

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Performance measures, GPRA, Non-entity assets, penetration testing - the lexicon of terms and concepts associated with our systems of accountability create a challenge for many of us to master. This report of our Fiscal Year 1997 performance is aimed at cutting through the jargon to give you an understandable picture of ATF's accomplishments and use of resources. The foremost asset in our year long pursuit of quality work has been the coalition of financial management professionals and program personnel. The presentations here are the result of an ongoing partnership with the Department of the Treasury and the Inspector General's office. Joining the team this year are independent public accountants, Price Waterhouse.



I am pleased to report that the substantial efforts of the professionals at ATF have produced an unqualified opinion for the third year in a row. Our focus this year has been to build on a system of timely, accurate and meaningful financial information that incorporated performance measures into budget and operational plans. The difficult task of reporting our work in terms of meaningful outcomes has been rewarded through the recognition of appropriation and budget officials.

The cumulative effect and purpose of this thorough oversight and reporting is not to rest on our accomplishments, but to move even more aggressively toward systems that will give very timely information on costs and performance. The installation of new systems and the training of personnel to accomplish these goals are massive. The potential rewards are equally enormous.

You will read many times between now and the year 2000 how organizations are preparing to meet the challenges of the new millennium. ATF hasn't been able to wait for this moment in time to meet our goals. The expectation to be 'better than the rest' has been our ongoing credo. Our resilient and motivated personnel are resolved to work creatively to make the approaching year 2000 a seamless transition to the next millennium.

Providing leadership and resources to our enforcement organization is foremost on our agenda. The coming years will see ATF stepping out as one of the first Treasury Bureaus to "pilot" a new integrated personnel system, implement cost accounting concepts and generate secure electronic commerce reporting and information systems. This report of our FY 1997 performance provides a sound and substantial foundation to meet not only our plans and goals but also the expectations of the public that we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "William F. Cole". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.