

FOIA MARKER

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Folder Title:
Crime: Church Arsons

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**FIRST YEAR REPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT
Draft -- Thursday 3:30**

Overview

In early 1996, federal officials began to detect a sharp rise in the number of reported attacks on our nation's houses of worship, especially African American churches in the South. This trend troubled communities, challenged law enforcement agencies, and stirred the nation's conscience.

In June 1996, President Clinton made the investigation of these fires a top priority of federal law enforcement and called upon all Americans to come together in a spirit of respect and reconciliation.

The President directed his Administration to implement a strategy to (1) identify and prosecute the arsonists; (2) help communities rebuild the burned churches; and (3) offer assistance in preventing more fires. Working together with state and local law enforcement, federal officials achieved great success on these fronts. Significantly, many Americans came together as a result of these arsons, often independent of this effort, to lend assistance in many ways.

PROSECUTIONS

- Federal and state authorities have arrested 199 suspects since January 1995.
- The 35% rate of arrest in church arson cases is more than double the 16% arrest rate for arsons in general.
- More than three quarters of all defendants arrested since 1995 were arrested after the President established the NCATF.
- Federal and state prosecutors have successfully convicted XXX individuals in connection with fires at XX houses of worship.
- Overall, the NCATF has opened investigations of 429 arsons, bombings or attempted bombings that have occurred at houses of worship between January 1, 1995 and May 27, 1997.

REBUILDING

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is working closely with the National Council of Churches and the Congress of National Black Churches in the rebuilding effort.
- As a result of this cooperation, XX churches have been rebuilt and XX churches are undergoing construction.
- HUD is administering a \$10 million Federal Loan Guarantee Fund to assist with the rebuilding of houses of worship and other non-profit organizations that have been damaged or destroyed by arson. This fund was established by Congress as part of the 1996 Church Arson Prevention Act.

PREVENTION

- Arson prevention efforts continue across the nation. The Department of Justice awarded \$3 million in grants to counties in 13 states to intensify their enforcement and surveillance efforts around vulnerable houses of worship.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) established a Clearinghouse for arson prevention resources that has received over XXX telephone inquiries from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and has distributed over XXX packets of arson prevention materials, including the NCATF Church Threat Assessment Guide.
- FEMA efforts also include a three city pilot project in Nashville, Charlotte and Macon to develop grass-roots arson prevention programs. [ADD MORE!!!]

Led by James E. Johnson, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (Enforcement) and Isabelle Katz Pinzler, Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, who replaced Deval L. Patrick, former Assistant Attorney General, the NCATF formalized the coordination of investigations already underway. The NCATF brought together the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Justice Department prosecutors, the United States Attorneys, victim/witness coordinators, the Community Relations Service and the U.S. Marshals Service, in partnership with state and local officers and prosecutors.

As a result of this partnership, local task forces were formed where needed, and federal authorities supported every prosecution. Their efforts have been aided significantly by support from the Congress, which provided additional statutory authority and resources for these investigations.

I. Prosecuting Perpetrators

A. Coordinating the Investigations

In 1996, following a series of fires around the time of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, federal authorities began to focus on the sharp increase in reports of attacks on churches, particularly African American churches in the South. The pattern of church fires led officials to take steps to improve the coordination within federal law enforcement and between federal, state and local law enforcement.

In June 1996, President Clinton established the National Church Arson Task Force to better coordinate the efforts of federal, state and local law enforcement. Shortly thereafter, Attorney General Reno directed U.S. Attorneys to establish local task forces focusing on church arsons, or to join an existing local task force. The local task force is to include state and local law enforcement and fire prevention officials, representatives of the ATF and FBI, mediators from the Community Relations Service, and victim/ witness coordinators.

In addition to the local task forces, the NCATF established an operations team in Washington staffed by special agents of the ATF and the FBI, as well as seasoned prosecutors from U.S. Attorney's Offices and the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. Working with local task forces, the operations team continues to investigate incidents, analyze potential connections and prosecute cases.

Since the formalization of the task force, more than 200 ATF and FBI investigators have been deployed to work with more than XX federal prosecutors and state and local authorities. It is one of the largest series of arson investigations in history and is currently the largest civil rights investigation underway.

B. Conducting the Investigations

For years, many arsons at houses of worship were handled by local authorities, and not reported to federal authorities. As a result, local law enforcement often did not benefit from the resources of the federal government in pursuing these incidents. Following the formation of the task force, local law enforcement began regularly reporting these incidents to federal authorities and they are now receiving greater assistance.

