



U.S. Department of Justice

Jessie K. Liu  
United States Attorney

*District of Columbia*

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*Judiciary Center  
555 Fourth St., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530*

October 3, 2019

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

The Honorable Charles Allen  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety  
Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 110  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Allen:

The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia (USAO-DC) commends the Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety for its efforts to convene a discussion on combatting firearms violence in the District of Columbia. As you know, illicit firearms play a role in most forms of the violent crimes that we see here in the District and serve to empower organized criminal groups. Firearms violence, often committed at the hands of repeat offenders, too often shakes our community to its core as innocent bystanders lose their lives. To tackle this intractable issue, we must all work together to devise a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency, and multi-jurisdictional set of effective solutions. As a result, my Office has partnered with the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) in an effort to address a significant source of illegal firearms in the District. As we have indicated previously (most recently in the October 2, 2019, letter of Renata Cooper to the Committee), the ATF stands ready to meet with the

Committee and staffers to discuss further the nexus between firearms access and firearms trafficking as well as trends important to trafficking and violent crime reduction.

Firearms make their way into the District in a variety of ways. Most firearms are produced legally and then diverted into the illicit market. They are frequently stolen and trafficked. Some unlicensed firearms sellers purchase firearms in one state, then transport them to their state of residence and sell, trade, or distribute the firearms, which can end up in the hands of those who commit crimes. Some prohibited purchasers (such as convicted felons) also use "straw purchasers," individuals who buy firearms on behalf of persons who would otherwise be precluded from buying guns themselves. Gun traffickers have also found ways to exploit the loopholes in federal law by purposefully purchasing guns through sales that do not require background checks or sale records.

Our challenge, therefore, is to determine how can we reduce the number of firearms-related incidents and keep guns out of the hands of those who should not have them. One effective strategy is to address the problems of unscrupulous gun dealers, stolen weapons, and illegal purchasers and suppliers. We have sought to do this through increased information sharing and coordination with our federal and local law enforcement partners. This allows us to identify specific incidents and trends, thereby enabling us to move quickly in investigating and prosecuting these offenses in the most appropriate venue.

Further, our partnership with the ATF, the federal agency tasked with investigating firearms trafficking, has hammered home how essential the ability to track firearms is to the reduction of trafficking and the successful investigation of firearms-related crimes. In fact, through ATF's firearms tracing capabilities and the use of the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), our collective partnership has been able to gain intelligence regarding specific recovered firearms that assists not only in identifying the firearm's source, but its connection to other shootings, crimes, and violent offenders.

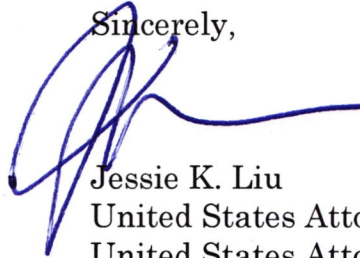
Working side by side with our partners on this issue has allowed us to prosecute individuals involved in the illegal trafficking of firearms. For example, as recently as April 2019, Isaiah Green of Washington, D.C., was sentenced to 50 months in prison for his role in drug trafficking schemes in which he illegally trafficked 31 guns, and Stephon Jeter of Washington, D.C., was sentenced to 63 months for his role in a multi-state firearms trafficking conspiracy in which 25 firearms were recovered.

USAO-DC will continue to prosecute aggressively those who commit criminal offenses using firearms, those who illegally traffic in firearms, and those who illegally

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possess firearms in our city. The correlation between violent crime and the availability and use of illegal guns is undeniable, and we will continue to work closely with our partners in the law enforcement community in the promotion of public safety and the pursuit of justice. We stand by our message to those who traffic in illegal firearms: You will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. And we stand by each and every one of our partners in the District without whose invaluable partnerships we cannot find solutions to the illegal flow of firearms.

Sincerely,



Jessie K. Liu  
United States Attorney  
United States Attorney's Office  
for the District of Columbia

cc: The Honorable Anita Bonds, Councilmember, Judiciary Committee  
The Honorable Mary M. Cheh, Councilmember, Judiciary Committee  
The Honorable Jack Evans, Councilmember, Judiciary Committee  
The Honorable Vincent C. Gray, Councilmember, Judiciary Committee