



Figure 3: ATF Strategic Goals: Mission and Management Activities

## STRATEGIC GOAL 1 ILLEGAL FIREARMS TRAFFICKING

### CHALLENGES AND THREATS IN THE ILLEGAL FIREARMS TRAFFICKING DOMAIN

Firearms violence associated with drug trafficking and violent crime continues to erode the quality of life in many American communities. There is widespread traffic in firearms moving in or otherwise affecting interstate and international commerce. States and cities across the country seek effective programs to reduce or eliminate violent crime by stemming the flow of illegally trafficked firearms into their communities.

Mexico's drug traffickers have aggressively turned to the United States as a source of

firearms and routinely transport firearms from the United States into Mexico. The U.S.-Mexican border is the principal arrival zone for most illicit drugs smuggled into the United States, as well as the predominant staging area for the subsequent distribution of drugs throughout the country. Firearms are an integral part of these criminal enterprises. They are the "tools of the trade" that drug traffickers use against each other as well as against Mexican and American law enforcement officials and innocent civilians on both sides of the border.

Illegal firearms trafficking via the Internet is an emerging threat. The privacy of the Internet makes it an ideal means for gang members, violent criminals, terrorists, and juveniles to traffic and obtain illegal firearms.

### ATF'S ROLE IN ELIMINATING ILLEGAL FIREARMS TRAFFICKING

The goal of ATF's illegal firearms trafficking enforcement and industry regulation is to reduce violent crime and protect national security. We investigate and arrest individuals and organizations who illegally supply firearms to prohibited individuals. ATF is the Federal law enforcement organization that regulates the firearms industry. We deter the diversion of firearms from lawful commerce into the illegal market with enforcement strategies and technology. ATF regulates and partners with the firearms industry to promote compliance, to prevent diversion, and to detect those criminals that bring violence to our communities.

ATF's illegal firearms trafficking and violent crime strategies provide state and local govern-



ments a solution for crime that originates within and outside of their jurisdictions.

The focus of the **Integrated Violence Reduction Strategy (IVRS)** is to remove violent offenders from our communities, keep firearms from prohibited possessors, eliminate illegal weapons transfers, and prevent firearms violence through community outreach. IVRS builds upon traditional enforcement efforts with the use of state-of-the-art technology, intelligence and information sharing, industry regulation, and community outreach.

**Project Gunrunner** is ATF's primary Southwest Border firearms enforcement initiative. The Southwest Border initiative brings together the resources of DOJ's various law enforcement components in a concerted effort to reduce cross-border drug and weapons trafficking and the extremely high level of violence associated with these activities. It is a forceful strategy that meets the threats that affect the U.S.-Mexican border and is consistent with the U.S. Department of State's proposal to address U.S.-based illegal firearms trafficking related to the illicit international drug market. ATF's primary role in this strategy is to stem the trafficking of illegal weapons across the border and to reduce the firearms driven violence occurring on both sides of the border.

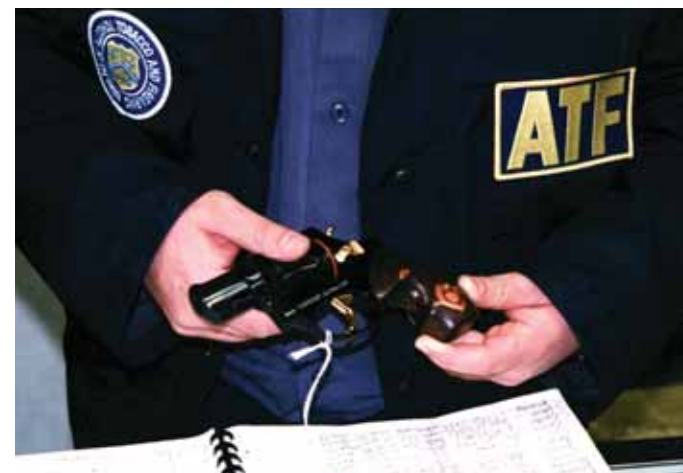
As part of the Southwest Border initiative, ATF's Forensic Science Laboratories (FSLs) analyze recovered firearms for trace evidence, DNA, fingerprints, and tool marks. They also analyze recovered grenades and other explosives to identify the origin of these commodities for U.S. and Mexican law enforcement. To facilitate the cross-border sharing of forensic information, the FSLs are establishing real time access to ATF's National



Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) and Spanish eTrace systems for the Government of Mexico.

The **ATF National Tracing Center (NTC)** is the Nation's firearms tracing facility. The regulatory framework established in the Gun Control Act (GCA) establishes the "paper trail" that allows ATF to "trace" each firearm from its point of manufacture or importation to the point of its first retail sale. The NTC traces crime guns for Federal, state, local, and international law enforcement to provide investigative leads. By tracing firearms recovered by law enforcement authorities, ATF is able to discern patterns of names, locations, and weapon types. This information provides invaluable leads that aid in identifying persons engaged in the diversion of firearms into illegal commerce, links suspects to firearms in criminal investigations, identifies potential traffickers, and can detect intrastate, interstate, and international patterns in sources.

