



U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,
Firearms and Explosives

Firearms Technology Industry Services Branch

Martinsburg, WV

www.atf.gov

MAY 01 2018

907010 (b) (6)
3311/307767

(b) (6)

Dear (b) (6)

This refers to your correspondence to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Firearms Technology Industry Services Branch (FTISB). Specifically, you requested information regarding building an AR-15 type pistol.

As background, the amended Gun Control Act of 1968, 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(3), defines the term "firearm" to include *any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may be readily converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive...[and]...the frame or receiver of any such weapon....*

Also, with respect to the definitions of "handgun" and "pistol" under Federal statutes and regulations, you may be aware that the GCA, 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(29), defines "handgun" to mean, in part: *...a firearm which has a short stock and is designed to be held and fired by the use of a single hand....*

Additionally, 27 CFR § 478.11, a regulation implementing the GCA, defines "pistol" as:

...a weapon originally designed, made, and intended to fire a projectile (bullet) from one or more barrels when held in one hand, and having (a) a chamber(s) as an integral part(s) of, or permanently aligned with, the bore(s); and (b) a short stock designed to be gripped by one hand and at an angle to and extending below the line of the bore(s).

(b) (6)

Your specific questions are in italics below, followed by FTISB's response:

Q1) Is an AR-15 pistol that has a barrel less than 16 inches but an overall length over 26 inches classified as a pistol?

A1) Per 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(29), a pistol is designed to be held and fired with one hand; therefore, if there is no forward grip on a pistol over 26 inches in length, it is still a pistol.

Q2) Can a brace be installed on an AR-15 pistol with an overall length of more than 26 inches?

A2) A brace may be installed without changing the classification as long as it does not redesign the weapon to be fired from the shoulder.

Q3) Can a foregrip be attached to an AR-15 pistol with an overall length of more than 26 inches?

A3) Attaching a grip to a "pistol" constitutes redesigning the weapon to be fired using both hands, such a weapon is no longer a pistol. A weapon that is over 26 inches in overall length is considered a "firearm."

We thank you for your inquiry and trust the foregoing has been responsive to your questions.

Sincerely yours,



Michael R. Curtis

Chief, Firearms Technology Industry Services Branch