Future Crime Gun Trace Analysis Techniques

The ATF National Tracing Center is continuing to develop new techniques to analyze crime gun traces. These will further increase the ability of enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute illegal traffickers. Future developments will include the following:

**Reporting on crime guns with obliterated serial numbers that cannot be restored.** The NTC has established a database for crime guns for which serial numbers have been obliterated and cannot be restored. Collection of this information is critical to the NTC’s efforts to report on crime gun trafficking.

**Improvements in Project LEAD.** Project LEAD, ATF’s illegal firearms trafficking information system, is being improved to add indicators that will suggest new types of leads to trafficking investigators. In addition, special agents will be able to access Project LEAD in real time.

**Reports on multiple purchases of crime guns by a single purchaser.** When a Federal firearms licensee sells two or more handguns in five business days to a single purchaser, the licensee must notify ATF of these sales in writing. ATF provides a multiple sales form to simplify this notification. Information supplied by Federal firearms licensees on multiple sales forms is integrated into Project LEAD for use in illegal firearms trafficking investigations. In the future, information on crime gun traces associated with multiple purchases can be included in crime gun trace analysis reports.

**Reports on crime guns that possessors report to be stolen.** The submission of trace requests for firearms known by enforcement officials to have been stolen was inconsistent among participating sites. NTC procedures will be altered to permit accurate reporting of this information. Currently, less than 1 percent of all crime guns submitted for tracing to the NTC are reported to have been stolen.

**Use of a ballistics identification system to help identify firearms traffickers.** ATF has pioneered ballistics technology that allows enforcement agencies to link recovered bullets and cartridge cases with recovered crime guns. To facilitate identification of traffickers and other criminals, the ballistics data base and the NTC crime gun data base can be linked, and ballistics-related information can be captured in crime gun trace analyses.