**Illegal Firearms Trafficking Information and Intelligence:** Because of ATF's unique combination of criminal and regulatory authorities under the GCA, the National Firearms Act (NFA), and the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), ATF has developed specialized expertise, information, and intelligence resources to more effectively enforce these laws. ATF intelligence research specialists combine ATF proprietary data (e.g., Multiple Sales and Federal Firearms Licensee (FFL) Out of Business Records) and all source information to identify firearms traffickers, illegal firearms trafficking corridors, and armed violators. ATF intelligence products provide special agents comprehensive information to detect, investigate, apprehend, and recommend for prosecution those individuals or groups of individuals who illegally traffic in or possess firearms. They also assist industry operations investigators (IOIs) in conducting thorough application and compliance investigations. ATF's sharing of our information and intelligence products contributes to our national security efforts.



The **National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN)** facilitates the sharing of crime gun evidence across Federal, state, local, tribal and international law enforcement

agencies. Through NIBIN, ATF deploys the Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS) to law enforcement agencies for their use to image and compare crime gun evidence. The NIBIN system enables the quick discovery of links between crimes, and provides law enforcement agencies with access to a valuable intelligence tool. ATF's FSLs analyze evidence recovered in ATF cases using NIBIN, and maintain the system so that it can be used by other law enforcement agencies.



ATF manages the Gun Desk at the **Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC)**. The Gun Desk queries and disseminates crime gun related intelligence information to Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies, as well as foreign governments.

The **Federal Firearms Licensing Center (FFLC)** issues Federal firearms licenses. The FFLC processes applications from individuals or businesses seeking to engage in commerce in firearms in accordance with Federal regulations. The FFLC screens all individuals who apply for a Federal firearms license to ensure that felons and other prohibited persons do not gain access to firearms.



**Enforcement of the NFA** addresses the control of machine guns, short barrel rifles and shotguns, silencers and destructive devices. It requires that firearm importers, manufacturers and makers register NFA weapons. ATF approves or disapproves all NFA transfers and processes all applications and notices to manufacture, transfer, and register NFA items. ATF uses the National Firearms Registration and Transfer Record (NFRTR) to support field FFL inspections and criminal investigations and continually provides technical information to the industry and the public concerning the requirements of the NFA.

**The Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (Brady Act)** requires a check through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) for the transfer of every firearm from an FFL to a non-licensee. While the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or state agencies perform the NICS record checks, ATF analyzes Brady Act denials, and investigates and enforces Brady Act violations, including the actual or attempted acquisition of a firearm by a prohibited person.



**ATF regulates the importation of firearms, ammunition,** and other defense articles through the issuance of import permits. ATF maintains close liaison with the Department of State and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to ensure that issued permits do not conflict with the foreign policy and national security interests of the United States.

**ATF firearms inspection programs** ensure that only qualified applicants receive a Federal firearms license. ATF informs the new licensee about regulatory requirements and recommended internal controls that promote compliance and prevent diversion during the course of application inspections. ATF partners with the licensee to improve compliance and recommend internal controls that help safeguard the community. Inspections of FFLs promote voluntary compliance through education, detect the diversion of firearms, if present, and enhance our ability to trace firearms. When willful violations are uncovered, IOIs recommend the revocation of the license and



work with special agents if criminal activity is suspected. ATF uses risk indicators to identify which FFLs should be inspected. This ensures that investigator resources are more efficiently and effectively allocated.





ATF partners with the firearms industry to update members about statutory, regulatory, and policy changes that affect their day-to-day operations. ATF publishes and distributes open letters to all licensees of firearms, ammunition, and other regulated commodities to advise them of important issues that affect their operations. ATF also publishes pertinent articles in its semi-annual FFL Newsletter, on its industry-focused website, and conducts seminars for licensees at various locations across the country.

**Firearms Policy in International Agreements:** At the request of the Department of State, ATF

represents the firearms policies of DOJ and the United States in international forums such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States. ATF ensures that the international firearms agreements in which the United States participates are consistent with U.S. laws, regulations, policies, and practices. The United Nations Program of Action (reviewed biannually), the Organization of American States convention on firearms (reviewed annually), and the International Tracing Instrument (reviewed in 2008) are just a few of the agreements in which ATF represents the United States in international settings.



**Because of the importance and relevance of the issue, illegal firearms trafficking is a strategic goal for ATF. The strategic objectives and strategies related to this goal are provided below.**

