



U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

REFER TO: 2022-00491

www.atf.gov

September 19, 2022

Mr. William J. Olson 370 Maple Avenue W Suite 4 Vienna, VA 22180-5615

VIA EMAIL: wjo@mindspring.com

robert.jeffrey.olson@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Olson:

This responds to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated February 10, 2022, and received by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) on February 18, in which you requested copies of fact checking communications with USA Today regarding an article about ATF's use of out of business records. Your request was assigned number 2022-00491. Please refer to this number in any future correspondence.

In response to your request, we processed a total of 198 pages of potentially responsive material; 157 pages were non-responsive, and 41 pages are being released in whole or in part. Of the 41 responsive pages, we are releasing one (1) page in full and 40 pages in part. Individual redactions identify the exemption pursuant to which the redacted material has been withheld. Please be advised that we considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing records and applying FOIA exemptions.

We are withholding third party information, including the names of ATF employees, pursuant to FOIA Exemption (b)(6). To disclose personal information about a living individual to a member of the public, we need written consent from the person(s) whose information you requested. Without written consent, proof of death, or an overriding public interest, personal information is exempt from disclosure under the FOIA. The FOIA does not require agencies to disclose information that would be a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6).

For your information, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of the FOIA. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(c). This response is limited to those records that are subject to the requirements of the FOIA. This is a

Mr. William J. Olson

standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

You may contact our FOIA Public Liaison, Zina Kornegay, at 202-648-7390, for any further assistance and to discuss any aspect of your request. Additionally, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, Room 2510, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001, e-mail at ogis@nara.gov; telephone at 202-741-5770; toll free at 1-877-684-6448; or facsimile at 202-741-5769.

If you are not satisfied with my response to this request, you may administratively appeal by writing to the Director, Office of Information Policy (OIP), United States Department of Justice, 441 G Street, NW, 6th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20530, or you may submit an appeal through OIP's FOIA STAR portal by creating an account following the instructions on OIP's website: https://www.justice.gov/oip/submit-and-track-request-or-appeal. Your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted within 90 days of the date of my response to your request. If you submit your appeal by mail, both the letter and the envelope should be clearly marked "Freedom of Information Act Appeal."

Sincerely,

Adam C. Siple Chief

Information and Privacy Governance Division

From: Sent: To:	(b)(6) @usatoday.com] 2/1/2022 8:28:11 PM (b)(6) [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=c9233a8ee6c548b5aa60ea521673ec99 (b)(6) Public Affairs Division [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group
Subject:	(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=86e8424f64214688a109d7f28e518b44-PGA - Publi] [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY
Hi (b)(6)	
Great, than	ks so much! I appreciate the help.
(b)(6)	
From:	(b)(6) @usdoj.gov>
L	ay, February 1, 2022 3:18 PM
To	
	: Media request from USA TODAY
-	
(b)(6)	
We are awa	re of the article you are referring to. We are drafting a statement and will get that to you before your
deadime.	
V/r,	
(b)(6)
Public Affai	rs Officer
Public Affai	rs Division, ATF
99 New Yor	k Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226
(b)(6)	@atf.gov / C (b)(6)
From:	(b)(6) @usatoday.com>
*	ay, February 1, 2022 3:10 PM
	ffairs Division diagran 3 Matf grows

Hi there,

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Media request from USA TODAY

I hope you're doing well. I'm a reporter for USA TODAY and I'm reaching out for some insight for a fact check I'm working on about the ATF's gun records.

I'm fact-checking a popular claim online that the "ATF gun registry" now includes almost 1 billion firearm records. Here's the specific social media post I'm fact-checking, for reference:

https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=456753046107727&id=100053191068765&m_entstream_source=per_malink

My question for you: Is there any truth to this claim? Does the ATF have a "gun registry" with nearly 1 billion firearm records? Any additional context or nuance you think this claim needs would be greatly appreciated.

I hope to file this fact check by tomorrow (2/2) at 12 p.m. ET. I look forward to hearing from you.



From: (b)(6) @usatoday.com]

Sent: 2/1/2022 8:10:14 PM

Public Affairs Division [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group To:

(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=86e8424f64214688a109d7f28e518b44-PGA - Publi]

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From: (b)(6) @usatoday.com]

Sent: 2/4/2022 10:05:10 PM

To: Langwell, April L. [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group

(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=6e6b3ef182ca4ae4913432dc630389eb-Langwell, A]

CC: (b)(6) [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group

(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=c9233a8ee6c548b5aa60ea521673ec99 (b)(6)

Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY

Hi April,

Thanks so much for all this detailed information – it's really helpful for my fact check!

One quick follow-up question on the first and second points: You said all out-of-business records have been moved off microfiche and that the process wrapped in 2017. But the ATF letter sent to Rep. Cloud (https://freebeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Letter-Response-Rep.-Michael-Cloud-R-TX-51-x-GOP-co-signers-Federal-Gun-Registry-signed-letter.pdf) says that, as of November 2021, 865,787,086 of the 920,664,765 records were in a digitized format.

Is there a discrepancy here? Would it be accurate to say that all out-of-business records are now in a digitized format, or no?

