U. S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)

Fiscal Year 2027
Performance Budget
Congressional Submission

Salaries and Expenses
March 2026

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I. Overview for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

A. Introduction

Established as an independent Bureau in 1972, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is dedicated to the reduction of violent crime, prevention of terrorism, and the protection of the Nation. The ATF enforces and administers Federal laws and regulations involving firearms and explosives and enforces Federal criminal statutes relating to arson.

The ATF carefully assesses and calibrates its exercise of enforcement and regulatory authorities to maximize public safety, particularly with respect to the reduction of violent firearm crime. With respect to firearms, the ATF enforces the Gun Control Act (GCA) and the National Firearms Act (NFA), the two primary laws enacted by Congress to address firearms violence. In June 2022, Congress expanded ATF's firearm enforcement responsibilities by adding new criminal offenses and revising the definition of those required to obtain a Federal firearms license. The new criminal offenses include provisions that directly criminalize straw purchasing and firearms trafficking. The law also revised the definition of "dating relationship" to close the so-called "boyfriend loophole" and extend the GCA's prohibition on those convicted of misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence from possessing firearms to a broader range of offenders.

The ATF also enforces the import provisions of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA) applicable to arms, ammunition, and implements of war. With respect to explosives and arson, the ATF enforces the provisions of Title XI of the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970, including the Safe Explosives Act of 2002 (SEA), and certain provisions of the Anti-Arson Act of 1982. The SEA expanded the scope of explosives regulations administered by the ATF by establishing controls on the intrastate movement of explosives, and by mandating that all persons who receive explosives undergo a background check and obtain a Federal license or permit.

In January 2025, the ATF was conferred Title 8 immigration enforcement authority by the Attorney General to support efforts to investigate and apprehend aliens unlawfully in the United States. Since that time, the ATF has executed this mission with a focus on investigating those who are illegally present in the U.S. and are members of Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs), Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) or participate in unlawful activities including armed violent offenses, illegal firearm possession, and firearms trafficking activities.

The ATF's regulatory and enforcement strategies are interwoven to provide a comprehensive approach to the Bureau's mission. The ATF maintains partnerships with law enforcement at all levels (Federal, State Tribal, Territorial, local, and international), providing training and forensic expertise to maximize the prevention of violent crimes involving firearms, explosives, and arson. The ATF also works closely with its regulated industries to promote regulatory compliance and best practices that help prevent violence and safeguard the public. In administering Federal regulations of the firearms and explosives industries, the ATF strives to maximize public safety while minimizing any unnecessary regulatory burden on lawful commerce. The ATF's public safety mission is broad, and its role in combatting firearm violence is critical to the national priority of reducing violent crime. This budget proposal is intended to provide the resources necessary for the ATF to meet expanding mission requirements and the expectations of the Administration, the Department of Justice (Department), and the American public.

Electronic copies of the Department's Congressional Budget Justifications and Capital Asset Plan and Business Case exhibits can be viewed or downloaded from the Internet address: https://www.justice.gov/doj/budget-and-performance.

Frontline Business Model

The ATF business model, Frontline, maximizes resources and provides optimal return on investment to the American taxpayers by applying risk analysis and intelligence assessments to allocate and prioritize resources, always with an emphasis on public safety. Frontline emphasizes standardized business practices both internally and externally through strong leadership, transparency, accountability at all levels, and streamlined measurements of effectiveness and accomplishments.

Domain assessments conducted by each ATF field division are the foundation of Frontline. Domain assessments are comprehensive annual assessments that identify and analyze significant violent crime problems within each field division's area of responsibility and include evaluation of regulatory compliance among firearm and explosives licensees. Domain assessments are driven by actionable intelligence and crime information, identified by first-line supervisors through Special Agents in Charge (SACs). They propose a plan of action within the limits of available resources to mitigate or eliminate violent crime threats. This approach is flexible and allows for the redeployment of investigative resources when and where needed.

This process often requires the ATF to balance immediate operational demands with longer-term investment in essential information technology, human capital development, and forensic science infrastructure. The flexibility of Frontline has been essential to the ATF fulfilling its crucial role in the Department's overall violent crime reduction strategies, as ATF employs our expertise in combating violent crime throughout our nation to achieve our Department's objectives and meet our mission. ATF deploys a multidisciplinary approach to violence reduction, combining criminal enforcement, regulatory oversight, grant funding to local law enforcement, community intervention, and reentry programs. As the nation's primary enforcement arm to combat violent crime, ATF's employs its firearms authorities and expertise—investigative, regulatory, technical, and forensic analysis, to strategically combat violent crime. Frontline has allowed the ATF to allocate existing resources to best support the Department's violent crime reduction strategies and will continue to guide resource allocation in the future.

Investigative and Regulatory Efforts

Law Enforcement Operations

The Law Enforcement Operations decision unit involves resources and activities that are directly related to criminal investigations and industry operations. Industry operations consist of the regulatory inspections that the ATF Industry Operations Investigators (IOIs) conduct on Federal firearms licensees (FFLs), Federal explosives licensees (FELs), and Federal explosives permittees (FEPs). Core criminal enforcement activities include investigations involving illegal firearms trafficking, criminal use and possession of firearms, criminal organizations, arson and explosives crimes, and tobacco tax diversion. The ATF's criminal investigative efforts focus on reducing firearm-related violent crime by targeting domestic and international firearms traffickers, violent criminal organizations, armed violent offenders, and career criminals.

The ATF's investigations focus on both individual violent offenders and the criminal organizations that pose the greatest threat to public safety. Criminal organizations, including gangs, use guns to terrorize communities, enforce territorial boundaries, retaliate against rivals and witnesses, and facilitate the growth of their criminal enterprises. The ATF has wide-ranging experience investigating, infiltrating, and dismantling criminal organizations, ranging from Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) and Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) like Tren de Aragua (TdA) and MS-13, to national gangs like the Crips, Bloods, and Aryan Brotherhood, as well as smaller neighborhood "street crews."

The ATF uses Crime Gun Intelligence (CGI) in virtually all firearm-related investigations. CGI combines all available information on crime guns, shooting incidents, human intelligence, social media, telephone analysis, and technology to disrupt the cycle of firearm violence by providing otherwise unavailable information to investigators, who use the CGI data to identify offenders illegally purchasing or transferring firearms and the offenders who use firearms to commit violent crimes.

The ATF applies these CGI principles in executing the Department's violent crime reduction efforts and in supporting U.S. Attorney Offices in their Districts' Project Safe Neighborhoods initiatives. Current ATF initiatives, described in Section IV, include expansion of the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), expansion of the NIBIN National Correlation and Training Center (NNCTC), enhancement of Crime Gun Intelligence Centers (CGICs), and Crime Gun Enforcement Teams (CGETs) in cities experiencing extreme spikes in firearm violence.

In FY 2025, the ATF initiated approximately 22,885 criminal firearms investigations; to date, these investigations have resulted in the referral of Federal and State charges against approximately 11,232 defendants.

These investigations focused on armed violent offenders—the "trigger-pullers" who terrorize communities—and the firearms traffickers who supply guns to criminals and criminal organizations. With ATF support, State and local law enforcement agencies have also enhanced effectiveness in firearms investigations, as reflected by the substantial increase and record number of firearms trace requests submitted to the ATF National Tracing Center (NTC). The volume of tracing has continued to grow in recent years. In FY 2024, the NTC received 639,295 trace requests followed by 654,879 trace requests in FY 2025, an increase of about 2.4 percent. In FY 2025, the NTC received an average of 54,573 trace requests per month. The incoming volume of firearm trace requests has increased by nearly 70 percent over the past 10 years and the NTC is currently forecasting in excess of 680,000 trace requests in FY 2026, which will represent a 3.8 annual increase.

The ATF has sole Federal authority to regulate FFLs licensed to engage in the business of manufacturing, importing, or selling firearms in the United States. The ATF conducts licensing qualification inspections on those who seek to engage in the business of firearms importing, manufacturing, and dealing; issues FFLs to qualified applicants; administers regulations applicable to FFLs (including recordkeeping requirements for the acquisition and disposition of each firearm); and conducts FFL inspections. ATF inspections of FFLs are focused not only on ensuring regulatory compliance, but also on integrating and analyzing risk factors to detect diversion from lawful commerce and identifying "straw purchasers" who illegally purchase firearms to supply guns to criminals. The ATF keeps the firearms industry updated on regulatory and statutory changes and on issues affecting the industry. In addition, the ATF conducts educational seminars for licensees and publishes semiannual newsletters with industry specific information.

FFL burglaries, thefts, and robberies are a significant source of illegally trafficked firearms, directly fueling violent crimes involving guns. In 2018, the ATF implemented a policy of responding to all FFL burglaries and robberies with teams consisting of both Special Agents (SAs) and IOIs and expediting the processing of evidence from these incidents in its forensic laboratories. During the same time frame, the ATF developed an automated system that sends urgent alerts about FFL burglaries and robberies to other FFLs in the geographic area where the incident occurred, allowing them to take additional precautionary measures. After the initial positive impact of these programs in 2021, both FFL burglaries and robberies increased, peaking in 2023. This process led to a prioritization of contacting at-risk FFLs for inspection, outreach, and education on recognizing indicators of straw purchasing and firearms trafficking. In 2024 and 2025 FFL burglaries and robberies both declined by a total of 44 percent and 33 percent respectively. Not only was there a significant decline in the number of FFL burglaries from 2023 to 2025 but the number of firearms taken during these incidents also decreased from 4,542 in total for 2023 to 1,748 in total for 2025 representing a 61 percent decrease over those two years.

In addition to proactive enforcement measures for FFLs, the ATF has collaborated with the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) to promote Operation Secure Store, a comprehensive joint initiative to promote FFL safety and security measures to deter robberies, the taking of anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and burglaries, the unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft. The ATF analyzed the last five years of data (2021–2025) on FFL burglaries which revealed that FFL burglaries and robberies peaked in calendar year 2023. FFL burglaries were at their lowest in 2025 while FFL robberies were at their lowest for this reporting period in 2021.

While much of the public's focus is on the unacceptable rate of firearm-related violent crime, arson is also a violent crime. The ATF has primary Federal jurisdiction over the investigation of arsons and is uniquely equipped for this mission with specialized capabilities, expertise, and experience. The ATF's highly trained Certified Fire Investigators (CFI) investigate arson-for-profit schemes, respond to fires of Federal interest, and provide technical expertise to State and local counterparts. In many cases, the ATF's unique knowledge, technical resources, forensic capabilities, and jurisdictional authority are essential in solving arson related crimes. CFIs conduct fire scene examinations, render origin and cause determinations, provide expert testimony, and provide training to Federal, State and local fire investigators. The ATF's CFIs are recognized as experts in the field of fire investigations and are often acclaimed for their contributions.

The ATF Fire Research Laboratory (FRL) is a unique fire testing facility with the capacity to replicate a wide spectrum of fire scenarios in laboratory testing conditions. As a result of the advanced scientific and technical methods applied by the scientists, engineers, and CFIs at the FRL, the ATF is acknowledged as the Nation's definitive source of science-based fire investigation and training.

As the primary Federal law enforcement agency that regulates the explosives industry, the ATF enforces the SEA and licenses businesses and individuals that engage in manufacturing, importing, or dealing in explosives, and those receiving or transporting explosives materials. The SEA expanded the scope of explosives regulations administered by the ATF by establishing controls on the intrastate movement of explosives, and by mandating that all persons who receive explosives undergo a background check and obtain a Federal permit.

The ATF is recognized for its expertise in investigations involving bombings and explosives, particularly with respect to the reconstruction of explosives incidents. The ATF SA Certified Explosives Specialists (CESs), SA Bomb Technicians, Explosives Enforcement Officers (EEOs), and forensic personnel are highly trained and experienced in investigating post-blast scenes. As such, the ATF's CESs provide training to Federal, State local, Tribal, Territorial, and international law enforcement agencies. Investigating criminal bombings and the illegal use of explosives is an integral part of the ATF's overall violent crime reduction strategy.

The ATF's National Response Team (NRT) consists of highly trained and experienced SAs, CFIs, CESs, EEOs, electrical engineers, and other experts who work in conjunction with ATF's partners to support and participate in major arson and explosives investigations in the United States and internationally. High profile activations in recent years include the 2025 Palisades wildfire; the devastating 2025 explosion in McEwen, Tennessee that claimed 16 lives; the Christmas Day 2020 bombing in Nashville, Tennessee; and a 2022 incendiary fire of a restaurant in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania that killed a firefighter.

The ATF's criminal and regulatory programs are a key means by which the U.S. government enforces Federal explosives laws and prevents criminals and terrorists from obtaining explosives for use in bombings. Federal law requires that any manufacturer, importer, or dealer of explosives must have a Federal explosives license. Individuals who acquire, possess or transport explosives must hold a Federal explosives permit. The ATF enforces the regulatory standards for the storage of explosives materials to which licensees and permittees must adhere. IOIs conduct compliance inspections to prevent diversion and ensure the safe and secure storage of explosives. IOIs also detect and assist in explosives diversion investigations. When a significant safety hazard or loss of explosives is discovered, IOIs directly address these incidents to ensure the threat is mitigated.

Finally, the ATF has primary jurisdiction for enforcing the Contraband Cigarette Trafficking Act (CCTA) and the Prevent All Cigarette Trafficking (PACT) Act. The CCTA makes it unlawful for any person to ship, transport, receive, possess, sell, distribute, or purchase more than 10,000 cigarettes and/or 500 packages of smokeless tobacco (i.e., snuff, chewing tobacco), which bear no evidence of State tax payment in the State in which cigarettes are found if such State requires a stamp to evidence payment of taxes.

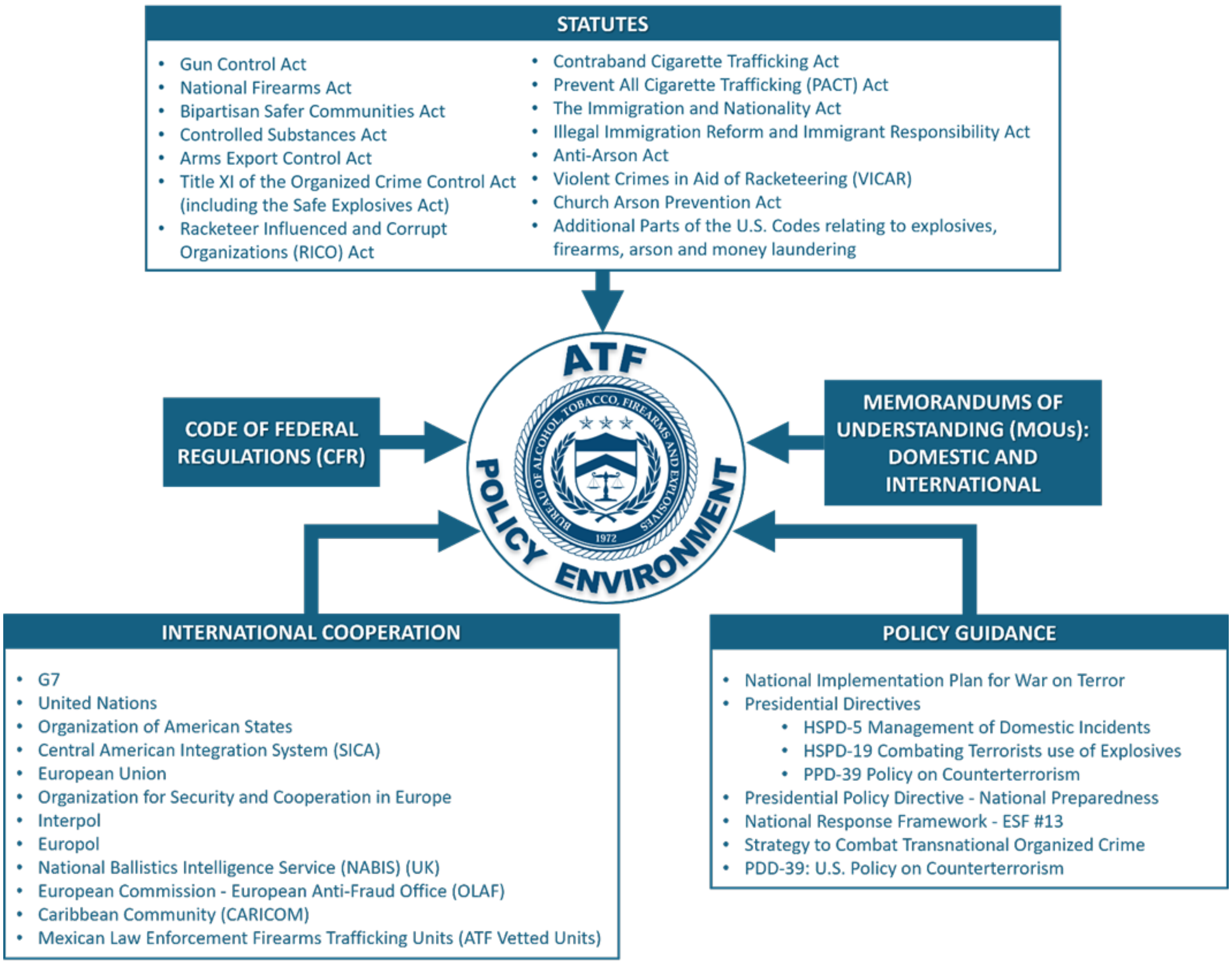
The PACT Act requires any person that makes remote delivery sales to consumers of cigarettes or smokeless tobacco to comply with all state and local laws pertaining to shipping, licensing, stamping, excise taxes and restrictions on sales to minors. This includes, but is not limited to, State and/or local regulations related to the sale of electronic nicotine delivery systems (E.N.D.S.), or vaping devices. ATF maintains and distributes a non-compliant list for delivery sellers that have violated the PACT Act, which prohibits common carriers from shipping cigarettes, smokeless tobacco or E.N.D.S. for any entity on the list. Moreover, ATF remains a critical member of the multi-agency task force initiated by DOJ and FDA to combat the illegal sale and distribution of E.N.D.S., along with federal partners.

Investigative Support Services

Resources and activities that support the ATF's law enforcement operations comprise the Investigative Support Services decision unit. Core activities include: firearms and explosives licensing and other firearms industry services, firearms tracing, National Center for Explosives Training and Research (NCETR), U.S. Bomb Data Center (USBDC), Terrorist Explosives Device Analytical Center (TEDAC), Emerging Threats Center (ETC), the ATF laboratories, financial investigations, collaboration and partnerships, and Emergency Support Function-13 (ESF-13).

The ATF continues to build, leverage, and rely on a full spectrum of interagency partnerships to reduce and prevent firearm-related violent crime and terrorism. These partnerships include collaboration with Federal, State local, Tribal, and international law enforcement agencies; other public safety agencies; local communities; and industry. The ATF partners with these entities to safeguard the public through investigations, information and intelligence sharing, training, research, and the use of technology. Finally, when major disasters or emergencies occur, the ATF is the Department's agency responsible for the coordination and deployment of ESF-13, the Public Safety and Security function of the National Response Framework.

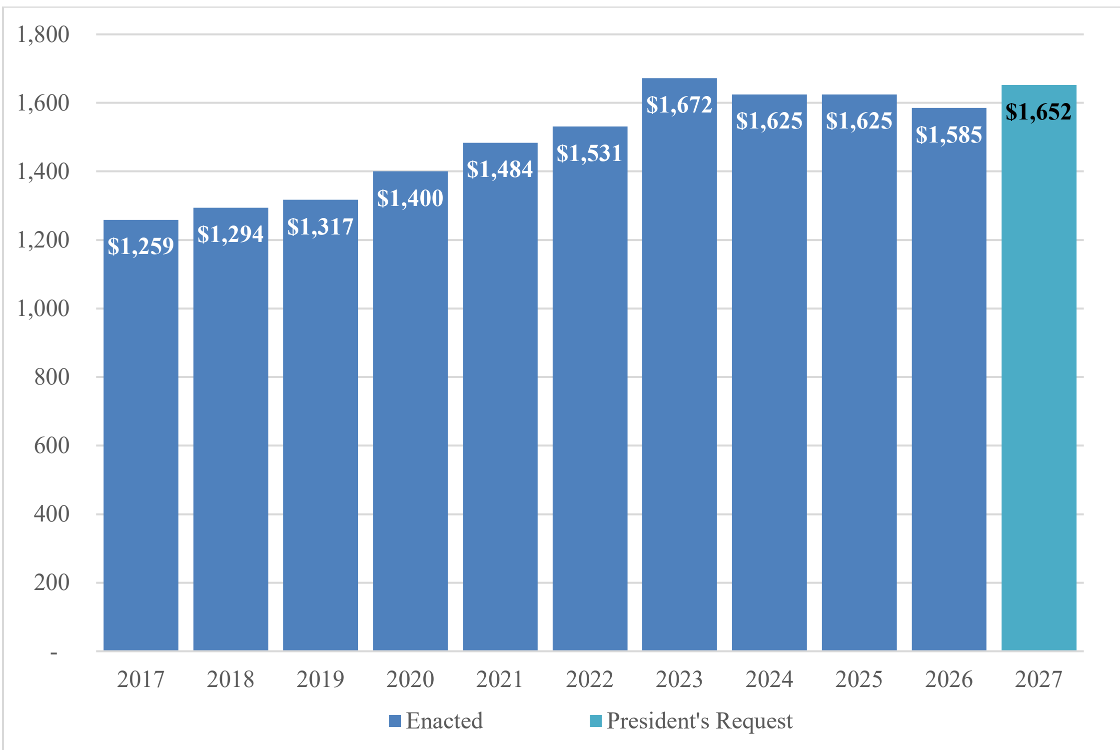
Chart 1. ATF Mission and Budget Strategy
Policy and Legislative Environment



B. FY 2027 Budget Request

The ATF's FY 2027 President's Budget request totals $1.652 billion for Salaries and Expenses (S&E), with 4,827 total positions (2,518 agents) and 4,749 full-time equivalents (FTE). Included within this amount is $33.4 million for technical and base adjustments which would maintain core resources and the current services level of SAs, IOIs, and support professionals. This request also includes $33.6 million in program enhancements to support the Bureau's mission objectives.

Chart 2. ATF Appropriated Funding, by Fiscal Year
($ in millions)



<u>Maintaining Current Services</u>

The FY 2027 President's Budget request includes $20.5 million in base adjustments to maintain current services. Within this amount, $6.6 million funds pay and benefits adjustments to continue support of SAs, IOIs, and other personnel; $0.3 million supports domestic rent and guard services adjustments; $12.8 million to support Spectrum operations and maintenance; and $0.8 million in foreign expenses to support capital security cost sharing and ICASS.

<u>Technical Adjustments</u>

The FY 2027 President's Budget request contains one technical adjustment for S&E totaling $12.9 million required for FY 2026 Interagency Law Enforcement (ILE), which allows for ATF to direct fund 45 positions (45 agents) and 46 FTE.

<u>Program Enhancements</u>

The FY 2027 President's Budget request contains two (2) program enhancements for S&E totaling $33.6 million, described below.

<u>S&E Program Enhancements:</u>

National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) and Crime Gun Intelligence (CGI)

The first S&E program increase requests $7.8 million and 0 positions to strengthen core capabilities, modernize infrastructure, and expand support to Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement partners. CGI and NIBIN are cornerstone components of the Department's and the President's strategy to reduce violent firearm crime. The request includes support for: NIBIN Program Infrastructure, NNCTC Support, and CGI/(NIBIN Enforcement Support System) NESS Enhancements. These programs enable ATF and its law enforcement partners to target the most violent offenders, link shooting incidents across jurisdictions, and generate actionable intelligence through ballistic imaging and data analysis.

Combatting Gun Violence – Immigration Enforcement Firearms Trafficking Involving Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs)

The second S&E program increase requests $25.8 million and 86 positions (60 agents) for regional violent crime and trafficking initiatives, specifically to address persistent firearms violence. These initiatives include the firearm trafficking Strike Forces initially established by the Department and ATF in 2021 and Operation Southbound, which is the Department's primary initiative addressing Cartel-driven firearms trafficking to Mexico.

C. Challenges

The ATF faces substantial external and internal challenges affecting its ability to meet mission critical goals and objectives. These include, but are not limited to:

- Responding to the significant rise in use and recoveries of privately made firearms (PMF), commonly referred to as "ghost guns" and conversion devices that transform a semiautomatic firearm into a fully automatic weapon;
- Keeping pace with an ever-increasing volume of NFA weapon applications;
- Keeping pace with an increase in crime gun trace requests;
- Establishing and funding a technology refresh strategy to modernize and better integrate ATF's information and forensic technology assets, infrastructure, and services , such as case management, firearms tracing, NFA, and NIBIN;

- Maintaining access to technology that enables the recovery and examination of digital evidence as criminals increasingly use ever-changing forms of electronic media;
- Improving productivity and customer service in the face of significant increases in workload requirements in both the law enforcement and services elements; and
- Meeting the ongoing hiring, training, and knowledge transfer demands posed by the retirement and attrition of SAs and other experienced staff.

Decision Units

Each fiscal year, the ATF develops its annual spending plan based on historical decision unit (DU) spending trends, current services funding requirements, and program changes. The ATF continues to assess options for better management of DU allocations. This includes addressing short-term solutions, processes, and IT systems that can more effectively allocate resources by DU, monitor DU budget execution, and achieve DU targets within reprogramming thresholds. ATF currently maintains two DUs as outlined below:

Law Enforcement Operations

The Law Enforcement Operations decision unit involves resources and activities that are directly related to criminal investigations and industry operations. Industry operations consist of the regulatory inspections that ATF Industry Operations Investigators (IOIs) conduct on Federal Firearms Licensees (FFL), Federal explosives licensees (FELs), and Federal explosives permittees (FEPs). Core criminal enforcement activities include investigations involving illegal firearms trafficking, firearms criminal use and possession, criminal organizations, arson and explosives crimes, and tobacco tax diversion. ATF's criminal investigative efforts focus on reducing violent crime by targeting domestic and international firearms traffickers, violent criminal organizations, armed violent offenders, and career criminals.

Investigative Support Services

Resources and activities that support ATF's law enforcement operations comprise the Investigative Support Services decision unit. Core activities include but are not limited to firearms and explosives licensing and other firearms industry services; crime gun firearms tracing; National Center for Explosives Training and Research (NCETR); United States Bomb Data Center (USBDC); Terrorist Explosives Device Analytical Center (TEDAC); the ATF laboratories; financial investigations; collaboration and partnerships; and Emergency Support Function-13 (ESF-13).

Addressing ATF Challenges

The FY 2027 President's Budget request will provide the funding necessary for the ATF to sustain efforts to participate and work with the Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF) designated cities and lead efforts to combat violent crime. This funding will improve ATF's ability to combat Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs), specifically TdA and MS-13, and to prioritize criminal enforcement targeting armed drug trafficking organizations, cartels, and firearms traffickers. ATF is the Federal government's law enforcement leader in State and local partnerships to reduce violent crime, and this investment will leverage those relationships and build on them to focus resources more effectively on violent offenders who unlawfully use and possess firearms and explosives and commit criminal acts of arson.

This funding is critical to ATF's ability to sustain previous years reductions in firearms related crime, expand the use of State and local police access to Crime Gun Intelligence, and will build on the Administration's success in making American communities safe. In addition to providing critical funding for operations, the request provides for hiring of criminal investigators who are critical to implementing ATF's violent crime reduction strategy. The FY2027 President's Budget request is an investment in Federal, State, local, territorial, and Tribal law enforcement agencies to ensure alignment in carrying out the Administration's priorities in focusing on violent offenders and those who are unlawfully in the United States and commit firearms offenses.

II. Summary of FY 2027 Program Changes

Item Name	Description				Page
	Purpose	Pos.	FTE	Dollars ($000)	
NIBIN and Crime Gun Intelligence	Enables ATF and its law enforcement partners to target the most violent offenders, link shooting incidents across jurisdictions, and generate actionable intelligence through ballistic imaging and data analysis	0	0	7,799	35
Combating Gun Violence – Immigration Enforcement Firearms Trafficking Involving Cartels and Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs)	ATF's highest priority is to enhance public safety by reducing and/or disrupting the cycle of firearm violence by dismantling the firearm trafficking organizations that supply crime guns.	86	43	25,836	41

III. Appropriations Language and Analysis of Appropriations Language

Salaries and Expenses

For necessary expenses of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, for training of State and local law enforcement agencies with or without reimbursement, including training in connection with the training and acquisition of canines for explosives and fire accelerants detection; and for provision of laboratory assistance to State and local enforcement agencies, with or without reimbursement, $1,652,000,000 of which not to exceed $35,650 shall be for official reception and representation expenses, not to exceed $1,000,000 shall be available for the payment of attorneys' fees as provided by section 942(d)(2) of title 18, United States Code, and not to exceed $25,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2028: Provided, That such funds shall be available to investigate or act upon applications for relief from Federal firearms disabilities under section 925(c) of title 18, United States Code.

Analysis of Appropriations Language

No substantive changes are proposed.

IV. Program Activity Justification

The table(s) below displays the Department's FY 2025 Enacted and FY 2026 Enacted , the basis for building this FY 2027 President's Budget.

A. Law Enforcement Operations

LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS	Direct Positions	Estimate FTE	Amount ($000)
FY 2025 Enacted	4,069	4,046	1,136,038
FY 2026 Enacted	3,720	3,692	1,108,074
Adjustments to Base and Technical Adjustments	45	46	33,365
FY 2027 Current Services	3,765	3,738	1,141,439
FY 2027 Program Increases	81	41	25,836
FY 2027 Program Decreases	0	0	0
FY 2027 Request	3,846	3,779	1,167,275
Total Change FY 2026 – FY 2027	126	87	59,201

Investigating and Preventing Violent Crime

Protecting Americans against violent crime is a top Administration and Department priority. The ATF's mission centers on this priority: the ATF enforces criminal laws involving firearms, explosives, arson, and the diversion of alcohol and tobacco products; regulates lawful commerce in firearms and explosives; and provides global support to law enforcement, public safety, and industry partners. In all these areas, the ATF focuses its resources on the effective investigation and prevention of violent crime.

Investigative and Inspection Accountability

The ATF establishes and reinforces accountability at all levels by giving Special Agents in Charge (SACs) at each of the ATF's 25 field divisions the necessary tools to prioritize and address the specific violent crime threats in his or her area of responsibility. SAs, IOIs, and supervisors conduct continuous reviews throughout the life of investigations and inspections to evaluate anticipated outcomes and impacts when weighed against risk and resource utilization.

Measurement

The ATF's Performance Review process evaluates actual performance against the Bureau's performance goals as outlined in the ATF's Strategic Management Performance Index. Throughout the course of investigations and inspections, supervisors monitor progress and performance to ensure effective and efficient resource allocation. Additionally, staff at all levels engage in periodic Performance Review sessions with their supervisors, Assistant Special Agents in Charge (ASACs) and SACs, who then collaborate to evaluate field-wide performance and provide feedback to the field. At the end of the fiscal year, the SAC also meets with their respective Deputy Assistant Director and the Assistant Director of Field Operations to review year-end performance. Through these meetings, both parties identify accomplishments, deficiencies, and resource needs for the next year.

Core Activities

The core activities in Law Enforcement Operations that constitute the ATF's mission include, but are not limited to, investigations and inspections that address:

1. Deterrence of Illegal Firearms Trafficking and Violent Gun Crime
2. Firearms Criminal Possession and Use
3. National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN)
4. Firearms Industry Operations
5. Combatting Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) and Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs)
6. Preventing the Misuse of Explosives, Bombs and Bombings
7. Explosives Industry Operations
8. Research Fire and Investigative Arson

In FY 2025, these core law enforcement operations activities resulted in the following significant accomplishments, including approximately:

- 25,953 investigations and 11,979 defendants referred for prosecution;
- 5,451 convictions;
- 8,472 firearms compliance inspections; and
- 3,304 explosives compliance inspections

1. Deter Illegal Firearms Trafficking and Violent Gun Crime

The ATF's firearms trafficking enforcement efforts seek to reduce violent crime by stemming the flow of firearms to violent criminals. Illegally trafficked firearms are "tools of the trade," which Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs), drug traffickers, gang members, and other violent criminals use to commit crimes, negatively affecting interstate and international commerce. The ATF identifies, investigates, and arrests individuals and members of organizations who illegally supply firearms to violent or prohibited individuals. The ATF deters the diversion of firearms from lawful commerce into the illegal market through robust regulatory and criminal enforcement strategies.

The ATF identifies, investigates, and arrests individuals and dismantles organizations that illegally supply firearms to prohibited individuals. To accomplish this goal, the ATF utilizes intelligence-based enforcement strategies, regulatory measures, and new technology. These include, but are not limited to, the creation, analysis, and use of CGI through the NIBIN Enforcement Support System (NESS), crime gun trace data, multiple sales reports, FFL compliance inspections, exploitation of social media and other sources of information that all lead to the dissemination of accurate, timely, relevant, and actionable leads to identify firearms trafficking.

Internationally, the ATF works with other agencies to prevent firearms from reaching the hands of drug traffickers, participants in organized crime, and foreign terrorist organizations. ATF enforces provisions of the Arms Export Control Act, and has primary jurisdiction over firearms and ammunition imports in cases involving the unlawful exportation of firearms. ATF works with partners across the Federal government including the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of State, and the Department of Commerce.

The ATF's strategy to combat firearms trafficking is comprehensive and intelligence-driven: Drawing on information that FFLs are required to maintain, the ATF's National Tracing Center (NTC) determines the original source market from which a recovered crime gun originated. The ATF agents and analysts then use collective trace data and investigative evidence to identify trafficking corridors and trends. The ATF SAs and IOIs work together with Federal prosecutors in source areas to reduce the flow of diverted firearms into trafficking channels, reducing the availability of crime guns for violent criminals and organizations in market areas—areas that can be thousands of miles away from the original source market. In market areas, ATF agents and law enforcement partners work closely to disrupt the transfer of trafficked firearms to criminal organizations and "trigger-pullers" identified through NIBIN analysis and other CGI.

As internet commerce flourishes, firearms-related commerce grows with it. While many of these firearms-related transactions are lawful, the internet also provides a forum for individuals intent on evading the law—as either a buyer or a seller—to conduct unlawful transfers with a degree of anonymity. To combat illegal firearms trafficking facilitated by the internet, the ATF established the Emerging Threats Center (ETC), supported by legal counsel and staffed with SAs, IOIs, and Intelligence Research Specialists (IRSs). Using cutting-edge technology, this team identifies illegal firearms trafficking occurring online, and provides actionable intelligence to the relevant ATF field division for follow-up investigation. When an investigation is national in scope or affects multiple ATF field divisions, the ETC coordinates intelligence and operations to ensure any resulting criminal investigation and prosecution has the widest impact. As part of this coordination process, the ATF works closely with the Department's Criminal Division to determine the best venue for prosecution.

Using this same approach, ATF personnel are constantly scanning for internet-based threats of violence, particularly those involving "soft" targets like schools and houses of worship. With great sense of urgency, ETC personnel use all available resources and tools to identify those making the threat, locate the individual(s) as best as possible, and immediately refer to law enforcement where the individual(s) are located. The ATF typically has no Federal jurisdiction related to these threats, so the local field office coordinates and works closely with appropriate State and local law enforcement agencies.

The ETC also provides comprehensive investigative and intelligence support to the ATF's field divisions on matters relating to internet-based criminal activity within the ATF's jurisdiction. Support includes technical online investigative tasks, legal support for internet-related warrants, and subpoenas. The ETC also serves as the single de-confliction point for online investigations both within the ATF and between other agencies. The ETC's subject matter experts also provide training on law enforcement methods and techniques for internet investigations, which includes social media tools among other various investigative methods. ETC members are instructed on these matters at the ATF's National Academy, different field divisions, the Department's National Advocacy Center (NAC), and training hosted by Europol for member nations.

The ETC has identified a number of significant firearms traffickers who used the internet to facilitate their crimes. Ongoing firearms trafficking investigations involve individuals and organizations using the surface web as well as the anonymous dark web. The ATF also investigated international firearms trafficking rings where U.S.-sourced firearms were destined for delivery to criminal organizations or prohibited persons outside of the United States and vice versa. Other investigations involved prohibited persons soliciting innocent people selling their firearms on the internet.

2. Firearms Criminal Possession and Use

The law enforcement community has long recognized the clear link between the availability of criminally possessed firearms and violent crime. Firearm violence associated with drug trafficking and violent crime threatens citizens' safety and livelihoods while eroding the quality of life in American cities. The ATF employs a threat matrix to identify patterns of firearm violence and deploys its resources to efficiently disrupt and prevent gun violence.

In July 2021, the Department established five ATF-led cross-jurisdictional Crime Gun Strike Forces to help reduce gun violence by disrupting illegal firearms trafficking in key regions across the country. Leveraging existing resources, the regional strike forces are tasked with focusing coordination across multiple jurisdictions to help stem the supply of illegally trafficked firearms from source cities and into eight key market regions: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco Bay Area/Sacramento, Washington, D.C., Newark, Boston, and Baltimore. Each strike force is a collaboration between the ATF, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and State and local partners within their jurisdiction in both source and market areas. Through the strike forces, the ATF is targeting the firearms traffickers, "trigger-pullers," and violent criminal offenders who use these weapons to terrorize their communities. The ATF is utilizing every available resource, including NIBIN, and crime gun tracing, and other forms of CGI to identify, investigate and prosecute violent offenders.

3. NIBIN

The mission of the ATF's NIBIN program is to reduce firearms violence through aggressive evidence-based targeting, investigation, and prosecution of shooters and their sources of crime guns. NIBIN continues to aid the ATF and its law enforcement partners in identifying "trigger-pullers" and removing violent offenders from America's streets. . The ATF administers NIBIN for Federal, State, local, Tribal and territorial law enforcement agencies to solve crimes by establishing investigative leads through links between crime guns and criminals. NIBIN is the only interstate automated ballistic imaging network in operation in the United States and is available to every major population center in the United States to support local violent crime reduction strategies.

The NIBIN system is a collection of digital ballistic images of ammunition components recovered from crime scenes and recovered crime gun test fires. As with fingerprints, every firearm has unique identifying characteristics. The barrel of a weapon leaves distinct markings on a bullet or projectile, and the breech, ejector and firing pin leave distinct markings on the cartridge case. Using these markings, firearm technicians and examiners can examine bullets and cartridge casings to determine if they were expelled from the same firearm.

Through the NIBIN program, the ATF strategically deploys ballistic imaging equipment to Federal, State, local, Tribal and territorial law enforcement agencies for their use in imaging and comparing these unique markings on crime gun evidence. The ATF has worked to place the program in strategic locations across the country with the goal of giving investigators an edge in the fight against firearms-related violence.

The ATF's NIBIN program uses an integrated investigative approach which works in concert with other Federal, State, local, Tribal and territorial law enforcement agencies in combating firearms-related violence using technology to compare images of ballistic evidence obtained from crime scenes and recovered firearms. NIBIN is a proven investigative and intelligence tool that can identify leads that were not previously available, link firearms evidence from multiple crime scenes that were committed with the same firearm, and link firearms evidence from a crime scene to a recovered firearm.

The ATF's NIBIN network may be searched locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally in an automated environment to identify investigative leads. Law enforcement resources realize the true potential of NIBIN by following up on the investigative leads to solve crimes associated with these shooting incidents. In FY 2025, NIBIN sites confirmed more than 3,849 hits and issued approximately 193,269 investigative leads using this technology.

NIBIN partner sites began issuing leads in FY 2014 as the program changed its focus from a forensic tool to an investigative tool. NIBIN "leads" are potential ballistic links that either have been made by a firearms examiner or trained technician upon comparison of the ballistic images. NIBIN "hits" on the other hand, are ballistic links that have been confirmed by a firearms examiner under a comparison microscope. NIBIN hits require additional time and the ability to compare two physical pieces of ballistic evidence. With the emphasis on NIBIN as an investigative tool, as a "leads generator," sites have shifted focus and efforts to providing timely NIBIN leads to investigators in lieu of the microscopic comparison. In FY 2014, NIBIN sites issued more than 800 leads, which has grown to 193,269 leads in FY 2025 and over 1.2 million leads overall. This has had a positive impact for law enforcement, allowing them to focus their efforts on taking active trigger-pullers off the streets before they re-offend. Leads are issued more quickly than a confirmed hit, which means the information is fresh for investigators to pursue these armed criminals.

The ATF will continue to emphasize the program's focus on providing useful ballistic information in a timely manner for investigative action thus resulting in more referrals for prosecutions and impact on violent crime. The ATF is utilizing NIBIN along with other investigative tools and assets as part of an overall crime gun intelligence solution to effectively identify and target criminal shooters and their source of crime guns that are plaguing communities.

As part of the NIBIN program, the ATF established the NIBIN National Correlation and Training Center (NNCTC), a centralized facility capable of performing correlation reviews of ballistic images submitted by NIBIN sites anywhere in the United States. Correlation reviews are a critical function of the NIBIN process and are how ballistic leads are determined for investigative use. The NNCTC accomplishes this on behalf of a NIBIN site to relieve that local facility of the labor and machinery costs associated with NIBIN.

The NNCTC performs timely ballistics analysis and correlation services as well as expert level training in ballistic image acquisitions and correlations reviews to Federal, State, local, Tribal and territorial law enforcement partners. By providing this invaluable service, the NNCTC frees up local sites to perform other important aspects of the NIBIN process, thereby increasing their ability to provide critical violent gun crime leads to investigators in a timely fashion. As of December 2025, the NNCTC has conducted approximately 2,290,921 correlation reviews resulting in approximately 712,397 leads to more than 7,200 partner agencies while maintaining a 99.6 percent lead confirmation. Moreover, the expertise and capability of the NNCTC's Correlation Review Specialists and Firearms and Tool Mark Examiners allows lead generation turnaround time to be decreased to 24-48 hours where it might otherwise be more than a month if left to the local site. This consistent and timely turnaround of NIBIN leads provides investigators relevant and valuable information to identify and apprehend violent offenders more quickly. In addition to providing correlation review services, the NNCTC provides NIBIN training to the ATF's law enforcement partners.

As the continuing demand for NNCTC services expands throughout the United States, the ATF established a second location in Wichita, Kansas, on the campus of Wichita State University. The creation of the ATF's Crime Gun Intelligence Center of Excellence and the co-located NNCTC-II continues to expand the correlation capacity ensuring this essential function to all nationwide NIBIN sites, inclusive of sites currently on the NNCTC waitlist, as well as all new sites. As of January 2026 there were 19 sites on the waitlist for the NNCTC.

The secondary correlation review site for the ATF's NIBIN program alleviates a single point of failure, should one site experience a catastrophic event, which is consistent with ATF Continuity of Operations protocol.

To enhance law enforcement use of NIBIN investigative leads, the ATF created a web-based application known as the NIBIN Enforcement Support System (NESS) to collect, analyze, refer, track, and support NIBIN and other crime gun data. NESS facilitates information sharing between the ATF and its law enforcement partners by providing intelligence to agents, investigators, and intelligence specialists in the field. NESS can assist investigators identify the most active firearms being used in their areas. NIBIN leads target the most violent offenders regardless of gender, race, or geographical location.

4. Firearms Industry Operations

The ATF regulates the firearms industry from the point of manufacture or importation through retail sale to ensure FFL compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. In addition, the ATF regularly conducts training for FFLs with the intent to educate and encourage voluntary controls and foster cooperation with law enforcement officials.

As part of its regulatory role, the ATF determines which FFL applicants are eligible to engage in a firearms business. Upon determination, the ATF educates licensees on their legal responsibilities. FFLs must maintain acquisition and disposition records of their inventory of firearms. Additionally, FFLs are required to maintain detailed records of each disposition of firearms, positively identifying the purchaser and ensuring that they are not prohibited from possessing firearms. The ATF has the authority to request information from these records to assist with criminal investigations.

Proper and timely recordkeeping by FFLs is critical for successful crime gun tracing and is required for all firearms transactions by licensees. Failing to account for firearms in inventory is a serious public safety concern since unaccounted firearms cannot be fully traced to the retail purchaser. The ATF's FFL inspection program uses information related to recovered firearms to detect indicators of illegal firearms trafficking.

Through this regulatory framework, the ATF tracks each firearm recovered in a crime from its point of manufacture or importation through the chain of distribution to the point of first retail sale, a process known as "tracing." By tracing all crime gun recoveries submitted to the ATF, investigators can discern patterns of firearms purchases, locations of purchase, and weapon types. These patterns provide invaluable leads in identifying persons who divert firearms into illegal commerce. By targeting these persons, the ATF stems the flow of illegal guns for convicted felons, drug traffickers, or gang members who commit violent crimes. Moreover, after connecting a firearm to an illegal gun trafficker, the ATF makes every effort to interdict and prosecute these individuals to prevent gun violence.

In FY 2025, the ATF completed approximately 8,472 FFL compliance inspections. During FY 2025, there were approximately 127,739 active FFLs in the United States. In FY 2025, the ATF issued approximately 41,931 new FFLs to qualified applicants (including renewals).

Additionally, the ATF regulates the importation of firearms into the United States and registers importers of firearms, ammunition, firearms parts, and other defense articles pursuant to the import provisions of the AECA. The ATF also provides technical advice to the public regarding import requirements applicable to firearms or ammunition. The public and the firearms industry routinely submit products to the ATF for evaluation of whether an item is a firearm and how it is regulated.

5. Combat Criminal Organizations

Criminal organizations threaten all communities across the United States. Gangs remain key distributors of narcotics and are often sophisticated and flagrant in their use of firearms for violence and intimidation. To combat the criminal organizations that threaten communities across the United States, the ATF focuses its extensive and distinct investigative resources on areas experiencing the most violent crime. The ATF's strategy targets the most serious offenses, prosecuting the most dangerous criminals, directing assistance to crime 'hot spots,' and pursuing new ways to promote public safety, deterrence, efficiency, and fairness. The ATF developed strategies to address violent crime spikes and to execute operations intended to weaken and dismantle armed violent criminal organizations.

Each of the ATF's 25 field divisions works collaboratively with their Federal, State, and local partners, as well as the U.S. Attorney's Office. Partnership plays a vital role in combating violent gun crime. It allows law enforcement agencies to operate together with unity of effort to stem the flow of crime guns, investigate, and prosecute the offenders affiliated with criminal organizations and gangs who use them to commit violent crimes. Through partnerships, law enforcement leaders coordinate missions, strategies, tactics, and intelligence to effectively prioritize and maximize impact on violent crime.

The ATF CGETS partner with Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies to collect crime gun intelligence in cities identified by their high rates of violent gun crime. Crime gun tracing, along with NIBIN results and local agency police reports, are funneled to the ATF Crime Gun Intelligence Centers (CGICs) to analyze and produce actionable intelligence. Once received, agents and officers form enforcement strategies to target, arrest, and prosecute the "trigger-pullers" and the illegal firearms traffickers who provide them with firearms.

6. Preventing the Misuse of Explosives, Bombs, and Bombings

Criminal bombings and the illegal use of explosives are violent acts that threaten communities and national security. The ATF strives to reduce violent crime involving the misuse of explosives, assist State or local officers, advance public safety and security, deny the acquisition of explosive materials by statutorily prohibited persons, remove hazards to the public caused by improper storage or use of explosive materials, and assist agencies in combatting terrorism and violent crime.

The ATF has aligned its mission, resources, and expertise with the National Strategy to Counter Improvised Explosives Devices (IEDs). The ATF manages the USBDC, which in turn is responsible for maintaining, and enhancing the outward facing Bomb Arson Tracking System, the statutorily mandated and Attorney General designated National arson and explosives incident repository and case management system. Currently, the USBDC has more than 2,100 interagency partners and over 6,000 active users of the Bomb Arson Tracking System (BATS) who contribute arson and explosives intelligence and information for critical regional and national situational awareness.

The ATF has the responsibility and authority to inspect the storage of explosives by Federal explosives licensees and permittees to track thefts, losses, and recoveries of explosives. The ATF's mission extends to ensuring only qualified and legitimate applicants enter the explosives industry and that licensees keep proper records and use sound business practices to help prevent theft, explosives incidents, or the diversion of explosives to criminal or terrorist purposes.

The ATF's criminal enforcement mission, combined with the ATF's regulatory responsibility, gives the ATF a comprehensive perspective on activity involving explosives in this country. This perspective allows the ATF to impact public safety through the identification and correction of explosives storage violations that, unchecked, could pose significant risk to the public.

7. Explosives Industry Operations

Explosive materials diverted from legal commerce into the hands of criminal organizations and gangs, or terrorist organizations constitute a tangible threat to public safety and legal commerce. The ATF's criminal and regulatory programs enforce Federal explosives law and prevent criminals and terrorists from obtaining explosives for use in bombings.

On a three-year cycle, as required by the Safe Explosives Act, the ATF's IOIs conduct compliance inspections of approximately all active explosives licensees and permittees nationwide to detect, investigate, and prevent diversion, and promote the safe and secure storage of explosives. As of FY 2025, there are 9,174 active explosives licensees and permittees. The Federal Explosives Licensing Center screens license and permit applicants, in conjunction with the FBI, to ensure applicant eligibility to lawfully receive and use explosives. It further screens employees of such licensees and permittees to ensure prohibited persons do not have access to explosives.

8. Research Fire and Investigate Arson

Loss of lives and property due to arson remains a significant threat to communities, businesses, and the American people. Under Title 18 of the United States Code (U.S.C.), the ATF is designated as the Federal agency primarily responsible for enforcing criminal provisions of the Federal laws related to fire and explosives incidents, developing strategies to identify violent offenders who use fire as a weapon, and conducting financial investigations to expose illegal arson-for-profit schemes. ATF also conducts research for best practices regarding the collection of arson evidence, such as the recovery of firearm casings in burned structures and vehicles.

The ATF SAs investigate potential acts of arson motivated by profit, ideology, or other criminal intent. Some of the more recent significant events the ATF has been called upon for its expertise includes investigating the Lahaina (Maui) HI fires, the Pacific Palisades fire, Tesla Arsons and Las Vegas Tesla Bombing, Cyprus Wildland Fire, Memphis Clayborn Temple fire and the Nottoway Plantation fire. The ATF also trains Federal, State local, and international law enforcement agencies on how to investigate and solve such crimes.

The ATF has primary Federal jurisdiction over the investigation of arson crimes and is uniquely equipped for this mission with specialized capabilities, expertise, and experience. Most fires are investigated at the local level. The ATF responds to fires of Federal interest and provides its specialized skills when needed by State and local authorities. In many cases, the unique knowledge, technical resources, forensic capabilities, and jurisdictional authority of the Federal government are essential in solving arson-related crimes and removing arsonists from the community. The ATF's combination of CFIs, accelerant detection canines, NRT, forensic laboratories, forensic auditors, fire protection, electrical and mechanical engineers, and the FRL provide comprehensive technical expertise for investigating arson crimes that is unmatched in the United States. Additionally, the USBDC and BATS provide critical intelligence and information to the ATF and the interagency community related to occurrence of arson incidents both regionally and nationally.

Investigative Support Services

INVESTIGATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES	Direct Pos.	Estimate FTE	Amount ($000)
FY 2025 Enacted	1,067	1,061	488,963
FY 2026 Enacted	976	968	476,927
Adjustments to Base and Technical Adjustments	0	0	0
FY 2027 Current Services	976	968	476,927
FY 2027 Program Increases	5	2	7,799
FY 2027 Program Decreases	0	0	0
FY 2027 Request	981	970	484,726
Total Change FY 2026 – FY 2027	5	2	7,799

Delivery of the ATF's Forensic Expertise, Assets, and Intelligence Services to Improve Public Safety

The ATF continues to leverage, build, and rely on its partnerships with all law enforcement entities – Federal, State, local, Tribal, and international law enforcement, public safety agencies, communities, and industries – to prevent terrorism and abate violent crime. The ATF partners with these entities to safeguard the public through information and intelligence sharing, training, research, the use of technology, and by its lead role in the coordination of ESF-13 law enforcement response functions.

Resources and activities that support the ATF's law enforcement operations comprise the Investigative Support Services (ISS) decision unit. Core activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Firearms and Explosives Licensing and Other Firearms Industry Services
2. Firearms Tracing
3. National Center for Explosives Training Center (NCETR)
4. United States Bomb Data Center (USBDC)
5. Terrorist Explosive Device Analytical Center (TEDAC)
6. ATF Laboratories
7. Financial Investigations
8. Collaboration and Partnerships
9. Emergency Support Function – 13 (ESF-13)
10. Internet Investigations Center (ICC)

1. Emerging Threats Center (ETC) Firearms and Explosives Licensing and Other Industry Services

The ATF issues licenses to qualified firearms and explosives manufacturers, importers, and dealers. Under current regulations, the ATF is required to act upon firearms license applications within 60 days and explosives license application within 90 days of receiving a perfected application. During FY 2023, the ATF conducted approximately 9,328 firearms application inspections and 823 explosives application inspections.

In addition, the National Firearms Act (NFA) mandates registration and tax payment for making or transferring machine guns, silencers, short-barreled rifles, short-barreled shotguns, destructive devices, and certain concealable weapons classified as "any other weapons." The NFA requires individuals, firearms manufacturers, and importers to register the NFA firearms that they make, manufacture, or import, and that all NFA firearms transfers are approved by the ATF prior to being transferred.

Market demand for NFA services continues to set annual records, which has resulted in an increased workload over the past several years. In FY 2025, the ATF received approximately 1,445,407 NFA registration applications and processed approximately 1,507,443 NFA registration and transfer applications. In FY 2025, the ATF's NFA Division received the highest volume of taxpaid applications surpassing the previous record high year of FY 2024. Total NFA revenue collections for FY 2025 were over $187.9 million. All tax revenue collected by the NFA as part of the Form 1 and Form 4 making and transfer taxes, as well as that collected as part of the Special Occupational Tax (SOT), including penalties and interest, is deposited into the General Treasury Fund. ATF receives no direct benefit from the tax revenue collected, and with the reduction in making and transfer taxes for firearms other than machine guns and destructive devices to $0 as of January 1, 2026, tax revenue is expected to decrease significantly.

However, the increase in overall firearms commerce continues to significantly increase ATF's workload and has a significant impact on ATF's ability to meet internal and external performance targets, especially following implementation of the Working Families Tax Cut (WFTC) Act. Since January 1, 2026, ATF is receiving approximately 72,000 applications each week. This is an increase of 2 to 3 times last year's volume. In order to process this level of increase, ATF has detailed employees from other directorates and divisions, and also increased overtime for NFA employees. However, this is a short-term solution that cannot be sustained. Changes in the technology infrastructure and increases in personnel are necessary to meet the new demand.

The ATF regulates the importation of firearms, ammunition, and other defense articles by issuing import permits. The ATF also regulates the importation and possession of firearms and ammunition by non-immigrant aliens. The ATF maintains close liaison with the Department of State, Department of Defense, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to ensure that the permits issued do not conflict with the foreign policy and national security interests of the United States. During FY 2025, the ATF processed approximately 12,081 permanent import permit applications. The Attorney General has delegated to the ATF the authority to administer the permanent importation provisions of the AECA. Under the AECA, the ATF regulates the permanent importation of firearms, ammunition, and other defense articles into the United States.

The ATF processes applications to import items from domestic businesses, members of the U.S. military returning from abroad with personal firearms, non-immigrant aliens temporarily hunting or attending legal sporting activities in the United States, and U.S. citizens re-establishing residency after living abroad. Through industry outreach and regulation, the ATF provides technical advice to the public regarding import requirements applicable to firearms, ammunition, and implements of war.

2. Firearms Tracing

The ATF's National Tracing Center (NTC) traces firearms used or suspected to have been used during the commissioning of a crime for law enforcement to provide investigative leads. The NTC traces firearms annually for more than 12,000 Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies. Firearms tracing is an exclusive function of the ATF and is critical to law enforcement in their efforts to link suspects to firearms in criminal investigations and to detect illegal firearms traffickers. In FY 2025, 654,879 firearms trace requests were submitted to the NTC. The demand for timely and accurate trace data has continually grown, providing law enforcement agencies the ability to more quickly identify and apprehend the most violent firearms offenders. The NTC also operates a series of programs that relate to and support firearms tracing to include the ATF's eTrace program, Multiple Sales for Handguns Program, FFL Theft Program, Interstate Theft Program, Secondary Market Program, Obliterated Serial Number Program, NTC Connect, and the Out-of-Business Records Program Center.

ATF's eTrace application is a critical investigative tool that empowers law enforcement through timely, actionable criminal intelligence on the sources and trafficking patterns of crime guns. By enabling rapid firearm tracing and data-driven analysis, eTrace helps identify repeat offenders, disrupt illegal gun trafficking networks, and supports targeted enforcement strategies directly contributing to the reduction of violent crime and improved public safety nationwide. Access to eTrace has been authorized for more than 100,050 individual users representing over 10,595 law enforcement agencies throughout the United States and in 52 other countries. Collectively, the Crime Gun Intelligence developed as a result of firearms tracing allows the ATF to accomplish many goals, such as providing the requesting Federal, State local, and Tribal law enforcement agencies leads designed to help link suspects to firearms in criminal investigations; identifying illegal firearms traffickers through recurring patterns and trends indicative of illegal firearms trafficking; and analyzing aggregate trace data, to help communities develop focused strategies and programs that address specific factors that contribute to gun-related crime.

Trace information and analysis is vital to solving violent crime and identifying illegal firearms trafficking trends. The work performed at the NTC is a key element of CGI and is central to the Administration's priorities with regards to combatting gun violence. Tracing capabilities conducted at the NTC has resulted in valuable leads in recent high-profile cases such as the New Orleans Bourbon Street mass shooting on New Year's Day 2025, the September 10, 2025, Charlie Kirk assassination in Orem, Utah, the homicide of MN State Representative in Brooklyn Park, MN on June 14, 2025, and the September 24, 2025, shooting attack on a Dallas, TX ICE detention facility. Equally important, the NTC provides support to ATF's law enforcement partners in countless investigations across the United States every day.

3. NCETR

Detering and preventing the criminal use of explosives and investigating potential cases of arson are two of the core missions of the ATF. The National Center for Explosives Training and Research (NCETR) serves as the Bureau's primary source for research, training, and intelligence in these specialty areas. The ATF is the primary agency responsible for administering and enforcing the regulatory and criminal provisions of the Federal laws pertaining to destructive devices, explosives, and bombs; and it is the only Federal agency with the authority to investigate criminal arson cases. The ATF has extensive expertise in the investigation and forensic analysis of explosives incidents arising from criminal use of explosives or terrorist acts.

NCETR provides basic and advanced explosives training and research that leverages lessons learned and best practices to safeguard the public and reduce deaths and injuries from explosives crimes and accidents and aligns this support with the national Counter-IED (C-IED) effort. At NCETR, the ATF provides specialized training, techniques, and uses advanced technology and procedures to support forensic investigations and explosives enforcement. Additionally, the ATF contributes greatly to the global C-IED efforts through a focus on the interoperability between public safety bomb technicians and explosives specialists with their military Explosives Ordnance Disposal (EOD) colleagues. This is accomplished through a well-established training program focusing on the identification, processing, and disposal of homemade explosives (HME). EOD personnel from all branches of the armed forces attend the NCETR HME course prior to mobilization. In partnership with the Department of the Army, NCETR also leads and coordinates the annual "Raven's Challenge," an interoperability exercise for public safety bomb squads and military EOD personnel at four locations across the country that involves realistic IED incident scenarios and live fire training.

Also located at NCETR is the ATF's Fire Investigation and Arson Enforcement Division (FIAED), which oversees the National Response Team (NRT) Program, Certified Fire Investigator Program, Fire and Arson Investigation Training Programs, and the Arson and Explosives Criminal Investigative Analysis (Profiler) Program. These programs further support the ATF's efforts to identify, target, and dismantle criminal enterprises and other offenders that use fire or explosives in furtherance of violent criminal activity and investigate violators who use fire or explosives to damage or destroy property which affects interstate or foreign commerce. The ATF's NRT is the only group of crime scene investigators and subject matter experts in the world accredited by ISO and ANSI Standard 17020, allowing the NRT to render an opinion as to the origin and cause of a fire or explosion. NCETR is in the process of also accrediting both its CES and CFI programs to both ISO and ANSI standards.

NCETR also has oversight of the ATF's National Canine Division (NCD) located in Front Royal, Virginia. The ATF's canine program is the only canine program in the United States supported by a laboratory and the first Federally accredited explosive detection canine program. The ATF National Forensic Science Laboratories support the ATF NCD in the research and development of explosive and accelerant compounds and compositions for canine training, third party testing, instruction into the properties and chemical breakdown of accelerant and explosives, and support in all forensic related issues. The ATF NCD conducts evaluation and analysis of new and emerging facets within the explosives and accelerant detection canine arena and shares this vital information with its partners in a concerted effort to provide the best tools possible for safety and security in the fight against violent crime and terrorism. The ATF remains at the forefront of combating violent crime through such innovative programs as training explosives detection canines in the recognition of peroxide explosives and the standardized National Odor Recognition Testing.

The Explosives Research and Development Division (ERDD) within the Arson and Explosives Research and Intelligence Division at NCETR, represents a strategic investment in scientific knowledge generation and technology development. This work enables ATF to adapt and respond to the evolving threat of criminal misuse of explosives. By meeting emerging challenges and leveraging future opportunities, ERDB delivers high-quality research and development that directly supports the Nation's counter-IED (C-IED) efforts. Current research partners include the National Counterterrorism Center, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the United States Bomb Technician Association. Overall, NCETR ERDB adds value by improving the safe storage and disposal of explosives and strengthening the investigation and prosecution of explosives-related cases in support of ATF and the broader law enforcement community.

4. USBDC

The United States Bomb Data Center (USBDC) is located at the National Center for Explosives Training and Research (NCETR) in Huntsville, AL. The USBDC is a branch of the Arson & Explosives Research and Intelligence Division (AERID).

In 2004, the Attorney General, acting under the statutory authority of 18 U.S.C. § 846 (b), designated the ATF's Bomb Arson Tracking System (BATS) as the consolidated national repository for information related to arson and the suspected criminal misuse of explosives. The USBDC was then established and given the responsibility for management of BATS.

BATS is a web-based case management system that allows investigators across the country to capture details of bomb and arson cases, including the area of origin or device placement, casualties, financial loss, fire descriptors, collateral crimes, device components, and descriptions and photographs of how the device was constructed and delivered. BATS also allows investigators to build cases in the BATS application while maintaining critical operational security of their information. Images of arson and explosive scenes can be shared through the BATS secure web connection.

The USBDC Arson & Explosive Intelligence Section collects, analyzes, and disseminates timely information and relevant tactical and strategic intelligence within the ATF, and to external Federal, State local, Tribal, military, and international partners. The USBDC provides statistical analysis of current trends and patterns to aid in the detection, deterrence and prevention and prosecutorial support related to arson and the criminal misuse of explosives. The USBDC is available to assist other Federal, State and local law enforcement, and fire service investigators with arson and explosives investigations. The USBDC is staffed with ATF SAs, IRSs, and support personnel who are all experienced in arson and explosives related investigations.

The USBDC also provides explosives tracing services to duly authorized law enforcement agencies across the United States and in many foreign countries. Tracing is the systematic tracking of explosives from manufacturer to purchaser (or possessor) for the purpose of aiding law enforcement officials in identifying suspects involved in criminal violations, establishing stolen status, and proving ownership. The creation of the National Repository has achieved for these industries, as well as law enforcement, the most proficient and productive method for researching the movement of an explosive. Explosives manufacturers, importers, wholesalers, and retail dealers in the United States and foreign countries cooperate in the tracing endeavor by providing, on request, specific information from their records of manufacture, importation, or sale. Because of its licensing authority, the ATF is the only Federal agency with authorized access to these records.

The USBDC is tasked with the documentation and notifications of reported theft and/or losses of explosive materials in the United States. Federal Explosive Licensees (FELs) are required to report thefts or losses of explosives materials to ATF and the USBDC, utilizing ATF Form 5400.5. The USBDC documents those incidents in BATS and notifies the affected Field Divisions and ATF HQ personnel and then assists in those investigations as needed.

The USBDC also includes ATF personnel assigned to FBI's Terrorist Explosive Device Analytical Center (TEDAC) and the Counter Improvised Threat Collaboration Center (C3) in Huntsville, AL. The C3 consists of representatives from multiple US Federal agencies and representatives from our FVEY (Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand) partners to collaborate and share information freely on threats and emerging threats.

5. TEDAC

Jointly, the ATF and the FBI coordinate and manage TEDAC. The mission of TEDAC is to contribute directly to the eradication of the IED threat, through a whole-of-government effort that includes international partners. TEDAC informs its partners who, in turn, attempt to disrupt those individuals and networks responsible for the design, development, purchase, assembly, and deployment of IEDs. This is accomplished through scientific and forensic exploitation of IEDs; developing actionable intelligence; forecasting IED threats; and maintaining a repository of IED material obtained from incidents around the world. The TEDAC combines law enforcement, military, and intelligence assets to classify the operation, bomb components, and deployment of IEDs. These efforts help prevent IED attacks, protect U.S. armed forces, and identify those who manufacture and deploy these devices.

TEDAC's forensic exploitation at the intersection of law enforcement, science and technology, border forces, intelligence, and the military, provides a key perspective from which to research the science and technology of IEDs. The TEDAC research and testing program supports IED detection, countermeasures, and post-blast analysis. TEDAC continues to build depth and breadth within its device collection and develop technical, forensic, and intelligence methods to anticipate new devices and techniques envisioned by adversaries and to better collaborate with its partners.

6. ATF Laboratories

The ATF laboratory system comprises two traditional forensic science laboratories (FSLs) and a fire research laboratory (FRL) that provide direct support to the ATF SAs and other Federal and State law enforcement agencies in the investigation of violent crimes and other potential threats to public safety. The ATF's scientists and engineers play an integral role supporting violent crime investigations, often providing the critical links between the crimes and the suspects or providing a lead to a previously unknown suspect.

All of the ATF's laboratories are accredited by the ANSI National Accreditation Board to the ISO 17025 (2017) standard. In addition, the Forensic Science Laboratory-Washington meets the requirements of the FBI Quality Assurance Standards for Forensic DNA Testing Laboratories. The ATF laboratories support investigations through the scientific analysis of evidence; providing technical support at fire, explosion and shooting scenes; providing training to the ATF's SAs, prosecutors, and State and local law enforcement and forensic scientists in these areas; supporting the prosecution of violent criminals by providing expert testimony; and conducting scientific research to enhance forensic capabilities. FSL and FRL experts support the ATF's National and International Response Teams (NRT and IRT) and provide training and support to the ATF's explosives and accelerant detection canine programs, HME courses, the National Firearms Examiners Academy, fire debris analysis courses, as well as other specialized areas of instruction.

The FSLs maintain a unique expertise in areas supporting criminal investigations involving firearms, explosives, and suspected arson. The laboratories' Forensic Chemists provide chemical and physical analyses of bombs, improvised device components, fire debris, and trace evidence. The ATF laboratories have developed unsurpassed expertise in the specialized area of touch DNA analysis, in which low levels of DNA can be recovered from firearms, fired cartridge cases, bombs, and other tools of violent criminals. The ATF's capabilities in latent print examination and tool mark analysis focus on providing links between the evidence recovered from violent crimes and the perpetrators of the acts. The ATF's laboratories are global leaders in the application of forensic science to the types of evidence encountered in violent crimes investigated by the ATF.

The Fire Research Laboratory is staffed with fire protection engineers, mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, and technicians, and is the only laboratory of its kind in the world dedicated to the specific needs of the criminal fire investigation community. It provides the necessary facilities, equipment, and staff to support complex criminal fire investigation issues. Forensic examinations include fire scene reconstructions, flashover determination, validation of fire pattern indicators, impacts of accelerants on fire growth and spread, ignition studies and electrical fire cause analysis.

In FY 2025, the ATF's laboratories accomplished approximately the following:

- Received 1,522 requests for analysis and testing.
- Completed analysis on 1,065 forensic cases (FSL).
- Performed 163 laboratory case testing experiments (FRL).
- Performed 400 laboratory research testing experiments (FRL).
    - Provided 41 days of expert testimony in the courts.
    - Worked 220 days at crime scenes.

Provided 323 days of training for Federal, State and local investigators and examiners.

7. Financial Investigations

The Financial Investigative Services Division (FISD) supports criminal financial investigations. ATF's forensic auditors are experts in the field of forensic accounting and financial investigations. They conduct comprehensive financial analyses that develop financial criminal charges supporting ATF Special Agents (SA).

In addition to identifying financial criminal charges, ATF's forensic auditors assist in developing investigative leads, identifying co-conspirators, quantifying purchases, sales data, expenses and profits related to criminal investigations. These cases include arson-for-profit, murder-for-hire, firearms trafficking, firearms associated narcotics trafficking cases, contraband cigarette trafficking, the use of explosives and bombings in the furtherance of financial frauds, counterterrorism, threats to public safety, gangs, organized criminal enterprises, and multi-jurisdictional investigations involving domestic and international money laundering.

ATF's forensic auditors directly support complex investigations of criminal organizations, individual persons, businesses, not-for-profit entities, and non-governmental organizations. Forensic auditors isolate potential money laundering schemes, identify assets for forfeiture, and support restitution.

Forensic auditors lead the Prevent All Cigarette Trafficking (PACT) Act enforcement by performing meticulous reviews of sales, purchases, and transactions that support potential tax liabilities for various entities transacting in tobacco and Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), commonly referred to as vapes. ATF's forensic auditors also assist other directorates and offices within the Bureau through office reviews, special projects, regulatory inspections, and other special requests supporting detailed data analysis and audit functions.

8. Collaboration and Partnerships

The ATF is engaged in many cooperative agreements, collaborations, and partnerships with other Federal agencies, private industry, and in the international arena. For example, the ATF is fully engaged with and provides support to Homeland Security Task Forces (HSTFs) with the objective to end the presence of criminal cartels, foreign gangs, and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) throughout the United States. ATF supports the HSTFs by providing investigative and intelligence support in over 58 cities within the United States and Puerto Rico as well as a robust presence at the HSTF National Coordination Center and an active participant in the Attorney General's Consolidated Priority Organized Target (CPOT) working group. Additionally, ATF supports government anti-terrorism efforts, especially the FBI-led Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs). The ATF participates in JTTFs and assigns one ATF special agent to the National JTTF at the National Counterterrorism Center. In working with the JTTF, the ATF plays an important part in terrorism cases that involve firearms, bombs, and illegal explosive possession.

The ATF furthers fulfillment of its mission by participating in other multiagency efforts such as High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas and High Intensity Financial Crime Areas. Through these partnerships, the ATF plays a major role in the prevention and investigation of violent firearms crimes involving criminal organizations and gangs, and provides direct investigative expertise to criminal explosives, arson incidents, and threats. These collaborative efforts also make the ATF a key component in combating organized crime that threatens U.S. national and economic security.

At the request of the Department of State, the ATF serves as an advocate for U.S. firearm policy in international fora such as the United Nations (U.N.) and the Organization of American States (OAS). The ATF ensures that international firearms agreements in which the United States participates are consistent with U.S. laws, regulations, policies, and practices. The U.N. Program of Action, the OAS Convention on Firearms, and the International Tracing Instrument are just a few of the agreements through which the ATF protects the policies of the United States in international settings.

The ATF's International Affairs Division (IAD) is at the forefront in the ATF's mission of combating violent crime and other threats to public safety. The IAD's primary mission is to protect the public against crimes of violence by conducting and coordinating investigations involving transnational criminal organizations. The IAD's international offices are strategically positioned to extend the ATF's reach beyond U.S. borders and enable the ATF to combat violent crime before it reaches the United States. The IAD serves to further the ATF's mission and protect U.S. policies and interests by focusing personnel and resources primarily in the Western Hemisphere. The ATF currently has offices in Mexico, El Salvador, Canada, the Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Colombia, and Jamaica. Additionally, the ATF has representation at Europol in the Netherlands.

Through partnerships with such agencies as the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, and the Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development (OPDAT), the ATF's IAD can provide subject matter expertise , specialized training, and facilitate information sharing with foreign partners. The ATF's IAD also partners with the Department's International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) to provide expert and specialized training to participating countries throughout the world. The IAD's participation in the ILEA program allows the ATF to train foreign law enforcement in many of the ATF's areas of responsibility such as post-blast investigations, arson investigations and fire science, firearms and explosives identification techniques, and international firearms trafficking investigation techniques. This specialized training helps better facilitate information sharing and assists foreign law enforcement in developing sound investigative skills and programs.

9. Emergency Support Function-13

Ensuring a safe and secure environment for lifesaving and life-sustaining response operations during critical incidents and disasters is an essential requirement to protect the American people, their property, and communities within affected incident areas. ATF is the Department's lead agency to manage and coordinate the federal law enforcement support of Emergency Support Function (ESF) #13 – Public Safety & Security; one of 15 ESFs established by the National Response Framework (NRF). ATF coordinates with over 40 support organizations across the entire Federal law enforcement community to prepare for and deliver on-scene security, protection, and law enforcement; prior to, during, and in the aftermath of catastrophic disasters or terrorist attacks.

Through ESF #13, Federal law enforcement resources are rapidly mobilized, deployed, assigned, and integrated into the whole-of-government response; focused on providing Federal support and/or direct assistance to Federal, State, local, Tribal, territorial, and insular area (FSLTTI) authorities overwhelmed by a critical incident. ESF #13 domestic incident response operations require a collaborative task force and unified effort among partner law enforcement agencies to restore critical law enforcement, public safety, and security services. Achieving this objective supports stabilization of community lifelines and enables a rapid transition to recovery support functions. To accomplish this mission, ATF maintains a robust national and regional capability to perform essential functions of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and fulfill responsibilities, which include:

- Conduct ESF-13 law enforcement planning for the 50 states, District of Columbia, five territories, and Federally recognized tribes.
- Maintain liaison and build relationships with Federal, State, territorial, local, and Tribal law enforcement agencies, FEMA, emergency operations centers, and other first responders in all 10 FEMA regions.
- Conduct Federal ESF #13 steady-state operations and integrated preparedness activities at the national and regional levels; to include: planning, organizing, equipping, training, and exercises.
- Maintain situational awareness and logistic capability and capacity to mobilize, deploy, and equip Federal law enforcement personnel and resources to support domestic incident response operations within 72 hours of activation.
- Coordinate with FSLTTI area authorities to identify capability gaps and request Federal law enforcement resources for domestic incident response.
- Maintain robust situational awareness to ensure all personnel are properly informed of ESF-13 status and the condition of public safety and security in the disaster area.

The ATF supports operational travel of ESF-13 headquarters and regional staff for mandated activities throughout the year. Since 2012, ESF-13 has participated in 133 national activations, deployed over 9,900 personnel, and provided over $146.0 million in mission assignment funding. ESF-13 has participated in approximately 820 Federal and State exercises and approximately 1,720 Federal and State trainings. In the 10 FEMA regions, ESF-13 has participated in approximately 261 Regional Interagency Steering Committee meetings. ESF-13 personnel have been involved in 8,681 Federal, State, territorial, and Tribal planning and liaison meetings.

10. Emerging Threats Center (ETC)

The ETC is staffed with three (3) Special Agents, nine (9) Intelligence Research Specialists, one (1) Industry Operations Intelligence Specialist (IOIS), one (1) Program Analyst, and four (4) Cyber Intelligence Analysts (contractors). It conducts and coordinates multi-jurisdictional operations and provides investigative direction to disrupt and dismantle online criminal activity within the ATF's enforcement and regulatory jurisdiction. The ETC uses investigative and analytic techniques to identify domestic and international offenders and the associations among them.

The ATF established the ETC to track illegal online firearms trafficking and to provide actionable intelligence to agents in the field related to FFL burglaries, arson, firearms trafficking and violent crime. The ETC has identified several significant traffickers operating over the internet; its work has led to prosecutions against individuals and groups using the dark web to traffic guns to criminals or attempting to buy firearms illegally online. The ETC also investigates buyers and sellers who use the internet to facilitate illegal firearms transactions, both the surface web and the dark web.

Research on internet-facilitated firearm transactions indicate:

- The relative anonymity of the internet makes it an ideal means for prohibited individuals to obtain illegal firearms.
- The more anonymity employed by a firearms purchaser, the greater the likelihood that the transaction violates Federal law.
- Firearm transactions that occur on the dark web are more likely to be completed in person, by mail, or by common carrier, rather than through an FFL.

The ETC also provides comprehensive investigative and intelligence support to the ATF's field divisions on matters relating to internet-based criminal activity within ATF's jurisdiction. Support includes technical online investigative tasks and legal support for internet-related warrants and subpoenas. The ETC also serves as the single deconfliction point for online investigations both internally within the ATF and externally with other agencies.

V. Program Increases by Item

Item Name: **NIBIN and Crime Gun Intelligence (CGI)**

Budget Decision Unit(s): Law Enforcement Operations
Investigative Support Services

Organizational Program: National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN)

Program Increase: Positions _0_ Agt/Atty _0__ FTE _0_ Dollars $7,799,000

Description of Item

ATF is requesting $7.8 million and 0 positions to strengthen core capabilities, modernize infrastructure, and expand support to Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement partners.

CGI and NIBIN are cornerstone components of the Department's and the Administration's strategy to reduce violent firearm crime. These programs enable ATF and its law enforcement partners to target the most violent offenders, link shooting incidents across jurisdictions, and generate actionable intelligence through ballistic imaging and data analysis. This request consists of the following:

- ***NIBIN Program Infrastructure and NNCTC Support*** – ATF requests $7.49 million to enhance and support the NIBIN Infrastructure through refresh of ballistic imaging equipment reaching the end of operational capabilities, support for the NIBIN base infrastructure including the NIBIN network and enhance other operations such as the NIBIN National Correlation and Training Centers (NNCTCs) which provides technical assistance to ATF's law enforcement partner agencies, and to ensure 24 to 48 hour investigative lead turnaround across its 295 NNCTC-supported NIBIN partner sites.
- ***CGI/NESS Enhancements*** – ATF requests $0.3 million to improve the CGI/NIBIN Enforcement Support System (NESS). This initiative will support enhancements tied to DOJ's cybersecurity requirements for NESS, which is a critical tool supporting ATF's broader crime gun intelligence mission.

Justification

NIBIN is the only nationwide, automated ballistic imaging network in the United States. NIBIN enables law enforcement agencies to compare ballistic evidence across jurisdictional boundaries and generate investigative leads that would not be identified through traditional investigative methods.

NIBIN links:

- Ballistics evidence from multiple crime scenes together that were committed with the same firearm, and
- Ballistic evidence from a crime scene to a recovered firearm.

The ATF's CGI strategy is a key foundation for law enforcement partners at all levels to tackle gun violence. Combined, these initiatives support the overall mission to reduce firearms violence through aggressive targeting, investigation, and prosecution of shooters and their sources of crime guns.

Initiative #1: NIBIN

ATF has two NNCTC sites which are located in Huntsville, AL and Wichita, KS. The NNCTC personnel conduct remote correlation comparisons, which is the manual process of comparing high resolution images of ballistic evidence to determine matches (leads) versus non-matches (no leads). Leads represent an unconfirmed, potential association between two or more pieces of ballistic evidence. The results are disseminated within 24 to 48 hours to ATF and its law enforcement partners. These NIBIN leads provide investigators relevant and valuable information to focus enforcement resources on investigations that will have the most significant impact on violent firearm crimes in communities nationwide.

The NNCTC currently has the capacity to process more than 2,000 correlation reviews per day, and currently services 295 NIBIN sites. The NIBIN leads have been referred to approximately 6,500 police departments which contribute evidence to these sites. Overall, there are 425 NIBIN partner sites across the United States with more sites pending installation. Continued investment in the NIBIN program is critical to keep up with the increased demand for timely investigative leads to support our Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial partners. The current funding allows the NNCTC to provide support for 295 out of the 425 NIBIN sites. ATF is requesting funding for additional contractor services to enable the NNCTC to provide support for additional NIBIN partner sites. ATF has committed to providing correlation review service for all sites on the NIBIN network requesting the service. The increasing number of NIBIN partner sites makes the addition of contract support, NIBIN Infrastructure and refresh of end-of-life ballistic imaging equipment critical to maintaining the NIBIN program and enable NIBIN to implement an annualized 7-year equipment refresh. This funding would allow ATF to replace 34 ballistic imaging machines annually. This will allow ATF to continue to provide timely law enforcement intelligence to ATF and its partners in combatting violent crime.

The table below demonstrates the continual need for resources to support NIBIN from FY 2019 to the present day, as well as the success of the NIBIN Program and the NNCTC itself.

NIBIN Statistics

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026 through 12/31/2026
Partner Sites/1	211	235	250	275	315	376	418	425
Acquisitions/2	384,247	472,952	575,727	631,533	661,641	658,731	623,142	138,351
Leads/3	67,639	104,206	146,617	189,197	221,354	217,474	193,269	37,973

1. The number of sites includes all NIBIN Acquisition Sites, including ATF Transportable and Mobile Units as of September 2025.
2. Acquisitions represent the digital imaging of various firearm-related markings present on cartridge casings entered into NIBIN.
3. Leads represent an unconfirmed, potential association between two or more pieces of firearm ballistic evidence based on a correlation review of the digital images in the NIBIN database by either a firearms examiner or a trained NIBIN technician. They are intended to provide a lead for investigative purposes.

Initiative #2: CGI/NESS

ATF's NESS tool provides law enforcement personnel nationwide access to their agency's NIBIN leads and other sources of Crime Gun Intelligence in a single web-based platform. Currently, over 550 Federal, State, local, Tribal and territorial law partner agencies have direct access to NESS.

ATF requests $0.3 million to improve the CGI/NIBIN Enforcement Support System (NESS). This initiative will support enhancements tied to DOJ's cybersecurity requirements. Maintaining documentation, tracking systems updates, and fixes are important to meet DOJ and Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA) Cybersecurity Standard requirements. For example, NESS resources must remediate findings of monthly Web Application and Vulnerability Scans, complete Splunk implementation, conduct Penetration testing exercises, and other items. When a risk exists, DOJ tracks remediation via Plan of Action and Milestone (POA&M). One existing POA&M is to upgrade to supported versions of NESS's front end application framework, Angular, with planned deployment in the NESS environment in FY27. Development resources are often diverted from adding operational value to mitigating vulnerabilities and risks. This funding would be used to support cybersecurity projects to allow other resources to plan and execute value added functionality more effectively instead of diverting resources for maintenance and break fixes. NESS provides law enforcement personnel with easily accessible data and insight into shooting events, firearms tracking, and patterns of firearm violence. This system helps focus law enforcement resources for optimal impact in combatting firearm related violent crime.

NESS automatically integrates investigative data from select Federal, State, local, Tribal and territorial law enforcement record management systems. Automating this data entry process allows law enforcement personnel to analyze and investigate associated shooting events in a more efficient manner by focusing resources for the greatest impact on violent crime. As of December 2025, the NESS team has automated the intake of investigative data such as suspects and locations from 44 law enforcement agencies. Analysis has shown that associated development costs are significantly less than the personnel cost to enter the data manually.

As ATF maintains critical and sensitive NIBIN and case data, cybersecurity will remain a priority. Mitigating cyber threats in an ever-evolving technical landscape requires additional development and funding. This will, in turn, help ATF provide law enforcement with streamlined access to both crucial CGI data systems - NESS and eTrace. The effort includes leveraging the ATF's NIBIN and NESS data to ultimately assist field users in identifying patterns of violence.
NIBIN data shows that firearm violence often spans law enforcement jurisdictional boundaries. Collective Data Sharing (CDS) within NESS allows law enforcement agencies to share their NIBIN leads with one another.

Impact on Performance

In FY 2027, the ATF plans to utilize the requested budget increase to combat violent firearm crime consistent with the Administration's priorities and the ATF's strategic goals.

- The increased capacity for correlation reviews will allow the ATF to service additional NIBIN sites, while maintaining the 24 to 48-hour turn-around time. These NIBIN leads enable law enforcement to effectively investigate shooting cases NIBIN has identified as related.

- Additional resources will enable ATF to refresh end of life ballistic imaging equipment and establish a systematic method for annual life-cycle-replacement for this equipment. This funding would allow ATF to replace 34 ballistic imaging machines annually.

- Enhance cybersecurity to protect sensitive investigative data.

Collectively, these enhancements will directly support ATFs mission to reduce violent crime, modernize investigative capabilities, and support partner agencies nationwide in their enforcement efforts.

Funding

1. Base Funding

FY 2025 Enacted				FY 2026 Enacted				FY 2027 Current Services			
Pos	Agt/ Atty	FTE	Amount ($000)	Pos	Agt/ Atty	FTE	Amount ($000)	Pos	Agt/ Atty	FTE	Amount ($000)
51	17	51	66,312	51	17	51	66,312	51	17	51	74,111

2. Personnel Increase Cost Summary

Type of Position/Series	FY 2027 Request ($000)	Positions Requested	Full Year Modular Cost per Position ($000)	Annualizations ($000)			
				1st Year	2nd Year	FY 2028 (net change from 2027)	FY 2029 (net change from 2028)
N/A							
Total Personnel							

3. Non-Personnel Increase/Reduction Cost Summary

Non-Personnel Item	FY 2027 Request ($000)	Unit Cost ($000)	Quantity	Annualizations ($000)	
				FY 2028 (net change from 2027)	FY 2029 (net change from 2028)
NIBIN Program Infrastructure and NNCTC Support	7,499	7,499	1	296	308
CGI/NIBIN Enforcement Support System (NESS)	300	300	1	12	13
Total Non-Personnel	**7,799**			**308**	**321**

4. Justification for Non-Personnel Annualizations

N/A

5. **Total Request for this Item**

Category	Positions			Amount Requested ($000)			Annualizations ($000)	
	Count	Agt/ Atty	FTE	Personnel	Non-Personnel	Total	FY 2028 (net change from 2027)	FY 2029 (net change from 2028)
Current Services	51	17	51	48,172	25,938	74,111	308	321
Increases	0	0	0	0	7,799	7,799	0	0
Grand Total	**51**	**17**	**51**	**48,172**	**33,737**	**81,910**	**308**	**321**

6. **Affected Crosscuts:** National Security, Violent Crime, Mass Violence, Gun Safety

Item Name:	**Combating Gun Violence – Immigration Enforcement Firearms Trafficking Involving Cartels and Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs)**
Budget Decision Unit(s):	Law Enforcement Operations Investigative Support Services
Organizational Program:	Firearms Criminal Possession and Use Illegal Firearms Trafficking

Program Increase: Positions 86 Agt/Atty 65 FTE 43 Dollars $25,836,000

Description of Item

ATF is requesting a total of $25.8 million and 86 positions (60 agents, 5 attorneys, and 21 Technical Professional Administrative (TPA's) for regional violent crime and trafficking initiatives in furtherance of the policies set forth in Executive Order 14159. ATF's prioritization of Immigration Enforcement initiatives and its mission to combat firearms trafficking involving Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) is exemplified in the thirteen Firearms Trafficking Task Force (FTTFs) locations along the southwest border, where traffickers frequently coordinate the smuggling of firearms to Mexico and conduct domestic trafficking activities. Two of the FTTFs are located in Houston, Texas. The other eleven are located in Dallas, McAllen, Laredo, El Paso, and San Antonio, Texas; Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona; Albuquerque, New Mexico; El Centro, Glendale, and San Diego, California. The National Firearms Trafficking Center (NFTC) is comprised of ATF Office of Intelligence Operations investigative experts who work in unison with the FTTFs and Headquarters-level partners to provide operational and intelligence coordination, assets, and resources for domestic and international firearms trafficking investigations. Needed are five Field Division Attorneys to provide additional legal guidance and recommendations for the ATF's firearms trafficking investigations and industry operations inspections.

The NFTC dedicates the majority of its resources to combating Mexican Cartel FTOs by disrupting the flow of illegal firearms trafficked to the Southern Border. The NFTC also supports Immigration Enforcement initiatives when they intersect with firearms trafficking investigations. Support to Field Operations is provided through three core subject-matter expert disciplines: NFTC Special Agents, Industry Operations Investigators, and Intelligence Research Specialists. Given the volume of military-style weapons moving toward the Southern Border, the NFTC is experiencing a significant increase in requests for assistance from ATF Field Divisions and Federal partners nationwide.

The requested program increase for this initiative allows ATF to maximize the use of crime gun intelligence, particularly in identifying firearms traffickers supporting and arming Mexican Cartel FTOs. This initiative expands the reach, staffing, and support of ATF criminal enforcement and Operation Southbound offices by further embedding special agents and supporting cadre with local police departments and fusion centers to pursue leads on firearms trafficking networks supplying the TCOs/FTOs. Firearm trafficking networks routinely transport firearms across jurisdictional, State, and national boundaries, making ATF's Federal statutory authorities and expertise critical to effective investigation, disruption, and prosecution. Because these investigations are highly resource intensive, the ATF must expand its Special Agent and professional support cadre to effectively accommodate the increased volume and quality of its trafficking investigations. Expanding operational support to local law enforcement partners in the investigation and prevention of violent firearm offenses also requires additional ATF resources.

Justification

Firearm violence affects every community in the United States, ATF's highest priority is to enhance public safety by reducing that violence. ATF's criminal enforcement programs focus on disrupting the cycle of firearm violence by identifying and arresting the trigger-pullers who terrorize communities and by dismantling the firearm trafficking organizations that supply crime guns. This initiative is the cornerstone of the Department's efforts to address the epidemic of gun violence witnessed daily in the United States. The positions and funding in this request will directly support ATF's national and regional violent crime and trafficking initiatives. These initiatives leverage ATF's Frontline Business Model, which is designed to allocate ATF's investigative and regulatory resources to maximize support for the Administration's whole-of-government approach to firearms trafficking and violence.

Intelligence shows that cartels are employing their own armorers to build privately made firearms (PMFs), otherwise known as "ghost guns", as well as converting semi-automatic rifles into machineguns through the alteration of internal rifle components. Cartels are sourcing pistol-based machinegun conversion devices (MCDs) from China, which then flow into the United States, posing a risk to law enforcement and citizens. The manufacture of PMFs, 3D-printed firearms, machinegun conversion devices (MCDs), and other components has increased in popularity, with designs that are very complex and require the expertise of ATF Firearms Enforcement Officers to identify the manufacturing techniques and classify the firearms according to current law. Many of the PMFs are found disassembled to avoid detection, which requires trained firearm experts to identify and classify these items for criminal prosecution.

TCOs, including Mexican Cartels and other FTOs, pose a significant threat to the safety and stability of the United States. ATF seeks to expand our investigative footprint in combatting TCOs and FTOs. The scale, sophistication, and cross-border reach of TCOs and FTOs require enhanced investigative and legal capacity. Additional ATF agents and five dedicated division-based attorneys are necessary to effectively disrupt and dismantle these networks. TCO and FTO cases often involve multi-jurisdictional operations, international coordination, complex money laundering and financial transactions, and the use of emerging technologies (e.g., encrypted communications, cryptocurrency). These factors significantly increase investigative time and resource demands. TCOs and FTOs are heavily involved in firearms trafficking, narcotics trafficking, and violent crime. ATF agents are critical in the utilization of CGI principles, such as tracing crime guns, identifying trafficking patterns, NIBIN and linking criminal enterprise networks, both domestically and transnationally. Effective multi-jurisdictional and complex criminal investigations require significant human capital through our investigative processes, such as undercover operations, surveillance, intelligence analysis, and effective coordination with federal, state, local, and international partners. Additional ATF legal resources, such as our embedded division counsels, enable agents to have a direct legal resource, in addition to the U.S. Attorney's Office, to ensure compliance with department and bureau policy, leading to timely legal review, investigative decisions, and support to our prosecutions. These additional personnel are needed to effectively manage partnerships with agencies such as other department components, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and foreign law enforcement counterparts. Additional ATF staff of agents and attorneys will improve our ability to identify, seize, and forfeit illicit assets, weakening criminal enterprises of TCOs and FTOs and driving our impactful cases to reduce transnational crime involving gun violence and trafficking, drug trafficking, and organized crime that directly impacts our U.S. communities.

These groups exploit vulnerabilities in border security and immigration systems while fueling violence through the trafficking of firearms and narcotics. The cartels' access to U.S.-sourced firearms enables them to exert territorial control, destabilize government at all levels, and violently expand their influence, creating ripple effects that directly impact American communities. At the same time, FTOs and cartels leverage illegal immigration networks to move illicit actors and generate billions in revenue, exploiting immigration channels as both a profit stream and a pathway for potential infiltration. The convergence of firearms trafficking and illegal immigration has the potential to accelerate regional instability, especially along the Southern border, strains U.S. law enforcement and intelligence resources, and creates opportunities for adversaries to embed within migration flows. Collectively, these dynamics erode border security, undermine the rule of law, and elevate risks to national security and public safety. Addressing these threats requires ATF and its partners to remain vigilant, coordinated, and proactive in disrupting these networks.

Impact on Performance

ATF makes communities safer by identifying, targeting, disrupting, and dismantling criminal organizations that utilize firearms, arson, explosives, and alcohol or tobacco diversion in furtherance of violent criminal activity. The funding requested for "national and regional violent crime and trafficking initiatives" will expand ATF's capabilities to support law enforcement in communities experiencing the highest rates of persistent firearms violence in accordance with Administration priorities. Additional special agents, intelligence specialists and analysts, and other professional staff will enhance ATF's ability to better identify, disrupt, and dismantle firearms trafficking networks supplying firearms to FTOs and TCOs.

Funding

1. **Base Funding**

FY 2025 Enacted				FY 2026 Enacted				FY 2027 Current Services			
Pos	**Agt/ Atty**	**FTE**	**Amount ($000)**	**Pos**	**Agt/ Atty**	**FTE**	**Amount ($000)**	**Pos**	**Agt/ Atty**	**FTE**	**Amount ($000)**
2,272	1,681	2,255	515,735	2,272	1,681	2,255	515,735	2,358	1,746	2,298	541,571

2. **Personnel Increase Cost Summary**

Type of Position/Series	FY 2027 Request ($000)	Positions Requested	Full Year Modular Cost per Position ($000)	Annualizations ($000)			
				1st Year	2nd Year	FY 2028 (net change from 2027)	FY 2029 (net change from 2028)
Criminal Investigative (1811)	22,958	60	505	383	65	3,906	9,498
Human Resources (200-299)	305	3	174	102	98	294	207
Financial (500-599)	305	3	174	102	98	294	207
Attorney (905)	742	5	261	148	137	686	158
Information Technology (2210)	610	6	174	102	98	588	414
Intelligence Analysts (132)	814	8	174	102	98	784	552
Security Specialist (080)	102	1	174	102	98	98	69
Total Personnel	**25,836**	**86**				**6,650**	**11,105**

3. **Non-Personnel Increase/Reduction Cost Summary**

Non-Personnel Item	FY 2027 Request ($000)	Unit Cost ($000)	Quantity	Annualizations ($000)	
				FY 2028 (net change from 2027)	FY 2029 (net change from 2028)
N/A		0	0	0	0
Total Non-Personnel	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

4. **Justification for Non-Personnel Annualizations**
N/A

5. **Total Request for this Item**

Category	Positions			Amount Requested ($000)			Annualizations ($000)	
	Count	Agt/ Atty	FTE	Personnel	Non-Personnel	Total	FY 2028 (net change from 2027)	FY 2029 (net change from 2028)
Current Services	2,358	1,746	2,298	352,021	189,550	541,571	6,650	11,105
Increases	86	65	43	25,836	0	25,836	0	0
Grand Total	**2,444**	**1,811**	**2,341**	**377,857**	**189,550**	**567,407**	**6,650**	**11,105**

6. **Affected Crosscuts:** National Security, Immigration Enforcement Actions, Violent Crime, Gun Safety, Transnational Organized Crime & Mass Violence