
A MESSAGE FROM THE SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE

We live in a society where the criminal misuse of firearms has caused indescribable damage and pain to families throughout this country. As the Nation's leading firearms enforcement agency, partnered with other Federal, State and local agencies, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) is dedicated to the role of reducing violent crime here in Washington, DC, across the country and around the world.

At the core of firearms-related violence are the illegal transfers of firearms into the hands of criminals and their use of firearms to commit crimes. The task of interdicting the flow of these illegally trafficked firearms is the common bond among all law enforcement agencies. With this in mind, the Washington Field Division of ATF will operate the Regional Crime Gun Center (RCGC).

The RCGC will be multi-tasked to centralize management of new and existing strategies and databases. These include On-Line Lead, the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), the National Instant Check System (NICS), the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative (YCGII), and criminal intelligence information garnered from the Lautenberg and Brady Acts.

On-Line Lead is ATF's firearms trafficking database. A multi-dimensional intelligence approach to identifying the illicit transfer, possession and trafficking of firearms, On-Line Lead is a direct link to ATF's National Tracing Center (NTC). With access to the NTC's more than one hundred million firearms transaction records from out of business dealers and the statutory authority to obtain firearms trace information on crime guns from active dealers, the system is unique to law enforcement. It is the premier tool for law enforcement agencies to identify criminal patterns and to assist in the prosecution of firearm violations.

The RCGC will team with other law enforcement agencies to identify the sources of illicit firearms in their areas. That information will be used to provide leads for investigators and to develop strategies to stop the flow of illicit firearms.

ATF's NIBIN system electronically catalogues thousands of records of projectiles (*bullets*) and the imprint the interior of firearm barrels. These unique records, or images, can be compared in minutes, a task that would have taken a lifetime if performed manually. With NIBIN, firearms and projectiles recovered from crime scenes are compared to those recovered from previous crimes to identify links and patterns to other crimes. The system has been used to successfully match firearms to crimes and suspects that would have otherwise gone undetected.

Under the NICS program, persons who are prohibited from possessing firearms and who subsequently attempt to purchase a firearm are identified and the purchase is denied. The identities of those persons denied are forwarded to the RCGC for further investigation. Many prohibited individuals who have been denied are also associated with other crimes including firearms trafficking and threats to public officials. The RCGC will attempt to identify persons for whom further investigation is warranted and refer that information to the appropriate local investigative office.

The RCGC places special emphasis on the identification and interdiction of sources of firearms to juveniles and young adults. As part of the center's aggressive tracing program and liaison with state and local agencies, firearms recoveries and traces involving juveniles and young adults are given priority in investigation. The RCGC's Washington Field Division was the first to perfect a firearms trafficking prosecution under the nationwide Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative.

As the Federal steward of the legal firearms sales process, ATF is responsible for enforcing the provisions of the Brady Act. Persons who are prohibited from firearms possession must not be allowed access to firearms. Further, under the provisions of the Lautenberg Amendment to the Gun Control Act, a new category of person who may not possess or purchase firearms, the domestic violence misdemeanant, was created. In achieving one of its core missions - reducing violent crime - ATF and the RCGC are working closely with other law enforcement agencies to inform the public, prosecute violent offenders and reduce violence in our streets.

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