Thanks again!

(b)(6)

From: Langwell, April L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>

Sent: Friday, February 4, 2022 3:14 PM

To: (b)(6) @usatoday.com>

Cc: (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY

Hi (b)(6)

- Have all of the records been moved off microfiche? Yes
- What steps were taken to digitize these records? Speaking specifically to the microfiche records, the process started as a trial around 2011 when we sent samples to a company in California to convert the film into digital images. The process to digitize an estimated 50,000 rolls of film and additional microfiche took about six years & was completed in 2017. Waiting on various sources of funding was a big part of why it took so long. In what format are they stored now? They are stored in a variety of bitmap images as well as locked, non-text-searchable PDFs.
- When and why did that process start? Searching for records on microfilm/microfiche had become an outdated
 process. The film readers were becoming expensive to purchase and maintain. Digitizing the records actually
 increased the quality of the images, enabling us to reopen traces that had been closed unsuccessfully because
 the microfilm/fiche was illegible, and modern software enables us to adjust features such as lightness and
 contrast so we can read the information on poor quality records.
- What measures are in place so that these digital records don't become a searchable database? They are scanned
 as non-searchable, static images. They are NOT scanned for Optical Character Recognition (OCR). They are then
 indexed and stored by FFL, only to be accessed in completing a firearm trace involving that out-of-business
 dealer.

Also, I wanted to clarify. Scanning out of business records began in 2005.

In approximately 2017, they packed up the microfiche readers after they had completed all the conversions.

Hope this helps! Feel free to call me if something isn't clear.

Best, April

R/, April Langwell

Chief, Public Affairs Division, ATF

99 New York Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226

(b)(6) @atf.gov / C: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @usatoday.com>

Sent: Friday, February 4, 2022 2:28 PM

To: Langwell, April L. (b)(6) @atf.gov>

Cc: (b)(6) /@atf.gov>
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY

Hey April,

Thanks again for speaking with me! I appreciate you taking the time to answer my questions during such a busy week.

Here are a few of the other questions I had regarding the format of the out-of-business records that the ATF maintains:

- Have all of the records been moved off microfiche?
- What steps were taken to digitize these records? In what format are they stored now?
- When and why did that process start?
- What measures are in place so that these digital records don't become a searchable database?

Thanks again!

(b)(6)

From: Langwell, April L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>

Sent: Friday, February 4, 2022 12:06 PM

 Tot
 (b)(6)
 @usatoday.com>

 Cc:
 (b)(6)
 @usdoj.gov>

Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY

ні **(b)(6)**

I just tried calling. I want to make sure we understand your question fully. Can you give me a shout when you have a free moment?

Thanks,

R/,

April

April Langwell

Chief, Public Affairs Division, ATF

99 New York Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226 (b)(6) @atf.gov / C: (b)(6)
From: (b)(6) @usatoday.com> Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2022 5:55 PM To: Langwell, April L. (b)(6) @atf.gov> Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY
Hi April,
Great, thanks so much! I appreciate your help.
Stay well, (b)(6)
From: Langwell, April L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov> Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2022 5:38 PM To:
Cc: Chittum, Thomas L. (b)(6) Dusdoj.gov>; (b)(6) ; (b)(6) ; (b)(6) Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY
Hi (b)(6)
I will have (b)(6) from my Division, who responded to you earlier this week, respond to you directly. As a media entity, please address your inquiries to our mailbox at liaison2@atf.gov . I assure you, we respond to all inquiries as best we can.
Thank you & best regards, April
April Langwell Chief, Public Affairs Division, ATF 99 New York Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226 (b)(6) @atf.gov / C: (b)(6)
On Feb 3, 2022, at 5:31 PM, (b)(6) @usatoday.com> wrote:
Thanks for connecting us, (b)(6). And thanks for this detailed response, Thomas – I received a similar statement from ATF yesterday.
One quick follow-up for you: Does the ATF manage a separate database of guns recovered from criminals and crime scenes? Or does it solely draw upon its database of out-of-business records to assist in criminal investigations?
Thanks again! (b)(6)
From: Chittum, Thomas L. ⟨ (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>

Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2022 9:51 AM

T	(b)(6)		(b)(6)	
To:	ell, April L. (b)(6)	@usdoj.gov>	(D)(O)	@usatoday.com>
-	E: Media request from U			
Thank yo	eu, (b)(6)			
(b)(6) h	ere is ATF's respons	se to a similar i	nquiry:	
an				s that fall under the Gun Control Act, firearms may be used to create such a
rec tra to Dis bu cri	quires Federal Firearms insfers to both other FFI ATF when they go out o scontinuance of Busines siness records" to facilit	Licensees (FFLs) to us and to individual f business. See, 18 s. Federal law furt ate the tracing of rearm trace reque	o maintain ce als who are no B U.S.C. 923(g ther requires firearms that sts may only	f-business records". Federal law rtain records regarding firearm ot licensed, and to send these records (3)(4) and 27 C.F.R 478.127, that ATF maintain these "out-of-t law enforcement agencies recover in be submitted by law enforcement
bu red en sta	siness records that FFLs cords each month. Thes forcement trace reques aff must review each FFL	submit, and curre e records are inde ts, but are not sea record individual	ently processe exed by FFL to irchable by in ly to locate ir	ocessing and maintaining out-of- es an average of 5.5. million of these of facilitate processing of law adividual purchaser information. NTC information needed to complete a trace, orcement trace requests.
	ore information about the ps://www.atf.gov/reso		-	be found at: eet-national-tracing-center.
	so CC'd April Langw s you may have.	ell, ATF's Chie	f of Public /	Affairs for any additional
Tom Chil	tum			
To: Subject: [E	XTERNAL] Re: Media red	day.com>; Chittui quest from USA To fy that claim or c	ODAY ontest it, as	I simply don't know. You might try
(5)(0)				
Date: Tue	(b)(6) @ sday, February 1, 202 (b)(6) Media request from US]	

