

## FINANCIAL CRIMES ENFORCEMENT NETWORK FinCEN - Our New Partner In Fighting Financial Crime

Law enforcement has a new addition to its ranks. The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), born April 25, 1990, by order of Secretary of the Treasury Nicholas Brady, has become our new partner in fighting financial crime.

FinCEN's mission is to provide intelligence support to a wide spectrum of participating agencies to combat national and international money laundering operations, primarily in the anti-

drug area. FinCEN fulfills its mission by collecting, processing, analyzing, and disseminating intelligence related to the proceeds of illicit activity, i.e., "dirty" money, to the appropriate federal, state, local, and foreign law enforcement and bank regulatory agencies.

FinCEN provides law enforcement agencies with proactive targeting information; supports ongoing criminal investigations; monitors the trends and patterns of money laundering; and assists in the coordination of law enforcement anti-money laundering efforts.

The concept of creating a multi-source, multi-agency, multi-discipline financial crimes intelligence organization had been talked about for over a decade. But, the catalyst for FinCEN's birth was the President's 1989 National Drug Control Strategy calling for an increased focus on money laundering crimes and improved coordination of enforcement efforts in solving those crimes.

As Treasury's response to the national drug strategy in the "War on Drugs", the Customs Service and the Internal Revenue Service were directed to develop ways to: improve coordination of financial crimes enforcement within Treasury and among other agencies; improve the quality and completeness of data analysis; speed responsiveness to requests for data from field agents

(including agents from other participating agencies); and improve the quality and quantity of potential leads for field agents by expanding the computer-based intelligence systems. FinCEN was proposed as the solution.

FinCEN is located in Arlington, Virginia, just outside Washington, D.C., and has a staff of approximately 200. FinCEN's staff of intelligence analysts, computer specialists, and special agents includes detailees from the Department of Justice (DEA, FBI), from other criminal law enforcement agencies (such as Postal Service, Customs, IRS, BATF), and from U.S. foreign intelligence and bank regulatory agencies.

Among FinCEN's unique staff are numerous outstanding women who are directing the future growth of this new law enforcement organization. Profiles of three of FinCEN's outstanding women illustrate the range and depth of law enforcement experience that will enable FinCEN to achieve its full potential.

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### Shelley G. Altenstadter Deputy Director



As FinCEN's first Deputy Director, Shelley Altenstadter has

been a guiding hand in building this new organization. Ms. Altenstadter was attracted to FinCEN because she believes in its mission—to bring together expertise from various agencies and professions in a united law enforcement effort. She says about her role in FinCEN, "I have always wanted to do something new and exciting, and FinCEN has provided me with the challenge of starting a completely new organization."

When she started her law enforcement career, Shelley Altenstadter wanted to try a totally different kind of work. So, she became one of the first five U.S. Customs Inspectors to work at the Tijuana/San Ysidro Border. Her role model became Odelia Villareal, who was the first female Customs Inspector at San Ysidro. Ms. Altenstadter says about Inspector Villareal, "She wasn't liked by all the male inspectors, but the majority respected her because she did her job competently."

As she progressed in her career, Ms. Altenstadter has looked to other role models who were competent in their work, faithful to their priorities, had a healthy "self-perception", and worked toward accomplishing their goals.

Shelley Altenstadter served as a senior special agent in Los Angeles for the U.S. Customs Service. In this capacity, she conducted and coordinated complex criminal and civil investigations of violations of U.S. Customs and related laws involving money laundering and currency violations, fraud, illegal exportations of munitions and strategic technology, bribery, theft, and tort claims.

From 1984 to 1987, Ms. Altenstadter served as the Assistant U.S. Customs Attache, Rome, Italy. In this position, she managed the enforcement and liaison activities of the U.S. Customs Service in over 40 foreign countries.



Prior to accepting the position as FinCEN's Deputy Director, Ms. Altenstadter was the Director, U.S. Customs Office of Commercial Fraud Enforcement, from 1987 to 1989. In this capacity, she directed the criminal and civil investigative and enforcement programs of the U.S. Customs Service in the commercial fraud area.

Ms. Altenstadter's advice to women starting their law enforcement careers is, "Don't be afraid to try something new and different. Learn your job and do it well; observe others; keep track of what is really important; play fair, but be aware of those who do not."

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**Wendy L. Thomas**  
**(Acting) Executive Assistant to**  
**the Director**



Ms. Wendy Thomas was selected in September 1991 to serve as Executive Assistant to the Director of FinCEN, a position designed for enhancement of professional growth. Prior to this appointment, Ms. Thomas had been serving since July 1990 as Branch Chief of FinCEN's Cash Flow Branch, Office of Strategic Analysis.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from Stockton State College in New

Jersey, Ms. Thomas began her federal government career with the Justice Department as an Intelligence Research Specialist assigned to the President's Commission on Organized Crime.

In 1986, Ms. Thomas became an Intelligence Research Specialist for the Financial Intelligence Branch of the U.S. Customs Service, Office of Enforcement. In 1988 she was assigned to oversee the Federal Reserve analysis and targeting project and was subsequently selected as the Chief of the Bank Intelligence Section. While at Customs, Ms. Thomas completed a yearlong Executive Leadership Program during which she was detailed to various offices throughout Customs.

Advice by Ms. Thomas to her colleagues is, "Take advantage of professional development training programs in your career field. Career growth can be greatly accelerated by participation in these programs."

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**Mary V. McCarthy**  
**Branch Chief,**  
**Issues Analysis Branch**  
**Office of Strategic Analysis**



Ms. Mary McCarthy has served as FinCEN's Issues Analysis Branch

Chief, Office of Strategic Analysis, since September 1990. In this capacity, she supervises six Intelligence Research Specialists and two special agents.

Ms. McCarthy began her 25-year federal law enforcement career with the Drug Enforcement Administration in 1966. She became a DEA Intelligence Research Specialist in 1974, and worked on their most significant drug investigations. Several interesting DEA assignments included tours of duty to Lima, Peru; Bogota, Columbia; and the Hague, Netherlands.

In November 1983, Ms. McCarthy joined the U.S. Customs Service as the Director, Enforcement Support Division, Northeast Region, Boston, Massachusetts. In this capacity, she supervised two groups - the Regional Intelligence Branch and the Sector Communications Group.

Mary McCarthy's participation in professional organizations includes membership in the International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts (IALEIA) and service as the past President of the New England Chapter. Her educational background includes a B.S. in Sociology with a minor in Crime and Delinquency.

Ms. McCarthy believes women have come a long way in law enforcement. Her comment on this progress is, "When I began my career, there were no women special agents because it was believed that women could not handle firearms. Now there are many women special agents, who are handling firearms in addition to a lot of other responsibilities."