

# BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS

## DC TASK FORCE RATES "ACES" HIGH Communities Welcome ATF Support

By Dot Koester  
Public Affairs Office

A task force of 40 agents, backed by 14 inspectors from Compliance Operations and appropriate support personnel were brought from around the country into Washington, DC, to become part of a new task force concept to help combat the firearms and narcotics trafficking in the nation's capital.

In 1988, there were 372 homicides in the District of Columbia - per capita, the highest murder rate in the world. Many homicides were committed by firearms and many were narcotics-related. With jurisdiction of the federal firearms laws, ATF believed it could make a measurable impact on the death and violence overtaking one of America's most-visited cities.

And we did.

ATF formed the Armed Career Enforcement Study (ACES) task force to identify and define the best investigative concepts that could fight the violence plaguing many of our communities. Philadelphia ASAC Marge Moore developed the operational plan and orientation for the supervisors and special agents who would come to Washington from all parts of the country, including 14 from the Washington District Office.

In essence, a "mini-District" office was set up and operational in three weeks. That meant agents hitting the streets with the proper training and with assignments to use our jurisdiction to arrest the armed drug traffickers and the armed three-time convicted felons, and find the sources of the illegal firearms. Lines of cooperation were formed with the Metropolitan Police (8 were

assigned to ACES), the U.S. Attorney's office and several other federal law enforcement agencies.

One of the major surprises encountered by the ACES Task Force was their overwhelming support from the community - those people who live in the drug-infested parts of Washington and who want the dealing and the violence and the ricocheting of bullets out of their backyards. As the agents raided house after house, building after building, carting the dealers off for long-term jail, people in the neighborhoods started showing up whenever and wherever they saw "Maggie's blue boys." They shouted words of encouragement and support, offering coffee and in one case, cooking breakfast for the entire group. More importantly, those same citizens offered information on other drug dealers, other crack houses, and license numbers of cars delivering the guns to the drug dealers.

ACES set up a hotline - ATF GUNS - which was widely publicized and placed large letters on the side of ATF vehicles in the area. In the 10 weeks that ATF GUNS was operational, 175 calls were received with a voluminous amount of information. As ACES shut down operations, the ATF GUNS phone line was transferred to the Washington District Office.

Compliance Operations proved to be a vital part of the ACES operation. Through inspections of federal firearms dealers who had been identified as the sources of firearms recovered in the District, a list of probable illegal firearms purchasers was developed. The inspections resulted in 1,045 profiles which were then referred to ACES as possible illegal purchasers. The inspectors contributed greatly to the prosecution of several individuals who were heavily involved in illegal firearms trafficking. ACES' vital statistics:

- 194 criminal investigations
- 191 arrests for narcotics and drug violations
- 85 federal search warrants executed
- 94 firearms recovered
- narcotics with a street value of \$1 million were retained as evidence
- seizures of assets valued at \$600,000
- 90 criminal cases recommended for prosecution

One of the most innovative approaches used during the ACES operation was the high number of search warrants constantly executed by the agents at those locations where the drugs were actually being distributed. These executions targeted a vital component of the drug trafficking networks - the street dealer.

ACES discovered early on that the street dealers were widely regarded as "role models" by their associates, their hired hands, and by many of the kids in the neighborhood - kids who were easily influenced by the dealer's display of power and money. ACES constant presence caught a lot of the so-called role models and removed them forcibly from the community. And ATF agents made certain the neighborhood kids saw their "role models" go off to jail and their expensive cars and sound equipment seized by law enforcement.

"The most important part of any and every operation is safety - that's what I tell my agents over and over again - safety," says Dominick Polifrome, one of the five ACES supervisors. The other four were Roger Parker, Terry Lunders, Walt Wasyluk, and Jimmy Little, all of whom agreed with Dominick on the issue of agent safety.