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My question for you: Is there any truth to this claim? To your knowledge, does the ATF have a "gun registry" with nearly 1 billion firearm records? Any additional context or nuance you think this claim needs would be greatly appreciated.

I hope to file this fact check by tomorrow (2/2) at 12 p.m. ET. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks so much!

(b)(6)

Fact Check Reporter

(b)(6) @usatoday.com



USATODAY

From:	(b)(6) @usatoday.com]
Sent:	2/4/2022 7:27:33 PM
То:	Langwell, April L. [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group
CC:	(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=6e6b3ef182ca4ae4913432dc630389eb-Langwell, A] (b)(6) [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group
.	(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=c9233a8ee6c548b5aa60ea521673ec99 (b)(6)
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• Ha	ve all of the records been moved off microfiche?
• Wł	nat steps were taken to digitize these records? In what format are they stored now?
• Wł	nen and why did that process start?
• Wł	nat measures are in place so that these digital records don't become a searchable database?
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То:,	(b)(6) @usatoday.com>
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April	
R/,	
April Langv	vell
	ic Affairs Division, ATF
· ·	rk Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226
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Cc: Ch	ittum, Thomas L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov> (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>	· [(b)(6)	; (b)(6)
Subjec	t: Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TO	DDAY		
Hi <u>(</u>	b)(6)			
	ave (b)(6) from my Division, who responded a entity, please address your inquiries to our new as best we can.	•		
Thank April	you & best regards,			
Chief,	angwell Public Affairs Division, ATF w York Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226 6) @atf.gov / C: (b)(6)			
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	Τα (b)(6)	(b)(6)	@usatoday.co	<u>m</u> >
	Cc: Langwell, April L. (b)(6) @usdoj.g. Subject: RE: Media request from USA TODAY	<u>ov</u> >		
	Thank you, (b)(6)			
	(b)(6) here is ATF's response to a simi	lar inquiry:		

ATF does not maintain a federal gun registry for firearms that fall under the Gun Control Act, and none of the records ATF maintains relating to those firearms may be used to create such a registry.

The records relevant to your inquiry are known as "out-of-business records". Federal law requires Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs) to maintain certain records regarding firearm transfers to both other FFLs and to individuals who are not licensed, and to send these records to ATF when they go out of business. See, 18 U.S.C. 923(g)(4) and 27 C.F.R 478.127, Discontinuance of Business. Federal law further requires that ATF maintain these "out-of-business records" to facilitate the tracing of firearms that law enforcement agencies recover in criminal investigations. Firearm trace requests may only be submitted by law enforcement agencies conducting a bona fide criminal investigation.

ATF's National Tracing Center (NTC) is responsible for processing and maintaining out-of-business records that FFLs submit, and currently processes an average of 5.5. million of these records each month. These records are indexed by FFL to facilitate processing of law enforcement trace requests, but are **not** searchable by individual purchaser information. NTC staff must review each FFL record individually to locate information needed to complete a trace, and these records are only accessed to complete law enforcement trace requests.

More information about the National Tracing Center can be found at: https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/fact-sheet/fact-sheet-national-tracing-center.

I have also CC'd April Langwell, ATF's Chief of Public Affairs for any additional questions you may have.

Tom Chittum

From	(b)(6)			
	nursday, February 3		Ĺ		
То	(b)(6)	@usatoday.com>; Chit	ttum, Thomas L. 📋	(b)(6)	@atf.gov>
Subject	: [EXTERNAL] Re: N	ledia request from USA	\ TODAY		
		n't verify that claim o outy Director at ATF.			know. You might try @usdoj.gov
From:	(b)(6)	Dusatoday.com	<u>n</u> >		
Date: T	uesday, February	1, 2022 at 12:26 PM			
То:	(b)	(6)	\ 		
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(b)(6)
Fact Check Reporter
(b)(6) @usatoday.com
(b)(6)
USA TODAY

From:	Langwell, April L. [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=6E6B3EF182CA4AE4913432DC630389EB-LANGWELL, A]
Sent:	2/3/2022 10:37:50 PM
To:	(b)(6) @usatoday.com]
CC:	Chittum, Thomas L. [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=7dcbb4bb6e3b44c99f8be38df5f9e1d9-Chittum, Th]; (b)(6) (b)(6) [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=c9233a8ee6c548b5aa60ea521673ec99 (b)(6)
Subject:	Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY
Hi (b)(6)	
I will have As a media e inquiries as b	ntity, please address your inquiries to our mailbox at liaison2@atf.gov. I assure you, we respond to al
Thank you & April	best regards,
•	Affairs Division, ATF Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226 @atf.gov / C: (b)(6)
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Toa	(b)(6) (b)(6) @usatoday.com>
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More information about the National Tracing Center can be found at: https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/fact-sheet/fact-sheet-national-tracing-center.

