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Guns sent off by Texas police departments to be destroyed were stripped of parts and sold online

By Brian New

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DALLAS – Thousands of guns sent off by North Texas local law enforcement agencies to be destroyed were first stripped of parts that were then sold online by a private company.

Several police departments told the CBS News Texas I-Team they were unaware of this practice, even though it was stated in the contracts they signed with the company, Gulf Coast GunBusters.

An investigation by the CBS News Texas I-Team found in the past five years, 15 North Texas law enforcement agencies have contracted with the Louisiana-based company to dispose of their unwanted guns. Since 2019, these North Texas police and sheriff departments have sent Gulf Coast GunBusters more than 2,600 guns.

Law enforcement agencies often accumulate a stockpile of firearms that need proper disposal. These firearms can come from seizures during criminal investigations as well as gun buyback programs.

Gulf Coast GunBusters provides free firearm destruction services for law enforcement. However, before destroying the guns, the company strips the firearm for parts and destroys only the gun receiver. Subsequently, the remaining parts are sold through an online gun broker, where they are marketed as gun repair kits. These kits can be sold without a background check.

According to federal law, the receiver is considered the actual gun so by destroying this one part that bears a serial number, the firearm is considered destroyed. Everything else are unregulated parts.

In [contracts](#) signed by local police chiefs, GunBusters outlines how it will sell salvaged parts and scrap metals. However, in many cases, the I-Team found these contracts received little scrutiny when they were signed.

Seven North Texas police agencies told the I-Team that they recently stopped using the service when they learned parts were being resold as gun kits. (*Allen Police, Dallas Co.*

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Sheriff, Denton Police, Everman Police, Frisco Police, Lewisville Police, and Princeton Police)

Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins expressed surprise at the salvaged parts being sold online. He acknowledged he was unaware of this until the I-Team brought the issue to the county's attention.

In 2022, the Dallas County Commissioners approved a five-year contract with Gulf Coast GunBusters. During the Commissioner's Court meeting, there was no public discussion about the contract, as it was placed on the consent agenda, where routine and non-controversial items are addressed.

Last month, Jenkins stopped the transfer of firearms to GunBusters, including the more than 130 firearms collected in February from the Dallas County Sheriff's first ever gun buyback event.

"If we're saying we want to get dangerous guns off the street, then if someone comes up with a loophole to build 'ghost guns' out of destroyed guns, then we're going to close that loophole," Jenkins said.

Dallas County is currently working on a revised agreement with GunBusters for the destruction of the complete firearm including all parts. GunBusters offers this service for a fee.

It's unclear how much the county may have to pay to have their firearms destroyed completely but it can be expensive with it costing around \$70 per gun.

Gulf Coast GunBusters' owner, a former law enforcement officer, declined to comment to the I-Team.

The company's website promotes its process as safe, secure, and free for law enforcement agencies. Several North Texas police departments, including McKinney, Hurst, Haltom City, Richland Hills and North Richland Hills, continue to use GunBusters for disposing of unwanted firearms.

In a statement to the I-Team, the McKinney Police Department confirmed awareness of GunBusters' practice: "We are aware that under the agreement, GunBusters may sell salvaged parts and scrap metals. This service is provided at no cost to McKinney taxpayers. The McKinney Police Department believes this to be an efficient way to dispose of these items."

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While the federal government does not regulate or require a license for businesses involved in firearm destruction, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) recommends disposing firearms by destroying the entire weapon including all unregulated parts.

ATF spokesperson Kristina Mastropasqua said, "This is particularly true given the increasing criminal use of untraceable privately made firearms ("ghost guns"), which are often assembled with used firearm parts."

When ATF destroys firearms, it includes all parts, not just the frame or receiver. ATF does not resell firearms or firearm parts.

Several Texas police departments said finding vendors to destroy unwanted firearms can be difficult.

The Fort Worth Police Department employs a steel mill in Midlothian, where guns are melted to dispose of confiscated firearms. Meanwhile, the Dallas Police Department does not disclose the specific location where it destroys firearms but asserts that department auditors closely monitor the entire process to ensure proper destruction of every gun.

North Texas police that sent unwanted firearms to GunBusters

A CBS News Texas I-Team investigation found, since 2019, 15 North Texas law enforcement agencies had sent firearms to Gulf Coast GunBusters to be destroyed. As stated in its contract, the company destroyed the gun receiver but often salvaged the other parts to resell online as gun kits.

Table with 4 columns and 15 rows. Sorted ascending by column "Law Enforcement Agency"

Law Enforcement Agency	firearms sent to GunBusters	still using GunBusters	
Allen Police	232	no	Chief Steve Dye: "As the new Chief of Police in Allen, it was recently brought to my attention that we have an existing contract with GunBusters to destroy firearms that our department has seized or confiscated. It would never be the intent of the Allen Police

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Department for any of these firearms to be sold, in whole or in part, to anyone at any time. As a result, we have paused our contract with GunBusters to ensure we are working with a company that carries out our clear direction for full and complete destruction of these firearms.”

