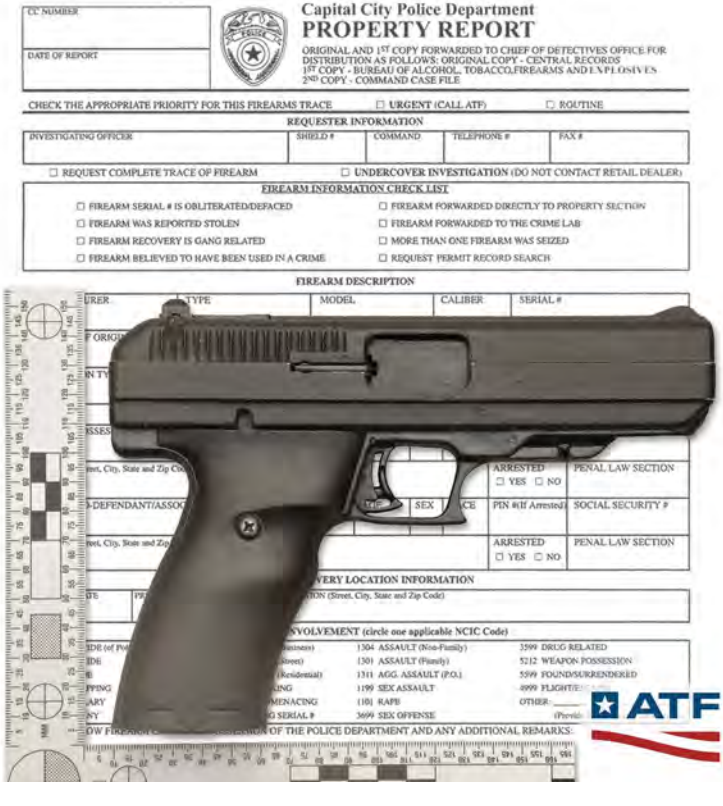
U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

National Tracing Center Division

ATF

POLICE OFFICER'S GUIDE to Recovered Firearms



ATF MISSION

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is a Federal law enforcement agency that protects our communities from violent criminals, criminal organizations, the illegal use and trafficking of firearms, the illegal use and storage of explosives, acts of arson and bombings, acts of terrorism, and the illegal diversion of alcohol and tobacco products. ATF partners with communities, industries, law enforcement, and public safety agencies to safeguard the public through information sharing, training, research, and use of technology.

NOTICE: The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or Department policies.

TRACE ALL RECOVERED FIREARMS

Comprehensively tracing recovered firearms can reveal:

- The original firearm **PURCHASER**, including the address and identification they used at time of purchase;
- The original **FIREARM RETAILER**, including their city and state;
- The **TIME PERIOD** between the original purchase and the recovery by law enforcement (time-to-crime);
- **PATTERNS** in purchase locations, purchasers, recovery locations, and other information that may be vital to an investigation or prosecution; and,
- **OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES** that have traced firearms and identified purchasers, possessors, firearms retailers and/or firearm recovery locations in common with yours.

HOW TO REQUEST A FIREARMS TRACE

ATF Form 3312.1, National Tracing Center Request, can be obtained at the ATF website **www.ATF.gov**.

Your agency can also request access to ATF's web-based electronic firearms tracing system – eTrace. Through eTrace, participating agencies can electronically **submit traces, receive results, and analyze their aggregate firearms trace data.**

TIPS FOR FIREARMS QUERIES USING MOBILE NCIC TERMINALS

- Query firearm serial number in NCIC.
- Use caution in identifying letters and numbers. For example, be careful distinguishing between "5" and "S," "Z" and "2," etc.
- Following a "hit," be sure to compare serial number, model, caliber, and miscellaneous field.
- The "Make" (MAK) field may contain Make, Brand, Model, or Trademark.
- Be aware, the serial number match is important. Discrepancies with MAK and/or MOD do not rule out a match if the serial numbers are the same.

MKE/STOLEN GUN
ORI/DC0100100 SER/L2714S MAK/C0L CAL/357 MOD/PYTHON
TYP/PR DOT/20000819
MIS/BLK GRIPS WITH INITIALS BRH UNDERNEATH
NIC/G123456789 DTE/20000820 2108 EDT
ORI IS THE NEXT COUNTY PD 123 456-7890
IMMED CONFIRM RECORD WITH ORI

REQUIRED MARKINGS

(See 27 C.F.R. §§ 478.92 and 478.102)

U.S. MANUFACTURED FIREARMS

- **SERIAL NUMBER** (*taken from* FRAME *or* RECEIVER) (*See* 18 U.S.C. § 923(i))
- **MANUFACTURER** (*Name, City and State*)
- **CALIBER** (*expressed* .38, 9mm, 7.62X25, 12Ga, *etc*.)
- **MODEL** (*if designated, expressed* J-25, P86, Python, *etc*.)

