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BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES: GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is a federal law enforcement agency within the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). It is the principal federal agency responsible for investigating and preventing federal offenses involving the unlawful use, manufacture, and possession of firearms and explosives; acts of arson and bombings; and illegal trafficking of alcohol and tobacco products. The ATF operates at the intersection of violent crime prevention and regulatory enforcement, playing a unique role in the U.S. federal justice system.

The ATF's core mission is to protect communities from violent criminals, criminal organizations, the illegal use and trafficking of firearms, the illegal use and storage of explosives, acts of arson and bombings, and acts of terrorism. Unlike agencies solely focused on enforcement (like the FBI or DEA), the ATF also has a significant regulatory function. It regulates the lawful commerce of firearms and explosives industries to prevent diversion to criminal markets.

This is the agency's most visible function is gun enforcement. The ATF enforces federal firearms laws, such as the Gun Control Act (GCA) and the National Firearms Act (NFA). ATF prevents trafficking

by investigating "straw purchasers" and unlicensed dealers who supply guns to criminals. ATF is operating the National Tracing Center, the only facility in the U.S. authorized to trace firearms recovered in crimes to their original point of sale. Also, the organization is managing the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), which allows law enforcement to match shell casings found at different crime scenes, linking varied crimes to a single weapon.

The ATF is the primary federal agency for investigating bombings and arson. It deploys National Response Teams (NRT) to major fire and explosion scenes (e.g., the Oklahoma City bombing or the 9/11 Pentagon attack site) to assist local authorities with forensic expertise. The agency regulates the explosives industry, ensuring safe storage and licensing for users of commercial explosives (e.g., construction and mining).

Also, agency is managing alcohol and tobacco. While the collection of federal excise taxes on these products was transferred to the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) (under the Treasury Department) in 2003, the ATF retains jurisdiction over criminal activity in these sectors. This primarily involves stopping the interstate smuggling of contraband alcohol and cigarettes to evade taxes, which is often used to fund organized crime and terrorist activities.

The ATF's history is rooted in tax collection rather than traditional law enforcement. The agency traces its roots to the early days of the Republic when Congress imposed taxes on imported spirits to pay off Revolutionary War debts. The agency gained prominence enforcing Prohibition laws. For most of its history, the ATF was part of the Department of the Treasury. Following the 9/11 attacks and the passage of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the law enforcement functions of the ATF were transferred to the Department of Justice in 2003. This shift reflected a change in focus from revenue collection to violent crime prevention and homeland security.

The agency is headed by a Director who is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The ATF is divided into 25 Field Divisions across the United States, with field offices in major cities. ATF has 2 specialized research facilities, which are the Fire Research Laboratory: A unique facility where experts can reconstruct full-scale arson scenarios to scientifically determine cause and origin and the National Tracing Center: Located in West Virginia, this facility

processes hundreds of thousands of trace requests annually for law enforcement agencies worldwide.

In summary, the ATF is a specialized agency with a dual identity: it is a regulator of industry and a fierce enforcer of criminal law. By targeting the tools of violence—illegal guns, explosives, and arson—the ATF aims to dismantle criminal networks and reduce violent crime rates across the United States.

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CRIMINOGENIC SITUATION IN CUBA : BETWEEN SAFETY AND SOCIAL PRESSURE

Cuba is a sovereign state in the Caribbean Basin that gained independence in 1902 and became internationally recognized for its vibrant cultural identity, rich musical and dance traditions, production of rum and cigars, socialist model of governance, and highly developed medical and educational systems; however, in the contemporary period it draws scholarly attention as a country facing a complex socio-economic situation, rising crime rates, the spread of shadow-economy practices, deepening shortages of food and energy resources, declining public security, and limited transparency of official institutions, which collectively create grounds for considering it an environment with elevated criminogenic risks.

Crime in Cuba in recent years has been characterized by a noticeable and rapid increase, although it is difficult to determine an exact crime rate due to the limited availability of official statistics and the lack of transparency of state institutions, which release only partial data. Independent observers and analytical groups note that since 2023, there has been a significant rise in both property and violent crimes on