



Councilmember Marni von Wilpert
City of San Diego • District 5
MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 27, 2021

TO: Chief David Nisleit, Chief of Police of the San Diego Police Department

FROM: Councilmember Marni von Wilpert, District 5

SUBJECT: Request for Report on Proliferation of Untraceable “Ghost Guns” in San Diego

In 2021 alone, more than 16,456 people have died by gun violence in the United States. Approximately 39,000 Americans die from preventable gun violence every year. The most recent atrocities in Atlanta, Georgia, Boulder, Colorado, Orange County, California, San Jose, California, and right here in San Diego are just the most recent examples of the gun violence epidemic we have in America.

Fueling gun violence and wreaking havoc on our communities is the unregulated sale and proliferation of untraceable “ghost guns.” “Ghost guns,” sometimes referred to as “do-it-yourself-guns,” are guns that can be built at home absent a manufacturer’s license. “Ghost guns” do not have traceable serial numbers, and therefore, generally evade all the regulations which apply to the regulated firearms industry.

Unregulated “ghost guns” undermine federal and state laws that would normally block access to guns by people who pose danger to our communities—including violent criminals, domestic abusers, individuals suffering from mental illness, and terrorists.

On April 22, 2021, a man with a criminal conviction who was prohibited from legally obtaining a firearm committed a mass shooting in the Gaslamp Quarter of San Diego. The man allegedly obtained a “ghost gun” to end the life of a fellow San Diegan and injure others, despite the legal barriers meant to prevent him from owning a lawfully purchased gun. It is past time to act to keep our communities safe.

I respectfully request the San Diego Police Department prepare a comprehensive report on the proliferation and enforcement of “ghost guns” in San Diego. The report will eventually be heard in front of the City Council at a future determined date.

I would like a holistic picture of what is really happening on our streets, so that we can act at the local level, in tandem with efforts at the state and federal level, to protect our communities from the surge of gun violence.

I also want to thank you, Chief Nisleit, for your advocacy to warn the public about this rising danger, noting the 169% increase in the use of “ghost guns” since 2020 in San Diego. You and I both share this concern about the alarming rise of “ghost guns” posing a danger to our communities and I look forward to working together to keep our City safe.

CC: Mara Elliott, San Diego City Attorney
Todd Gloria, Mayor of San Diego