IMPORTED (FOREIGN MANUFACTURED) FIREARMS

- **SERIAL NUMBER** (*taken from* FRAME *or* RECEIVER)
- **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN** (*example:* "Made in Italy")
- **IMPORTER** (*Name, City and State; be aware of abbreviations*)
- **MANUFACTURER** (*example:* Norinco, Bersa, FN, *etc*.)
- **CALIBER** (*expressed* .38, 9mm, 7.62X25, 12Ga, *etc*.)
- **MODEL** (*if designated, expressed* J-25, P86, Python, *etc*.)

(See following pages for examples)

NOTE: *Older firearms (manufactured or imported before 1968) may lack some of these markings including serial numbers.*

HOW TO IDENTIFY FIREARMS
FOR QUERIES AND PROPERTY
REVOLVER

FIREARM DESCRIPTION			
MANUFACTURER: Smith & Wesson	TYPE: Revolver	MODEL: 10	CALIBER: .38 Special
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: U.S.A.	IMPORTER: N/A		
OTHER MARKINGS OR INFORMATION: Ex., proof marks, obliterated serial number, etc.			

HOW TO IDENTIFY FIREARMS
FOR QUERIES AND PROPERTY
PISTOL

FIREARM DESCRIPTION			
MANUFACTURER: Glock	TYPE: Pistol	MODEL: 19	CALIBER: 9mm
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Austria	IMPORTER: Glock, Inc. Smyrna, Georgia		
OTHER MARKINGS OR INFORMATION: Ex., proof marks, obliterated serial number, etc.			

HOW TO IDENTIFY FIREARMS

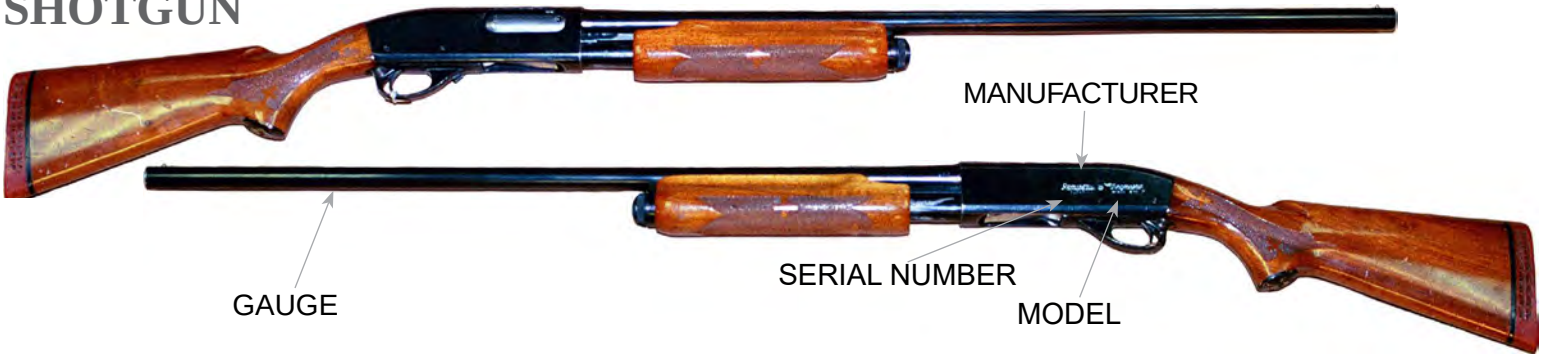
FOR QUERIES AND PROPERTY

RIFLE

FIREARM DESCRIPTION			
MANUFACTURER Marlin Firearms Co.	TYPE Rifle	MODEL 10	CALIBER .22
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN U.S.A.		IMPORTER N/A	
OTHER MARKINGS OR INFORMATION Ex., proof marks, obliterated serial number, etc.			

FIREARM DESCRIPTION			
MANUFACTURER Remington Arms Co.	TYPE Shotgun	MODEL Wingmaster 870	CALIBER 12 Gauge
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN U.S.A.		IMPORTER N/A	
OTHER MARKINGS OR INFORMATION Ex., proof marks, obliterated serial number, etc.			

SHOTGUN



TRACING PRIVATELY MADE FIREARMS & UNFINISHED/ UNSERIALIZED RECEIVERS

Due to law enforcement agencies encountering a significant increase in the recovery of non-serialized and counterfeit firearms in criminal investigations, the ATF National Tracing Center has established guidelines to assist the law enforcement community in submitting trace requests for such firearms. Because these firearms may be assembled by non-licensed individuals, void of identifying markings, or introduced into commerce illegally, they are often percceived as "untraceable." However, submitting trace requests for privately made, counterfeit, unmarked, and unfinished firearms using these guidelines enables the collection of intelligence, analysis of data, and simplification of querying this information from the firearms tracing system.

Commonly Used Terms

Privately Made Firearm. A firearm, including a frame or receiver, completed, assembled, or otherwise produced by a person not licensed to engage in the business of manufacturing firearms, and without a serial number placed on the frame or receiver by a licensed manufacturer or importer. These firearms may not have any markings at all.

