

The Active ATF Kansas City Field Division

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Kansas City Field Division's area of enforcement and responsibility includes the states of Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska. With barely more than 100 ATF special agents and 40 industry operations investigators (IOI) covering more than 285,675 square miles, the Division faces many daily challenges, including overseeing the regulation of an area with the highest number of gun dealers.

ATF conducts criminal enforcement over a wide variety of jurisdictions. Lately, ATF special agents in the Kansas City Field Division experienced one the most active months in recent memory. Two mass shootings (one resulting in a manhunt), a tragic residential fire, a church fire, and a large-scale multi-agency cigarette trafficking takedown.

Feb. 7: The ATF Kansas City Field Division was contacted by the Missouri State Fire Marshal's Office for assistance in investigating the origin and cause of an early morning fire that destroyed and partially collapsed an apartment building in Raytown, Mo., (a suburb of Kansas City, Mo.). A 4-year-old boy was killed in the fire while his grandmother died of her injuries two days later. The boy's 18-month-old brother was injured, but survived. The ATF National Response Team (NRT) was activated and investigated the scene for more than a one week determining the fire started in a trash can in a lower level laundry room. The exact cause of the fire was unknown.

Feb. 26: ATF responded to a mass shooting in Hesston, Kan. Cedric Ford shot 17 people (three fatally) before being shot and killed by law enforcement. There were four separate crime scenes from this incident. Hesston, a town of only 3,000 was devastated. ATF completed an urgent trace for the two firearms recovered from Ford, both of which were sold at a local pawn shop. Agents subsequently arrested Sarah Hopkins within 24 hours after the shooting for knowingly providing Ford (a convicted felon) with the murder weapons.

March 2: ATF responded to a fire at the First Methodist Church located in the heart of downtown Sedalia, Mo. A fixture of the community, the church (built in 1888) was completely destroyed. ATF, as the agency with primary jurisdiction over church fire investigations, sent certified fire investigators (CFIs) to the area, but could not determine the cause of the damage due to a collapse risk and unstable fire scene.

March 3: ATF special agents in St. Louis led an investigation that resulted in the federal indictments and arrests of 14 people charged in a cigarette contraband trafficking investigation. Multiple federal, state and local law enforcement agencies from Missouri, New York, Georgia, Indiana, and Illinois were also partners in this case.

March 8: ATF responded to another mass shooting, this time in Kansas City, Ks. Pablo Antonia Serrano-Vitorino shot and killed four neighbors in the late night hours. Serrano murdered his 5th victim while attempting to steal a truck from a nearby farm. A manhunt ensued. ATF special agents, an ATF Special Response Team (SRT), and K-9 teams assisted in tracking down the fugitive. Serrano was later captured, and in possession of a semi-automatic rifle.

The ATF Kansas City Field Division operated in sync with state and local departments throughout these tragic events and strengthened their partnerships. This was essential and contributed to the success in solving these violent crimes.