I have also CC'd April Langwell, ATF's Chief of Public Affairs for any additional questions you may have.

Tom Chittum

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2022 12:38 AM
To: (b)(6) @usatoday.com>; Chittum, Thomas L. ⟨ (b)(6) @atf.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Media request from USA TODAY
Hi, (b)(6) Sorry but I can't verify that claim or contest it, as I simply don't know. You might try Tom Chittum, Acting Deputy Director at ATF. His email is (b)(6) @usdoj.gov
(b)(6)
From: (b)(6) @usatoday.com>
Date: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 at 12:26 PM
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Subject: Media request from USA TODAY
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(b)(6)
Fact Check Reporter

(b)(6) @usatoday.com

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From:	(b)(6) @usatoday.com]
Sent:	2/3/2022 10:31:01 PM
To:	Chittum, Thomas L. [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group
	(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=7dcbb4bb6e3b44c99f8be38df5f9e1d9-Chittum, Th]; (b)(6)
	(b)(6)
CC:	Langwell, April L. [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group
	(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=6e6b3ef182ca4ae4913432dc630389eb-Langwell, A]
Subject:	[EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY
Thombs for a	annesting us (LNG). And thenks for this detailed response Themes. I received a similar statement from
	onnecting us, (b)(6). And thanks for this detailed response, Thomas – I received a similar statement from
ATF yesterda	ay.
One milely for	Have the fact that Dane the ATT manners a constraint database of all manners and financially and arises
•	llow-up for you: Does the ATF manage a separate database of guns recovered from criminals and crime
scenes? Or d	loes it solely draw upon its database of out-of-business records to assist in criminal investigations?
The selection is	.1
Thanks agair)!
(b)(6)	
	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
From: Chittu	m, Thomas L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>
Sent: Thursd	ay, February 3, 2022 9:51 AM
То:	(b)(6) (b)(6) @usatoday.com>
Cc: Langwell	, April L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>
Subject: RE:	Media request from USA TODAY
Thank you	, (b)(6)
(b)(6) he	re is ATF's response to a similar inquiry:

ATF does not maintain a federal gun registry for firearms that fall under the Gun Control Act, and none of the records ATF maintains relating to those firearms may be used to create such a registry.

The records relevant to your inquiry are known as "out-of-business records". Federal law requires Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs) to maintain certain records regarding firearm transfers to both other FFLs and to individuals who are not licensed, and to send these records to ATF when they go out of business. See, 18 U.S.C. 923(g)(4) and 27 C.F.R 478.127, Discontinuance of Business. Federal law further requires that ATF maintain these "out-of-business records" to facilitate the tracing of firearms that law enforcement agencies recover in criminal investigations. Firearm trace requests may only be submitted by law enforcement agencies conducting a bona fide criminal investigation.

ATF's National Tracing Center (NTC) is responsible for processing and maintaining out-of-business records that FFLs submit, and currently processes an average of 5.5. million of these records each month. These records are indexed by FFL to facilitate processing of law enforcement trace requests, but are **not** searchable by individual purchaser information. NTC staff must review each FFL record individually to locate information needed to complete a trace, and these records are only accessed to complete law enforcement trace requests.

More information about the National Tracing Center can be found at: https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/fact-sheet-national-tracing-center.

I have also CC'd April Langwell, ATF's Chief of Public Affairs for any additional questions you may have.

Tom Chittum

From: Sent: Thursda	(b)(6) ay, February 3, 202	2 12:38 AM			
r		atoday.com>; Chittu	m, Thomas L.	(b)(6)	 @atf.gov>
***************************************		request from USA To			
	•	erify that claim or c	-	• •	know. You might try Tom Chittum,
From	(b)(6)	@usatoday.com>			
Date: Tuesd	ay, February 1, 2	022 at 12:26 PM			
То	(b)(6)				
Subject: Me	dia request from	USA TODAY			
Hi (b)(6)					

I hope you're doing well. I'm a reporter for USA TODAY and I'm reaching out for some insight for a fact check I'm working on about the ATF's gun records.

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https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=456753046107727&id=100053191068765&m_entstream_source=per_malink

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I hope to file this fact check by tomorrow (2/2) at 12 p.m. ET. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks so much!

(b)(6)
Fact Check Reporter
(b)(6) @usatoday.com
(b)(6)
USA TODAY

From: (b)(6) @usatoday.com]

Sent: 2/3/2022 10:28:51 PM

To: (b)(6) [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=c9233a8ee6c548b5aa60ea521673ec99 (b)(6)

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY

Hi (b)(6)

Thanks so much for this detailed information – it's really helpful for my fact check. I appreciate you taking the time.

