

## U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives



ATF Snapshot 2007

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**The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)** is a principal law enforcement agency within the Department of Justice (DOJ) dedicated to preventing terrorism, reducing violent crime, and protecting our Nation. ATF has dual responsibilities for enforcing Federal criminal laws and regulating the firearms and explosives industries. The combined efforts of special agents and industry operations investigators allow ATF to effectively identify, investigate, and recommend for prosecution violators of the Federal firearms, explosives, arson, and tobacco and alcohol diversion laws. ATF uses this team approach to ensure that firearms and explosives licensees operate within established laws and regulations.

### **VIOLENT CRIME REDUCTION**

ATF is the lead Federal law enforcement agency in DOJ's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). PSN uses a comprehensive strategy to reduce gun violence and promote safe communities. PSN coordinates local, State, and Federal law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and community leaders in a multi-faceted strategy to deter and punish gun violence.

The **Violent Crime Impact Team (VCIT)** initiative pursues violent criminals and reduces the occurrence of homicide and firearms-related violent crime through geographic targeting, and proactive investigation and prosecution. Multi-agency enforcement teams identify, target, disrupt, arrest, and prosecute the "worst of the worst" criminals. These efforts produce long-term reductions in firearms violence. There are 25 VCIT cities throughout the U.S. and plans to add an additional five cities in Fiscal Year 2007.

ATF's firearms trafficking interdiction reduces violent crime by decreasing the availability of illicit secondary market firearms and by recommending for prosecution individuals who illegally supply firearms to those prohibited from possessing them (e.g., felons, gang members, juveniles). A primary enforcement concern for ATF is the vigorous investigation of violent street gangs. Gangs are often involved in firearms trafficking to divert weapons for use in firearms-related crime and in furtherance of drug trafficking activities.

ATF has highly trained and experienced investigators who are experts in processing arson and bombing scenes. In FY06, ATF special agents serving as **certified fire investigators (CFI)** and **certified explosives specialists (CES)** investigated 4,048 fire and explosives incidents. ATF's CFI program is unique in Federal law enforcement and provides expertise in origin and cause of fires for arson investigations. ATF CESs have developed an unmatched level of expertise in post-blast analysis. ATF has 267 CESs based in the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Guam. Additionally, ATF employs **explosives enforcement officers (EEO)** who have unique technical capabilities in explosives and bomb disposal.

### **PREVENTING TERRORISM**

ATF's explosives jurisdiction and expertise gives it a unique role in the national effort to prevent terrorism. ATF is the world's leading explosives investigating and training agency, providing that expertise to the U.S. military, State Department, and local, State, and other Federal law enforcement in the United States and overseas. Since 2001, ATF's National Center for Explosives Training and Research has trained almost 6,000 bomb technicians and investigators. ATF provides explosives training to the Iraqi Police Service and at the International Law Enforcement Academies in Botswana, El Salvador, Hungary, and Thailand. ATF helps train military explosives units prior to their deployment to Iraq.

ATF works in Iraq with the **Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell (CEXC)**, whose role is to provide immediate, in-theater technical and operational analysis of the **improvised explosives devices (IED)** used by insurgents. In the U.S., an ATF special agent/CES serves as deputy director of the **Terrorist Explosive Device Analytical Center (TEDAC)**, which examines IED debris the CEXC submits from Iraq and Afghanistan.

ATF operates the **U.S. Bomb Data Center**, the DOJ repository for all explosives and arson information and databases. One of those databases, the **Bomb Arson Tracking System (BATS)**, allows State, local, and other Federal law enforcement agencies to share information about bomb and arson cases and incidents. **DFuze** is ATF's multilingual explosives database that ATF and other international law enforcement agencies use to share information and intelligence on explosives incidents, devices and methods, terrorist groups, and firearms.

ATF is DOJ's lead agency for the training of explosives and accelerant detection canines used by Federal, State, local, and international law enforcement agencies. Since 1995, ATF has trained over 760 explosive and accelerant detection canines deployed in 20 countries. ATF explosive detection canine teams assist investigations and support public safety by finding explosive devices and evidence. ATF accelerant canine teams work in arson investigations to identify substances that are used to speed the spread of fire. ATF has developed the National Odor and Recognition Test to scientifically judge the proficiency of explosives detection canines to certify their training and abilities.

### **PROTECTING THE NATION**

At the end of FY06, over 106,000 **Federal firearms licensees (FFL)** in the U.S. were authorized to conduct commerce in firearms. In FY06, ATF performed more than 12,000 firearms licensee inspections and processed 13,790 applications for new firearms licenses and 23,633 applications for license renewals. ATF **industry operations investigators (IOI)** also helped ensure the lawful storage of explosive materials by more than 11,000 Federal explosives licensees and permittees. In FY06, IOIs completed more than 6,391 explosives inspections and detected 3,931 explosives industry public safety violations. In addition, ATF processed 1,930 applications for new explosives licenses and 3,641 applications to renew existing licenses.

ATF enforces Federal criminal statutes (including the Contraband Cigarette Trafficking Act) that address the diversion of alcohol and tobacco products in schemes designed to avoid the payment of Federal, State, local, and/or foreign taxes. Organized crime groups and individuals with ties to terrorist organizations increasingly engage in illegal trafficking of tobacco products. The proliferation of large-volume trafficking across international borders and in interstate commerce provides increased funding to terrorist organizations and traditional criminal enterprises, and robs government of significant revenue.

### **OTHER ATF RESOURCES AND ASSETS**

**NIBIN** -- ATF provides investigative support to its partners through the **National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN)**, which allows Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies to image and compare crime gun evidence. NIBIN currently has 228 sites throughout the United States, including Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. During FY06, NIBIN partner agencies imaged 131,482 bullets and casings into the database, resulting in 3,565 "hits," or matches that provide investigative leads.

**Gun Tracing** -- ATF's Comprehensive Crime Gun Tracing Initiative is the largest operation of its kind in the world. ATF's **National Tracing Center (NTC)** processed approximately 288,443 trace requests of crime guns in 2006. Gun tracing provides information to Federal, State, and local law enforcement on the history of a firearm from manufacturer to first purchaser, and statistics and mapping for crime guns.

**National Response Teams (NRT)** -- ATF **National Response Teams** consist of highly trained special agents, forensic chemists, and professional support staff who can be deployed within 24 hours to major explosion and fire scenes anywhere in the United States. Since 1978, the team has conducted crime scene analysis, and origin and cause investigations of fires and explosives incidents.

**National Laboratory Services** -- ATF maintains three national laboratories in Maryland, Georgia, and California where firearms examiners, fingerprint specialists, and forensic chemists provide scientific expertise and support for the agency's investigations. The National Laboratory Center (NLC) in Maryland includes the ATF Forensic Science Laboratory and the Fire Research Laboratory, the only such facility in the world dedicated to fire scene investigations. ATF operates the National Firearms Examiner Academy for firearms and toolmark examiners and provides extensive forensic and other training for State and local fire and arson investigators.