The supervisors conducted the raid briefings (these are briefings held before the raids indicating the job and location of every agent tak-

ing part in the raid). "Every agent must know precisely what he has to do and when. Control the situation, make the arrests, get the evidence, and get out. We can't afford any mistakes. You know when you go into situations like this that you must be totally alert and totally prepared. You never know when you enter one of those closed doors what to expect so you have to be ready for anything.

"The bottom line is safety. Agents must protect one another. We're Number 1. Bad guys last. And that's just the way it is." And it worked. Not one agent was wounded or killed during the entire operation.

Once the fact of the ATF task force hit the news, there was widespread coverage in the printed press, on television, and on radio. Each medium focused on a different aspect of ACES. Channel 7 zeroed in on the ATF-GUNS number and gave it wide publicity; Channel 5 featured several different stories on various phases of the task force; and who can forget the Channel 9 coverage of the 5-year-old blind boy wandering around his neighborhood until Special Agent Jimmy Little picked him up to take him to safety, turned to the camera and said, "Kids - that's what this is all about."

Said ASAC Marge Moore, "Planning a new operation means leaving nothing to chance. We attempt to anticipate every need, forecast every possibility, and predict every possible consequence. All of this takes a tremendous spirit of hard work and cooperation. ACES was truly a total Bureau operation involving all directorates and every member of the Headquarters executive staff with special agents, inspectors, and supervisors working in concert and acting as one strong motivating force to get the job done well."

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## ATF AGENT MORENO-FULLERTON HONORED

By Tom Hill

Public Affairs Branch

In March 1990, ATF agent Teresa Moreno Fullerton was one of 12 Federal employees to be honored at regional job fairs in six major cities that kicked off the Office of Personnel Management's public service campaign.

The campaign, called "Celebration of Public Service," was planned to promote federal careers and to encourage top-quality people to consider a career in government service. The campaign began with regional job fairs in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Denver, San Francisco and Washington, DC.

Teresa was selected by OPM to represent federal employees because of her consistently outstanding work in the Los Angeles district in undercover firearms and narcotics investigations.

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held to open the 2-day job fair at Chicago's Hilton Towers. Teresa addressed the job fair participants, community leaders and government officials at the opening ceremonies. Teresa spoke of her pride in working for ATF and in protecting the public:

"I entered into government service because I was influenced by my parents who have always been involved in the community. At this point in time, I look back on my career as a time of great personal and professional satisfaction.

"I have never been disappointed with my involvement with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and federal service and I encourage all to consider a career with the federal service. I thank you for honoring me today and accept this award on behalf of the many government employees who are as deserving as I am."

Following her remarks, Teresa received a Celebration of Public Service Awards plaque signed by Constance Berry Newman, Director

of the Office of Personnel Management, "in grateful appreciation of exemplary performance and outstanding contributions to the federal service."

After receiving her plaque Teresa was joined by Secretary Edward J. Derwinski of Veterans Affairs, Representative Lynn Martin (R-IL), and Mike Singletary of the Chicago Bears in the ribbon cutting ceremony opening the job fair.

The crowds were heavy at the job fair which was publicized widely by the Chicago news media. Teresa was interviewed by the Spanish International Television Network, several radio stations, and also did some public service announcements promoting careers in the federal government.

Agent Moreno joined ATF in 1983 and was assigned to the DEA Narcotics Task Force in Los Angeles after completing training at Glynco. She is married to Stanley Fullerton, a special agent with the FBI. Teresa has a son born in December 1989 and three stepchildren.

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## A BALANCE FOR AGENTS

By Kathy Kiernan

Miami Group IV Supervisor

In the world of law enforcement there are many givens—it is given that you work long hours, on weekends and during holiday periods when you prefer to be with your family. It is given that you become skeptical at accepting anything or anyone at face value, it is given that informants lie to you, disappoint you and attempt to manipulate you. It is given that oftentimes victims and witnesses follow the same standard. Law enforcement personnel can easily become consumed by their jobs and although reluctant to admit it, lack a proper balance in their lives.

