



## Gun Owners of America

The Only No-Compromise Gun Lobby in Washington

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April 17, 2026

Mr. William M. Blier

Acting Inspector General

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20530

### **Re: DOJ and ATF Publication of Sensitive Tax Return and Taxpayer Information**

Dear Mr. Blier,

I am the Senior Vice President of Gun Owners of America, Inc. ("GOA"). I write today to request that your office open a formal investigation into recent actions by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives ("ATF") and the Civil Division of the Department of Justice ("DOJ").

Recently DOJ attorneys, while representing the ATF and the Attorney General in litigation, intentionally and deliberately publicized the sensitive tax information and tax returns of one of GOA's members, in the form of approved transfers of several National Firearms Act ("NFA") registered firearms. See *Silencer Shop Found. v. BATFE*, No. 6:25-cv-00056-H (N.D. Tex.), ECF No. 101-1. As part of that filing, DOJ also negligently publicized – presumably inadvertently – this gun owner's name and location. *Id.* at PageID No. 1217. Finally, DOJ's briefing describes this GOA member's history of approved NFA applications, thereby disclosing intimate details of the member's personal firearm collection. *Id.* at PageID No. 1212; ECF No. 100 at 2.

This intentional public disclosure of sensitive tax return and taxpayer information by government agencies demands your immediate oversight.

### **Background**

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In the *Silencer Shop* litigation, GOA, the State of Texas, and co-plaintiffs sued ATF and DOJ, challenging the NFA's continued constitutionality and the government's ability to require registration of certain NFA firearms now that the "One Big Beautiful Bill" reduced the tax on certain firearms to \$0.

During that litigation, the plaintiffs brought to the court's attention certain supplemental authorities. See ECF No. 98-1. This occurred after a GOA member attempted to register two NFA firearms with the ATF. On these registration applications, the GOA member stated the reason for acquiring these firearms was to "EXERCISE MY GOD GIVEN RIGHT."

But ATF denied the applications on that basis, stating that the GOA member's reason – constitutional rights – was "INSUFFICIENT," and demanding that a "legal reason" be provided. Following a notice of supplemental authority filed by the plaintiffs (ECF No. 98-1), ATF reversed course and approved the member's applications.

What followed constitutes a severe breach of taxpayer – and gun owner – privacy.

**First**, in response to the plaintiffs' notice of supplemental authority, DOJ informed the court that ATF had approved the GOA member's subsequent NFA applications – but only after the member changed the stated "reason" for applying. In so doing, DOJ publicized two approved ATF Forms 1, "Application to Make and Register NFA Firearm." These forms constitute tax returns, and the information contained in them constitutes sensitive tax information.

**Second**, on one of the NFA forms publicized, DOJ and ATF failed to redact certain identifying information about the GOA member, including the member's name, city, and state.

**Third**, the government's filing also included a declaration from Stephen Albro, the Chief of the ATF's NFA Division. In that declaration, ATF detailed that, in addition to the subsequently approved forms, the GOA member in question had been approved for "two additional ATF Forms 1" and "twelve ATF Forms 4." ECF No. 101-1, PageID No. 1212.

The personal information of this GOA member was left freely available for public viewing until plaintiffs' counsel brought the matter to DOJ's attention. Eventually, DOJ sought to have the Court restrict public access to those documents. But then, when attempting to correct the filings, DOJ inexcusably publicized most of the same sensitive information a second time.

**First**, DOJ refiled further-redacted copies of the GOA member's "approved" Forms 1, this time with the name, city, and state redacted.

**Second**, DOJ again filed ATF Chief Albro's declaration. This declaration continued to publicly report the number of NFA items approved and transferred to the GOA member – intimate details about the member's personal firearms collection compiled from return information contained on more than a dozen of the GOA member's taxpayer returns.

### **An OIG Investigation Is Warranted**

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DOJ's filing of taxpayer returns, and ATF's description of tax return information – properly redacted or otherwise – raises serious concerns about the government's compliance with federal law.

Under 26 U.S.C. § 6103, NFA registration forms are strictly prohibited from disclosure, as they constitute tax "return information." The special treatment provided to these NFA Forms are evident on the Forms themselves. See ATF Form 5320.4 at 4 n.3, <https://www.atf.gov/media/23251/download> (ATF Form 5320.4 at 4 n.3 ("Tax return information is protected from unauthorized disclosure under 26 U.S.C. 6103."); id. at 7 n.9 ("[A]ny dissemination by ATF of information relating to the application to make and register an NFA firearm must conform with the restrictions in 26 U.S.C. 6103."). And, as the Supreme Court held in *Church of Scientology v. IRS*, 484 U.S. 9, 16, 18 (1987), the mere redaction of some identifying details does not permit the disclosure of confidential tax returns.

To date, neither DOJ nor ATF has offered any plausible justification for their deliberate publication of tax return and taxpayer information, such as whether either entity believes some exception to Section 6103(b) applies. This is to say nothing of DOJ's – presumably accidental – disclosure of the taxpayer's personally identifying information.

The sensitivity of this information cannot be understated, nor can the severity of DOJ and ATF's breach of personal privacy and possible violations of federal law. Not only have DOJ and ATF willfully publicized

tax returns containing sensitive taxpayer information, but also they (i) doxed (presumably inadvertently) a GOA member by publicizing name, city, and state, and (ii) intentionally provided would-be criminals a description of this GOA member's firearm collection in the process.

The impunity with which DOJ and ATF have acted and continue to act in this matter underscores the need for your prompt attention.

### **Request for OIG Investigation**

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Based on the facts above, and pursuant to your authority under 5 U.S.C. App. §§ 4(a)(1) and 6(a), and perhaps other statutes, we request that the OIG immediately launch an investigation into any potential statutory, regulatory, and policy violations, to determine:

- 1) The specific circumstances that led to ATF and DOJ's public disclosure of protected tax records and taxpayer information;
- 2) What warning(s), if any, ATF provided to DOJ regarding the sensitivity of the tax information it provided, prior to DOJ filing that information on the public docket;
- 3) Whose decision it was to refile this sensitive tax information with the Court, whether redacted or unredacted;
- 4) Whether DOJ and ATF's actions constitute a breach of any federal statute, regulation, or policy; and
- 5) What policies and procedures ATF and DOJ have instituted, and what new policies and procedures must be implemented, to prevent future such events.

We thank you for your assistance. The millions of gun owners represented by Gun Owners of America expect a prompt, transparent, and complete investigation of this matter.

Sincerely yours,



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**Erich Pratt**

Senior Vice President  
Gun Owners of America, Inc.