From its inception, the NCATF developed a protocol for investigating and prosecuting suspected arsons. The protocol sets forth procedures for facilitating the exchange of information among task force agencies, developing an investigative plan for each incident, and ensuring that investigators pursue all lines of inquiry, including whether the

crime was motivated by race or religion, and whether any one incident is connected to any other.

Once an investigation is opened, the NCATF compiles statistical information about the investigation in a unified database. In addition, the databases and computer systems of the ATF and FBI are used to track and analyze evidence about attacks on houses of worship and to generate investigative leads.

During the investigation, the FBI calls upon its experience in conducting civil rights investigations and the ATF relies on its experience in conducting arson and explosives investigations. In fact, since the inception of the task force, FBI agents have trained ATF agents on how to conduct civil rights investigations, and ATF agents have trained FBI agents on how to conduct arson investigations.

As the past year has proven, arson cases are among the most difficult criminal cases to solve. Forensic evidence is often destroyed with the fire. Moreover, because some of the churches burned are located in isolated, rural areas, there are often no eye witnesses to the incident. For these reasons, the arsons can often take years to solve. Further, as with many criminal acts, it is difficult to discern the motive for setting fire to a house of worship.

C. Strengthening Laws and Adding Resources

Over the past year, Congress has offered tremendous support to the investigatory efforts of the task force, both in terms of toughening federal laws and providing additional resources.

When the task force was formalized, federal prosecutors relied on several statutes to prosecute arson cases. They had authority, under the Anti-Arson Act of 1982, to prosecute those who used fire to destroy property involved in interstate commerce (18 U.S.C. 844(i)). Under criminal civil rights statutes, they also had the authority to prosecute those who conspired to deprive persons of their civil rights or who desecrated religious property or a house of worship (18 U.S.C. 241 and 247).

On July 3, 1996, President Clinton signed the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996, which granted federal prosecutors greater power in pursuing church burnings and desecrations. Sponsored by Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), Senator Lauch Faircloth (R-NC), Congressman Henry J. Hyde (R-IL) and Congressman John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI), the statute was passed unanimously by both chambers of Congress.

Under the new law, which amended 18 U.S.C. 247, federal prosecutors no longer have to demonstrate that the incident involved the use of interstate facilities or show that the resulting damage totaled \$10,000. In addition, prosecutors can now seek sentences of up to 20 years imprisonment for arson.

In August 1996, Congress provided more than \$12 million to support ATF's role in the task force, until the end of the fiscal year. The next month, Congress appropriated an additional \$12 million for ATF's role in the following fiscal year. Additional funds for task force activities by the Justice Department and the FBI also were appropriated or reprogrammed.

D. Progress

1. Opening Investigations

The NCATF has opened investigations into 429 arsons, bombings or attempted bombings that have occurred at houses of worship between January 1, 1995, and May 27, 1997. This number does not include vandalism or other desecration at houses of worship, which continue to be investigated and prosecuted by the FBI, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and U.S. Attorneys offices. Nor does it include fires that the investigators have determined are accidental.

Of these 429 incidents, 162 have involved African American churches. Three quarters [??] of the fires at African American churches have occurred in the southern United States. While arsons at houses of worship appeared to reach a peak in June 1996, federal authorities continue to receive reports of such arsons. For instance, the NCATF launched 17 investigations in March 1997, 21 investigations in April 1997, and 12 investigations in May 1997. [See "Chart A" identifying the numbers of NCATF investigations launched each month over the past year.]

For every new suspicious fire, the NCATF continues to launch a new investigation. As of May 27, 1997, arrests were made in connection with 150 incidents. The task force remains committed to expending the necessary time, resources and effort to solving these crimes and prosecuting those who are responsible.

To expand the sources of information available to investigators, the NCATF established a toll-free tip line for citizens to report information on church arsons.

1-888-ATF-FIRE

To date, the NCATF has received more than XXX calls through its tip line service. The ATF and FBI also are offering rewards for information in a number of arson cases. [ADD: Private rewards -- Nationbank, et.al. offering up to 500,000?]

2. Arrests

The partnership between various enforcement agencies has produced significant number of state and federal arrests that have solved many of the incidents.

Since January 1995, federal and state authorities have arrested 199 suspects in connection with 150 fires at churches and other houses of worship. This 35% rate of arrest is significantly higher than the general arrest rate for arsons, which is approximately 16%, according to Department of Justice statistics.

[DELETE??] Since the formation of the task force, the number of arrests has increased significantly. XXX persons, representing more than three quarters of all defendants arrested since January 1995, were arrested following the formation of the task force.

Of the 199 persons arrested, 34 are African American, 5 are Hispanic and 160 are white. XXX are juveniles. Of the XXX suspects arrested for arsons at African American churches, XXX are white, XXX are African American and XXX is Hispanic. Of the XXX suspects arrested for arsons at non-African American houses of worship, XXX are white, XXX are African American, and XXX are Hispanic. XXX additional white suspects have been arrested for

arsons at both African American churches and non-African American churches.

3. Convicts

Since January 1, 1995, XXX defendants have been convicted in federal and state prosecutions in connection with fires at XXX houses of worship. [See "Chart B" for a list of incidents in which a conviction has been obtained.] These successes include the first convictions under provisions of the 1996 Church Arson Prevention Act. Prosecutions in connection with XXX of the XXX incidents have occurred during the first year after the formation of the task force.

Federal charges are pending in a number of cases, and grand jury investigations are ongoing in many others. Conspiracy charges have been filed, and convictions obtained, in a number of cases involving small numbers of fires. Investigators continue to pursue the question whether broader conspiracies were responsible for some of the fires.

In still other cases, state prosecutions have been initiated in consultation with federal prosecutors or investigators. The NCATF actively monitors these prosecutions to ensure that any federal interest is vindicated and to ensure that accurate information is compiled regarding law enforcement's response to attacks on houses of worship. Often, state prosecutors need not demonstrate motive in order to obtain a conviction.

II. Helping to Rebuild

A. Coordinating the Rebuilding Effort

Working together with a wide array of private organizations and religious organizations, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has forged a coalition with the National Council of Churches, the Congress of National Black Churches, local financial institutions and other organizations. Together they have assessed the overall arson damage and worked to target resources to affected houses of worship as quickly as possible. As a result of this cooperation, 25 churches have been rebuilt and 62 more are currently being constructed.

B. Strengthening Resources to Help Rebuild

At the request of President Clinton, Congress enacted legislation that authorized a HUD loan guarantee program that can be used for church rebuilding. The legislation, which also strengthened the law, made HUD responsible for administering a \$10 million Federal Loan Guarantee Fund to assist with the rebuilding of houses of worship and other non-profit organizations that have been damaged or destroyed by arson.

Through its work with local financial institutions, HUD is working actively with approximately 20% of the churches identifies as candidates for loan assistance.

In addition, the National Rebuilding Initiative will be awarding "rebuilding resource packages" to 79 churches in 18 states in the form of grants from the National Council of Churches, federally guaranteed loans, and volunteer labor and in-kind materials. Of these 79 churches, 13 are eligible for a HUD loan, 20 have received or are eligible for a National Council of Churches grant, and 46 are eligible for a blended resource package of a grant and loan.

C. Reaching out to the Communities

The private-public partnership is continuing to identify other areas where help can be provided. They are conduct on-site visits and group workshops where technical advice and guidance is offered. HUD is also organizing regional workshops to bring together ministers from the burned churches with organizations and financial institutions, volunteers, and other grant-making agencies.

III. Preventing Arsons

A. Coordinating Prevention Efforts

The NCATF, as part of the federal response to church arson, participates in a coordinated effort to enhance local and state programs to prevent fires at houses of worship and to promote arson awareness generally. The National Arson Prevention Initiative, spearheaded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), has focused on coordinating federal resources to support community-based grass roots efforts to prevent arson.

In June 1996, FEMA established a Clearinghouse for arson prevention resources. To date, the Clearinghouse has received over XXX telephone inquiries from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and responded to requests for over XXX packets of arson prevention materials. Included in those materials is the Church Threat Assessment Guide prepared by the NCATF, which informs congregations about steps they can take to make their churches safer, as well as steps to take after an incident has occurred.

B. Strengthening Prevention Resources

1. Providing Grants

In an effort to help communities prevent future arsons, Congress provided additional resources. For instance, the Justice

Department awarded \$3 million in grants to counties from 13 states to intensify their enforcement and surveillance efforts around vulnerable houses of worship. The states were: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

In addition, FEMA released \$774,000 in training grants to enhance state and local arson investigations and prevention capabilities. These grants have been used to deliver National Fire Academy courses by the state fire training organizations and also to support the training of state and regional arson task forces.

[IAAI -- add their efforts!!!]

2. Educating Communities to Prevent Arsons

The NCATF updated and distributed a Church Threat Assessment Guide containing valuable information on the steps that may be taken to prevent fires at houses of worship and the steps to follow after an incident has occurred. Working with FEMA, the task force has distributed over XXX of these booklets.

The NCATF is working closely with FEMA, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the National Sheriffs' Association and southern governors to develop a series of interdisciplinary training conferences and workshops on arson prevention that will be conducted in thirteen targeted southern states in 1997. An additional four regional conferences outside the southern region are also planned.

FEMA has developed a pilot community action program for arson prevention in three communities: Nashville, Tennessee, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Macon, Georgia. A coalition of fire prevention personnel, law enforcement, community, school and business leaders will be recruited to develop local arson prevention programs. These can include workshops on juvenile firesetters, an arson risk assessment survey, an arson hot-line, improved building and fire code enforcement and neighborhood watch programs.

IV. Reconciliations

A. Reaching Out to the Affected Communities

Without the confidence and cooperation of the congregations whose churches burned, many of these investigations, which were difficult at the outset, would have been destined to fail. The NCATF took steps early on to ensure solid, working relationships between law enforcement and the affected communities.

Less than a week after being formalized, the NCATF met with FBI and ATF Special Agents in Charge and U.S. Attorneys from the Southeast region to emphasize the critical importance of pursuing the investigations with vigilance, determination and dispatch, as well as with sensitivity to the needs of the victims.

President Clinton, Vice President Gore, Secretary of the Treasury Robert Rubin and Attorney General Janet Reno have helped reach out to the affected communities, by bringing church arsons to national attention, speaking out forcefully on the commitment of the federal government to solve these church arsons and meeting with ministers from the burned churches.

In June, President Clinton travelled to Greelyville, South Carolina to help dedicate a new church in place of In August, the President and Vice President travelled to Fruitland, Tennessee to help rebuild... And in June, the President

organized an interfaith breakfast where he called on leaders of all faiths to open discussion to resolve our nation's divisions.

Also, Treasury Secretary Rubin and Attorney General Reno instructed Assistant Secretary Johnson and then-Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Patrick to remain in close contact with the affected communities.

In addition to meeting regularly with representatives from the National Council of Churches, the NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Congressional Black Caucus, Assistant Secretary Johnson, then-Assistant Attorney General Patrick, and current Acting Assistant Attorney General Isabelle Katz Pinzler, have travelled throughout the South to meet with church and community leaders and to view personally the devastation these arsons have wrought.

B. Dispatching Conflict Resolution Experts

The Community Relations Service (CRS) also has been an important partner in Task Force outreach efforts. Conflict resolution experts from CRS have worked in many communities affected by church burnings to identify and resolve racial conflicts and reduce racial tensions, to foster healthy relationships between law enforcement and minority communities and to facilitate communications among all parties.

The NCATF also developed, with the help of CRS, and distributed to every ATF and FBI supervisor and U.S. Attorney a "Best Practices" guide for conducting community outreach activities. The guide noted the sources of tension that arson investigations could create both for [and by] law enforcement.

CRS plays an integral part in the Administration's response in local towns and cities, working with over 150 local communities in reducing racial polarization, bridging law enforcement and minority communities, facilitating a biracial rebuilding effort, and training law enforcement on cultural diversity and race relations. Throughout the South, CRS convened a series of dialogues on race relations at which community members learned to better understand their neighbors.

C. Watching the Nation Respond

In addition to the efforts of Congress, federal law enforcement agencies and the states, many private companies and organizations, as well as an untold number of Americans did their part in responding to the arsons.

Private companies offered funds and materials to help rebuild. Airlines reduced fares for individuals travelling south to offer a hand. Religious organizations and private groups organized work camps to construct new churches where old ones once stood. And thousands of Americans donated their time and money to show they cared.

Forty-four VISTA and AmeriCorps volunteers travelled to 18 rural communities in which church arsons have occurred and to 73 other communities in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. In these communities, volunteers conducted community and church threat assessments, organized arson watch groups and town hall meetings on arson prevention, and engaged in community relations projects.

In the end, Americans of all walks of life refused to let these acts of destruction tear apart our communities or our nation.

