



## Foreword by the Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms

ATF established the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative (YCGII) in 1996 to focus special agent and inspector resources on reducing youth gun violence. To increase our effectiveness, we resolved to equip our investigators and their State and local counterparts with more facts about how violent youth obtained guns. We asked our colleagues in State and local law enforcement to help us systematically “follow the gun” used in crime to help identify violent criminals and their illegal suppliers by tracing all crime guns with the National Tracing Center.

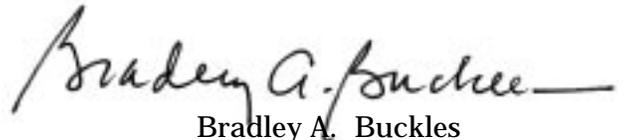
These crime gun traces, which use a gun’s serial number to track its transfers from manufacturer to retail purchase, lead law enforcement to sources of illegal diversion, gun traffickers, and violent criminals, and contribute to successful prosecutions. This report provides examples of successful cases against such offenders. In the past, the case an agent made with trace information would likely have been the last case using that information. Every investigator would start a new case relying on new leads. As these *Crime Gun Trace Reports* demonstrate, that era is over in law enforcement. Today, law enforcement officials can and do access, search, and analyze investigative and case information contributed by hundreds of their colleagues, to gain additional investigative leads and strategic perspective.

Recently, we examined our firearms investigative docket and learned that over a quarter of ATF’s investigations into the illegal diversion of guns involved felons. This allowed us to confirm what ATF agents and their State and local colleagues have known but not previously documented — there is a sizable illegal market in firearms involving felons, juveniles, and other illegal possessors and traffickers of firearms. It includes corrupt federally licensed dealers who ignore the results of background checks, straw purchasers, unlicensed sellers, thieves, and traffickers in stolen firearms, among others.

Collecting and analyzing information from thousands of crime gun traces supplied by Federal, State, and local law enforcement are helping us gain a more precise picture of that crime gun market and provide investigative and strategic direction to enforcement aimed at gun crime. This year’s reports, the third annual publication of *Crime Gun Trace Reports*, include this *National Report* and a series of individual *City Reports*, which provide complete information on the trace results in those cities. These reports are available at [www.atf.treas.gov](http://www.atf.treas.gov).

Of great value to law enforcement are the lists of guns that repeatedly show up in crimes and that do so rapidly after purchase, suggesting criminal intent associated with the original transaction. Every city has its own crime guns and patterns, reflecting local conditions, but certain local, regional, and national patterns are evident. This information permits law enforcement officials to tailor investigative strategies to the most violent criminals and juveniles, local “hot spots,” and illegal sources of guns. Knowing the changing trends in crime guns is also vital to ensuring officer safety.

Crime gun tracing and its complementary tool, ballistics identification, are rapidly transforming Federal, State, and local firearms enforcement. We cannot completely stop violent criminals from using illegal means to acquire guns, but we can track their methods with greater precision than ever before, intervene to stop trafficking schemes, investigate both illegal suppliers and their criminal buyers, and fully enforce our Nation’s firearms laws to deter gun criminals and hold them accountable. We are at the beginning of the new era of using available crime gun and ballistics information to solve and prevent gun crimes. We present this year’s *Crime Gun Trace Reports* as an information cornerstone of our efforts to reduce violent crime, disarm the criminal, and better protect our Nation’s youth.



Bradley A. Buckles