

27 CFR 179.111: PROCEDURE

A National Firearms Act (NFA) firearm may not be imported for use as a sample for sales to law enforcement agencies if the firearm is a curio or relic unless it is established that the firearm is particularly suitable for use as a law enforcement weapon.

ATF Rul. 85-2

[Status of ruling: Active]

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has approved a number of applications to import National Firearms Act (NFA) firearms for the use of registered importers to generate orders for such firearms from law enforcement agencies.

A review of the characteristics of the NFA firearms approved for importation as sales samples indicates that some of the firearms are not being imported for the purposes contemplated by the statute. Some of the NFA firearms imported are, in fact, curios or relics and are more suitable for use as collector's items than law enforcement weapons.

Importations of NFA firearms are permitted by 26 U.S.C. Section 5844, which provides in pertinent part:

“No firearm shall be imported or brought into the United States or any territory under its control or jurisdiction unless the importer establishes, under regulations as may be prescribed by the Secretary, that the firearm to be imported or brought in is:

- 1) being imported or brought in for the use of the United States or any department, independent establishment, or agency thereof or any State or possession or any political subdivision thereof; or
- 2) * * *
- 3) being imported or brought in solely for . . . use as a sample by a registered importer or registered dealer;

except that, the Secretary may permit the conditional importation or bringing in of a firearm for examination and testing in connection with classifying the firearm.”

The sole purpose of the statute permitting the importation of NFA firearms as sales samples is to permit registered importers to generate orders for firearms from government entities, primarily law enforcement agencies, on the basis of the sample.

The implementing regulation, 27 CFR Section 179.111, provides that the person importing or bringing a firearm into the United States or any territory under its control or jurisdiction has the burden of proof to affirmatively establish that the firearm is being imported or brought in for one of the authorized purposes. In addition, a detailed explanation of why the importation falls

within one of the authorized purposes must be attached to the application to import. The mere statement that an NFA firearm is being imported as a sales sample for demonstration to law enforcement agencies does not meet the required burden of proof and is not a detailed explanation of why the importation falls within the import standards.

Held, an application to import a National Firearms Act firearm as a sample in connection with sales of such firearms to law enforcement agencies will not be approved if the firearm is determined to be a curio or relic unless it is established by specific information that the firearm is particularly suitable for use as a law enforcement weapon. For example, the importer must provide detailed information as to why a sales sample of a particular weapon is suitable for law enforcement purposes and the expected customers who would require a demonstration of the weapon. Information as to the availability of firearms to fill subsequent orders would help meet the burden of establishing use as a sales sample. Also, letters from law enforcement agencies expressing a need for a particular model or interest in seeing a demonstration of a particular firearm would be relevant.