

**Statement of B. Todd Jones, Director
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
U.S. Department of Justice
Before the Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
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Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Mikulski, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am pleased to be here to discuss the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Budget Request for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

ATF's principal mission is to protect our communities from serious and violent criminals who illegally possess and use firearms, use explosives for criminal purposes, and engage in deadly acts of arson. We accomplish our mission through both the enforcement of criminal law and the regulation of the firearms and explosives industries. ATF has a long history of delivering our expertise and capabilities to our federal, state, and local partners. We provide critical resources and support to them in the fight against violent crime. We highly value our partnerships and strong working relationships with law enforcement, public safety agencies, industry groups, and community organizations. When violent crime strikes our nation, ATF is there working side-by-side with our partners, supporting them with our specialized skills, tools, and experience. In the past three years alone, ATF has been at the frontline fighting against crime and helping our partners investigate tragedies such as: the Boston Marathon Bombing; the horrific mass shootings in Aurora, Colorado; Newtown, Connecticut; and the Washington Navy Yard, as well as assisting in thousands of other less publicized investigations.

Across the country, ATF and our partners pursue the most violent criminals, particularly those who engage in organized gang violence or illegally supply those gangs with firearms.

Recently, ATF completed enhanced enforcement initiatives in New Haven/Bridgeport, CT and Chicago, IL. In total, 350 defendants were accepted for prosecution and ATF seized or purchased more than 350 crime guns during these operations. In Chicago alone, the approximately 200 charged defendants had almost 3,000 prior felony arrests. We accomplished this with additional ATF manpower, our partners, and technology such as ATF's National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), which compares high resolution images of cartridge cases recovered from multiple crime scenes to link firearms to multiple shootings. I'm proud of what we are able to achieve for the citizens of those communities.

For ATF to more effectively combat violent crime and better serve our partners and our communities, we developed "Frontline", a business model that prioritizes our resources to those areas and programs that will have the greatest impact on fighting violent crime, whether that is firearms trafficking, gang, arson/explosive or tobacco investigations. We accomplish this, in part, by assessing each ATF field division for efficiency and effectiveness and making any necessary changes to improve mission performance.

We partner more closely and effectively than ever with state and local law enforcement in fighting violent crime. In many instances local law enforcement has experienced significant budget cuts, and the violent crime enforcement expertise and training we provide is often reported as a key component of their success. In fact, during the last year we trained thousands of local law enforcement across ATF's jurisdiction of firearms, explosives and arson. Some specific courses included Advanced Firearms Trafficking Techniques, Advanced Explosives Disposal Techniques, Basic Fire Origin and Cause Determination, Accelerant Detection Canine Course, Arson for Prosecutors, and two NIBIN-related courses. Programs such as eTrace (a paperless firearms trace request submission system and interactive trace analysis module that facilitates firearms tracing) and NIBIN provide tools extensively used by state and local law enforcement to combat violent firearm crimes. Using these programs, ATF traced more than

364,000 crime guns last year.

ATF's Fire Research Lab in Ammdendale, MD is in the midst of several significant research projects on high profile arson/explosive incidents with our state and local partners. In February 2015, lab personnel performed testing related to the April 17, 2013, explosion and fire at the West, Texas, fertilizer plant that killed 15 and injured 160. ATF is working with the Texas State Fire Marshal's Office to study various hypotheses in an effort to determine the origin and cause of the fire and explosion. Further, based on ATF's expertise in arson/explosive incidents, ATF supported the investigation of the fire that claimed six lives two months ago in Annapolis, MD. Investigators concluded an electrical failure ignited the skirt of the family's Christmas tree. We will perform tests in early April to better understand the fire dynamics related to Christmas tree fires. This information can then be released to our state and local fire investigator partners to help them prevent any further loss of life and property through similar occurrences.

