United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to Congressional Requesters

September 1998

FIREARM SAFETY LOCKS

Federal Agency Implementation of the Presidential Directive



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United States
General Accounting Office
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General Government Division

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September 30, 1998

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
The Honorable Charles Schumer
House of Representatives

This report responds to your request for information about compliance with President Clinton's March 1997 directive regarding child safety locks for firearms. The directive required executive departments and agencies to (1) develop and implement a policy requiring that a safety lock device be provided with each handgun issued to federal law enforcement officers, (2) inform all federal law enforcement officers of the policy, and (3) provide accompanying instructions for the proper use of devices when issued. In May 1997, the White House issued a memorandum clarifying that the directive covers all firearms, not just handguns, issued to federal law enforcement officers. The intent of the presidential directive—and the subsequent clarifying memorandum—was, in part, to reduce unauthorized use of firearms and protect children from injury and death.

As you requested, our study addressed two questions: (1) Currently, how many firearms have been issued to or are used in an official capacity by employees at selected federal law enforcement organizations? (2) How have selected federal law enforcement organizations implemented the presidential directive? As you further requested, even though the directive applies only to executive branch organizations, we focused our work on each federal civilian department or agency that has 1,000 or more law enforcement officers. These departments or agencies are

- three executive branch organizations that are subject to the presidential directive—the Department of Justice and the Department of the Treasury, each of which has several components that individually employ over 1,000 law enforcement officers; and the National Park Service, whose rangers and police officers may carry firearms;
- Postal Inspection Service, which is a law enforcement component of the U.S. Postal Service, an independent establishment of the executive branch;
- in the legislative branch, the U.S. Capitol Police, which provides protective services for Members of Congress and other law enforcement services within the U.S. Capitol buildings and grounds; and
- in the judicial branch, federal district courts that employ probation and pretrial service officers who may be authorized to carry firearms.

Collectively, these organizations account for about 92 percent of the total number of federal civilian law enforcement officers who have authority to make arrests and carry firearms, according to a 1996 Bureau of Justice Statistics survey. As table I.1 in appendix I shows, the Justice Department enforcement components we reviewed were the Bureau of Prisons, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and U.S. Marshals Service. Also, the Treasury Department enforcement components we reviewed were the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF); U.S. Customs Service; Internal Revenue Service (IRS); and U.S. Secret Service. To reiterate, even though the presidential directive does not apply to the Postal Inspection Service,[1] the Capitol Police, and the federal courts, you asked that we obtain data, when available, on the number of firearms issued or used by these organizations and determine if they have voluntarily initiated safety lock programs.

In conducting our review, we interviewed knowledgeable officials at the headquarters of each selected agency. We also obtained and reviewed copies of applicable documents, such as safety lock procurement records, implementation policies and guidance, and training manual updates. However, the scope of our work did not constitute a full compliance audit in that we did not visit field offices of the law enforcement agencies to verify that safety locks had been issued. We performed our work from June 1998 to September 1998 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Appendix I presents more details about our objectives, scope, and methodology.

Results in Brief

The three executive branch organizations we reviewed that are subject to the presidential directive—Justice, Treasury, and the National Park Service—have issued about 72,000 firearms to employees, with Justice issuances accounting for about 49,000 (68 percent) of the total. Additionally, these organizations have authorized for official use about 26,000 personally owned firearms. Of this total, Justice authorizations accounted for about 23,000 (88 percent). The Postal Inspection Service has issued about 2,000 firearms to employees and authorized about 400 personally owned firearms for official use. The Capitol Police has issued approximately 1,100 firearms to officers but does not allow personally owned firearms to be used for official duties. The Administrative Office of

[1]The U.S. Postal Service is an independent establishment of the executive branch. According to an Associate Director in the White House Domestic Policy Council, the U.S. Postal Service's law enforcement components are not subject to the presidential directive.

the U.S. Courts had no readily available, centralized data showing the number of firearms issued to or used by federal judicial district officers.

