HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL

KE KANIHELA O KE KALANA O HONOLULU

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

No. 26-199

RESOLUTION

URGING THE HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT TO CONDUCT COMPREHENSIVE FIREARMS TRACING USING THE ETRACE SYSTEM AND ENHANCE CRIME GUN INTELLIGENCE THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELATED DASHBOARDS AND PLATFORMS, TRAINING, AND DATA ANALYTICS.

WHEREAS, firearms tracing is the systematic tracking of the movement of a firearm from its first sale by the manufacturer or importer through the distribution chain, such as a wholesaler or retailer, to the first retail purchaser or the last known purchaser from a federal firearms licensee; and

WHEREAS, comprehensive firearms tracing is the routine tracing of every crime gun—generally defined by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives ("ATF") as any firearm used in a crime or identified by law enforcement as suspected of having been used in a crime—that was recovered within a geographic area or specific law enforcement jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, comprehensive firearms tracing yields valuable information, including the types of firearms being recovered; sources (purchasers, retail sales locations, and out-of-state sources); individuals (possessors and associates) involved; recovery locations; patterns in firearms-related crimes, and trends, including data that can assist law enforcement in identifying firearms trafficking patterns and emerging threats; and

WHEREAS, the ATF's National Tracing Center ("NTC") is the United States' only crime gun tracing facility, conducting firearms tracing to provide investigative leads for federal, state, local, and foreign law enforcement agencies; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, the ATF introduced the eTrace system, an internet-based system that allows participating law enforcement agencies to submit firearm trace requests to the NTC, receive firearm trace results, search firearm traces submitted by their individual agency, and perform analytical functions free of charge; and

WHEREAS, by giving participating law enforcement agencies the option to conduct firearms tracing through the NTC electronically, the eTrace system made the NTC tracing process more efficient and accessible, and as of August 2024, there were 9,996 United States law enforcement agencies using the eTrace system; and

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WHEREAS, despite the longstanding existence of the eTrace system, neither the State of Hawai'i ("State") nor the City and County of Honolulu ("City") requires their law enforcement agencies to conduct comprehensive firearms tracing; and

WHEREAS, gun violence costs the State an estimated $901.4 million each year, including costs for police and criminal justice services, medical and mental health care, and emergency transportation, of which an estimated $19 million is paid by taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, between April 2021 and April 2022, the Honolulu Police Department ("HPD") flagged 1,052 cases involving firearms, including 759 cases in which firearms were recovered; and

WHEREAS, the HPD has reported an increase in the number of untraceable, unserialized firearms, commonly known as "ghost guns," being used in crimes and that these firearms are being mail-ordered in pieces or homemade using three-dimensional printers; and

WHEREAS, the ATF uses two key tools to identify violent shooters and the sources of crime guns—the eTrace system and the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network ("NIBIN"), which is the only national network that allows for the capture and comparison of ballistic evidence to aid in solving and preventing violent crimes involving firearms; and

WHEREAS, in June 2026, the ATF installed the Officer Suzanne O NIBIN site, the State's first NIBIN site, named in honor of fallen Maui Police Officer Suzanne O, creating an opportunity for the HPD to strengthen its crime gun intelligence through the complementary use of NIBIN and the eTrace system; and

WHEREAS, while the HPD has begun taking steps toward modernizing its firearm tracing capabilities, the City Council believes that comprehensive firearms tracing through the eTrace system and NIBIN; the enhancement of crime gun intelligence; and the development of related dashboards and platforms, training, and data analytics are essential to modernize and strengthen the City's law enforcement infrastructure; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu ("Council") that the Honolulu Police Department ("HPD") is urged to conduct comprehensive firearms tracing using the eTrace system and enhance crime gun intelligence through the development of related dashboards and platforms, training, and data analytics; and

RESOLUTION

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the HPD is urged to:

