

Understanding Ghost Guns: Rise, Risks, and Regulation in the US

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What's in today's article?

- Why in News?
- What is 3D Printing?
- What is Ghost Gun?

Why in News?

Luigi Mangione, the person suspected of the fatal shooting of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, was carrying a “ghost gun” when he was apprehended.

The police suspect Mangione’s gun may have been made using a 3D printer.

What is 3D printing?

- **Background**

- Invented in the 1980s, **3D printing** burst into the mainstream around the 2010s, when many thought it would take over the world.
- The technology, however, at the time was expensive, slow and prone to making errors.
- In recent years, some of these flaws have been done away with, making 3D printing more prevalent than ever before.

- **About**

- 3D printing, also known as **additive manufacturing**, is a process of creating three-dimensional objects from digital models by adding material layer by layer.
- It is an additive process, in which layers of a material like plastic, composites or bio-materials are built up to construct objects that range in shape, size, rigidity and colour.
- This process allows for more efficient and customized production compared to traditional subtractive manufacturing methods.

- **Some notable examples**

- 3D printing is being used in a host of different industries like healthcare, automobile and aerospace.
- In May 2023, aerospace manufacturing company Relativity Space launched a test rocket made entirely from 3D-printed parts, measuring 100 feet tall and 7.5 feet wide.
 - Shortly after its take off, however, it suffered a failure.
- At the peak of the **Covid-19** pandemic in 2020, the healthcare industry used 3D printers to make much-needed medical equipment, like swabs, face shields, and masks, as well as the parts to fix their ventilators.

What is Ghost Gun?

- **About**

- Ghost guns are untraceable firearms, often made using 3D printers and assembled from various parts, including metals and plastics.
- These guns lack serial numbers, making them difficult for law enforcement to trace.
- Kits for assembling such weapons were initially popular among hobbyists in the US, symbolizing libertarian ideals, but have now gained popularity among criminals due to their anonymity.

- **Concerns**

- The ease of creating ghost guns bypasses background checks required for commercial firearm sales.
- This incident highlights the evolution of 3D printing technology and raises concerns about its misuse in crafting precision equipment like firearms.

- **A Growing Threat in the US**

- **Untraceable and Increasingly Prevalent**

- Ghost guns, formally known as Privately Made Firearms (PMF), are becoming a significant problem in the US due to their untraceable nature.

- **Sharp Rise in Recoveries**

- In 2022, the US Department of Justice recovered 25,785 ghost guns, reflecting a staggering 1,300% increase since 2016.
- Between 2017 and 2021, nearly 38,000 suspected ghost guns were recovered during domestic seizures.

- **Recent Trends**

- The number of ghost guns recovered and traced increased significantly:
- 19,273 in 2021, up from 8,504 in 2020, according to the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF).
- **Are ghost guns legal in the US?**
- **Biden's 2022 Rule for Ghost Guns**
 - President Joe Biden introduced a rule in 2022 requiring ghost guns to adhere to the same regulations as commercial firearms.
 - The rule mandates serial numbers and background checks for buyers.
 - The measure faces legal challenges in the Supreme Court, with no final ruling yet.
- **Arguments Supporting Ghost Guns**
 - Advocates claim ghost guns are for hobbyists and align with the Second Amendment, which protects the right to keep and bear arms.
 - Supporters argue individuals have a right to build firearms for personal use.
- **Existing Legal Framework**
 - The **Gun Control Act of 1968** permits private citizens to construct guns for personal use without mandatory registration or traceability, provided they are not sold.

Q.1. What are ghost guns, and why are they a concern in the US?

Ghost guns are untraceable firearms made using 3D printing or assembly kits. They lack serial numbers and bypass background checks, making them attractive to criminals and challenging for law enforcement to track.

Q.2. How has ghost gun usage evolved in the US?

Between 2016 and 2022, ghost gun recoveries in the US surged by 1,300%. In 2022, over 25,000 ghost guns were recovered, underscoring their growing prevalence and the challenges they pose to public safety.

News: [Ghost gun: what is the weapon found with UnitedHealth CEO's murder suspect Luigi Mangione](#) | [Investopedia](#) | [ABC News](#)

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