Counterfeit Firearm. Firearm manufactured, whether by licensed or unlicensed dealer, and designed to effectively resemble a firearm made by a known licensed manufacturer. Counterfeit firearms often exhibit characteristics such as inaccurate logo forging and stamping methods, incorrect type face of text, inaccurate marking locations, invalid/fake serialization, misspelling, erroneous importer markings, inconsistent fire selector switches, crude machining marks, and misplaced rivets/button head pins.

Unfinished Frame/Receiver. A partially completed frame/receiver body made from forging, casting, extruding, molding, or machining that, while completed to the point it can be recognized as a "receiver-blank," has not yet reached a stage of manufacture that it can be classified as a "frame" or "receiver." Non-serialized machined bodies (i.e., frames/receivers) typically have not been finished to the point of being classified as a "firearm" under the GCA or NFA. These frames and receivers are often referred to by the firearms industry as "80%" frames/receivers.

Receiver from Flat. A machined receiver body formed from the stamping of sheet metal (usually steel) that generally must still be bent into its final shape.

Serialized Components. Serialized slides, barrels, upper assemblies, or other firearms parts commonly used to complete a privately made firearm. In some cases, the serial number from a component may assist in tracing a crime gun, but it should be noted in the trace request that the marking came from the component and not from the frame or receiver.

TRACING FIREARMS WITH OBLITERATED SERIAL NUMBERS

An increasing number of firearms recovered in crimes have had their serial numbers partially or completely obliterated. Altering or obliterating a firearm's serial number is a felony and evidence of an attempt to conceal the source of that firearm (*See* 18 U.S.C. § 922(k)).

Firearms recovered with obliterated serial numbers should be submitted to the crime lab to attempt to restore the markings. Even if a lab is only able to restore a partial serial number, the trace request can be submitted to the NTC's Obliterated Serial Number Program to research potential serial number combinations.

Firearms with obliterated serial numbers should be traced regardless of whether or not an attempt has been made or could be made later to restore the serial number. Even without a serial number on the crime gun, submitting the possessor, associate and recovery location information could potentially link that firearm to other traces and identify related criminal activity and produce an investigative lead.

PERSONS PROHIBITED BY FEDERAL LAW FROM POSSESSING FIREARMS*

(See 18 U.S.C. § 922(g))

- Persons convicted of a crime punishable by more than one year in prison;
- Fugitives from justice;
- Users of illegal drugs or persons addicted to illegal drugs;
- Persons adjudicated mentally ill or incompetent and persons committed to a mental institution;
- Persons dishonorably discharged from military;
- Illegal aliens, and nonimmigrant aliens who do not meet an exception listed at 18 U.S.C. § 922(y)(2);
- Persons who have renounced their
- US citizenship;
- Persons under a qualifying order of protection; and,
- Persons convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence.

NOTE: *Persons under indictment for a felony are prohibited from receiving firearms and ammunition – they can continue to possess firearms and ammunition they have when the indictment is issued, but cannot receive any more firearms or ammunition.*

FIREARMS RECOVERY: BEST PRACTICES

- Trace all recovered firearms, regardless of how insignificant the related crime may seem.
- Submit firearms trace requests within 24 hours of recovery.
- Update firearms traces if new information becomes available in the investigation, such as recovery details and possessor or associate identities.
- Work with your local ATF office in opening joint firearms trafficking investigations.
- Use eTrace to submit firearm trace requests and retrieve trace results electronically, generate statistical reports, and conduct firearm trace data analysis.
- Opt into Collective Data Sharing (CDS) in eTrace to view and share trace data with other agencies within the same state that are also authorized to access eTrace and are opted into CDS. To request eTrace access or for more information on CDS, contact the ATF National Tracing Center at 800-788-7133, Ext. 1540.
- Enter shell casings in the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN). For more information on NIBIN, call 202-648-7140.

For more information or assistance, contact your local ATF office or call **1-800-ATF-GUNS.**

QUESTIONS TO ASK UNLAWFUL FIREARMS POSSESSORS

1. About their specific crime and their role in it.
2. About drug use past and present.
3. When and where did they get the gun?
4. How much did they pay for the gun?
5. Did they load the gun themselves?
6. Is there more ammunition, not with the gun?
7. Who else knows they have a gun(s)?
8. Do they have other guns?
9. Can they get more guns? From what source?
10. Is that source violent and armed?
11. Who else gets guns from that source?
12. Did they, or does their source try to remove markings from guns? If so, which markings and how?
13. If stolen, when and from where was the gun stolen?
14. Have they stolen firearms from other locations?

FIREARMS SAFETY

- Treat every firearm as if it were loaded (even if you know it is not).
- Keep finger off and away from the trigger.
- Always keep firearms pointed in a safe direction.

VISUAL GUIDE TO FIREARMS

DERRINGER REVOLVER PISTOL OTHER

RIFLE (LEVER ACTION)

RIFLE (BOLT ACTION)

RIFLE (SEMIAUTOMATIC)

SHOTGUN (PUMP ACTION)

PISTOL GRIP FIREARM

AR TYPE RIFLE

AK TYPE RIFLE

MACHINEGUNS