V. Drawing Preliminary Conclusions

- **Multiple Motives**

The arsons at African American churches raised significant fears about an increase in racially motivated crimes. As a result of our efforts to date, we have determined that the arsons were motivated by a wide array of factors, including blatant racism or religious hatred, but also financial profit, burglary, personal revenge, and plain old vandalism. The task force continues to investigate many cases. When sufficient evidence of racial motive is developed, we will continue to bring criminal civil rights charges, as we have in cases in Alabama, Nevada, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

- **National Conspiracy**

There is still no evidence to date to prove a national conspiracy. For instance, federal authorities have not found links between many of the individuals who were charged with arson. But in several instances, more than one individual was found to be responsible for more than one fire. These conspiracies, though, tend only to exist in defined geographic areas.

- **No Hate Group Conspiracy**

To date, the task force has not found a national conspiracy behind all the arsons. Each defendant or group of defendants were responsible for either one or a handful of arsons. While XX of the XX arrested in XX cases were determined to belong to a hate group, most of the defendants were either not part of a hate group or could not be proven to belong to one. In fact, prosecutors need not show that a

defendant belongs to a particular hate group in order to gain a conviction.

- **No Final Conclusions**

The task force continues to investigate and prosecute those responsible for burning our nation's houses of worship. It is therefore too soon for the task force to speak conclusively to the motivation behind many of the fires at churches and other houses of worship. While it was the number of fires at African American churches that brought these crimes to national attention, the NCATF will continue to investigate and prosecute attacks on all houses of worship, regardless of their denomination or racial composition.

- **Damage**

Hundreds of churches burned, congregations were temporarily displaced, and many people were left wondering how this could happen in the 1990's. According to ATF, damage ranged from.... But, those communities which suffered a burned house of worship came to realize that thousands of Americans really care. The arsonists may have sought to divide our communities by burning our houses of worship, but in the end they only helped bring them closer together.

Conclusion

We need to continue prosecuting, investigating, and rebuilding, but we also know there is more work to do. We have seen how communities can pull together to rebuild. We hope we can build on the progress that we have made here to further address the divisions in our society.

Acknowledgement

The co-chairs of the Task Force would like to thank all of the investigators, prosecutors and others who have worked tirelessly and so well over the course of the last year.

Respectfully submitted,

James E. Johnson
Assistant Secretary
Department of the Treasury

Isabelle Katz Pinzler
Acting Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Justice

QUOTES FOR THE NCATF REPORT

"When we got there it was about a group of Jews wanting to help out and experience the Southern black Christian community--a community which had never seen a Jew before. By the end of the week, it was about a group of blacks experiencing the Jewish community. Soon, whites and blacks were singing Hebrew Hanukkah songs in a Missionary Baptist Church in Alabama. It was a unique experience of coming together."

Gail Foorman, a San Francisco resident who traveled with a group of Jewish community leaders to Greensboro, Alabama to help rebuild the Rising Star Missionary Baptist Church.
415-474-3247

"It's important for the history of this country, it's important to remember the struggle of this country. It serves as a reminder as to how we all pulled together as a country to fight racism and hatred. This is the first time I've seen FBI, ATF and local and state law enforcement all working together to solve these crimes. That is significant."

Reverend Terrance Mackey, Mt. Zion AME Church in North Charleston, S.C.

"I think that many black and white people...in Florence who did not previously know each other or would probably not even talk to each other became friends when they worked together to rebuild the church. It sort of brought the people together."

Michael Gutierrez, a 19-year old Montgomery (Maryland) County College student who travelled to help rebuild Effingham Baptist Church (CHECK THIS) in South Carolina.
202-305-2967

"I came down for a week and ended up staying five months. You meet so many people from so many different backgrounds and they are the most unselfish people. No one really cares whether they're arsons or not. It's just a matter of doing what needs to be done. It's an amazing experience."

Jason Horning, an 21 year-old Ann Arbor, Michigan resident who traveled to Greensboro, Alabama to help rebuild the Rising Star Baptist Church.

"The hard work and cooperation paid off in that we were able to conclude the initial investigation with the arrest of two individuals early on...Sunday."

G. Mike Davis, State Fire Marshal, Texas Commission on Fire Protection, commenting the efforts of federal officials working together with state officials. [ATF] (CHECK THIS)

"When I was a student nearby, I helped move pews into the sanctuary. When I returned as an ATF agent, I was sifting thorough ashes to solve a crime. You could be sure I was going to proceed with compassion."