ATF's National Center for Explosives Training and Research (NCETR), in Huntsville, AL – established through the support of the Chairman and members of this Subcommittee – is also performing important research and development to fulfill our explosives enforcement and training missions. This year, NCETR will increase their staffing by more than 20%. This will allow ATF to immediately increase fire and arson investigation training. We will offer several training classes to state, local and federal investigators and prosecutors that have not been offered in a number of years. NCETR is redeveloping these classes and once complete we will enroll students in this state-of-the-art training.

Additionally, the NCETR Explosives Research and Development Division will hire engineers and support positions to provide much needed research and development capabilities for ATF and our partners, such as the National Ground Intelligence Center and the National Counter Terrorism Center. Lastly, ATF is relocating the U.S. Bomb Data Center (USBDC) from ATF Headquarters to the NCETR facility. These expansions in ATF's capacity at NCTER will

enhance and complement our collaboration with our partners at the FBI, which also maintains a facility near NCETR. We are gratified by the opportunity to reinvigorate our explosives and arson investigation training in coordination with our research and development mission at NCETR. We are equally gratified by the opportunity to expand collaboration with the FBI's Terrorist Explosive Device Analytical Center (TEDAC) on counter terrorism matters, advisories, bulletins, and reports about testing and research. Enhancing our ability to develop and report best practices to the explosives and arson investigation communities are great steps forward for NCETR.

FY 2016 Budget Request

ATF's FY 2016 budget request totals \$1.26 billion in direct budget authority, including 5,111 permanent positions, nearly half of which are ATF Special Agents. This request includes a \$52 million increase for base resources required to support ATF's workforce and infrastructure at a critical juncture – between now and FY 2019 nearly 1,000 of our current 2,500 ATF Special Agents will become eligible for retirement. That represents more than one-third of our special agents. ATF is taking significant steps in hiring to address this attrition bubble, but we require the continued funding level support requested in this budget to maintain this effort.

In addition, ATF's FY 2016 budget includes one program enhancement - \$8.1 million to continue increasing capacity and reducing backlogs at ATF's Martinsburg, WV, facility. This increase will allow ATF to add 10 Legal Instrument Examiners as well as additional contract support to continue to reduce the backlog in processing National Firearms Act (NFA) registrations. The additional funding will also improve ATF's firearms tracing operations, a unique and vital violent crime fighting asset that is heavily relied upon by our state, local and federal law enforcement partners.

In this era of tighter budgets, ATF is doing more than ever to ensure that taxpayer resources are directed to areas that generate the greatest public safety value and return on

investment. We do this by prioritizing our resources, partnering with our federal, state and local colleagues, and using existing technologies in new and innovative ways to fight violent crime.

Let me give you some additional examples of how ATF has become more strategic:

- The deployment of the Mobile Bomb/Arson Tracking System (BATS) will enable over 10,000 federal, state and local law enforcement and public safety interagency users to report arson and explosives incidents from the scene of the incident, reducing the average reporting time from 35 days to one day.
- The National Firearms Act Branch performed many innovative staffing enhancements, including the cross training of existing personnel, with the net effect of a 58% reduction in the Branch backlog.
- The National Tracing Center saved \$50-70 million on the digital conversion of microfilm and microfiche.
- NIBIN will downsize its server population resulting in cost reductions, improved performance capabilities, and improved efficiencies in communication lines.
- ATF performed an agency-wide technology refresh, replacing all personal computers and updating operating systems.
- ATF will reallocate any realized savings to enforcement and industry support operations. If you or your staff would like details on these cost savings that I have highlighted, we will be glad to brief you on them in more detail.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I want to conclude by saying that ATF is proud of its contributions at the frontline fighting against violent crime. We are recognized by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies across the country for our expertise and take great pride in our successes that reduce gun violence and remove violent offenders from the streets. I am humbled by the exceptional work done every day by ATF Special Agents,

Investigators, and professional support staff combating violent crime. Even in times of adversity – which can come often when you are in our line of work - I am proud to tell you that the dedicated men and women of ATF have continued, day in and day out, working tirelessly to enhance the safety of all Americans. They and their families have my deepest gratitude for the sacrifices this often difficult work requires and I am honored to be here today to represent ATF.