



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on August 5, 2021

NYC Gun-trafficking Case Reveals Surveillance Against Perps and Lawful Gun Owners

[The announcement](#) by the U.S. attorney's office of the Southern District of New York on Wednesday revealed not only indictments against nine individuals accused of gun trafficking, but also the vast array of surveillance technology involved in the investigation.

Said Manhattan U.S. Attorney Audrey Strauss:

Today's arrests shut down the alleged gun pipeline of these nine defendants. These arrests should also send a message to anyone who is thinking about illegally selling guns to New Yorkers or illegally bringing guns to New York.

We and our law enforcement partners are watching. And we will prosecute gun traffickers to the fullest extent of the law.



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The key player in the scheme is DuVaughn Wilson, also known as "Dupree," who, over an eight-month period, purchased some 87 firearms (mostly handguns) in his own name, and then provided them to members of the network. They transported them, mostly via public transportation, to New York City where they were sold for cash to various buyers.

If convicted, Wilson and his accomplices could spend the next 15 years in prison for the crime.

Strauss exposed part of the vast network that was involved in the takedown, including law-enforcement "partners" in Georgia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Massachusetts, and New Jersey.

The announcement came just days after the U.S. Department of Justice [announced its "strike force"](#) focused on gun trafficking. Initially, that "strike force" — enhanced personnel and technology — would focus on New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland said the effort is designed to "bolster cooperation" between the federal government and "local partners," calling it "another concrete step to address violent crime and illegal firearms trafficking."

The danger to law-abiding gun owners is clear, as those "strike forces" can also be used to track firearms they legally own. The program is, according to the DOJ, a "long-term, coordinated, multi-jurisdictional strategy" using gun trafficking as cover:



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This new approach that links law enforcement and prosecutors and locations where violence is occurring with the law enforcement and prosecutors in the jurisdictions where the firearms originate broadens our focus to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated response in both of those areas.

The technology that is being used has been installed over recent years and is vast and intrusive. It includes the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), which automates ballistics evaluations and analyses that used to be done by hand. Cartridge-casing evidence gathered at a crime scene is now entered into the Integrated Ballistic Identification System, which can be searched online by law-enforcement agencies.

At the DOJ's disposal is eTrace, a web-based application that tracks the purchase and use history of firearms used in violent crimes. "These leads," notes the ATF, "help law enforcement agencies quickly identify potential firearm traffickers and suspects ... in order to identify an unlicensed purchaser." eTrace, added the ATF, "is part of the broader ATF mission to catch violent offenders and criminal suppliers, and get their firearms off the street." It added ominously, "ATF is constantly looking to leverage technology like eTrace to streamline the investigative process." "The eTrace system allows law enforcement to conduct comprehensive traces of recovered crime guns and establish potential leads in their investigations," the ATF continued.

The ATF uses the National Tracing Center to track the movement of a firearm from its manufacture through the distribution chain of wholesalers and retailers to identify "unlicensed" purchasers. "That information," intones the ATF, "can help to link a suspect to a firearm in a criminal investigation and identify potential traffickers."

Since 1968, the ATF has received several hundred million such records. So much for the claim that there is no national registry of firearms legally owned by American citizens.

The ATF has 25 Crime Gun Intelligence Centers (CGICs) across the land "designed to collect, analyze and distribute intelligence data about guns, mass shootings, and major incidents across multiple jurisdictions." These centers "take a preventative approach to violent crime by targeting and prosecuting the sources of crime guns." The ATF proudly reports that "CGICs disrupt the shooting cycle by identifying and prosecuting shooters and their sources of crime guns."

All of this technology was woven together in late 2019 with the launch of Project Guardian in November, and Operation Relentless Pursuit in December. Project Guardian, launched by the DOJ, was "designed to reduce gun violence and enforce federal firearms laws across the country." As then-Attorney General William Barr explained:

Project Guardian will strengthen our efforts to reduce gun violence by allowing the federal government and our state and local partners to better target offenders who use guns in crimes and those who try to buy guns illegally....

[It] will coordinate with state, local and tribal law enforcement and prosecutors to consider potential federal prosecution....

[It] will create new ... guidelines for ... prosecution of federal cases involving false statements [on Form 4473] made during the acquisition ... of firearms.



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“These tools,” said Barr, “can greatly enhance the speed and effectiveness in identifying trigger-pullers and finding their guns.”

Operation Relentless Pursuit is a practical application of all of these technologies and purposes by combining the ATF, the DEA, the FBI, and the U.S. Marshals “to support those cities that ... continue to be plagued by rates of violent crime that are simply too high.”

Barr made it clear:

Through Relentless Pursuit, we pledge to hold accountable the trigger-pullers, firearm traffickers, violent criminals and those who supply them the guns to terrorize our communities.

ATF will aggressively utilize every available tool, including our crime gun enforcement teams, National Integrated Ballistic Information Network, and firearms tracing, to identify, investigate and support the prosecution of the most violent firearm offenders.

It’s a short step to expand the definition of who those “violent firearm offenders” might be to include anyone who owns a firearm. That would be *prima facie* evidence that such an individual is a potential “violent firearm offender” merely by his possession of such a weapon.

If virulent anti-gun David Chipman, Biden’s pick to head the ATF, somehow gets confirmed, every legal gun owner in the country will shortly be in his crosshairs. All the tools are in place. And the agency knows where millions of those gun owners live.

The success the ATF and the DOJ had in rounding up those gun traffickers from Georgia to New York reveals just how potent those tools are.



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