



INTERPOL



iARMS

# INDICATORS OF FIREARM TRAFFICKING

Targeting the true source of  
criminal firearms activity



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## INDICATORS OF FIREARMS TRAFFICKING

### INTERPOL Firearms Programme

INTERPOL's Firearms Programme focuses on the interception, tracing and ballistic comparison of illicit firearms material as key components of the fight against terrorism through the preventive dismantling of firearms trafficking and violent criminal organizations across international borders. **To this end, quality data inputting into our databases as part of this Protocol for all crime guns recovered in your jurisdiction is of primary importance.**

Only then will INTERPOL's Firearms Programme fully benefit you through proper gathering, sharing, and analysis of both the firearm and ballistic-related intelligence, leading to further arrests and convictions of firearms traffickers. **We can work together to break the firearms supply to terrorist groups and violent individuals.**

Firearms trafficking goes undetected in many jurisdictions. So often the firearms investigation is considered completed with the recovery of the firearm. The INTERPOL Firearms Programme suggests that the recovery is just the beginning of the investigation. With analysis of the intelligence gathered from inside and outside of the recovered firearm, laboratory examination, and interviews of suspects and others associated with the firearm, a more complete picture of firearms trafficking may emerge. If your analysis reveals any of the indicators located in this document, The INTERPOL Firearms Programme suggests further investigation is warranted to target the true source of your jurisdiction's firearms problem: the trafficker.

**Indicators of trafficking (only one indicator may be present):**

- Relatively short amount of time from when a firearm was purchased to when it was recovered
  - Also known as “short time-to-crime”. The recovery of a crime gun within 2 to 3 years after its initial purchase is considered a short time-to-crime and a significant trafficking indicator
- Recovered firearm originated (reported stolen from or traced to) from a different region of the country or another country
- Recovered firearm was part of multiple firearms purchased by the same person
  - The purchaser is associated with previously traced crime guns. Multiple recoveries associated with the same purchaser may indicate a variety of things, such as the purchaser's guns were stolen in a burglary, that the purchaser sold them (knowingly or unknowingly) to a trafficker or prohibited persons, or that the purchaser is part of a trafficking ring
- Recovered firearm was part of multiple firearms stolen at or around the same time or vicinity (determined by reviewing police reports or speaking to police personnel after contact is made when query indicates the firearm was stolen)
- Altered or obliterated serial number
  - It is possible that whoever is in possession of the firearm does not want the firearm to be traced
- Suspect claims to have obtained firearm from a non-licensed individual
- Pattern of recovered firearms (from different individuals or from different locations) originating from same geographical location.

**If you suspect trafficking, have those leads provided to assigned personnel and have them report back any new intelligence for further analysis and interviews.**

## Also to be kept in mind:

Analysis of recent firearms seizures indicates a number of recent trends used by traffickers:

- A major part of firearms trafficking occurs on a small level and involves unsophisticated methods. In these cases, trafficking appears to be mostly regional and to be done within domestic borders or between neighboring countries
- Firearms are often transported by land in private cars, buses and/or concealed in import/export trucks. If these modus operandi are used for the trafficking of a few weapons at a time, frequent small-scale trafficking can collectively move large quantities of firearms and ammunition over time
- The number of firearms recovered in private mails is increasing. Small parcels, sent by public mail services or private shipping companies are found to be containing parts, ammunition and/or even whole firearms
- When it comes to large shipments of firearms, measured in hundreds of tons or more, they are often associated with supplies to parties involved in armed conflicts or shipments to embargoed countries
- Considering the increase of Darknet websites offering firearms, the INTERPOL Research & Innovation Sub-Directorate conducted a study named "Firearms in Darknet: Empowering the Lone Wolf". After researching over 8 underground online marketplaces, the conclusions of this study are:
  - large availability of firearms and increased level of anonymity (websites usually offer more than one type of firearm and their stocks appear to be well provisioned)
  - shipment available worldwide
  - different weapon categories available: pistols, rifles, machine guns, sub-machine guns, shotguns, sniper rifles, shotguns, explosives, armor and body armor



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