

The Star-Ledger

More than 80 people indicted for selling or having illegal firearms, N.J. officials say

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NJ Advance Media for NJ.com and The Star-Ledger

Published June 3, 2021

New Jersey officials said Thursday that more than 80 people have been indicted in recent months for allegedly selling or possessing illegal guns, amid fears over increased shootings and a push by the governor to tighten the state's already strict gun laws.

Investigators also seized nearly 100 weapons, including 10 so-called ghost guns, which can be manually assembled and are difficult to track, officials said.

“By focusing on illegal guns, working to shut down the iron pipeline of firearms from other states, and prosecuting offenders under New Jersey's tough gun laws, we are taking guns and armed criminals off of the street — and undoubtedly saving lives,” state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal said in a statement.

The announcement came shortly before Grewal was scheduled to discuss gun violence prevention with other attorneys general at a virtual roundtable organized by March for Our Lives. That Florida-based nonprofit advocates for stricter gun laws in the aftermath of the 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

Grewal's support for new gun limits, including raising the purchasing age to 21, has faced pushback from Republican lawmakers and some gun owners who argue that many restrictions only add more red tape while failing to stop gun deaths.

Grewal has responded by largely blaming lax regulation in other states, and he's called on the federal government to increase oversight nationwide.

The cases in Thursday's announcement include many out-of-state guns, including some from an alleged trafficking ring officials previously said sold weapons from Philadelphia to Camden.

At least 18 seized guns were from Pennsylvania and a dozen came from South Carolina, among other places, officials said. Sixteen assault rifles, one machine gun and 53 illegally large ammunition magazines were taken overall.

Since mid-March, grand juries have issued 35 indictments against 81 people concerning illegal guns, according to court records and Grewal's office. Five people were charged with illegally trafficking firearms, and some face decades behind bars if they're ultimately convicted.

The indictments were issued by grand juries, which were authorized by the state Supreme Court to meet virtually during the pandemic. Socially distanced, in-person grand juries may resume later this month.

Grewal's office is also represented on a new state commission tasked with approving smart guns for sale, which are firearms that can theoretically only be fired by authorized users.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.