Justice, Treasury, and National Park Service officials told us their organizations have taken appropriate steps to implement the presidential directive. In implementing the presidential directive, these organizations are requiring that all firearms issued to employees, as well as personally owned firearms authorized for official use, be equipped with safety lock devices. Generally, these organizations did not require safety lock devices for firearms that are maintained in secure agency facilities and not taken home by employees. Our review verified that these organizations have developed and taken actions to communicate a safety lock policy to their law enforcement officers. Initially, for instance, these organizations issued memoranda or other communications to field units informing them of the presidential directive and, subsequently, included a section on safety lock devices in the firearms training provided to new agents. Also, our review indicated that these organizations have purchased a sufficient number of safety lock devices for all issued firearms. However, regarding personally owned firearms authorized for official use, these organizations differ on whether the agency or the employees should pay for safety lock devices. Further, our review of program documentation confirmed that written instructions for properly attaching safety lock devices to firearms were available at the executive branch organizations we contacted.

The Postal Inspection Service has voluntarily developed and taken actions to communicate a safety lock policy to its law enforcement officers and has purchased safety lock devices for all permanently issued and personally owned firearms authorized for official use by its inspectors. The Postal Inspection Service does not require safety lock devices for firearms that are maintained in secure agency vaults and not taken home. At the time of our review, the Capitol Police was in the process of updating its firearms policy and was ordering lock boxes for home storage of firearms issued to its officers. The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts has provided the 94 federal judicial districts guidance on the use of firearms, including a suggestion that safety lock devices be used. However, according to the Administrative Office, each district has the discretion to establish its own policies, and the Administrative Office had no readily available summary or overview of current policies and practices in all districts.

Background

In his March 5, 1997, directive to heads of executive departments and agencies, President Clinton noted that firearms claim the lives of children daily and were the fourth leading cause of accidental deaths among children ages 5 to 14. In order to have the federal government serve as an example of gun safety, the President required that a safety lock device be provided with each handgun issued to federal law enforcement officers, in part, to reduce unauthorized use of handguns and protect children from injury and death. In May 1997, the White House issued a memorandum to all chiefs of staff clarifying that the directive covers all firearms, not just handguns, issued to federal law enforcement officers.

Generally, before the presidential directive was issued, many federal agencies, such as DEA, FBI, and INS, already had developed firearms safety policies and were training their employees on how to properly secure their firearms when not in use. Further, the curriculum at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center specifically addressed the need for officers to use caution in securing firearms at home when children are present. Also, FBI and ATF officials told us that before the 1997 directive, their agencies were purchasing and distributing safety lock devices for all handguns issued to their agents. Similarly, National Park Service and Postal Inspection Service officials told us that before the 1997 directive, their agencies were providing—at the discretion of local management—lock boxes for home storage of firearms.

The 1997 presidential directive did not mandate use of a particular brand or one specific type of safety lock device. However, the directive did require that when properly installed on a firearm and secured by means of a key or combination lock, the device should prevent the firearm from being discharged. The directive also allowed for locking mechanisms that are incorporated into the design of firearms rather than having to be attached.

Approximate Number of Firearms Issued or Used in an Official Capacity

At the time of our review, issuances of firearms to law enforcement officers by Justice, Treasury, and the National Park Service collectively totaled approximately 72,000 weapons. As presented in table 1, this estimate consisted of about 61,000 handguns and about 11,000 shoulder weapons, such as shotguns and rifles. Also, as noted in the table, this estimate represented only those firearms that had been issued to officers and that could remain in their possession at all times, including at home. Thus, for example, the numbers shown in table 1 do not include firearms issued by the Bureau of Prisons, an agency whose weapons are available

for official use during work schedules but are otherwise usually retained in secure agency facilities.

In addition to agency-issued firearms, table 1 shows that Justice, Treasury, and the National Park Service have authorized for official use an estimated total of at least 26,000 personally owned firearms. According to the agency representatives we contacted, almost all of this total consists of handguns.

The Postal Inspection Service, as table 1 shows, has issued an estimated 2,000 handguns to inspectors and authorized for official use an additional estimated 400 personally owned handguns. The Postal Inspection Service said it maintains all shoulder weapons in secure agency facilities when not in use. The total does not include firearms used by uniformed police officers who, after completing a daily tour of duty, leave their firearms in secure agency facilities.

The Capitol Police, as table 1 shows, has issued about 1,100 handguns to officers but said it maintains all shoulder weapons in secure facilities when not in use. The Capitol Police does not authorize for official use any personally owned firearms.

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts did not have aggregate data showing the number of firearms issued to or authorized for use by probation and pretrial service officers in the 94 federal judicial districts.

Table 1: Approximate Number of Firearms Issued to or Used by Federal Law Enforcement Officers

	Number of firearms issued to individual officers[a]			Number of personally owned firearms authorized for official use
Organization	**Total**	**Handguns**	**Shoulder weapons[b]**	
Executive branch organizations subject to the directive				
Justice	48,900[c]	39,300	9,500	22,800[d]
Treasury	21,600[e]	20,200	1,300	3,000[f]
National Park Service[g]	1,600	1,600	Not available	200
Subtotal	**72,100**	**61,100**	**10,800**	**26,000**
Independent establishment of the executive branch				
Postal Inspection Service[h]	2,000	2,000	None	400
Legislative branch				
Capitol Police[i]	1,100	1,100	None	Not applicable

(continued)

Organization	Number of firearms issued to individual officers[a]			Number of personally owned firearms authorized for official use
	Total	Handguns	Shoulder weapons[b]	
Judicial branch				
Federal judicial districts[j]	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Total	**73,300**	**62,300**	**10,800**	**26,400**

Note: Totals and subtotals are sums of numbers that have been rounded to the nearest hundred. Rows may not add due to rounding.

[a]Data represent firearms that could be readily identified in central agency databases—or estimated by agency officials—as permanently issued to individuals (i.e., firearms that may be taken home by employees). The data do not include firearms that are used for official daily duty tours or specific operations and returned to vaults or other secure agency facilities when not in use.

[b]Shoulder weapons are firearms, such as shotguns and rifles, that are fired from the shoulder.

[c]Data represent firearms issued by four Justice enforcement components—DEA, FBI, INS, and the Marshals Service. DEA, FBI, and the Marshals Service provided estimates, and INS provided data from its firearms database. The other Justice component we reviewed, the Bureau of Prisons, keeps firearms in secure facilities when officers are off duty.

[d]Data represent estimates of the number of personally owned firearms authorized for official use by three Justice components—FBI, INS, and Marshals Service. DEA did not maintain organizationwide data and could not estimate the number of these firearms. The Bureau of Prisons does not authorize personally owned firearms for official use.

[e]Data represent firearms issued by the four Treasury components we reviewed—ATF, Customs Service, IRS, and Secret Service. IRS' Criminal Investigation Division provided an estimate, and IRS Internal Security provided actual issuance data.

[f]Data represent personally owned firearms authorized for official use by the Customs Service. The remaining three Treasury enforcement components—ATF, IRS, and Secret Service—do not generally authorize personally owned firearms for official use (see table 2).

[g]Data represent the agency's estimate—based on firearms policy and number of employees—of how many primary-duty firearms, i.e., handguns, are issued to nonseasonal enforcement rangers. Organizationwide data on total number of shoulder weapons were not centrally available.

[h]Data represent the Service's estimate—based on firearms policy and number of employees—of handguns issued to inspectors. The Postal Inspection Service said it maintains all shoulder weapons in secure agency facilities when not in use.

[i]The Capitol Police said it maintains shoulder weapons in secure agency facilities when not in use and does not allow officers to use personally owned firearms for official duties.

[j]Nationwide data on the number of firearms issued to or authorized for use by probation and pretrial service officers in federal judicial districts were not centrally available.

Source: Developed by GAO on the basis of agency firearms database records and/or testimonial evidence provided by knowledgeable organization officials.

Firearm Safety Lock Program Implementation

The following two sections, respectively, discuss (1) implementation of the presidential directive by Justice, Treasury, and the National Park Service; and (2) voluntary implementation of firearm safety lock programs by the Postal Inspection Service, the Capitol Police, and federal judicial districts, which are not subject to the presidential directive.

