

RID ALERT



July 10, 2026

News from Reeves & Dola, LLP

ATF Proposes Changes to Reduce Regulatory Burdens and Confusion for Importers

This alert is the second publication in the Reeves Dola series covering the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) proposed and final rules to modernize its regulations governing firearms and ammunition. In our previous [article](#), we reviewed ATF's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking addressing machine gun transfers between qualified licensees (Docket No. ATF-2026-0006; ATF No. 2025R-19P). Today's alert covers two proposed rules to address longstanding issues plaguing firearm and ammunition importers: (1) [the conversion of temporary imports into permanent imports](#); and (2) [the importation of "dual-use" frames, receivers, and barrels](#).

The comment period for both rules closes on **August 6, 2026**.

I. Converting Temporary to Permanent Imports for Defense Articles

Issue

Anyone who has needed to convert temporarily imported firearms, ammunition, or any other U.S. Munitions Import List (USMIL) item to permanent import knows full well ATF's long-standing refusal to allow such change in status when the item is already in country. Instead, the importer is forced to jump through high and expensive hoops. Take for example a temporary import for repair purposes, where it is determined the item must be replaced but the parts are salvageable. Due to ATF policy and interpretation of the Gun Control Act (GCA), the National Firearms Act (NFA), and the Arms Export Control Act

(AECA), ATF would not approve a Form 6 permanent import permit application for any USMIL item already in the United States. ATF stood by this policy regardless of whether the item was brought in under a temporary import authorization of the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) or under the temporary import entry clearance requirements of the Export Administration Regulations (EAR). Consequently, the importer either had to first export the item to begin the permanent import application process or destroy the item at a total loss. These limited options imposed significant logistical burdens, additional transportation costs, and unnecessary administrative complexity with no discernable benefit to public safety or the economy.

Proposed Rule

The proposed rule would establish a formal administrative process allowing an importer to convert an **eligible** temporary import into a permanent import without having to first export and re-import the item. Specifically, ATF could approve a Form 6 requesting permanent import authorization after a temporary import has occurred, provided the importer satisfies all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements governing permanent imports. It is important to note, however, that this temporary to permanent conversion will only be possible if the import is permissible under the GCA and the NFA. In other words, to convert temporarily imported non-sporting firearms, ammunition, and barrels to permanent import status, the importer will bear the burden of overcoming the GCA restrictions by establishing the permanent import is either for a government end user or one of the other acceptable reasons in Section 925 of the GCA.

Practical Impact

If finalized, the proposal will provide meaningful operational flexibility for companies that utilize temporary import authorizations but must convert the import to permanent status. Rather than requiring costly export-and-reimport transactions or all out destruction, companies will be able to preserve inventory already located within the United States through an ATF approval process that will also preserve all existing import eligibility requirements.

II. Importing Dual-Use Frames, Receivers, and Barrels

Background

The GCA restricts the importation of firearms that are not "generally recognized as particularly suitable for or readily adaptable to sporting purposes." Per section 925(d)(3) of the GCA, this restriction extends to firearm frames, receivers, and barrels, although uncertainty has persisted over the years regarding frames, receivers, and barrels capable of being used in both sporting and non-sporting firearm configurations. The confusion was greatly exacerbated by ATF's non-sensical policy flip-flops, documented in several Open Letters between July 2005 and August 2008: (1) [July 13, 2005](#): rescinding policy that allowed imports of frames, receivers, or barrels for repair purposes; (2) [November 22, 2005](#): allowing imports of "dual use" barrels so long as the importer promises not to use such barrels to assemble nonimportable firearms; (3) [June 25, 2008](#): reminding importers that ATF will only approve import permit applications for barrels for nonsporting, NFA, and surplus military firearms when the barrels are for official federal state, or local government use.

Finally, on June 23, 2025, after reviewing its interpretation of 18 USC 925(d) regarding dual-use barrels, ATF issued [Ruling 2025-1, Importing Dual-Use Barrels](#). In that ruling, ATF explained that prior policy was to consider previous use as a factor and denied permits to import barrels that were formerly assembled on non-importable firearms regardless of the ability to incorporate the barrel into a sporting firearm configuration. The ruling superseded the Open Letter from November 22, 2005, and held barrels may be lawfully imported if, at the time it is imported, there is an identified firearm sporting

configuration for the barrel, regardless of whether that barrel had been previously configured on non-sporting, military surplus, or NFA firearms.

Proposed Rule

ATF proposes to codify its 2025-1 ruling on barrels and extend the policy to include frames and receivers capable of use in both sporting and non-sporting firearms if the importer can show that at the time of importation, there is an identified sporting firearm configuration for the component. Once lawfully imported, the frame, receiver, or barrel may subsequently be incorporated into a firearm (sporting, non-sporting, or NFA) provided the assembly complies with all other applicable federal firearms laws.

Practical Impact

This proposed codification is welcome news for importers and will hopefully put to rest the confusion surrounding imports of firearm frames, receivers, and barrels caused by ATF policy changes. Opening these imports up based on an identifiable sporting configuration at the time of importation will insert clarity long overdue and allow for increased predictability in import planning and inventory management. Importantly, the proposal does not eliminate existing statutory import restrictions or authorize importation of otherwise prohibited firearms. Rather, it clarifies the treatment of components that have both sporting and non-sporting applications.

Conclusion

Although relatively narrow in scope, these proposed rules reflect ATF's broader effort to modernize and clarify the firearms import regulations by reducing unnecessary procedural burdens while maintaining statutory safeguards. For regulated industry participants, the proposals could offer key practical benefits:

- A new mechanism to convert temporary firearm imports into permanent imports without requiring export and re-importation; and
- Greater certainty regarding importation of dual-use frames, receivers, and barrels commonly used across multiple firearm platforms.

Companies involved in firearms manufacturing, importation, distribution, defense contracting, or law enforcement supply chains should review the proposals to assess how they may affect existing import practices, compliance programs, and future business operations. Interested stakeholders have until **August 6, 2026**, to submit comments. Given the proposals' potential operational significance, we strongly recommend affected businesses participate in the rulemaking process to address implementation questions, clarify technical issues, or recommend revisions before the rules are finalized.

Stay tuned for our next alert, which will look at more ATF modernizing changes in the wake of the 2025 Supreme Court case, *Bondi v. VanDerStok*.

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Questions about this alert may be directed to:

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