



“A Message from the Inspector General: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives’ Monitoring of 3-D Firearm Printing Technology,” December 2021

Hello, I’m Michael Horowitz, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Today, my office released a report on the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives’, or ATF’s, monitoring of 3-D printed firearm technology. Advancements in 3-D printing have resulted in better, cheaper, and more accessible 3-D printers, which may increase the likelihood that this technology will be used to print firearms or parts. 3-D printed firearms present unique law enforcement challenges because they can be undetectable to metal detectors and lack serial numbers, rendering them effectively untraceable.

While ATF reports that only a limited number of 3-D printed firearms have been used in crimes, and therefore it has not identified these weapons as a priority area, our report found that ATF does not have a method to collect data on 3-D printed firearms seized or recovered in connection with criminal activity. Without such a method, and without better monitoring, ATF can’t comprehensively analyze emerging trends involving 3-D printed firearms and parts.

We also found that ATF doesn’t have dedicated communication channels to share information about 3-D printed firearms within its own agency and with its law enforcement partners.

We made four recommendations to enhance ATF’s ability to ensure that 3-D printed firearms are not trafficked, do not fall into the hands of prohibited persons, and meet the requirements of existing federal laws.

To read our report, please visit our website oig.justice.gov, or go to oversight.gov.

Thank you for joining me today.

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