



**DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY  
BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS**

National Tracing Center Division  
882 T. J. Jackson Drive  
Falling Waters, West Virginia 25419

MAR 11 2003

904000:TPA  
3312

Mr. Lawrence G. Keane  
Vice President and General Counsel  
National Shooting Sports Foundation, Inc.  
11 Mile Hill Road  
Newtown, Connecticut 06470-2359

Dear Mr. Keane:

This is in response to your letter dated February 21, 2003, received via facsimile, concerning some follow-up questions you have regarding my previous correspondence with Taurus Manufacturing International.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) traces over 200,000 firearms annually for Federal, State, local and foreign criminal law enforcement agencies. Firearms trace information assists the requesting law enforcement agency in its resolving the potential criminal offense in question. ATF also utilizes trace data, along with other information, for firearms trafficking investigations, including any complicity on the part of a licensee when it occurs.

ATF's obligations to investigate firearms crime is derived from its duty to enforce the several criminal statutes such as the Gun Control Act, the National Firearms Act, and certain provisions of the Arms Export Control Act. ATF enforces these requirements with respect to members of the firearms industry, along with the public at large.

Over the years, many Federal firearms licensees - manufacturers and distributors -- have provided valuable assistance to ATF special agents and inspectors in their investigation of potential violations of the Federal firearms laws to assist in stemming the trafficking of

Mr. Lawrence G. Keane

firearms to prohibited individuals. ATF has been fortunate to have enlisted the support of those lawfully engaged in the firearms business in a variety of other ways.

While important, the role of Federally licensed manufacturers and dealers in responding to trace requests is limited. Your understanding is correct that in the context of a trace request, ATF only requests manufacturers and dealers to provide trace information in a timely and accurate manner. ATF does not want licensees or members of the public to interfere with ongoing criminal investigations by undertaking their own criminal investigations. While the law and regulations enforced by ATF do not prohibit licensees from undertaking any lawful follow-up action based on firearms trace information, nonetheless we urge licensees not to undertake their own criminal investigations or take any other action that might interfere with a specific ATF or other governmental investigation unless directed to do so by a law enforcement agency.

If I can be of any further assistance, please contact me at 304-260-1510. As always, we appreciate the outstanding cooperation that has been afforded us over the years by the National Shooting Sports Foundation. Involvement by responsible industry members has played a key role in making firearms tracing such a valuable resource to the police community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. P. Austin", with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Terrence P. Austin  
Chief, National Tracing Center Division