

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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The year 1997 marked the 25th anniversary of ATF's designation as a distinct Bureau in the Department of Treasury. Although our mission actually spans two centuries, this milestone provided an opportunity to reflect with pride on the tremendous achievement we have made as a Bureau through the dedication, courage, and sacrifice of our people. Since 1972, new responsibilities and the demands on ATF have increased dramatically while our size has not. Through the innovative and collaborative spirit of the women and men of ATF, we have been able to keep pace. Just this year, for example, Harvard University selected our Disarming the Criminal strategic planning initiative as a finalist for its Innovations in American Government Awards Program. Also, ATF once again received the highest rating on our financial audit by the Department of the Treasury.



As we move into the next chapter of our history, we are better positioned to meet the challenges before us. We are now approaching enforcement of the Federal alcohol, tobacco, firearms, explosives, and arson laws from a more unified perspective. Two organizational changes began this year to provide a structure that better facilitates the concentration of all of our assets toward achieving Bureau-wide strategic goals driven by our vision for a sound and safer America. The changes involve structuring our Headquarters around program areas, rather than the historic regulatory and criminal division. Likewise, we are streamlining and consolidating our field structure and processes.

One purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive description of our plans and accomplishments. This year we continued to capitalize on partnerships that will allow us to deliver even greater service to the American public. A focus of these partnerships has been the development of technology that increases our expertise, improves our response capability, and maximizes our ability to train State and local personnel in the areas of alcohol, tobacco, firearms, explosives, and arson. For example, some of the most talented and experienced representatives from the fire services and science community and the University of Maryland joined with ATF to design a state-of-the-art Fire Research and Education Center that will be a powerful tool in our fight against arson. Moreover, a Memorandum of Agreement between ATF, the U.S. Fire Administration, the National Fire Protection Association, and the American Re-Insurance Company will result in a first-of-its-kind CD-ROM package that provides arson training through photo virtual reality. We have also implemented the first phase of Access 2000, a partnership between ATF and firearms manufacturers that utilizes specially designed software to quickly exchange lawful and critical information needed to trace crime guns. These are but a few of the exciting, productive strides we have made in leveraging talents, resources, and technology to better fulfill all aspects of our mission.

A second and equally important purpose of this report is to demonstrate our careful handling of the funds and other resources entrusted to us. Therefore, it is with equal pride that I can report that the evaluation of our management systems for FY 1997, required by the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act of 1982, demonstrates compliance with that Act. The evaluation further disclosed no material non-conformances with ATF's programs or administrative activities or with government-wide requirements in ATF's financial management systems. Finally, the Bureau is in compliance with the requirements of the Federal Financial Management Improvement Act of 1996. Specifically, ATF has implemented and maintained financial systems that comply with Federal financial management systems' requirements, applicable Federal accounting standards, and the United States Government Standard General Ledger at the transaction level.

In closing, anyone reading this report can appreciate that the men and women of ATF greatly value our role as public servants and are dedicated to continually assessing and implementing policies and programs that will most effectively protect the public, reduce violent crime, and collect the revenue.

*John W. Magaw*