



ATF News

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Office of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

FY-07-02

Contacts: Andrew L. Lluberes/Sheree L. Mixell
202-927-8500

For Immediate Release

Dec. 6, 2006

COLOMBIA DEDICATES ATF-SUPPORTED BOMB DATA AND FIREARMS TRACING CENTER *Facility Is First of Its Kind in South America*

BOGOTA, Colombia – Colombia today dedicated its new Explosives Information and Firearms Tracing Center (CIARA), a U.S.-funded project that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) helped establish.

CIARA, three years in the making and the first bomb data and firearms tracing center of its kind in South America, will serve as the focal point for all Colombian military and law enforcement efforts on explosives and firearms tracing. Funded through the U.S. Plan Colombia assistance program, its mission will be to support the Colombian judicial process by focusing on the prevention and investigation of bombings and other explosives incidents, and by tracing firearms used in crimes and terrorist attacks.

Located on the grounds of the Colombian Judicial Police headquarters here, CIARA includes the Dfuze international explosives database that ATF helped develop, an explosives repository, national response and post-blast bomb squads, a biochemical unit and a firearms tracing program that will be linked to ATF's eTrace system and the Integrated Ballistic Identification System (IBIS).

eTrace allows participating law enforcement agencies to submit, via the Internet, firearms tracing requests in real time and directly to the computer at ATF's National Tracing Center in the United States. IBIS is the software that allows law enforcement to image and compare cartridges and other crime gun evidence.

"CIARA's dedication is an outstanding example of how law enforcement cooperation and information sharing must extend across national borders," ATF Acting Director Michael J. Sullivan told the assembled guests. "ATF shared its well-established expertise in explosives investigation and training with our Colombian counterparts and now both countries will benefit immeasurably."

--more--

ATF has a history of successful cooperation and information sharing with Colombian law enforcement. Since 2002, ATF Bogota has helped its Colombian counterparts trace more than 12,000 firearms recovered from both narcotics traffickers and the three narco-terrorist groups that operate in Colombia. The traces have generated 75 leads identifying potential traffickers that are sent to ATF field offices in the United States for investigation.

ATF has provided extensive firearms tracing/identification training to numerous investigative groups throughout Colombia and hosted a national firearms trafficking conference. Additionally, ATF provides training to various ballistic groups that manage the three IBIS machines in Bogota.

ATF Bogota has promoted a cooperative relationship between the sole licensed firearms dealer in Colombia and Colombian firearms and explosives investigators. When a firearm sold by the dealer is recovered, or explosives manufactured in Colombia are recovered, ATF has established a protocol whereby investigators can do their own “in house” tracing or investigations.

In the area of explosives assistance, ATF has trained and helped establish 76 Colombian investigative bomb squads since 2002, provided equipment such as robots and radio frequency jammers, and is working with the Colombian Ministry of Defense to design an explosives inspection model based on ATF’s regulatory mission. Colombia, which lost six to seven of its bomb techs in attacks every year, has lost two since 2002.

As a result of the ATF-Colombia partnership, Colombia was one of the first four countries – with Britain, Mexico and the United States – to join Dfuze, a comprehensive international and national information management system on explosives incidents that ATF helped develop to manage and promote the sharing of information among participating members and national bomb data centers worldwide. Since then, Australia, Hong Kong, Northern Ireland and Singapore have also joined.

ATF, which also has jurisdiction for investigating major fire incidents and arson in the United States, helped develop the arson program in Colombia. Prior to 2004, there were no arson investigators in Colombia; since then, 36 arson investigators have been trained in two ATF-run courses.

More information on ATF and its programs is at www.atf.gov.

###

Read Acting Director Sullivan’s Remarks