

ATF Emphasizes Collaborative Approach to Regulating Firearms and Explosives Industries

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For several months, representatives from the Office of Enforcement Programs and Services (EPS) and Field Operations (FO) at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) have visited firearms and explosives manufacturing facilities across the country as part of a long-range plan to reinforce relationships with these industry partners. In their travels from Massachusetts to California, and Florida to Arizona, EPS Assistant Director (AD) Marvin Richardson has emphasized the value of ATF-industry collaboration. “ATF can work smarter when we learn more about the firearms and explosives industries, and when the industries learn more about ATF,” he said.

AD Richardson launched the new initiative in December 2014, shortly after taking the reins of ATF’s EPS directorate, which develops and delivers policy guidance and technical support regarding the firearms and explosives industries. As the former EPS Deputy Assistant Director (DAD), AD Richardson already understood the importance of both industries as he stressed the need “...to visit with them, to learn more about their respective industries, to build relationships, and to establish trust.”

To date, AD Richardson, EPS DAD Curtis Gilbert, and other ATF representatives have visited industries such as firearms manufacturers Smith & Wesson, Colt Manufacturing, Heckler & Koch, Glock, BPI Outdoors, Taurus Manufacturing, Tracking Point Precision Rifles, Mega Arms, American Sporting Suppliers, and Rio Ammunition. Wholesaler visits have included RSR Group, and Hill Country Wholesalers. Retailer visits have included BIG 5, Gander Mountain, Bass Pro, and Vance Outdoors. Explosives industry visits have included Austin Powder, Orica, Detotec North America, United Launch Alliance, Entertainment Fireworks Inc. The Cape Canaveral Explosives, and Orica. Pawnbroker Visits have included EZ Corp and Cash America. At the same time, ATF continues to participate in industry events such as the Orchid Advisors Firearms Industry Compliance Conference in May, The FireArms Import/Export Roundtable (FAIR) in August, and the Institute of Makers of Explosives’ spring meeting in Arizona, among others.

Early results suggest a positive response from explosives and firearms industry representatives who have hosted and shared information with ATF visitors. In addition, ATF representatives have appreciated the face-to-face meetings that have allowed them to strengthen relationships with firearms and explosives industries.

And while the goal was to establish regular ATF visits and interaction, industry members have visited ATF to discuss regulatory issues and other matters.

On a recent trip, ATF Headquarters directorates EPS and Field Operations, and ATF Boston Field Division representatives met with officials from O.F. Mossberg, Taurus International Manufacturing Inc., and other manufacturers. Participants included EPS AD Richardson; Daniel Kumor, Special Agent in Charge, Boston Field Division; Ken Houchens, Director of Industry Operations (DIO), Boston Field Division; Nealy Earl, Area Supervisor, Hartford Area Office; Michael Fronczak, DIO, Baltimore-Washington Field Divisions; Alphonso Hughes, Firearms and Explosives Services Division Division Chief; Max Kingery, Firearms Technology Branch Chief; John Badowski, Firearms Industry Technical Advisor; Eric Epstein, Senior Policy Counsel (firearms and explosives); Andrew Lange, Office of Regulatory Affairs Division Chief; and Ed Courtney, Firearms Industry Programs Branch Chief.

Future visits with other industry members are in the works.