

ATF SNAPSHOT 2003

BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES (ATF)

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The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is a law enforcement agency within the U.S. Department of Justice. Effective January 24, 2003, as part of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, ATF law enforcement and the regulatory responsibility relating to firearms and explosives transferred from the Treasury Department to the Department of Justice. The Bureau's important responsibilities and strategic plan are designed to reduce the incidence of violent crime and protect the public. For the past seven years as a component of the Treasury Department, the Inspector General has awarded ATF the highest rating possible for a strong financial internal control structure and a solid record of complying with laws and regulations.

VIOLENT CRIME REDUCTION

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), announced by President Bush and Attorney General Ashcroft in 2001, is an initiative that brings to bear the combined resources of Federal, State and local agencies to reduce violent crime. The ATF Integrated Violence Reduction Strategy (IVRS), works in partnership with other law enforcement entities to focus on successfully removing armed career criminals, armed criminal organizations, armed drug traffickers, and illegal firearms traffickers from our nation's streets. An integral component of IVRS and PSN is ATF's Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative (YCGII). It provides ATF special agents, inspectors and support personnel, as well as equipment and training to follow leads generated through comprehensive crime gun tracing. The ATF's goal is to interdict the flow of illegal firearms to youths and juveniles through partnerships with participating police departments in selected cities. Since its inception and through fiscal year 2002, YCGII has been established in 50 cities, with an additional ten cities to be added in fiscal year 2003.

ATF initiated 27,241 firearms investigation in fiscal year 2002, resulting in over 6,660 indictments and more than 5,000 convictions. An analysis of the characteristics of firearms defendant's sentenced in fiscal year 2002 showed that 51 percent were previously convicted felons; 25 percent were firearms traffickers; 15 percent were involved with drugs; four percent were traffickers of firearms to youth and juveniles; and four percent were armed career criminals.

In fiscal year 2002, ATF also initiated 3,221 fire and explosives investigations that resulted in 421 indictments and 430 convictions.

ATF also enforces Federal criminal statutes that address the diversion of taxes, including the Contraband Cigarette Trafficking Act. In the last three years, ATF has conducted numerous investigations in the alcohol and tobacco diversion area. Criminal

investigations have increased from nine in 1998 to 160 in 2002. Seizures of alcohol and tobacco monies and real property involved in criminal violations totaled over \$1.6 million.

PROTECT THE PUBLIC

As of December 30, 2002, there were 103,411 Federal firearms licensees in the U.S. authorized to conduct commerce in firearms. In fiscal year 2002, ATF conducted compliance inspections of approximately 6,000 licensees, resulting in the detection of more than 8,200 violations and nearly 900 referrals to law enforcement.

Also fiscal year 2002, ATF inspectors, in helping to ensure the lawful storage of explosive materials, completed 5,171 full inspections, which encompassed both explosives applications inspections and part of the then approximate 8,900 explosives licensees and permittees. During the course of these inspections, ATF discovered and resolved 1,209 unsafe storage conditions. As of May 22, 2003, ATF has licensed approximately 11,000 explosives licensees and permittees as a result of enactment of the Safe Explosives Act.

OTHER RESOURCES

NIBIN – ATF provides investigative support to our State and local partners through a leadership role in the National Integrated Ballistic Identification Network (NIBIN). NIBIN provides for the nationwide installation and networking of automated ballistic imaging equipment in partnership with State and local law enforcement agencies. Currently, 222 law enforcement locations are making use of this valuation technology and eight more locations are pending deployment. In fiscal year 2002, NIBIN equipment assisted law enforcement agencies in finding more than 1,300 links, or “hits.” In each of these instances, evidence from two or more crime scenes was identified as being potentially linked.

COMPREHENSIVE CRIME GUN TRACING – The Comprehensive Crime Gun Tracing Initiative that began in fiscal year 2001 continues to provide nationwide firearms tracing capability. As a result there has been an increase of 15 percent in the number of trace requests from 2001 to 2002. In fiscal year 2002, the ATF’s National Tracing Center conducted over 240,000 trace requests of crime guns.

GANG RESISTENCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING (GREAT) -- A key prevention program is ATF’s GREAT program. GREAT is a life skills competency program designed to provide middle-school children the ability to avoid gangs, resist conflict, make responsible decisions and develop a positive relationship with the law enforcement community. In fiscal year 2002, ATF provided funding to 228 law enforcement agencies and 1,163 officers were certified to instruct in the GREAT program, providing GREAT instruction to 364,701 students. To date, over 6,000 officers representing 1,850 agencies have taught more than three million children the concepts of GREAT.

NATIONAL RESPONSE TEAMS (NRTS) – ATF maintains four National Response Teams (NRT) that are comprised of highly trained and well-equipped special agents, forensic chemists and professional support staff that can be deployed within 24 hours to major explosion and fire scenes anywhere in the United States. The NRT was activated 25 times in fiscal year 2002 to investigate major fire and explosives incidents.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TEAM (IRT) – The ATF International Response Team participates with the Diplomatic Security Service of the U.S. Department of State to provide technical and investigative assistance at international explosive and fire incidents. There have been 23 IRT activations since 1991, including responses to Peru, Macedonia, Argentina, El Salvador, Ecuador, Pakistan, and Korea.

EXPLOSIVES DETECTION CANINES – In fiscal year 2002, ATF's explosives detection canine teams conducted 81,265 operational searches and supported preventative security efforts at events such as the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. There are 36 ATF trained explosives detection canine teams deployed with State, local and other Federal law enforcement agencies and 48 ATF trained and certified accelerant detection canine teams deployed with State and local fire and police department. To date, ATF has trained over 310 international law enforcement organization's explosives detection canine teams worldwide.

NATIONAL LABORATORY SERVICES – ATF maintains three national laboratory facilities, in Maryland, Georgia and California. The ATF Forensic Science Laboratories were the first Federal laboratories to be accredited by the American Society of Laboratory Directors.