It provides critical information that helps federal, state and local law enforcement agencies solve firearms crimes, detect firearms traffickers, and track the intrastate, interstate and international movement of crime guns. Congressional restrictions currently prevent the release of firearms trace information to anyone other than law enforcement agencies.

### **Programs**

**eTRACE:** This is a web-based tracing system that ATF developed to allow law enforcement agencies to securely submit trace requests via the Internet, as well as receive trace results and perform limited analysis of the data. Currently, approximately 2,000 law enforcement agencies use eTrace to submit their trace requests to the NTC, including law enforcement agencies from 10 foreign countries.

**SUSPECT GUN:** A suspect gun is a firearm that has not been recovered by law enforcement but is suspected to be involved in criminal activity. It is flagged in the Firearms Tracing System (FTS) so that if and when it is recovered and traced by a law enforcement agency, the criminal investigations can be coordinated.

**FIREARMS THEFT:** Federal firearms licensees (FFL) are required to report the theft or loss of firearms in their inventory to ATF so that if and when they are recovered and traced by a law enforcement agency, the criminal investigations can be coordinated.

**INTERSTATE THEFT:** Interstate carriers can voluntarily report the theft or loss of firearms in transit so that if and when they are recovered and traced by a law enforcement agency, the criminal investigations can be coordinated.

**OBLITERATED SERIAL NUMBER:** Allows law enforcement agencies to submit firearms trace requests with partial serial numbers from crime guns recovered with obliterated serial numbers in order to identify the crime gun and develop investigative leads.

**INTERNATIONAL TRACING:** ATF traces firearms for foreign law enforcement agencies to provide investigative leads, detect firearms traffickers and to determine international arms trafficking routes. More than 50 countries annually submit trace requests to the NTC.

**OUT-OF-BUSINESS RECORDS:** When an FFL discontinues business, the FFL must send their firearms transactions records to the NTC. The NTC receives an average of 1.2 million out-of-business records per month and is the only repository for these records within the United States.

**MULTIPLE SALES PROGRAM:** When an FFL sells two or more handguns to the same purchaser within five consecutive business days the FFL is required to submit a report of multiple sales to the NTC. The NTC receives an average of 140,000 reports of multiple sales from licensees each year. These reports, when cross referenced with firearms trace information for recovered crime guns, can be an important indicator in detecting illegal firearms trafficking.

**RECORD SEARCH REQUESTS:** By searching the out-of-business FFL records, the NTC can assist law enforcement agencies investigating the theft of firearms to obtain firearms serial numbers. This is conducted when the owner has no record of the firearm serial number and the FFL from whom the owner purchased the firearm is now out of business.

**CERTIFIED TRACE REQUESTS:** The NTC certifies firearms trace records and FFL out-of-business records for ATF and U.S. prosecutors for criminal court purposes. All information is validated for accuracy.

**DEMAND PROJECT:** The NTC sends certified demand letters to non-compliant FFLs who repeatedly fail to respond to firearms trace requests within the required timeframe, and to FFLs who repeatedly sell firearms with short time-to-crime traces. (The time-to-crime is the period of time between the sale of a firearm and the use of that firearm in a crime.)

### **Location**

The NTC is located on a 10-acre secure site in Martinsburg, W.Va. This facility also houses ATF's Violent Crime Analysis Branch, Firearms Technology Branch, Firearms Testing Range, Brady Operations Branch, ATF's Gun Vault Collection, the Federal Explosives Licensing Center, Imports Branch, NFA Branch, and will soon house the Federal Firearms Licensing Center .

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