One quick follow-up for you: Does the ATF manage a separate database of guns recovered from criminals and crime scenes? Or does it solely draw upon its database of out-of-business records to assist in criminal investigations?

Thanks again!

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 7:08 PM

To: (b)(6) @usatoday.com>; Public Affairs Division <liaison2@atf.gov>

Subject: RE: Media request from USA TODAY

(b)(6)

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(b)(6)

Public Affairs Officer
Public Affairs Division, ATF

99 New York Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226

(b)(6) @atf.gov / C: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @usatoday.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 3:28 PM
To: (b)(6) Patf.gov>; Public Affairs Division iaison2@atf.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY
Hi (b)(6)
Great, thanks so much! I appreciate the help.
(b)(6)
From: ((b)(6) @usdoj.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 3:18 PM
Tot (b)(6) @usatoday.com>; Public Affairs Division < liaison2@atf.gov>
Subject: RE: Media request from USA TODAY
(b)(6)
We are aware of the article you are referring to. We are drafting a statement and will get that to you before your deadline.
V/r,
(b)(6)
Public Affairs Officer '
Public Affairs Division, ATF
99 New York Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226
(b)(6) @atf.gov / C: (b)(6)
/b/6)
From: (b)(6) @usatoday.com>

Sent: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 3:10 PM **To:** Public Affairs Division < liaison2@atf.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Media request from USA TODAY

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Thanks so much!

(b)(6)

Fact Check Reporter

(b)(6) @usatoday.com

(b)(6)

USA TODAY

From:	(b)(6) [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=C9233A8EE6C548B5AA60EA521673EC99 (b)(6)
Sent:	(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=C9233A8EE6C548B5AA60EA521673EC99 (b)(6) 2/3/2022 10:57:27 PM
To:	Langwell, April L. [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group
Subject:	(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=6e6b3ef182ca4ae4913432dc630389eb-Langwell, A]; (b)(6) @usatoday.com Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY
)(6) response over to you first thing in the morning.
Sent fro	om my iPhone
	On Feb 3, 2022, at 5:37 PM, Langwell, April L. (b)(6) @atf.gov> wrote:
	I will have (b)(6) from my Division, who responded to you earlier this week, respond to you directly.
	As a media entity, please address your inquiries to our mailbox at liaison2@atf.gov. I assure you, we respond to all inquiries as best we can.
	Thank you & best regards, April
	April Langwell Chief, Public Affairs Division, ATF 99 New York Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226 (b)(6) @atf.gov / C: (b)(6)
	On Feb 3, 2022, at 5:31 PM, (b)(6) @usatoday.com> wrote:
	Thanks for connecting us, Adam. And thanks for this detailed response, Thomas – I received a similar statement from ATF yesterday.
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	Thanks again! Daniel
	From: Chittum, Thomas L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov> Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2022 9:51 AM
	Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2022 9:51 AM To (b)(6) @law.ucla.edu>; (b)(6) @usatoday.com> Cc: Langwell, April L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov> Subject: RE: Media request from USA TODAY

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Tom Chittum

From		(b)(6)				
Sen <u>t: T</u>			2022 12:38 AM				
То:	(b)(6)		<u> Pusatoday.com</u> >; Ch	ittum, Thon	nas L.		
(I	b)(6)	@atf.gov>	•				
Subjec	t: [EXTERNA	AL] Re: Me	edia request from US	SA TODAY			
<i></i>	,						
Hi, (b)(6) Sorry	but I can	't verify that claim	or contest	it, as I simpl	ly don't know	
You m	ight try To	m Chittu	m, Acting Deputy [Director at A	ATF. His ema	ail	
is	(b)(6)	<u>@usd</u>	oj.gov				
_							
(b)(6	3)						
From:	(k)(6)	@usatoday.co	<u>m</u> >			
Date:	Tuesday, F	ebruary:	1, 2022 at 12:26 PN	Л			

То:	(b)(6)	
Subject: Media reque	est from USA 7	ODAY
ні (b)(6)		

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I hope to file this fact check by tomorrow (2/2) at 12 p.m. ET. I look forward to hearing from you.





