



GARY R. BARKSDALE
CHIEF POSTAL INSPECTOR

UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

August 21, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
United States Senate
135 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1501

Dear Senator Grassley:

This is in response to your April 30, 2024, letter regarding the Postal Inspection Service's work in detecting and intercepting firearm conversion devices, commonly referred to as "switches," "auto sears," or "Glock switches."

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the law enforcement and security arm of the U.S. Postal Service, is committed to protecting postal customers here and abroad from illicit contraband shipped in the U.S. Mail. The Postal Inspection Service is acutely aware of the significant risks posed by the trafficking of firearms through the mail. We are committed to addressing this issue and proactively implementing comprehensive measures across our organization to prevent the unauthorized domestic and international transportation of contraband, such as "switches," via the U.S. Postal Service.

The Postal Inspection Service works regularly with our federal partners and international law enforcement to deter and detect various types of contraband. One such partnership began in March of 2019 when the National Targeting Center – Investigations (NTC-I)¹ identified a surge in shipments of machine parts intended to convert semiautomatic Glock pistols into machine guns. These conversion devices, even without the accompanying pistols, are classified as prohibited items under the National Firearms Act (NFA)², which defines them, in pertinent part, as "any part designed and intended solely and exclusively, or combination of parts designed and intended, for use in converting a weapon into a machine gun."

In response to this influx, a national strategy was collaboratively initiated by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and the Postal Inspection Service. As part of this effort, the Postal Inspection Service has played a crucial role in investigating and prosecuting individuals involved in the illegal shipment of firearm conversion devices. By collaborating with HSI, CBP, and the ATF, we have leveraged our unique capabilities to intercept and dismantle these criminal operations that utilize the U.S. Mail. This joint effort has enhanced the effectiveness of our investigations and led to significant prosecutions, demonstrating our commitment to maintaining public safety and

¹ The National Targeting Center (NTC) is a division of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) responsible for coordinating and enhancing the United States' border security efforts.

² 26 U.S.C. § 5845(a)

upholding federal laws. Below are several case highlights that underscore the success of this collaborative effort.

- A convicted felon in Delaware was arrested for illegally possessing machine guns. The investigation revealed that the man had ordered Glock “auto sears” from China, which had been shipped to his residence.³
- A Southern Idaho man was sentenced to federal prison for providing illegal firearms, including Glock switches, to a cartel. The investigation involved the Postal Inspection Service, which played a crucial role in uncovering the man's attempts to ship a loaded pistol with a Glock switch installed. A search of his home led to the seizure of 16 firearms, 14 switches, drop-in auto sears, high-capacity drum magazines, suppressors, and ammunition.⁴
- A New York man was indicted for distributing over 50 grams of methamphetamine and transferring firearms, including ghost guns and Glock switches. The Postal Inspection Service, alongside other federal and state agencies, played a crucial role in the investigation. Postal inspectors intercepted and traced packages and executed search warrants, leading to the arrest and indictment. The investigation revealed that the man had allegedly sold numerous “Glock switches” to other customers.⁵
- A Virginia man was sentenced to three years in prison for possessing and selling multiple machine gun conversion devices, known as “Glock switches.” The Postal Inspection Service, in collaboration with the ATF, played a crucial role in the investigation by intercepting packages mailed by the man that contained these illegal devices. The work by postal inspectors led to the seizure of multiple conversion devices and firearms, showcasing the essential role postal inspectors play in identifying and stopping illegal mailings of firearm parts.⁶
- A New Jersey man received an 80-month federal prison sentence for illegal firearm possession and drug distribution. The investigation began when CBP intercepted a package from China containing Glock conversion parts. Postal Inspectors identified multiple parcels addressed to the man, executed a controlled delivery, and conducted surveillance that led to the discovery of 507.6 grams of heroin, 524.3 grams of cocaine, and 107.2 grams of methamphetamine, along with a loaded Tech-9 handgun.⁷

³ Press Release, U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Delaware, *Middletown Man Charged with Illegally Possessing Machineguns*, U.S. Dep’t of Justice (Aug. 1, 2024), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-de/pr/middletown-man-charged-illegally-possessing-machineguns>.

⁴ “Southern Idaho Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for Providing Illegal Firearms, Including Glock Switches, to Cartel,” *Big Country News* (Apr. 2024), https://www.bigcountrynewsconnection.com/idaho/southern-idaho-man-sentenced-to-federal-prison-for-providing-illegal-firearms-including-glock-switches-to/article_31cad6e2-028e-11ef-87f0-23f9b70c880d.html.

⁵ “New York Man Facing Up to Life in Prison in Massachusetts on Firearm and Drug Trafficking Charges,” *Fall River Reporter* (Mar. 2023), <https://fallriverreporter.com/new-york-man-facing-up-to-life-in-prison-in-massachusetts-on-firearm-and-drug-trafficking-charges/>.

⁶ Press Release, U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Virginia, *Richmond Man Sentenced for Possession and Sale of Machinegun Conversion Devices*, U.S. Dep’t of Justice (Aug. 8, 2024), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edva/pr/richmond-man-sentenced-possession-and-sale-machinegun-conversion-devices>.

⁷ “Absecon Man Sentenced to 80 Months on Federal Drug and Gun Charges,” *Breaking AC* (Apr. 26, 2021), <https://breakingac.com/news/2021/apr/26/absecon-man-sentenced-to-80-months-on-federal-drug/>.

