

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 30, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Steven Dettelbach
Director
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

Dear Director Dettelbach:

I write today about concerning reports that Chinese and Russian companies are manufacturing and selling deadly “switches” or “auto sears” to buyers in the U.S. with little effort from foreign authorities to prohibit their sale while sellers have used deceptive distribution practices to evade detection in the U.S.¹ I would like to learn more about what steps your agency has taken to prevent these deadly Chinese and Russian-made devices from ending up in our local communities and whether there is a concerted effort by foreign adversaries to flood American streets with illegal, foreign devices.

News reports have noted an alarming increase in the prevalence of this deadly device.² Despite being commonly referred to as “Glock switches,” these conversion devices can be manufactured with differing designs to fit a range of firearms.³ These cheap block-shaped devices, no larger than a Lego, can turn a regular handgun or rifle into an illegal weapon capable of firing 20 bullets in one second.⁴ These devices are reportedly easy to find and buy on the internet from foreign countries via a variety of apps including Facebook, Twitter, and China-owned TikTok.⁵

¹ Rob Crilly, *China is deliberately allowing the export of deadly devices that turn handguns into machine pistols as it seeks to destabilize the US with street warfare, says explosive new book*, Daily Mail, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13121197/china-glock-switch-export-book-peter-schweizer.html> (Feb. 26, 2022) citing Peter Schweizer’s *Blood Money*; Alain Stephens and Keegan Hamilton, *The Return of the Machine Gun*, The Trace (Mar. 24, 2022) <https://www.thetrace.org/2022/03/auto-sear-gun-chip-glock-switch-automatic-conversion/>.

² Tom Jackman, *With ‘conversion switch’ devices, machine guns return to U.S. streets*, Wash. Post (Dec. 6, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/12/06/with-conversion-switch-devices-machine-guns-return-us-streets/> (according to reports, these devices are known by many names including: Switch, Giggle switch, Sear, Auto sear, Conversion device, Glock switch, etc.).

³ Lindsay Whitehurst, *A surge of illegal homemade machine guns has helped fuel gun violence in the US*, AP News (Mar. 9, 2024) <https://apnews.com/article/machine-guns-modified-illegal-switches-gun-violence-ddc2e9b6602ee1eb62e75732bbd54784>.

⁴ Ken Dilanian, *A tiny and cheap device called a “Glock switch” lets criminals create their own machine guns*, NBC News (Dec. 6, 2023), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/tiny-cheap-device-called-glock-switch-lets-criminals-create-machine-gun-rcna127265>; Tom Jackman, *With ‘conversion switch’ devices, machine guns return to U.S. streets*, Wash. Post (Dec. 6, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/12/06/with-conversion-switch-devices-machine-guns-return-us-streets/>.

⁵ Cyrus Farivar, *It’s Shockingly Easy to Buy Illegal Gun Modifiers on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter*, Forbes (Jun. 28, 2023), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/cyrusfarivar/2023/06/28/its-shockingly-easy-to-buy-illegal-gun->

Reportedly, switches were responsible for casualties in California and Minneapolis.⁶ In Houston, Texas, a police officer lost his life after being hit by a burst of over a dozen bullets in an instant.⁷ In Washington, D.C., a drug dealer fired 24 rounds in one burst, wounding two passersby.⁸ Nationwide statistics reflect a clear trend in the wrong direction. The ATF said that between 2017 and 2021 it recovered more than 5,400 switches – a 570% increase from the preceding five years.⁹

Reports show these devices are regularly imported from China and Russia.¹⁰ An Ohio man was recently charged with illegally possessing switches after he bought dozens of them for \$80-\$220 each from wholesalers in Russia and China using cell phone apps.¹¹ The man advertised the switches for sale on his YouTube channel and Instagram account and recruited people to advertise to friends.¹² The Chinese supplier who he bought from told him that he packaged the switches to look like keychains to avoid detection when they were shipped.¹³ The Chinese supplier reportedly said, “I have been doing this for two years, many wholesale customers, many of my customers are from America.”¹⁴ In another reported example, a 19-year old Illinois teen was arrested after being accused of ordering a total of 30 switches from China.¹⁵ The teen reportedly admitted that he ordered the switches from an app and sold nine of them to customers, profiting \$2,000.¹⁶ A purple switch and an extended ammunition magazine were also recovered from his bedroom.¹⁷ A press release on ATF’s website highlights the indictment of a 33-year old Kansas man who purchased seven switches from Shenzhen, Gaundong Province,

[modifiers-on-instagram-facebook-and-twitter/?sh=56f4f55267e5](https://wpde.com/news/spotlight-on-america/united-states-gun-violence-mass-shootings-hanguns-glock-switches-device-converter-machine-gun-20-dollars-criminals-homicides-crime-dc-maryland-virginia-safety-police-law-enforcement); Lisa Fletcher, *Cheap, tiny device that converts handguns into machine guns on the rise across US*, ABC News 15 (Nov. 6, 2023) <https://wpde.com/news/spotlight-on-america/united-states-gun-violence-mass-shootings-hanguns-glock-switches-device-converter-machine-gun-20-dollars-criminals-homicides-crime-dc-maryland-virginia-safety-police-law-enforcement>.