Dewey Webb, ATF RAC of the Oklahoma City Field Office, on his experience investigating the First Missionary Baptist church. (CHECK THIS)

"At first there were so many different people from so many different backgrounds...and so many different religions....We were all a little on edge about our differences. But by the end of the week, no one cared about the differences...no one cared about who burned the churches. We just wanted to get the work done. It was the best experience of my life."

Elliot Panek, an Emerson College student who travelled to Greensboro, Alabama to help rebuild the Rising Star Missionary Baptist Church along with students from Boston University and Haverford College.

"The second day we received a prepared lunch from the senior citizen Sunday School class...in Tuscaloosa. It struck me that I was not only helping to build a church, I was in some small way seeing the building of a community."

Debbie Gandy, Manassass, Va. [NOT CHECKED]

"Nothing prepared us for what we were going to experience. The local community was so welcoming. The preacher even wondered whether the first guy who lit the first match understood how many people he brought together. In a way, I think it may have done as much good as it did harm. It's ironic that we had to travel hundreds of miles to address race relations. But now we're trying to foster community awareness right here on our campus."

Rob Donahue, who travelled to Greensboro, Alabama along with fellow Northwestern students to help rebuild the Rising Star Baptist Church.

"The local community was not bitter. They saw this as a way to come out of this ordeal stronger. This was a challenge. And they were going to rise and meet the challenge. I hope whoever did this saw me hanging drywall and putting the roof on--so they saw their act of hate backfired...it brought people together.

Earl Daniels, a Valdosta, Ga., resident who traveled to Boligee, Alabama, to help rebuild the Little Zion Baptist church.
[912-244-2919]

"At first I came here with the knowledge that I was to rebuild churches...What I did not realize was that I was also here to help rebuild the hopes and trust of the suffering community. What these people experience was an act of hate...We hopefully instilled the idea in these people that hate and racist-driven acts will not go unrecognized and that people will take action."

Elizabeth Miller 703-759-6021 [lm]

"I witnessed an incredible outpouring of support to the community. I sometimes wonder...if people responded the same way when Hitler burned more than hundred temples in one night in Germany, maybe the Holocaust would never have occurred."

Rabbi Nancy Weiner [Not checked]

National Church Arson Task Force

Breakdown of House of Worship Arson/Bombing Investigations

January 1, 1995 - MAY 27, 1997

Houses of Worship

Nationwide

Other Houses
of Worship

62.2%

267

162

African American
Houses of Worship

50.0%

37.8%

African American
Houses of Worship

Houses of Worship

Located in the South

126

126

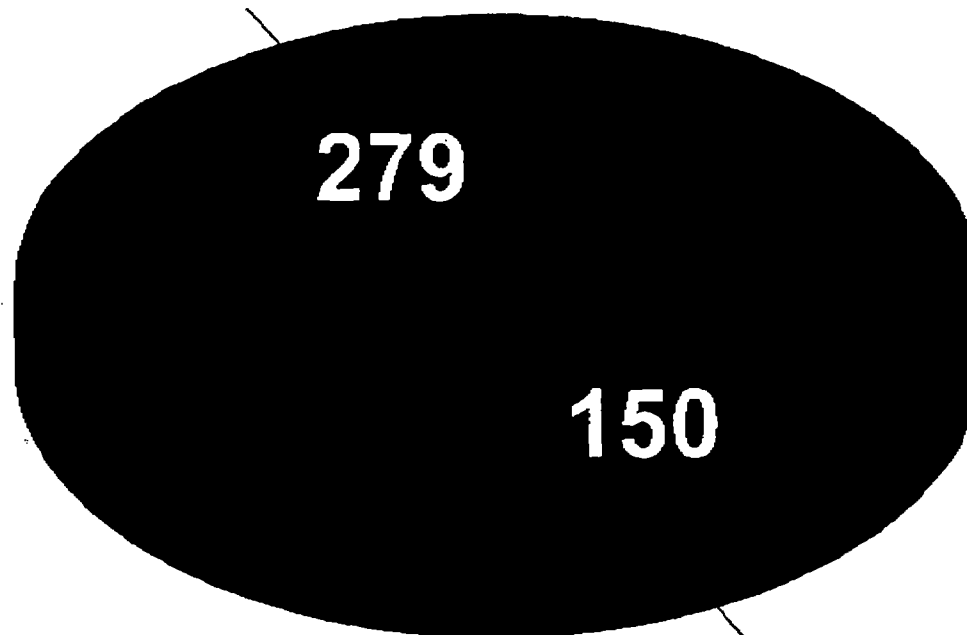
50.0%

Other Houses
of Worship

Total House of Worship Arsons/Bombings - 429

**NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE
BREAKDOWN OF
ARSON/BOMBING/ATTEMPTED BOMBING
INVESTIGATIONS
*JANUARY 1, 1995 - MAY 27, 1997***