From: Sent:	(b)(6) @usatoda 2/3/2022 10:55:10 PM	, .			
To:	Langwell, April L. [/o=ExchangeLa	· ·	•		
Subject:	(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipien RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media reques		e4913432dc630389eb-La	ngwell, A]	
Hi April,					
Great, thar	ks so much! I appreciate your hel	p.			
Stay well, (b)(6)					
_	well, April L (b)(6) @u day, February 3, 2022 5:38 PM	sdoj.gov>			
То	(b)(6) @usatoday.com>	·			
Cc: Chittun (b)(ousdoj.gov>;	(b)(6)	Þ	(b)(6)
	: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request f	rom USA TODAY			
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H (b)(6)					
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As a media	entity, please address your inquir				
As a media					
As a media inquiries as	entity, please address your inquir				
As a media inquiries as	entity, please address your inquir best we can.				
As a media inquiries as	entity, please address your inquir best we can. & best regards,				
As a media inquiries as Thank you April April Langv Chief, Publ	entity, please address your inquir best we can. & best regards, vell c Affairs Division, ATF	ries to our mailbox at			
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·			,	
То:	(b)(6)	\(C\	(b)(6)	@usatoday.com>
	ngwell, April L. (b ct: RE: Media request f		<u>isdoj.gov</u> > DAY	
•				
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	business records tha records each month. enforcement trace re staff must review each	t FFLs submit These recorequests, but ch FFL recore	t, and currently proces ds are indexed by FFL are not searchable by I individually to locate	rocessing and maintaining out-of- ses an average of 5.5. million of these to facilitate processing of law individual purchaser information. NTC information needed to complete a trac nforcement trace requests.
			onal Tracing Center ca nter/fact-sheet/fact-s	n be found at: heet-national-tracing-center.
	e also CC'd April La tions you may have	~ ′	F's Chief of Public	: Affairs for any additional
Tom	Chittum			
To:	Thursday, February 3, 2	2022 12:38 A Jusatoday.co	m>; Chittum, Thomas	L. ⟨ (b)(6) <u>@atf.gov</u> >
Hi, (b	Sorry but I can't Chittum, Acting Depu	t verify that	claim or contest it, a	as I simply don't know. You might tr (b)(6) @usdoj.gov
(b)(6	·			
,	Tuesday, February 1	, 2022 at 12	day.com> ::26 PM	
To: Subje	(b)(6) ct: Media request fro		DAY	

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Thanks so much!

(b)(6)

Fact Check Reporter

(b)(6) @usatoday.com

(b)(6)

USA TODAY

From:	(b)(6) @usatoday.com]
Sent: To:	2/3/2022 11:00:24 PM (b)(6)
Subject:	(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=c9233a8ee6c548b5aa60ea521673ec99 (b)(6) RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY
Great, thank	s so much! I appreciate it.
From Sent: Thurse	(b)(6) @usdoj.gov> lay, February 3, 2022 5:57 PM
To: Langwell	, April L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>; (b)(6) @usatoday.com> [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY
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Thar Apri	nk you & best regards, I
Chie 99 N	I Langwell f, Public Affairs Division, ATF lew York Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226 b)(6)
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From: Chittum, Tho	mas L. (b)	(6) 🛛 🕲 വ	sdoj.gov>	
Sent: Thursday, Feb	ruary 3, 2022 9:5	1 AM		
То	(b)(6)	;	(b)(6)	@usatoday.com>
Cc: Langwell, April L	(b)(6)	@usdoj.gov	<u>'</u> >	
Subject: RE: Media	request from USA	TODAY		
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Tom Chittum

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Sent:	Thursday, February 3, 202	2 12:38 AM	
To:	(b)(6) 🖾 USa	<u>atoday.com</u> >; Chittum, Thom	as L.
((b)(6) @atf.gov>		
Subje	ct: [EXTERNAL] Re: Media	request from USA TODAY	
			
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Youn	night try Tom Chittum, A	Acting Deputy Director at A	TF. His email
is	(b)(6) @usdoj.g	<u>ov</u>	

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @usatoday.com>
Date: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 at 12:26 PM
To (b)(6)

Subject: Media request from USA TODAY

ні **(b)(6)**

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From: Sent:	Chittum, Thomas L. [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=7DCBB4BB6E3B44C99F8BE38DF5F9E1D9-CHITTUM, TH] 2/3/2022 2:50:54 PM
To:	(b)(6) ; (b)(6) @usatoday.com]
CC:	Langwell, April L. [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group
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l have also have.	CC'd April Langwell, ATF's Chief of Public Affairs for any additional questions you may
Tom Chittu	ım
To: Subject: [EX	(b)(6) lay, February 3, 2022 12:38 AM (b)(6) Dusatoday.com>; Chittum, Thomas L. (b)(6) @atf.gov> TERNAL] Re: Media request from USA TODAY Sorry but I can't verify that claim or contest it, as I simply don't know. You might try Tom Chittum,
Acting Depu	uty Director at ATF. His email is (b)(6) @usdoj.gov
(b)(6)	
From:	
	day, February 1, 2022 at 12:26 PM
To:	*
Subject: Me	edia request from USA TODAY



I hope you're doing well. I'm a reporter for USA TODAY and I'm reaching out for some insight for a fact check I'm working on about the ATF's gun records.

I'm fact-checking a popular claim online that the "ATF gun registry" now includes almost 1 billion firearm records. Here's the specific social media post I'm fact-checking, for reference:

https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=456753046107727&id=100053191068765&m_entstream_source=per_malink

My question for you: Is there any truth to this claim? To your knowledge, does the ATF have a "gun registry" with nearly 1 billion firearm records? Any additional context or nuance you think this claim needs would be greatly appreciated.

I hope to file this fact check by tomorrow (2/2) at 12 p.m. ET. I look forward to hearing from you.