Strategic Goal: Illegal Firearms Trafficking	Strategic Objective 1:	Strategies
Reduce violent firearms crimes by strengthening firearms trafficking intelligence gathering, analysis, inspection, and investigative activity.	Interdict and prevent illegal firearms trafficking.	<p><b>1. Deploy Integrated Firearms Enforcement Teams:</b> Identify, investigate, and dismantle illegal firearms trafficking organizations and individuals engaged in illegal firearms trafficking through the deployment of integrated firearms enforcement teams to identified source areas and trafficking routes.</p> <p><b>2. Expand Risk-Based Approach to Inspections:</b> Prevent the illegal trafficking of firearms through expansion of our risk-based approach to inspections while striving to achieve a three-year periodic inspection cycle in partnership with FFLs.</p> <p><b>3. Enhance Use of Internet Trafficking Units:</b> Enhance utilization of Internet crime units and Field Intelligence Groups to identify, investigate, and prevent illegal Internet firearms trafficking.</p> <p><b>4. Increase Targeted Import Inspections:</b> Prevent the importation of prohibited firearms and firearms kits through a targeted inspection process of inbound shipments and automation of the importation process.</p> <p><b>5. Increase ATF's Illegal Firearms Trafficking and Technical Training:</b> Provide ATF personnel, Federal, state, local, tribal, and international law enforcement officers and prosecutors a cooperative investigative framework to combat unlawful access to firearms.</p> <p><b>6. Advance Uniformity in Crime Gun Recovery Protocols:</b> Provide leadership in the advancement of uniform crime gun recovery protocols in all law enforcement agencies to enhance the quality of criminal cases referred for prosecution.</p> <p><b>7. Expand Awareness and Outreach:</b> Reduce the potential for diversion of firearms into illegal commerce, such as unlawful sales conducted via the Internet or at gun shows through expanded awareness, outreach, and investigation.</p> <p><b>8. Improve Inventory Control of Firearms Licensees:</b> Reduce the potential for diversion of firearms into illegal commerce by improving the FFL's inventory control.</p>
<b>Performance Goal Statement:</b>		
Reduce the risk to public safety caused by illegal firearms trafficking.		



<p><b>Strategic Goal: Illegal Firearms Trafficking</b> Reduce violent firearms crimes by strengthening firearms trafficking intelligence gathering, analysis, inspection, and investigative activity.</p> <p><b>Performance Goal Statement:</b> Reduce the risk to public safety caused by illegal firearms trafficking.</p>	<p><b>Strategic Objective 2:</b> Lead the advancement of illegal firearms trafficking intelligence capability through comprehensive information management and research in emerging technology.</p>	<p><b>Strategies</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Establish a Comprehensive Firearms Tracing Program:</b> Improve our ability to detect and investigate firearms traffickers through a coordinated and comprehensive firearms tracing program.</li> <li><b>2. Modernize and Integrate Firearms Databases:</b> Improve our ability to detect, investigate, and deter traffickers by improving the accessibility and accuracy of the ATF firearms-related data through the modernization and integration of our firearms databases.</li> <li><b>3. Increase Participation in State Fusion Centers:</b> Expand our ability to identify leads for criminal investigations and inspections through strengthened partnerships with state and local law enforcement, utilizing State Fusion Centers.</li> <li><b>4. Enhance Partnerships with Academia:</b> Enhance our partnerships with academia to improve program performance through program review and the development of innovative performance measures.</li> <li><b>5. Increase Research and Development in Firearms Technology:</b> Continually build our industry and investigative expertise through research and development in existing and emerging firearms technology. Exploit those technologies with the potential to improve business practices, our ability to regulate industry, and our ability to solve crimes.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Illegal Firearms Trafficking Performance Indicators:</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Number of defendants referred for prosecution, in the given fiscal year, for violations related to firearms trafficking</li> <li>◆ Number of defendants convicted, in the given fiscal year, for violations related to firearms trafficking, regardless of the year of referral</li> <li>◆ Estimated number of firearms trafficked</li> <li>◆ Number of traces submitted</li> <li>◆ Percent of domestic law enforcement agencies with an e-Trace account</li> <li>◆ Number of people (ATF employees and Federal, state, local and international law enforcement) receiving firearms investigation training</li> <li>◆ Percent of firearms traces completed within ten days</li> <li>◆ Number of NIBIN hits</li> <li>◆ Number of items entered into NIBIN</li> </ul>		

**STRATEGIC GOAL 2  
CRIMINAL GROUPS AND GANGS**

**CHALLENGES AND THREATS  
IN THE CRIMINAL GROUPS  
AND GANGS DOMAIN**

**Criminal groups and gangs affect communities across the country.** Once found principally in large cities, violent street gangs now affect public safety, community image, and the quality of life in communities of all sizes in urban, suburban, and rural areas. While



many gangs have members in a number of states and worldwide, the vast majority of gangs operate on local or regional levels.

Gangs remain key distributors of narcotics in the United States and are sophisticated and flagrant in their use of firearms for violence and intimidation. Because gangs frequently use firearms, ATF uses its expertise in illegal firearms trafficking deterrence and enforcement to address violent crime and gang activity.

Violence is not the only form of gang-related criminal activity that threatens the welfare of the public. There is evidence of a link between criminal groups trafficking tobacco and those engaging in acts of terrorism.

**ATF'S ROLE IN DISMANTLING  
CRIMINAL GROUPS AND  
GANGS**

ATF works to reduce violent crime by targeting and dismantling those criminal groups and gangs that pose the greatest threat to public safety and national security. Through collaboration with Federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies, ATF helps remove violent criminals from our streets. These partnership programs include the following:

**Violent Crime Impact Teams (VCITs)** are ATF-led, geographically focused enforcement groups composed of Federal, state and local law enforcement officers and prosecutors that remove violent criminals and criminal organizations from the community.