⁶ Tom Jackman, *With ‘conversion switch’ devices, machine guns return to U.S. streets*, Wash. Post (Dec. 6, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/12/06/with-conversion-switch-devices-machine-guns-return-us-streets/>; Lisa Fletcher, *Cheap, tiny device that converts handguns into machine guns on the rise across US*, ABC News 15 (Dec. 11, 2023) <https://wpde.com/news/spotlight-on-america/united-states-gun-violence-mass-shootings-hanguns-glock-switches-device-converter-machine-gun-20-dollars-criminals-homicides-crime-dc-maryland-virginia-safety-police-law-enforcement>.

⁷ Tom Jackman, *With ‘conversion switch’ devices, machine guns return to U.S. streets*, Wash. Post (Dec. 6, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/12/06/with-conversion-switch-devices-machine-guns-return-us-streets/>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ ATF, *Part VII: Recommendations and Future Enhancements*, (Jan. 11, 2024), at 4, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-ii-part-vii-recommendations/download> (These AFT statistics reflect switches or “Machine-Gun Conversion Parts” of all firearm types).

¹⁰ Crilly *supra* note 1; Stephanie Haines, *Law enforcement aims to crack down on “Glock switches”*, News Nation (Feb. 23, 2023), <https://www.newsnationnow.com/crime/law-enforcement-glock-switches/>.

¹¹ Adam Ferrise, *Willowick man bought Glock switches from China, Russia, advertised sales on social media, feds say*, cleveland.com (Sept. 22, 2023), <https://www.cleveland.com/court-justice/2023/09/willowick-man-bought-glock-switches-from-china-russia-advertised-sales-on-social-media-feds-say.html>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Stephanie Usery & Gabriela Vidal, *Metro East teenager accused of trafficking Glock switches from China*, First Alert 4 (Jun. 5, 2023), <https://www.firstalert4.com/2023/06/05/metro-east-teenager-accused-trafficking-glock-switches-china/>.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

China on a website advertising a “Glock Auto Switch.”¹⁸ The news reports demonstrate that foreign-based suppliers don’t hesitate to sell and ship these deadly switches to our shores and do so without any regard for U.S. law or the threat to life they pose to ordinary Americans. Congress needs to know more about what your agencies are doing to detect and deter these actions.

Foreign actors targeting American buyers present a clear threat to the safety of our communities. So that Congress may conduct objective and independent oversight concerning your agency’s response to the apparent targeting of American buyers by foreign actors, and how any governmental plans to combat these devices also protect fundamental Second Amendment rights, please provide answers to the following no later than May 14, 2024.

1. Has your agency developed or implemented any new programs or initiatives, either within your agency, in conjunction with other federal, state, or local agencies, or private sector entities in response to the sale and use of switches? If not, why not? If yes, provide records related to these programs and initiatives and describe how your agency’s actions protect fundamental Second Amendment rights.¹⁹
2. Has your agency developed or issued updated training, policies, guidance, or related documents regarding the detection, interception, and investigation of switches? Provide records of these updates and describe how they protect fundamental Second Amendment rights.
3. Provide statistics related to the use of switches:
 - a. The number seized or recovered;
 - b. The country of origin;
 - c. Method of purchase;
 - d. Currency used to purchase;
 - e. The shipping and delivery method to the end purchaser;
 - f. Times used or suspected of being used in the commission of a crime; and
 - g. The number of casualties.
4. Has your agency identified any trends in the production, manufacture, sale, and distribution of switches that indicates an intentional foreign-based effort to sell to American communities? Provide records related to the identified trends.
5. Has your agency analyzed the level of complicity by foreign governments, to include the communist Chinese government, in the manufacture and sale of switches? If so, what did your agency find? If not, why not?
6. Has your agency collaborated with U.S. foreign policy officials to address the importation of deadly switches shipped from China, Russia, or other foreign countries? If not, why not? If yes, provide records of these collaborative efforts and describe, in detail, all results.

¹⁸ Press Release, Dep’t of Just., Indictment: So-called ‘Glock Switches’ Would Have Turned Pistols into Machineguns (May 30, 2019) <https://www.atf.gov/news/pr/indictment-so-called-%E2%80%98glock-switches%E2%80%99-would-have-turned-pistols-machineguns>.

¹⁹ “Records” include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (e-mails, email attachments, and any other electronically-created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether or not they resulted in final documents).

7. Provide a detailed description of your agency's role in disrupting the supply chain of switches sold by entities in foreign countries and shipped to purchasers in the U.S.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Should you have any questions, please contact Brian Randolph on my Committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget