



# ATF News

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives  
Dallas Field Division

CONTACT: S.A. Tom Crowley  
Special Agent, PIO  
(469) 227-4318 (office)  
(214) 435-5226 (cell)

For Immediate Release  
February 28, 2007

## **ATF ENTERS INVESTIGATION INTO CHURCH FIRE IN TEXAS**

DALLAS -- The National Response Team from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) along with ATF special agents from Lubbock have entered the investigation of a large fire that occurred Feb. 26 at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Amarillo.

Ken Chisholm, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of ATF's Dallas Field Division, said the church was destroyed with an estimated loss of approximately \$5-\$6 million. "ATF is assisting the Amarillo Fire Marshal's Office in this joint investigation," Chisholm said. "The ATF NRT is being brought in to assist in the investigation because of the difficulties presented when investigating a fire of this size."

In 1978, ATF developed the NRT to assist federal, state and local investigators in meeting the challenges faced at the scenes of significant arson and explosives incidents. The NRT consists of four teams organized geographically to cover the United States. Each team can respond within 24 hours to assist state and local law enforcement/fire service personnel in onsite investigations.

In addition to investigating hundreds of large fire scenes, the NRT has also been activated to scenes such as the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the Oklahoma City Federal Building bombing and the 9/11 Pentagon crash site, as well as explosions at explosives and ammunition manufacturing plants, legal fireworks factories and illegal explosive device manufacturing operations.

The teams are each composed of veteran special agents who have post-blast and fire origin-and-cause expertise; forensic chemists; explosives enforcement officers; fire protection engineers; accelerant detection canines; explosives detection canines; intelligence support, computer forensic support and audit support. The teams work alongside state and local officers in reconstructing the scene, identifying the seat of the blast or origin of the fire, conducting interviews, and sifting through debris to obtain evidence related to the bombing/arson. Further complementing the team's efforts are technical, legal and intelligence advisers.

--more--

Page 2

Moreover, a fleet of fully equipped response vehicles strategically located throughout the United States is available to provide logistical support.

The NRT arrived on the scene today. This is the NRT's ninth activation for fiscal year 2007 and the 627th activation since the inception of the program in 1978.

ATF is the federal agency with jurisdiction for investigating fires and crimes of arson. More information on ATF can be found at [www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov).

#####