- A New York man pleaded guilty to possession of a machine gun after receiving a device through the US Mail that converts a pistol to fully automatic mode. Postal inspectors played a crucial role in the investigation by identifying and intercepting illegal mailings.⁸
- A Massachusetts man pleaded guilty to possessing ghost guns and other illegal firearm components. Postal inspectors were instrumental in this case, assisting with intercepting an international parcel containing illegal firearm parts. Postal inspectors coordinated a controlled delivery, leading to a search of the man's residence, where law enforcement discovered six ghost guns, silencers, homemade explosives, and ammunition.⁹

The Postal Inspection Service has developed comprehensive training programs designed to enhance our capabilities in detecting, intercepting, and investigating contraband shipped through the U.S. Mail, including firearm switches and other illegal firearms components. This specialized training equips our personnel with advanced skills and knowledge, drawing upon our extensive experience in parcel-based narcotics investigations. Given the similarities between parcels containing narcotics and those containing firearms or firearm parts, our training emphasizes the identification of critical indicators and behaviors associated with these shipments. This approach ensures that our inspectors are well-prepared to handle the complexities of modern contraband trafficking. Additionally, our training programs are continually updated to incorporate the latest intelligence, investigative techniques, and technological advancements, thereby maintaining our agency's effectiveness in combating illegal activities.

The Postal Inspection Service's primary law enforcement mission is to safeguard the Postal Service, its employees, and the mailing public from criminal activities. To effectively fulfill this mission, we collaborate closely with our federal partners, leveraging their specialized expertise to obtain trends and analysis. For instance, we rely on the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) for comprehensive drug intelligence, as their primary function is to combat drug trafficking. Similarly, we depend on the ATF for insights and analysis related to firearms, given their core mission to regulate and enforce laws pertaining to firearms. This collaborative approach ensures that we stay informed about emerging threats and can proactively address any potential misuse of the postal system. Furthermore, our personnel are assigned to various interagency task forces and centers, such as the DEA's Special Operations Division, the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Fusion Center¹⁰, and CBP's National Targeting Center. This collaboration allows us to share intelligence, coordinate cases, and conduct joint enforcement operations, maximizing our resources and impact.

While the Postal Inspection Service has not conducted an independent analysis of the level of complicity by foreign governments, including the Chinese government, in the manufacture and sale of switches, our strategic partnerships with agencies such as the HSI, ATF, and other federal entities provide us with critical intelligence. These collaborations enable us to understand the

⁸ Press Release, U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of New York, *Rochester Man Pleads Guilty to Possession of a Machine Gun*, U.S. Dep't of Justice (July 26, 2024), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdny/pr/rochester-man-pleads-guilty-possession-machine-gun>.

⁹ "Wrentham Man Pleads Guilty to Possessing Ghost Guns, Ordered to Serve 18 Months," *The Sun Chronicle* (Dec. 2020), https://www.thesunchronicle.com/news/local_news/wrentham-man-pleads-guilty-to-possessing-ghost-guns-ordered-to-serve-18-months/article_6d82af69-38b8-5361-a927-4ccba36bab64.html.

¹⁰ Established by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) Program in 2004, the OCDETF Fusion Center (OFC) is a multi-agency intelligence center designed to provide intelligence information to investigations and prosecutions focused on disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking and money laundering organizations. U.S. Dep't of Justice, Off. of the Inspector Gen., Evaluation & Inspections Div., *Review of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces Fusion Center*, I-2014-002, at 1 (2014), <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2014/e1402.pdf>.

broader context of the supply chain and the role of the Postal Service within it. By leveraging the specialized knowledge and analytical capabilities of our partners, we effectively monitor and address the trafficking of illegal firearm components through the mail, ensuring a coordinated and informed approach to mitigating these threats.

While the Postal Inspection Service has not directly collaborated with U.S. foreign policy officials to address the importation of deadly switches shipped from China, Russia, or other foreign countries, we have knowledge of current work in that arena through our partnerships with other federal law enforcement agencies. As previously discussed, these collaborations have provided valuable intelligence and support in tackling the issue. We remain open and willing to engage directly with U.S. foreign policy officials when addressing these importations through the U.S. Mail, ensuring a comprehensive and coordinated approach to mitigating this threat.

Your letter included multiple areas of inquiry requiring records that the Postal Inspection Service may retain. The Postal Inspection Service acknowledges the importance of this law enforcement sensitive information in assisting with Congress' oversight responsibilities. Our agency is committed to full cooperation with congressional oversight. However, we request written authorization from the Chair of the relevant congressional committee conducting this oversight. To facilitate our response without undue delay, the Postal Inspection Service kindly requests a formal letter signed by the Committee Chairman authorizing the release of the specified law enforcement sensitive information. This letter should include confirmation of the oversight or legislative intent of the request, detailed specifications of the information or documents needed, and any relevant deadlines for delivering this information. If you have any questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to contact Program Manager Brian Bone at bdbone@uspis.gov.

I want to reiterate that the Postal Inspection Service is firmly committed to eliminating illicit contraband from the U.S. Mail. The Postal Inspection Service continues collaborating with federal law enforcement partners and prosecutors to investigate cases involving illegal firearm components and ensure that those responsible are held accountable. Our commitment to upholding the integrity of the postal system remains unwavering. We will persist in our efforts to thoroughly investigate and prosecute all cases of this nature to the fullest extent of the law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Barksdale", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Gary R. Barksdale
Chief Postal Inspector