From:	(b)(6) [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP
	(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=C9233A8EE6C548B5AA60EA521673EC99- (b)(6)
Sent:	2/2/2022 12:08:19 AM
То:	(b)(6) @usatoday.com]; Public Affairs Division [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative
Subject:	Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=86e8424f64214688a109d7f28e518b44-PGA - Publi] RE: Media request from USA TODAY
,	······································
(b)(6)	
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The records	relevant to your inquiry are known as "out-of-business records." Federal law requires Federal Firearms
	o maintain certain records regarding firearm transfers to both other FFLs and to individuals who are not
	d to send these records to ATF when they go out of business. See, 18 U.S.C. 923(g)(4) and 27 C.F.R 478.127,
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ΔΤΕ'ς Natio	nal Tracing Center is responsible for processing and maintaining out-of-business records that FFLs submit,
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	ocessing of law enforcement trace requests but are not searchable by individual purchaser information. NTC
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	ed to complete law enforcement trace requests.
	nation about the National Tracing Center can be found at: https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/fact-
sheet/fact-	sheet-national-tracing-center.
V/r,	
(b)	(6)
Public Affai	
	rs Division, ATF
	k Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226
(b)(6)	@atf.gov / C: (b)(6)
From:	(b)(6) @usatoday.com>
<u> </u>	lay, February 1, 2022 3:28 PM
То:	(b)(6) @atf.gov>; Public Affairs Division iaison2@atf.gov>
Subject: [E>	(TERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY
Hi (b)(6)	

Great, thanks so much! I appreciate the help.

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>

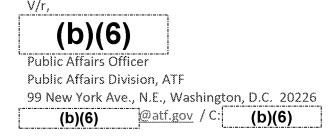
Sent: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 3:18 PM

To (b)(6) @usatoday.com>; Public Affairs Division < liaison2@atf.gov>

Subject: RE: Media request from USA TODAY

(b)(6)

We are aware of the article you are referring to. We are drafting a statement and will get that to you before your deadline.



From: (b)(6) @usatoday.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 3:10 PM

To: Public Affairs Division < liaison2@atf.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Media request from USA TODAY

Hi there,

I hope you're doing well. I'm a reporter for USA TODAY and I'm reaching out for some insight for a fact check I'm working on about the ATF's gun records.

I'm fact-checking a popular claim online that the "ATF gun registry" now includes almost 1 billion firearm records. Here's the specific social media post I'm fact-checking, for reference:

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I hope to file this fact check by tomorrow (2/2) at 12 p.m. ET. I look forward to hearing from you.

(b)(6)

Fact Check Reporter
(b)(6) @usatoday.com
(b)(6)

Langwell, April L. [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP From: (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=6E6B3EF182CA4AE4913432DC630389EB-LANGWELL, A] 2/4/2022 8:14:07 PM Sent: To: (b)(6) @usatoday.com] /o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group CC: (b)(6) (b)(6) (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=c9233a8ee6c548b5aa60ea521673ec99 Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY ^H (b)(6) Have all of the records been moved off microfiche? Yes What steps were taken to digitize these records? Speaking specifically to the microfiche records, the process started as a trial around 2011 when we sent samples to a company in California to convert the film into digital images. The process to digitize an estimated 50,000 rolls of film and additional microfiche took about six years & was completed in 2017. Waiting on various sources of funding was a big part of why it took so long. In what format are they stored now? They are stored in a variety of bitmap images as well as locked, non-textsearchable PDFs. When and why did that process start? Searching for records on microfilm/microfiche had become an outdated process. The film readers were becoming expensive to purchase and maintain. Digitizing the records actually increased the quality of the images, enabling us to reopen traces that had been closed unsuccessfully because the microfilm/fiche was illegible, and modern software enables us to adjust features such as lightness and contrast so we can read the information on poor quality records. What measures are in place so that these digital records don't become a searchable database? They are scanned as non-searchable, static images. They are NOT scanned for Optical Character Recognition (OCR). They are then indexed and stored by FFL, only to be accessed in completing a firearm trace involving that out-of-business dealer. Also, I wanted to clarify. Scanning out of business records began in 2005. In approximately 2017, they packed up the microfiche readers after they had completed all the conversions. Hope this helps! Feel free to call me if something isn't clear. Best, April R/, April Langwell Chief, Public Affairs Division, ATF 99 New York Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226 @atf.gov / C: (b)(6) From: (b)(6) @usatoday.com> Sent: Friday, February 4, 2022 2:28 PM To: Langwell, April L. (b)(6)

|@atf.gov>

(b)(6)

Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY

Hey April,

Thanks again for speaking with me! I appreciate you taking the time to answer my questions during such a busy week.

Here are a few of the other questions I had regarding the format of the out-of-business records that the ATF maintains:

- Have all of the records been moved off microfiche?
- What steps were taken to digitize these records? In what format are they stored now?
- When and why did that process start?
- What measures are in place so that these digital records don't become a searchable database?

