Terry-Dawn Hewitt, Esq.
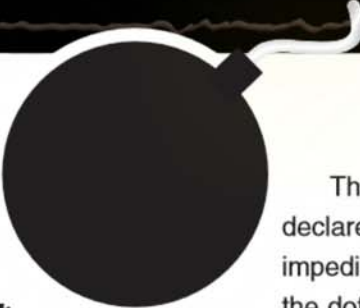Co-Chair*

IAAI Fire
Investigation
Standards
Committee
(FISC)

The Bomb and Arson Tracking System*

The Bomb Arson Tracking System (BATS) is a Web-based computerized case management system for law enforcement and public safety agencies. The purpose of BATS is to collect data and to provide investigators with analytical products to assist in the investigation of crimes related to the criminal misuse of explosives and acts of arson.

It is easily accessible, contains powerful tools for trend analysis, and allows nationwide searching of similarities in bombing and arson motives, device components, and potential suspects. Each agency administers their BATS account. For law enforcement agencies, (BATS) is the reporting link to the United States Bomb Data Center (USBDC), the national database (repository) for explosives and arson incident information.

BATS serves as the national repository for arson and explosives incidents. It contains data on over 300,000 incidents dating back to the 1970s. There are currently over 9,700 BATS users.

The 911 Commission declared that, "the biggest impediment to connecting the dots is the human or systemic resistance to sharing information." This theme is universal to all investigations. A key recommendation was the creation of a "trusted information network ' to facilitate better information sharing at the local, State, and Federal levels. BATS is the solution to law enforcement and public safety's long-term inaccessibility to real-time fire and explosives incidents by providing a trusted means to exchange information across the country. Investigations increasingly involve other jurisdictions and transient subjects.

BATS provides your unit with state-of-the-art technology to manage and keep track of all your investigations and administrative activities. Users can easily create professional reports using standardized terminology for consistency. This provides the investigator with the ability to efficiently communicate investigative findings with a prosecutor and other instigators. BATS reports are printed with your agency's official letterhead.

BATS helps investigators easily manage and track their investigations. As there are multiple facets and each case is different, BATS aids investigators in organizing the case by easily documenting facts and evidence. It also helps investigators with planning their investigation.

BATS gives investigators access to various pre-formatted reports that provide a detailed

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representation of their incident data. These forms include the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) for arson statistics, a Fire Marshal Summary form and a Hazardous Devices School (HDS) form for bomb squad statistics. As the information has already been entered once, a user does not have to re-enter case detail to generate different reports.

BATS users include State Fire Marshals, Fire Investigation Units, Fusion Centers, State Police, Bomb Squads and other law enforcement.

In 2004, the Attorney General mandated that "all of the Department's arson and explosives incident databases [be consolidated] into a single database," which is now known as the Bomb and Arson Tracking System (BATS). This was reinforced in 2010 by the Deputy Attorney General's Office.

ATF and the United States Bomb Data Center (USBDC) released the latest version of BATS to the community in January 2014. BATS (Version 7.1.2) features numerous improvements developed as a result of feedback from system users, and has a new and improved look and feel with even more investigative resources for the arson and explosives investigative community.

BATS has been endorsed by the International Association of Bomb Technicians and Investigators (IABTI), the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI), the National Bomb Squad Commanders Advisory Board (NBSCAB), and is supported by the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC).

The BATS program is separate from the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) database. Whereas the primary mission of NFIRS is to collect fire incident information, BATS is dedicated to documenting the "follow-up" investigation (i.e. case management). According to the U.S. Fire Administration, NFIRS is not intended to replace an arson information management system such as BATS. BATS is part of the curriculum at the National Fire Academy's Fire/Arson Origin and Cause Determination offering in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

For more information on BATS, please visit the website at http://www.atf.gov/content/arson

Information for this article was provided by the Bomb and Arson Tracking System, United States Bomb Data Center, submitted by Special Agent Certified Fire Investigator Mark A. Teufert.