Executive Branch Implementation of the Presidential Directive

Justice, Treasury, and the National Park Service have developed and taken actions to communicate firearms safety lock policies. These organizations require that safety lock devices be provided with each permanently issued firearm. For example, according to knowledgeable officials, new agents are provided a safety lock device concurrently with issuance of a primary duty firearm. In addition, Justice, Treasury, and the National Park Service require that personally owned firearms authorized for official use be equipped with safety lock devices.

Generally, these organizations do not require safety lock devices for firearms that are maintained in secure agency facilities and not taken home by employees. For example, except for the Marshals Service, Justice components do not require safety lock devices for firearms that are used for official daily duty tours or specific operations and returned to vaults or other secure agency facilities when not in use. These organizations do require, however, that firearms be equipped with safety lock devices when taken into home environments.

At the time of our review, Justice, Treasury, and the National Park Service had updated, or were in the process of updating, their firearms policy manuals to reflect safety lock requirements. In addition, these organizations have used various means to inform their employees of applicable firearms safety lock policies. Initially, for instance, these organizations issued memoranda or other communications to field units informing them of the presidential directive. Subsequently, the organizations have included a section on safety lock devices in the firearms training provided to new agents. Also, some agency officials said that use of safety lock devices may be covered during the firearms requalification testing periodically required for agents. Further, we found that the firearms safety training course at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center includes specific instruction on the presidential directive and safety lock devices.

Our review of procurement records and other documents indicates that Justice and Treasury have purchased a sufficient number of safety lock

devices for the total number of firearms issued to individual employees. Regarding the National Park Service, except for documentation of 200 safety locks purchased for new hires, we found that organizationwide safety lock device procurement documentation was not centrally available. However, headquarters officials told us that they had contacted several large parks, whose managers reported that a sufficient number of safety lock devices had been purchased for their employees.

As table 2 shows, the executive branch organizations subject to the presidential directive we reviewed have purchased over 109,000 safety lock devices. Most frequently, universal safety lock devices—which can be used on a variety of firearm types—were purchased, at a unit cost ranging from about $4.00 to $10.00. Also, Justice, Treasury, and National Park Service officials told us that their respective organizations tested the safety lock devices before purchasing them to ensure that (1) discharge was prevented when the devices were properly attached, and (2) the devices could not be easily removed without having a key or knowing the combination.

Table 2: Comparison of the Approximate Number of Firearms Issued or Used in an Official Capacity to the Number of Safety Lock Devices Purchased by Selected Executive Branch Enforcement Components Subject to the Directive

Executive branch enforcement component	Number of firearms issued to individual officers[a] (rounded to the nearest hundred)	Number of personally owned firearms authorized for official use (rounded to the nearest hundred)	Number of safety lock devices purchased (actual)	Comments
Justice				
Bureau of Prisons	None See comments	None[b]	2,179	Bureau of Prisons firearms are to be kept in secure facilities when officers are off duty. Safety locks are to be issued for firearms only when used for off-facility activities, i.e., for armed escorts of prisoners or for personal security in reservation housing (e.g., wardens' homes).
DEA	6,000[c]	Not available[d]	8,000	DEA requires agents to purchase safety locks for personally owned firearms authorized for official use.
FBI	22,600[c]	20,000[c]	24,987	In September 1998, the FBI made a funding policy decision to pay for safety locks for personally owned firearms authorized for official use.
INS	18,400	600[c]	23,400	

(continued)

Executive branch enforcement component	Number of firearms issued to individual officers[a] (rounded to the nearest hundred)	Number of personally owned firearms authorized for official use (rounded to the nearest hundred)	Number of safety lock devices purchased (actual)	Comments
Marshals Service	1,900[c]	2,200[c]	10,439	The Marshals Service requires safety locks for all firearms, including firearms maintained in secure facilities when not in use. Initially, the agency centrally purchased 10,439 safety lock devices to cover all handguns and shoulder weapons (including handguns issued to court security officers, who are not Marshals Service employees). Subsequently, individual districts and employees have purchased additional safety locks. According to the Chief of District Affairs, the total number of safety locks purchased equals or exceeds the total number of firearms in inventory.
Subtotal	**48,900**	**22,800**	**69,005**	
Treasury				
ATF	3,000	None[b]	6,932	
Customs Service	11,800	3,000	22,500	
IRS[e]	3,400[c]	None[b]	4,515	
Secret Service	3,400	See comments	6,150	The Secret Service generally does not certify personally owned firearms for official use during duty tours. However, the agency does certify such firearms for off-duty purposes and has purchased a sufficient number of safety locks for these firearms.
Subtotal	**21,600**	**3,000**	**40,097**	
National Park Service	1,600[c]	200[c]	200	The Service does not have organizationwide data on all firearms issued to individuals.
	See comments		See comments	The 1,600 firearms represent an estimate of the number of primary-duty weapons issued to nonseasonal enforcement rangers. The Service requires each park to purchase and issue safety locks. Thus, there were no centrally available data on total safety lock purchases. The 200 safety locks represent only the number purchased for new employees.
Total	**72,100**	**26,000**	**109,302**	

(Table notes on next page)

[a]The data represent firearms that could be readily identified in central agency databases—or estimated by agency officials—as issued to individual employees and do not include firearms that are maintained in vaults or other secure facilities and not taken home by employees.

[b]The organization does not authorize personally owned firearms to be used for official duties.

[c]The data represent estimates by organization officials.

[d]Organizationwide data were not centrally or readily available, and headquarters officials could not provide an estimate.

[e]The data represent totals for IRS Criminal Investigation Division and IRS Internal Security.

Source: Developed by GAO on the basis of agency firearms database records, procurement documents, and/or testimonial evidence provided by knowledgeable organization officials.

Knowledgeable Justice and Treasury officials told us that safety lock devices generally have been issued to all appropriate employees according to the respective organization's policies. The National Park Service had no centrally available, organizationwide data on its firearms safety lock program. However, as indicated above, headquarters officials told us they contacted several large parks, whose managers reported that safety locks devices had been distributed to their employees.

Justice, Treasury, and National Park Service officials told us that their distributions of safety lock devices were accompanied with written instructions for properly attaching the devices to applicable firearms. Our review of safety lock program documentation confirmed that written instructions were available at all of the organizations we contacted.

An implementation issue that reflects differences among executive branch organizations is the funding of safety lock devices for personally owned firearms authorized for official use. Within the Justice Department, for example, DEA's policy is to require its officers to pay for safety locks for these firearms; INS purchases safety locks for personally owned firearms authorized for use by its officers. Also, in September 1998, the FBI made a funding policy decision to pay for safety locks for such firearms used by its officers. As table 2 shows, the FBI has by far the largest estimated number (20,000) of personally owned firearms authorized for official use. Treasury components that authorize personally owned firearms for official use purchase safety lock devices for these firearms. The National Park Service requires employees to pay for safety lock devices for these firearms.

Firearms Safety Lock Programs of Three Organizations Not Subject to the Presidential Directive

The Postal Inspection Service—a law enforcement component of the U.S. Postal Service, an independent establishment of the executive branch—is not subject to the presidential directive, according to the White House Domestic Policy Council. However, the Postal Inspection Service voluntarily initiated a safety lock program in response to the presidential directive. As of August 1998, the Postal Inspection Service employed about 2,200 inspectors and about 1,400 uniformed police officers. The agency requires safety locks for all permanently issued firearms and personally owned firearms authorized for official use by its inspectors. The agency does not require safety locks for the firearms used by its uniformed police officers because these weapons are maintained in secure agency vaults and are not taken home. The agency initially issued a memorandum informing its employees about the safety lock program and currently is updating its firearms policy manual to reflect safety lock requirements.

