

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg

FAST FACTS

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, using firearms trace data incorrectly, targeted more than 60 federal firearms licensed dealers (FFLs) across the country for unauthorized and ill-advised sting operations. The mayor sent civilian private eyes into these targeted retail stores to attempt to illegally purchase a firearm. The private eyes attempted to demonstrate “signs” indicative of a strawpurchaser and “fool” the dealer into selling the firearm. If a dealer proceeded with the sale, the city filed suit.

In May of 2006 Mayor Bloomberg filed suit in a Brooklyn Federal Court against 15 out-of-state FFLs. In December of 2006, Mr. Bloomberg filed a second lawsuit against 12 additional firearms dealers. He alleged in his suit that those out-of-state firearms dealers were “rogue,” describing them as “the worst of the worst” and blaming them for the criminal misuse of guns in New York City.

In a strongly worded letter dated February 6, the United States Department of Justice rebuked the City of New York for engaging private investigators in stings of out-of-state federally licensed firearms dealers. The letter, a copy of which is below, was critical of the city’s actions, saying the private investigators were “without proper law enforcement authority” and that future such action carried “potential legal liabilities.” The letter also warned that the city’s actions “however well-intentioned, could interrupt or jeopardize ongoing criminal investigations.” In fact, ATF officials have publicly confirmed that New York City’s actions did in fact interfere with as many as 18 ongoing criminal investigations. ATF officials have also acknowledged that they would investigate whether the city’s private investigators broke the law. NSSF was shocked by Deputy Mayor Ed Skyler’s response to the Justice Department’s warning saying that New York City would not necessarily stop conducting such stings.

The accusations being leveled by the mayor and the ill-advised (and potentially criminal) actions he has taken to make his civil case are inextricably linked to

several larger firearms-related issues: lawsuits against the firearms industry, straw purchases, gun tracing, and the relationship between the firearms industry and law enforcement.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: MAYOR BLOOMBERG AND THE FIREARMS INDUSTRY

Why were Mayor Bloomberg’s so-called “sting” investigations of out-of-state firearms dealers ill-advised?

In addition to risking the lives of undercover law enforcement officers and witnesses, Mr. Bloomberg’s “sting” operations, run without the knowledge of ATF or even the NYPD, interfered with as many as 18 ongoing federal investigations.

ATF has publicly announced that it is reviewing the conduct of the Mayor’s investigators to determine whether they engaged in any criminal conduct.

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Is there any truth to the mayor’s claims that firearms from “gun friendly” states are being used in New York City crimes?

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the government entity charged with researching and reporting on such issues, approximately 40 percent of criminals obtain their firearms from friends or family and another 40 percent obtain their firearms from illegal sources on the street or stealing. Criminals rarely (less than 8.5 percent of the time) obtain firearms through retail dealers.¹

Several of the dealers sued by Mayor Bloomberg are located in Virginia that has a one-gun-a-month law.

Has Mayor Bloomberg reached out to the Industry for help?

No. To the contrary, Mr. Bloomberg has repeatedly rebuffed industry offers to educate him and members of his mayoral coalition about ongoing educational programs to reduce the illegal acquisition and misuse of firearms.

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[NSSF release requesting seat at gun summit](#)

Gun-trace related:

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¹Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, (“Firearms Use by Offenders,” Nov. 2001)



11 Mile Hill Road
Newtown, CT 06470-2359
T: 203.426.1320
F: 203.426.1087
nssf.org