
Evolution of ATF

- 2002 Homeland Security Act of 2002**—transferred the authorities, functions, personnel, and assets of ATF from the Department of the Treasury to the Department of Justice (DOJ), and created within DOJ the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, which continues to be referred to as ATF.
- 2002 Safe Explosives Act**—enacted as part of Homeland Security Act of 2002, strengthens Federal explosives laws enforced by ATF; expands explosives permitting provisions; expands categories of persons prohibited from possessing explosives.
- 2001 Patriot Act**—designated two Gun Control Act offenses [importation under section 922(l) and trafficking under section 924(n)] as “specified unlawful activity” for purposes of the money-laundering statutes.
- 2000 Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform Act**—the Act changed the procedures and burden of proof applicable to civil forfeiture of various kinds of property, including the forfeiture of firearms under the Gun Control Act; permitted the forfeiture of property in criminal proceedings where forfeiture was traditionally limited to civil actions.
- 1999 Omnibus Appropriations Act**—added “nonimmigrant aliens” to categories of persons prohibited from possessing firearms, and required firearms dealers to have available secure gun storage or safety devices.
- 1998 Brady Law**—mandatory five-day waiting period for transfer of firearm to non-licensee replaced by mandatory background checks through National Instant Criminal Check System (NICS) for firearms purchasers.
- 1997 Omnibus Appropriations Act**—added “misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence” to categories of persons prohibited from possessing firearms; authorized ATF to establish canine odor recognition standards and national explosives repository; added interstate commerce element to Gun Free School Zones Act.
- 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996**—added plastic explosives offenses; increased sentences for a number of explosives offenses; required taggant study.
- 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act**—amended and strengthened current Federal firearms and explosives laws enforced by ATF; added a new category of prohibited persons: any person under certain restraining orders; implemented a ban on semiautomatic assault weapons.
- 1993 Brady Law**—created a mandatory five-day waiting period for purchasing handguns. Provision allows law enforcement to check the background of each handgun purchaser before delivery of any handguns are made by Federal firearms dealers. (Waiting period provisions took effect in 1994.)
- 1992 Gang Resistance Education And Training (G.R.E.A.T.)**—program established for gang violence prevention.
- 1986 Firearms Owners Protection Act**—enacted significant amendments to the Gun Control Act, to include provisions to impose mandatory penalties for certain criminal offenses, provisions relating to inspections of Federal Firearms Licensees, provisions relating to the forfeiture of firearms, and the implementation of a machine gun ban.
- 1984 Armed Career Criminal Act/Comprehensive Crime Control Act**—Congress passed amendments to the 1968 Gun Control Act, establishing mandatory sentences for armed drug traffickers and violent career criminals.
- 1982 Antiarson Act**—amended the Federal explosives laws to include destruction of property by fire along with destruction by explosives.
- 1978 Contraband Cigarette Act**—ATF helps State enforcement agencies to improve their enforcement and revenue collection capabilities, in response to the millions of dollars being lost to the State by cigarette smuggling from low-tax to high-tax states.
- 1972 Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Division**—was separated from the IRS and given full Bureau status in the Treasury Department as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms.
- 1970 Title XI of the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970**—contained provisions for regulation of the explosives industry and established certain bombings and arsons as Federal crimes. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Division name changed to the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Division under the IRS.
- 1968 Gun Control Act**—created stricter licensing and regulation of the firearms industry and established new categories of offenses involving firearms and the first direct Federal jurisdiction aimed at criminal use of explosives. Responsibilities delegated to the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Division.
- 1954 Internal Revenue Code**—Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Division gained jurisdiction over the regulation and tax collection on the alcoholic beverages, tobacco products and firearms industries.
- 1952 Title Change**—As a result of alcohol tax duties being delegated to the Alcohol Tax Unit in 1951, the unit title was changed to Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Division of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
- 1938 Federal Firearms Act**—established regulations of the firearms industry and made it a crime for felons and fugitives to receive firearms in interstate commerce.
- 1935 Federal Alcohol Administration Act**—created licensing and permit requirements and established regulations designed to ensure an open and fair marketplace to the legal businessman and to the consumer.
- 1934 National Firearms Act**—imposed criminal, regulatory, and tax laws on gangster-type weapons such as machine guns, and the Bureau of Prohibition turned over its responsibilities to a newly created Alcohol Tax Unit within the Bureau of Internal Revenue.
- 1927 Prohibition Unit**—became the separate Bureau of Prohibition, under the Department of Justice.
- 1794 Whiskey Rebellion**—violent resistance to the established authority of the Federal government to levy an excise tax on distilled spirits.
- 1791 Congress imposed the first Federal tax on distilled spirits.**