At the time of our review, the Postal Inspection Service had purchased 2,500 safety locks, which represent a sufficient number for all permanently issued and personally owned firearms authorized for official use by its inspectors. According to the Inspector-in-Charge of the agency's training academy, safety lock devices have been issued with written instructions to all inspectors. Also, the Inspector-in-Charge said that agency staff (1) discuss safety lock policy during semiannual firearms requalification tests; and (2) ensure, during annual personal property inventory checks, that each inspector has an appropriate number of firearms safety locks.

The Capitol Police, a legislative branch agency, is not subject to the presidential directive. However, the Capitol Police has voluntarily begun its own firearms safety efforts, in part, in response to the presidential directive. At the time of our review, the agency was in the process of updating its firearms policy and purchasing keyed safety lock boxes—at a cost of about $25 each—for home storage of firearms issued to its approximately 1,100 police officers, according to the Deputy Chief of the Administrative Services Bureau.

Federal district courts, which, as part of the judicial branch, are not subject to the presidential directive, employ probation and pretrial service officers. As of August 1998, the 94 federal judicial districts employed a total of 3,805 probation officers and 574 pretrial service officers, according to a senior official at the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. The Administrative Office has provided the 94 judicial districts guidance on the use of firearms, including a suggestion that safety lock devices be used. However, according to the Administrative Office, each district has the

discretion to establish its own firearms policy, including whether to authorize probation and pretrial service officers to carry firearms. In response to our inquiry, the Administrative Office had no readily available summary or overview of all districts' current policies and practices. However, a senior Administrative Office official noted that as of July 1998, at least 10 of the 94 federal judicial districts prohibited officers from carrying firearms.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report for review and comment to the Departments of Justice and the Treasury, the National Park Service, the Postal Inspection Service, the Capitol Police, and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. We received comments during the period September 2 to 14, 1998. Generally, the various agencies provided technical comments and clarifications, which have been incorporated in this report where appropriate.

We received comments from the Departments of Justice and the Treasury, which indicated that the draft was reviewed by representatives from the Bureau of Prisons, DEA, FBI, INS, the Marshals Service, ATF, the Customs Service, IRS, the Secret Service, and the Department of the Treasury's Office of Enforcement. The Departments generally concurred with the substance of the report. Officials from one Treasury component, the Customs Service, believed that we had not given enough credit for their efforts to account for firearms because we allowed other agencies to provide estimates of firearms data. The Customs Service noted that it and some other agencies had developed and maintained life-cycle accountability over firearms via automated or other tracking systems. We agree that all agencies should be able to account for the firearms they use but, given our short time frame, some agencies were unable to provide specific data on the number of firearms that may be taken home by officers. However, these agencies did provide a credible basis for their estimates and said that they could have provided exact data if given more time to respond to our request. Generally, we believe that the report adequately identifies and caveats the sources of firearms data presented.

We received comments from the Deputy Chief Ranger, National Park Service headquarters; the Deputy Chief Inspector (Administration), Postal Inspection Service; the Deputy Chief of the Administrative Services Bureau, Capitol Police; and the Chief of the Office of Program Assessment, Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, all of whom agreed with the substance of the report.

As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from the date of this letter. At that time, we will send copies of this report to the Chairmen and Ranking Minority Members of committees and subcommittees with jurisdiction over law enforcement issues; the Attorney General; the Secretary of the Treasucry; the Postmaster General, U.S. Postal Service; the Director, National Park Service; the Director, Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; and other interested parties. We will also make copies available to others on request.

Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix II. Please contact me on (202) 512-8777 if you or your staff have any questions.

Richard M. Stana

Richard M. Stana
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Contents

Letter 1

Appendix I
Objectives, Scope, and Methodology 16

Appendix II
Major Contributors to This Report 22

Tables

Table 1: Approximate Number of Firearms Issued to or Used by Federal Law Enforcement Officers 5

Table 2: Comparison of the Approximate Number of Firearms Issued or Used in an Official Capacity to the Number of Safety Lock Devices Purchased by Selected Executive Branch Enforcement Components Subject to the Directive 8

Table I.1: Number of Federal Civilian Law Enforcement Officers by Agency 18

Abbreviations

ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
IRS	Internal Revenue Service

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

As agreed with the requesters' offices, our objectives were to determine (1) the number of firearms currently issued to or used in an official capacity by employees at selected federal law enforcement organizations and (2) how selected federal organizations have implemented President Clinton's March 1997 directive regarding firearm safety locks. This directive, and a subsequent clarifying memorandum, required executive departments and agencies to (1) develop and implement a policy requiring that safety locks be provided for all firearms issued to federal law enforcement officers, (2) inform all such officers of the policy, and (3) provide instructions for the proper use of safety locks.

