



# eTrace

## FACT SHEET

### Fast Facts

**eTrace** helps identify gun traffickers, potential suspects and patterns of violent gun crime to assist law enforcement agencies in solving criminal cases.

**eTrace** enables criminal investigators to quickly track down the origin and purchaser of crime guns.

**eTrace** is used by local, state, tribal and federal law enforcement agencies to both enter and access firearms trace data.

eTrace is a web-based application through which authorized law enforcement agencies may submit trace requests to ATF and retrieve detailed trace results upon completion of each trace. Firearms tracing is the systematic tracking of a firearms movement from its point of introduction into U.S. commerce by a licensed manufacturer or importer, through the chain of distribution, which typically involves a wholesaler and one or more retail dealers in order to complete the trace, i.e., identify the last known individual purchaser.

The system, available in both English and Spanish, is key in generating investigative leads to help solve violent crimes across the country as well as outside the United States. These leads help law enforcement agencies quickly identify potential firearms traffickers and suspects in criminal investigations.

Firearms are traced by local, state, federal, tribal and international law enforcement agencies. Authorized users can utilize eTrace to search using various fields, including the firearm's serial number, type of crime, date of recovery, and the names of purchasers and possessors involved. Additionally, participating law enforcement agencies have the option to share firearms trace data with other eTrace users in their state who also choose to share their data. This allows users to identify patterns of violent crime across different jurisdictions.

## FIREARMS eTRACE SYSTEM

*What happens when  
a trace is conducted...*

### LEADS



**LEA\*** recovers a firearm at a crime scene

### LINK



**LEA** enters a trace request via **eTrace** to identify the firearm's origin to develop investigative leads

### DETECT



**eTrace** provides information used to link a suspect(s) to a firearm in a criminal investigation(s)

### RECOVER



**eTrace** provides information that can be used to detect interstate, intrastate and international trafficking

\*LEA – Law Enforcement Agency



Nearly **640,000**  
**firearms trace requests**  
were reviewed, analyzed  
and processed by the  
National Tracing Center in  
**fiscal year 2024.**



**10,000+**  
**law enforcement**  
**agencies** use **eTrace**  
in their investigations,  
including agencies from  
**52 foreign countries.**

## HOW ETRACE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

When a firearm is found at a crime scene, it is critical for investigators to quickly track down the origin of the crime gun and any possible suspects. eTrace serves as a one-stop shop for comparing firearms data across multiple jurisdictions, helping agencies close cases faster.

### The benefits of eTrace include:

- Robust statistical reports that readily generate new investigative leads
- Faster processing of firearms trace history
- Targeted trace data relevant to a specific state or local jurisdiction
- Real-time data verification and case updates

eTrace is part of the broader ATF mission to arrest violent offenders and firearm traffickers. ATF leverages technology like eTrace to streamline the investigative process.

## COMBATING VIOLENT CRIME

eTrace is the primary investigatory tool of ATF's National Tracing Center (NTC). ATF is the only federal agency authorized to trace firearms; however, ATF's authorization is only to trace firearms for law enforcement agencies involved in bona fide criminal investigations. ATF provides eTrace access free of charge to authorized law enforcement agencies.

The eTrace system allows law enforcement agencies to conduct comprehensive traces of recovered crime guns and establish leads in their investigations. The system also allows agencies to strategize long-term on how best to reduce firearms-related crime, firearms trafficking and violence in their communities.

## ETRACE DIRECT

The eTrace DIRECT Application Programming Interface (API) is an automated tracing solution that allows law enforcement agencies to electronically submit and retrieve firearm trace related data using system-to-system communication between their Records/Case Management System (RMS) and the National Tracing Center. eTrace DIRECT integration eliminates the need for manual and redundant entry of trace requests, monitoring and retrieval of trace results, and improves timeliness and data quality. Contact [eTraceDIRECT@atf.gov](mailto:eTraceDIRECT@atf.gov) to learn more.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Submitting Firearms Trace Requests](#)
- [eTrace Brochure \(PDF\)](#)
- [Request an eTrace Account \(law enforcement only\)](#)