

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 704

Submitted by Theodore E. Mathison

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Hearing: March 8, 2023

House Bill 704 Firearms – Tracking Technology

I am writing to oppose HB 704 as it proposes the installation, i.e., the embedding, of tracking devices in firearm frames/receivers sold in a “bulk firearms transfer”. The devices are unworkable and will create structural and safety problems with the firearms on which installed. Further, the data collected from the firearms maybe used by the Maryland State Police (MSP) to track individual citizens thereby intruding upon the private lives of Maryland citizens.

The Bill requires tracking devices that “...emit(s) unique tracking information...” be embedded...” in the frame or receiver of new firearms in a manner such that the devices cannot be removed without destroying the frame or receiver of the firearm. Each tracking devices is to emit unique data that the MSP can use to capture the time/date/location of each firearm transfer from, presumably, a dealer to a purchaser. At present, the most likely choice for such a tracking device is the Global Positioning System, or GPS. However, GPS has a number of significant limitations. The electronic waves it transmits are of relatively low power making them vulnerable to distortion and hacking. When hacked, the waves can be used to give false locations.

Further, HB 704 does not mention a source of power for the emitting/GPS device, but some type of power source, perhaps a battery, would be required. A battery could not be embedded in the firearm as on occasion it would need to be replaced or recharged.

What is most troubling about HB 704 is the requirement to “embed” the tracking devices within the frames and/or receivers of firearms. The frames/receivers on many firearms must withstand very high pressures, perhaps upwards of 58,000 pounds per square inch. There is concern the embedding process could create stress problems thereby weakening the frames/receivers causing them to rupture when the firearm is fired. Jagged fragments of metal would be thrown in all directions causing death or injury to anyone close to the firearm. The embedding requirement is fraught with potential problems and should have a thorough metallurgical evaluation to determine whether it is feasible, and more important, safe.

Lastly, there is concern the installation of tracking devices in firearms, with the data captured by the MSP, could be used to track the whereabouts of citizens in their everyday activities. This would be most inappropriate and certainly not something the State of Maryland should condone. It is the type of activity practiced by totalitarian societies.

Written Opposition HB 704
Theodore E. Mathison
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Accordingly, I request HB 704 be given an unsatisfactory report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Theodore E. Mathison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and a long, sweeping underline.

Theodore E. Mathison