To address these objectives, we obtained firearm and safety lock data from

- five Justice Department components—the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the Bureau of Prisons, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the U.S. Marshals Service;
- four Treasury Department components—the U.S. Customs Service, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the U.S. Secret Service, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF); and
- the National Park Service.

Each of these 10 executive branch organizations, according to a 1996 survey by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, employed 1,000 or more law enforcement officers (see table I.1). Overall, as the table shows, the law enforcement officers in these organizations make up about 82 percent of the total number of civilian law enforcement officers in the federal workforce.

At the behest of the requesters, we also obtained data, when available, on the number of firearms issued or authorized by 3 federal organizations (each with 1,000 or more law enforcement officers) not subject to the presidential directive and their safety lock policies and practices. These organizations were the Postal Inspection Service (an enforcement component of the U.S. Postal Service, an independent establishment of the executive branch); the U.S. Capitol Police (legislative branch); and, collectively, the federal district courts (judicial branch). Thus, by including these three organizations in the scope of our work, along with Justice, Treasury, and the National Park Service, we encompassed in our review all organizations that employ 1,000 or more federal civilian law enforcement

officers and, thereby, covered about 92 percent of the total number of federal civilian law enforcement officers. (See table I.1.)

Table I.1: Number of Federal Civilian Law Enforcement Officers by Agency (as of June 1996)

Agency	Number of officers	Component percentage	Cumulative percentage
Executive branch organizations subject to the directive			
Justice Department			
INS	12,403		
Bureau of Prisons	11,329		
FBI	10,389		
DEA	2,946		
Marshals Service	2,650		
Treasury Department			
Customs Service	9,749		
IRS	3,784		
Secret Service	3,185		
ATF	1,869		
National Park Service	2,148[b]		
Subtotal	**60,452**	**81.5**	**81.5**
Independent establishment of the executive branch			
Postal Inspection Service	3,576	4.8	86.3
Legislative branch			
U.S. Capitol Police	1,031	1.4	87.7
Judicial branch			
Federal judicial districts	2,777[c]	3.7	91.5
Other civilian agencies[d]	6,294	8.5	100.0
Total number of federal civilian law enforcement officers[e]	**74,130**	**100.0**	

Note: Percentages may not add due to rounding.

[a]The Bureau of Justice Statistics (1) defined a federal law enforcement officer as any full-time employee having the authority to make arrests and carry firearms and (2) excluded law enforcement officers serving in foreign countries or U.S. territories and those employed by the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Armed Forces.

[b]This figure includes enforcement park rangers and park police officers.

[c]This figure includes probation officers in all 94 federal judicial districts.

[d]Among others, these agencies include Justice and Treasury components, such as Offices of Inspector General, the U.S. Mint, and the Bureau of Printing and Engraving, that each employ fewer than 1,000 law enforcement officers.

[e]The total number of federal civilian law enforcement officers excludes Defense Department civilian employees. Also, the total excludes certain federal or federally contracted employees, such as Justice security personnel, who provide physical security for buildings.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Federal Law Enforcement Officers, 1996.

To obtain information on the number of firearms issued to law enforcement officers in Justice, Treasury, the National Park Service, the Postal Inspection Service, the U.S. Capitol Police, and federal district courts, we reviewed relevant available records and databases and/or interviewed headquarters officials knowledgeable about their respective organizations' firearms inventories, databases, policies, and practices. We requested the organizations to break down their firearms data by gun type, i.e., handguns and shoulder weapons (e.g., rifles and shotguns).