Thanks again! (b)(6)	
From: Langwell, April L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov> Sent: Friday, February 4, 2022 12:06 PM To: (b)(6) @usatoday.com> Cc (b)(6) @usdoj.gov> Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY	
Hi (b)(6)	
I just tried calling. I want to make sure we understand your question fully. Can you give me a shout when you have a free moment? Thanks, April	
R/, April Langwell Chief, Public Affairs Division, ATF 99 New York Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226 (b)(6) @atf.gov / C: (b)(6)	
From: (b)(6) @usatoday.com> Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2022 5:55 PM To: Langwell, April L. (b)(6) @atf.gov> Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY	
Hi April,	
Great, thanks so much! I appreciate your help.	
Stav well, (b)(6)	
From: Langwell, April L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov> Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2022 5:38 PM To: (b)(6) @usatoday.com>	
Cc: Chittum, Thomas L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>; (b)(6) (b)(6) @usdoj.gov> Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY	(b)(6)

Hi (b)(6)
I will have (b)(6) from my Division, who responded to you earlier this week, respond to you directly. As a media entity, please address your inquiries to our mailbox at <u>liaison2@atf.gov</u> . I assure you, we respond to all inquiries as best we can.
Thank you & best regards, April
April Langwell Chief, Public Affairs Division, ATF 99 New York Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226 (b)(6) @atf.gov / C (b)(6)
On Feb 3, 2022, at 5:31 PM, (b)(6) @usatoday.com> wrote:
Thanks for connecting us, (b)(6) And thanks for this detailed response, Thomas – I received a similar statement from ATF yesterday.
One quick follow-up for you: Does the ATF manage a separate database of guns recovered from criminals and crime scenes? Or does it solely draw upon its database of out-of-business records to assist in criminal investigations?
Thanks again! (b)(6)
From: Chittum, Thomas L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov> Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2022 9:51 AM
To: (b)(6) (b)(6) @usatoday.com> Cc: Langwell, April L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov> Subject: RE: Media request from USA TODAY
Thank you (b)(6)
(b)(6) here is ATF's response to a similar inquiry:

ATF does not maintain a federal gun registry for firearms that fall under the Gun Control Act, and none of the records ATF maintains relating to those firearms may be used to create such a registry.

The records relevant to your inquiry are known as "out-of-business records". Federal law requires Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs) to maintain certain records regarding firearm transfers to both other FFLs and to individuals who are not licensed, and to send these records to ATF when they go out of business. See, 18 U.S.C. 923(g)(4) and 27 C.F.R 478.127, Discontinuance of Business. Federal law further requires that ATF maintain these "out-of-business records" to facilitate the tracing of firearms that law enforcement agencies recover in criminal investigations. Firearm trace requests may only be submitted by law enforcement agencies conducting a bona fide criminal investigation.

ATF's National Tracing Center (NTC) is responsible for processing and maintaining out-of-business records that FFLs submit, and currently processes an average of 5.5. million of these records each month. These records are indexed by FFL to facilitate processing of law enforcement trace requests, but are **not** searchable by individual purchaser information. NTC staff must review each FFL record individually to locate information needed to complete a trace, and these records are only accessed to complete law enforcement trace requests.

More information about the National Tracing Center can be found at: https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/fact-sheet/fact-sheet-national-tracing-center.

I have also CC'd April Langwell, ATF's Chief of Public Affairs for any additional questions you may have.

Tom Ch	ttum
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Sent: Thu	rsday, February 3, 2022 12:38 AM
	(b)(6) ②usatoday.com>; Chittum, Thomas L. ⟨ (b)(6) ②atf.gov>
Subject:	EXTERNAL] Re: Media request from USA TODAY
·	
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	\ <u></u>
(b)(6)	
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Thanks so	much!
(b)(<u>)</u>
	<u>/i</u> < Reporter
Tace Chel	\ (\CDO) (C)

(b)(6) @usatoday.com



From: Sent: To: CC: Subject:	Langwell, April L. [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE A (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=6E6B3EF182CA 2/4/2022 5:05:39 PM (b)(6) @usatoday.com] (b)(6) [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange A (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=c9233a8ee6c548 RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Media request from USA TODAY	.4AE4913432DC630389EB	-LANGWELL, A] (b)(6)	
	alling. I want to make sure we understand your quest e me a shout when you have a free moment?	ion fully.		
Thanks, April				
· ·	ell c Affairs Division, ATF k Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20226 Datf.gov / C: (b)(6)			
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Stay well, (b)(6)	(bV6)			
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Cc: Chittum (b)(Subject: Re	, Thomas L. (b)(6) @usdoj.gov>;	(b)(6)	> ;	(b)(6)
Hi (b)(6)				
	(b)(6) from my Division, who responded to y entity, please address your inquiries to our mailbox at best we can.			•
Thank you a	& best regards,			
April Langw	ell			

Chief, Public	Affairs Div	isio	n, ATF		
99 New York	Ave., N.E.	, Wa	shington,	D.C.	20226
(b)(6)	@atf.gov	/ C:	(b)	(6)	

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rom Cm	itum, Acting Deputy	Director at ATF. his email is (b)(6) itwasaoj.gov
	ì	
(b)(6)		
From	(b)(6)	 @usatoday.com>
	esday, February 1, 2	
1	(b)(6)	
Subject:	Media request fron	n USA TODAY
Junjeut.	media request mon	7.00/(100/(1
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