



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DOJ OIG Releases Report on the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives Firearm Disposal Practices

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today the [release of a report](#) examining the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) firearm disposal practices. Since September 2015, the ATF has utilized the National Disposal Branch (NDB), formerly the National Firearms and Ammunition Destruction (NFAD) Branch, to centralize and streamline the disposal process of forfeited and ATF-owned firearms. Each year, the ATF destroys thousands of firearms at the NDB. The DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) undertook this audit following the discovery that thousands of firearms, firearm parts, and ammunition had been stolen from NFAD from 2016 to 2019. Following a joint DOJ OIG, ATF, and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) investigation, in August 2019, a DHS contract security guard was convicted in connection with these thefts, and in November 2021 the OIG issued an Investigative Summary of findings related to the thefts, including findings that the facility had vulnerabilities which enabled the thefts to occur undetected and without the assistance of others.

The OIG found that the ATF has implemented several new control procedures to reduce the risk of firearm thefts reoccurring at the NDB facility. However, the ATF needs to implement additional controls to safeguard and protect firearms from loss or theft while in NDB custody.

- **Corrective Actions Not Implemented.** Following the thefts, the ATF convened the NDB Working Group to evaluate and reorganize the NDB. The assessment resulted in eight recommendations to address key vulnerabilities. While we found that the ATF has fully or partially implemented six recommended corrective actions, two remain outstanding. Specifically, the NDB has not met the recommended staffing levels and items unrelated to the NDB mission are being stored at the facility. In our judgment, implementing these two remaining corrective actions will not only ensure the NDB is operating effectively and in compliance with pertinent policies, but will add an additional level of security to firearms stored at the NDB.
 - **Noncompliance with NDB Operating Procedures.** NDB staff do not consistently adhere to established operating procedures in place to mitigate the risk of firearms being lost or stolen. Specifically, we observed NDB staff: (1) propping open doors into secure areas of the facility solely for the sake of convenience, (2) allowing visitors to enter the facility through doorways other than the main entrance and drive their cars into the facility to unload firearms, and (3) permitting unauthorized individuals to access NDB vault storage spaces.
 - **Additional Controls and Safeguards are Needed.** We identified overarching ATF policies that are not addressed in current NDB operating procedures and are not evident in current NDB operations but would further mitigate the risk of firearms in NDB custody being lost or stolen without detection.
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For example, we found that ATF should improve its controls over firearms stored in temporary vaults and over keys used to unlock shipping cases containing firearms slated for disposal.

- **Improvements to Surveillance Cameras.** We identified blind spots in the NDB's surveillance camera coverage of both the interior and exterior areas of the facility that could be exploited by an individual seeking to conceal illicit activity. We also found that the low resolution of some of the surveillance video does not allow the viewer to identify individuals or discern activities conducted within certain secure areas of the facility.

Today's report makes 10 recommendations to improve the ATF's firearm disposal practices at the NDB. The ATF agreed with all of the recommendations.

Report: Today's report is available on the OIG's website at the following link:

<https://oig.justice.gov/reports/audit-bureau-alcohol-tobacco-firearms-and-explosives-firearm-disposal-practices>

Video: To accompany today's report, the OIG has released a 2-minute video of the Inspector General discussing the report's findings. The video and a downloadable transcript are available at the following link:

<https://oig.justice.gov/news/multimedia/video/message-inspector-general-report-bureau-alcohol-tobacco-firearms-and>

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