We focused specifically on the number of firearms issued to individual employees—i.e., firearms that can remain in the employees' possession at all times and be taken home—rather than firearms that are available for official use during work schedules or specific operations but otherwise retained in field office vaults or other secure facilities. When specific data regarding issuances of firearms to individual employees were not available, we requested and obtained estimates based on the organization's firearms policies and practices, number of current enforcement officials, and other relevant information. Regarding Justice components, for example, DEA and the FBI each have a centralized firearms database; however, the databases do not include specific information indicating whether the firearms are issued to individuals versus retained in field office vaults for use in specific operations. Thus, the firearms training units of DEA and the FBI provided us estimates of the number of firearms issued to their respective agencies' employees.

We also sought to determine the number of firearms that were personally owned by law enforcement officers and authorized for official use. When organizationwide data on the number of personally owed firearms authorized for official use were not readily available, we requested and obtained, when possible, estimates based on the organization's firearms policies and practices, number of current enforcement officials, and/or other relevant information.

We did not independently verify the reliability of the firearms-related data provided to us. However, we did question agency officials about reliability issues, such as how data were collected, what tests or general system reviews were conducted to ensure that data were accurate, and whether any concerns had been raised about the reliability or accuracy of these data. The officials stated that firearms transactions data—e.g., records of purchases, issuances, transfers, and disposals—are entered into the applicable database system. To ensure accuracy, the officials said that the respective agency periodically conducts reviews or tests, such as

comparing the results of annual physical inventories to database balances. Generally, the officials told us they had no particular concerns about the reliability or accuracy of their respective organizations' firearms data. However, INS officials noted that the agency's centralized database may underreport the total firearms inventory somewhat due to time lags in data input of approximately a few weeks. The officials explained that some field offices are unable to provide on-line updates and, thus, these offices send paper documents to the National Firearms Unit. This may result in some data not having been entered into the agency's centralized database at the time of our request for firearms information.

To determine how Justice, Treasury, and the National Park Service have implemented the presidential directive regarding firearm safety locks, we reviewed the directive, including any explanatory memoranda, that set out the basic requirements for compliance. We also interviewed an Associate Director in the White House Domestic Policy Council knowledgeable about the presidential directive. In addition, we interviewed appropriate officials at the organizations listed in table I.1 and obtained and reviewed relevant documentation regarding (1) their organizations' implementation of firearm safety lock policies, (2) how their organizations informed law enforcement officers of these policies, and (3) what instructions their organizations provided for use of firearms safety locks. In addition, we interviewed officials and obtained and reviewed relevant documentation from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center regarding how requirements of the presidential directive were incorporated into the Center's curriculum.

Also, to determine whether Justice, Treasury, and the National Park Service purchased an appropriate number of firearm safety locks based on each organization's interpretation of the directive, we interviewed appropriate agency officials, obtained centrally available procurement documentation, and compared the number and type of safety locks purchased to the number and type of firearms subject to the directive, as defined by each organization. To determine whether the safety locks purchased were in compliance with the requirements of the directive, we (1) compared the descriptions of the types of locks purchased to the criteria specified in the directive and (2) interviewed appropriate organization officials regarding any testing conducted to ensure that the purchased locks successfully prevented the discharge of firearms and could not be easily removed without having a key or knowing the combination.

To determine what policies and practices, if any, the Postal Inspection Service, the Capitol Police, and federal district courts had developed regarding firearm safety locks, we interviewed knowledgeable officials and reviewed relevant, centrally available documentation. For example, we interviewed the Inspector-in-Charge of the Postal Inspection Service's training academy and obtained and reviewed documentation regarding the organization's firearms safety lock policies, guidance, instructions, and procurements. Also, we interviewed the Deputy Chief of the Capitol Police's Administrative Services Bureau and obtained and reviewed documentation regarding the agency's firearms safety policies and practices. Regarding federal judicial districts, we contacted the Office of Program Assessment within the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts to obtain and review applicable guidance on the use of firearms safety locks.

Due to time constraints and the number of organizations included in our review, we did not visit field offices to (1) obtain additional or more specific firearms data or (2) verify that the correct number and type of safety lock devices had been distributed to all appropriate employees according to the respective organization's policies.

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