The Miami District Office may have struck just such a balance. We initiated a local chapter of the Sunshine Foundation.

This organization was founded in 1976 by Bill Sample, a Philadelphia police officer. Bill, while on the job, was assigned a detail at a local children's hospital, where, once his cynical exterior cracked, he was never able to think or act the same way again. What resulted was his founding the Sunshine Foundation, a non-profit, police-run organization geared exclusively to providing help, love and understanding to chronically and terminally ill children.

It was a natural meld - these children considered police officers to be heroes, in a time when heroes are in short supply. Bill quickly involved his peers, his friends and their families and began to provide "sunshine" in the lives of these children. Unselfishly they raised funds, donated their time and resources and were able in 1976 to create the cornerstone of an organization that to date has assisted over 13,000 children.

In 1988, while attending a convention sponsored by the International Association of Women Police in Atlanta, I met Bill Sample. During the week long convention, ATF's recruitment booth was located adjacent to the Sunshine Foundation booth. I expressed a desire to get involved, a desire motivated by what I characterize as a lack of balance in myself as well as the agents I supervise. I felt that my group needed to know and believe that we were capable of making a significant positive impact in the lives of others.

From a law enforcement perspective, Miami is a never ending battle. As hard and as long as my group works, we will never completely stem the tide of automatic weapons, violence, and narcotics that permeate the very fiber of the city. I felt helping the Sunshine

Foundation would provide us with the opportunity to really feel good about ourselves and the career we chose.

After speaking with Bill, I knew that the children only wanted to be accepted and experience with and through others all that they could in their short lives.

I invited Bill to Miami and he spoke to a group of agents and fellow supervisors. I observed aggressive, active street-wise agents succumb to the spell cast by Bill. Shortly, thereafter, a local chapter was established and run by Group IV agents, ASAC Joe Vince and me.

I hope other offices will read this story and become involved in the Sunshine Foundation. It doesn't involve a great deal of time, nor is fund raising a major endeavor. Other projects include visiting hospitals and arranging and participating in sports activities such as racquetball playoffs and mini-marathons. Anyone with questions, should contact me in Miami at FTS 350-4556 or Bill Sample at (813)424-4188.

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#### **ATF PROFESSIONALS COMMENDED BY TREASURY SECRETARY**

Special Agent Karen L. Simpson, Senior Inspector Janet E. Calhoun, and Employee Relations Specialist Marilyn G. Wilkins were among five ATF professionals exemplifying "excellence in public service" who were honored by Secretary of the Treasury Nicholas F. Brady at Treasury's 1990 Annual Awards Ceremony in Washington, July 26, 1990.

"I join Secretary Brady in recognizing ATF and other Treasury employees honored as 'the very

best among us,'" said ATF Director Stephen E. Higgins.

"We are extremely proud of our ATF award recipients. The tradition of quality service and professionalism they carry forward has been a hallmark of Treasury employees for more than two centuries."

The award to Agent Simpson commends her contributions to the safety of law enforcement personnel who face chemical hazards when they raid clandestine drug laboratories. Chemicals in labs can cause cancer and damage to the reproductive systems and lungs. Simpson evaluated the problem, then suggested a comprehensive program that improved training and heightened awareness of dangers in the unlawful labs. Simpson is a special agent in Oklahoma City.

The commendation presented to Inspector Calhoun praised her "sustained superior performance" in carrying out difficult assignments. Investigations by Calhoun prevented wine mislabeling and halted illegal business practices by a beer distributor. She also conducted revenue audits resulting in recovery by the Treasury of underpaid alcohol excise taxes totaling thousands of dollars. Calhoun works out of the Santa Rosa office.

The quality step increase award to Employee Relations Specialist Wilkins cited "her consistently outstanding work" in ATF's program to keep drugs out of the workplace. Specialist Wilkins works in Washington, DC, and was a prime mover in developing and implementing the Drug-Free Workplace Program. She conducts training nationwide, counsels employees and serves as an advisor to the Bureau's Executive Staff.