Dallas Co. Sheriff

80

currently working on new agreement to pay for the full destruction of all firearms

After the CBS News Texas I-Team reached out to the county about GunBusters, County Judge Clay Jenkins ordered his purchasing department to stop all transfers of firearms to GunBusters. The county then entered into a new deal with Gulf Coast Gunbusters where the county will pay for the destruction of the entire firearm. Jenkins told the I-Team, "Thank you for bringing this to our attention. It's rare that I say this to a reporter, but some of this without your reporting wouldn't have been found and couldn't have been fixed ... If we're saying we want to get dangerous guns off the street, then if someone comes up with a loophole to build 'ghost guns' out of destroyed guns, then we're going to close that loophole. And that's what we're doing.“

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Denton Co. Sheriff	130	unknown	The Denton County Sheriff's Office has not responded to questions from the I-Team.
Denton Police Dept	286	no	Chief Bryan Cose: "As the Interim Denton Police Chief, I was recently made aware of Denton PD's contract with GunBusters for the destruction of seized or surrendered firearms. Previously, our department utilized a local recycling company's firearm disposal service. In 2021, the company notified Denton PD that it would no longer offer this service, so an open Request For Proposal (RFP) solicitation was conducted. Of the two respondents, only GunBusters was able to meet the ATF's requirements for firearms destruction. Based on a market search and the RFP process, no other vendors met ATF and Denton PD's requirements for the transport, documentation, and destruction of firearms. Once the GunBusters contract and practices were brought to my attention, I decided to pause the sending of firearms for destruction to actively evaluate all available options. "

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Ennis Police	133	unknown	The Ennis Police Department has not responded to questions from the I-Team.
Everman Police	47	no	Chief C.W. Spencer: "I was not aware of the extent of the issue. Your bringing this to my attention has caused me to put a pause on our agreement with Gunbusters while we investigate and determine how best to move forward. The overwhelming majority of firearms that come into our possession do so primarily because of nefarious reasons. It is never our goal to re-introduce weapons back into the community. We want to make sure that our processes comply with the law as it is intended, not just how it is written. Our agency will conduct a review of our process and determine a new process going forward that complies with the law as intended as well as complies with the public's expectation."
Frisco Police	280	no	"Chief David Shilson reports the Frisco Police Department has not used GunBusters since 2022 to dispose of any weapons. Chief Shilson also shares the department has paused its contract with GunBusters." – Mayor Jeff Cheney

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Law Enforcement Agency	firearms sent to GunBusters	still using GunBusters	
Haltom City Police	648	yes	"Current options for firearm destruction are limited, and GunBusters is an economical choice that provides secure destruction services within the guidelines specified by the federal government." - Sgt. Richard Alexander
Hurst Police	127	yes	"Prior to contracting with GunBusters, Hurst PD staff had to physically destroy and dispose of firearms. This time-consuming process exposed our staff to potential injury. GunBusters offered a free service that improved efficiency and eliminated a safety concern, making our decision to contract with GunBusters appropriate. The Hurst Police Department does not share a concern about parts being resold by GunBusters." - Assistant Chief Billy Keadle
Lewisville Police	162	no	"In early 2022, the Lewisville Police Department (LPD) was searching for a new solution for firearm disposal. This search began because the Tarrant County Medical Examiner (former destruction vendor) was no longer able to facilitate this process for LPD due to capacity issues. Gunbusters emerged as a vendor that could facilitate this

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		<p>process. A reference check to other agencies and those in the property destruction network were already utilizing Gunbusters and provided favorable feedback. In an effort to continue with firearm destruction, and be good stewards of the taxpayer's money, Gunbusters was a reasonable solution for compliance with firearm destruction laws. As such, LPD engaged with Gunbusters in 2022 to manage firearm destruction for LPD. LPD used Gunbusters one time in August of 2022. Like many other agencies in this area, and across the country, once it was discovered Gunbusters' scope of operation could result in firearm parts being sold, we immediately stopped conducting business with Gunbusters. We have not used Gunbusters since August of 2022. The LPD does not support any method of destruction other than the complete and total destruction of the entire firearm. The LPD will not permit any of the firearms in our possession to be sold or transferred, in whole or in part, to any person at any time."</p>

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McKinney Police	261	yes	<p>"The McKinney Police Department uses Gunbusters to safely destroy seized and surrendered firearms. We are aware that under the agreement Gunbusters may sell salvaged parts and scrap metals. This service is provided at no cost to McKinney taxpayers. The McKinney Police Department believes this to be an efficient way to dispose of these items."</p>
North Richland Hills Police	382	yes	<p>"Prior to our use of GunBusters, we had an agreement with a local metal recycling plant. Any firearm identified for destruction was taken to this location, where any item was fully melted down in our presence. That facility later made the decision to stop providing this service for law enforcement which created a need for us to identify a new solution. As a tax funded service provider, responsible spending is always a consideration, but the primary reason for utilizing Gunbusters' service was the limited options available and Gunbusters' ability to provide a means of destruction that met the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives guidelines. We recognized</p>

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			<p>GunBusters provided a means of destruction that met the BATF requirements—one that cleared these guns from our inventory while ensuring they stayed off the streets and out of any hands where they could pose a threat to our community. Our agreement specifies that GunBusters’ reserves the option to sell salvaged parts and scrap metals obtained from any item we transferred to them for destruction. However, if our colleagues in Michigan (Michigan State Police) have identified concerns, this provides an opportunity and an obligation for us to review our own practices. Consider, that most every firearm in our inventory was recovered under circumstances which placed our officers or community at risk. There are no circumstances where we would desire or intend for that risk to be perpetuated.” - Lt. Matt Jackson</p>
Princeton Police	48	no	<p>The service was used by a previous administration. The police deartment no longer works with GunBusters.</p>
Richland Hills Police	110	yes	<p>“We have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreement with</p>

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			<p>GunBusters that specifies that all receivers/frames are to be destroyed by them, which is in accordance with the ATF guidelines for the proper destruction of firearms. We verify that the destruction of each submitted firearm is completed per the ATF guidelines through a video recording provided by GunBusters of the destruction of each submitted firearm. The understanding, as stated in our MOU with GunBusters, is that GunBuster will sell salvaged parts and scrap metal, which are not required to be destroyed per the ATF guidelines. We have no knowledge or information that GunBusters has operated in any manner that violates our agreement with them.” – Officer Sheena McEachran</p>
Wylie Police	22	no	declined to comment

Table: Brian New / CBS News Texas Investigative Reporter

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