1. Upon the recovery of any firearm that was unlawfully possessed, was used for any unlawful purpose, was recovered from the scene of a crime, is reasonably believed to have been used or associated with the commission of a crime, or was acquired by the HPD as an abandoned or discarded firearm, use the best available information, including a firearms trace, to identify the source of the firearm and determine how the individual who was in possession gained access to the firearm;

2. Execute a memorandum of understanding with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives ("ATF"), United States Department of Justice, to obtain authorization to access and use the eTrace system administered by the National Tracing Center ("NTC");

3. If the recovered firearm is a "crime gun", as defined under the executed memorandum of understanding, submit a firearms trace request to the NTC using the eTrace system within 48 hours of the recovery, in accordance with the requirements of the eTrace system;

4. Permanently maintain records of all firearm trace requests submitted to the NTC using the eTrace system and all trace results retrieved through the eTrace system; and

5. Upon the recovery of any firearm, promptly query the National Crime Information Center using the available identifying information for the firearm, including the make, model, caliber or gauge, and serial number, to determine whether the firearm was reported stolen; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the HPD is also urged to:

1. Opt into the Collective Data Sharing feature of the eTrace system, which allows participating law enforcement agencies in the same state to share their trace data under a collective data sharing agreement;

2. Use data from the eTrace system on an ongoing basis and analyze the data for patterns and trends relating to recovered firearms;

3. Develop and update at least once every six months a public-facing interactive online dashboard that allows users to view the patterns and trends relating to recovered firearms; and

4. Develop and update at least monthly a restricted-access gun trace analytics platform for law enforcement personnel to view statewide trace data, including known trafficking indicators that may assist in identifying firearm traffickers, individuals who commit crimes with firearms, individuals who are prohibited from possessing firearms, and the source of their crime guns; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the HPD is requested to implement a training curriculum for relevant officers on unserialized firearms and 3D-printed firearms and ensure that relevant officers complete the training on an annual basis; provided that the training is requested to include instruction on:

1. Federal and State laws requiring firearms, frames, and receivers to be serialized;

2. Federal and State laws prohibiting the sale, possession, or manufacture of unserialized firearms, frames, and receivers;

3. State laws prohibiting the unlicensed manufacturing of firearms, including by use of 3D printers;

4. Firearm components, such as frames and receivers;

5. Types of unserialized firearms, commonly known as "ghost guns", and the assembly of unserialized firearms from both 3D-printed parts and purchased firearm parts;

6. Known vendors, manufacturers, and brands of firearm parts that can be used to assemble unserialized firearms;

7. Information on 3D printing materials, including filaments and resins;

8. Known 3D printer manufacturers, brands, and models, including which manufacturers, brands, and models have been used to manufacture firearms in Hawai'i and in other jurisdictions;

9. The process of printing 3D objects from digital instructional files;

10. Recording recoveries of 3D-printed firearms, including the digital instructional files used, when known, and any separately supplied parts kits;

11. Known online platforms that are common sources of digital instructional files for 3D-printed firearms, firearm components, and machine-gun conversion devices;

12. Common designs of 3D-printed firearms, firearm components, and accessories prohibited by HRS Section 134-8.5;

13. Practices for collecting digital evidence related to 3D-printed firearms, including digital instructional files and internet histories; and

14. Processing 3D-printed firearms, including safety precautions, tracing methods, tagging, and tracking practices; and

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BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Chief of Police, the Mayor, the Managing Director, and the Corporation Counsel.

INTRODUCED BY:

DATE OF INTRODUCTION:

AUG 28 2026

Honolulu, Hawai'i

Councilmembers

Report Title:
Comprehensive Firearms Tracing; eTrace System; Crime Guns; Crime Gun Intelligence; Collective Data Sharing; Firearms Trafficking; Unserialized Firearms; Ghost Guns; Three-dimensional ("3D")-Printed Firearms; Interactive Online Dashboard; Gun Trace Analytics Platform; Training; Honolulu Police Department ("HPD"); Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives ("ATF"); National Tracing Center ("NTC")

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.