**PENDING
INVESTIGATIONS**
65.0%



35.0%

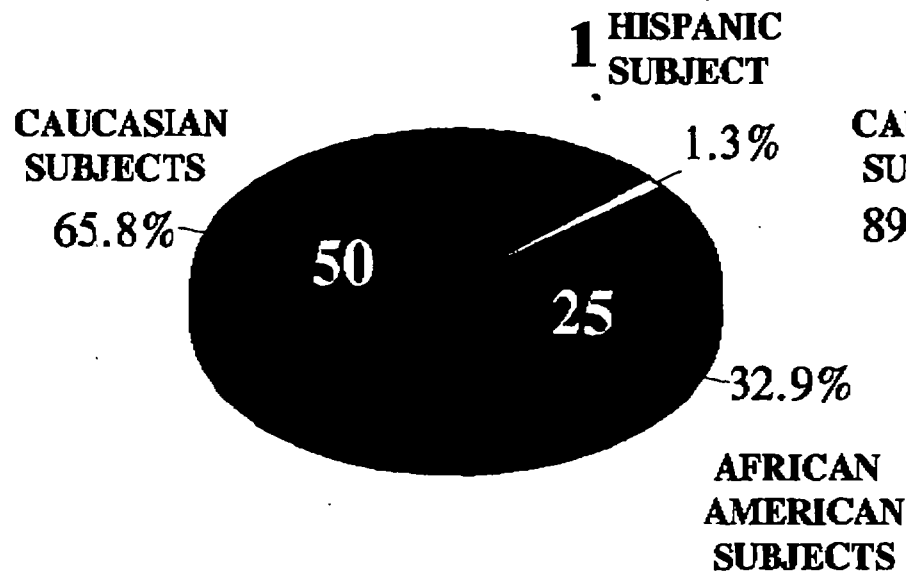
TOTAL INVESTIGATIONS = 429

**INVESTIGATIONS WHERE
ARRESTS HAVE BEEN MADE**

NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE
RACIAL MAKEUP OF ARRESTED SUBJECTS
HOUSE OF WORSHIP ARSONS/BOMBINGS NATIONWIDE
JANUARY 1, 1995 - MAY 27, 1997

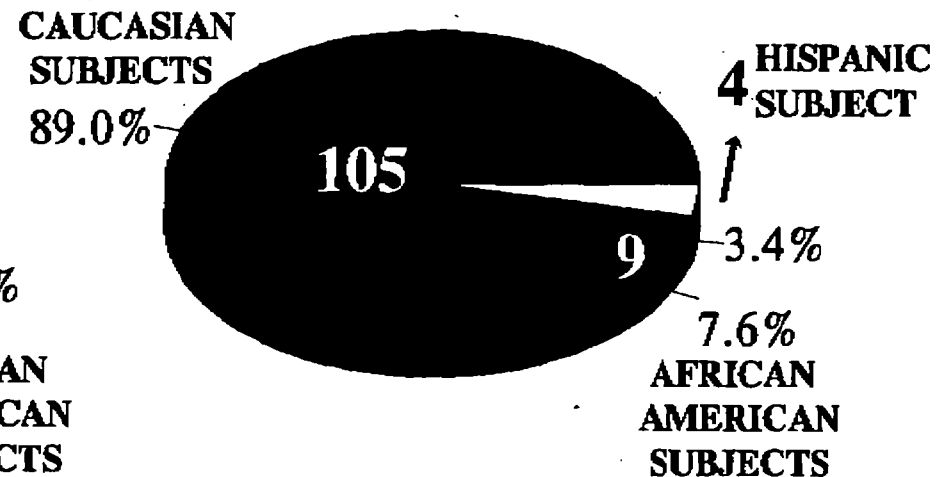
AFRICAN AMERICAN
HOUSES OF WORSHIP

ARSONS - 50
BOMBINGS - 2



NON-AFRICAN AMERICAN
HOUSES OF WORSHIP

ARSONS - 95
BOMBINGS - 3

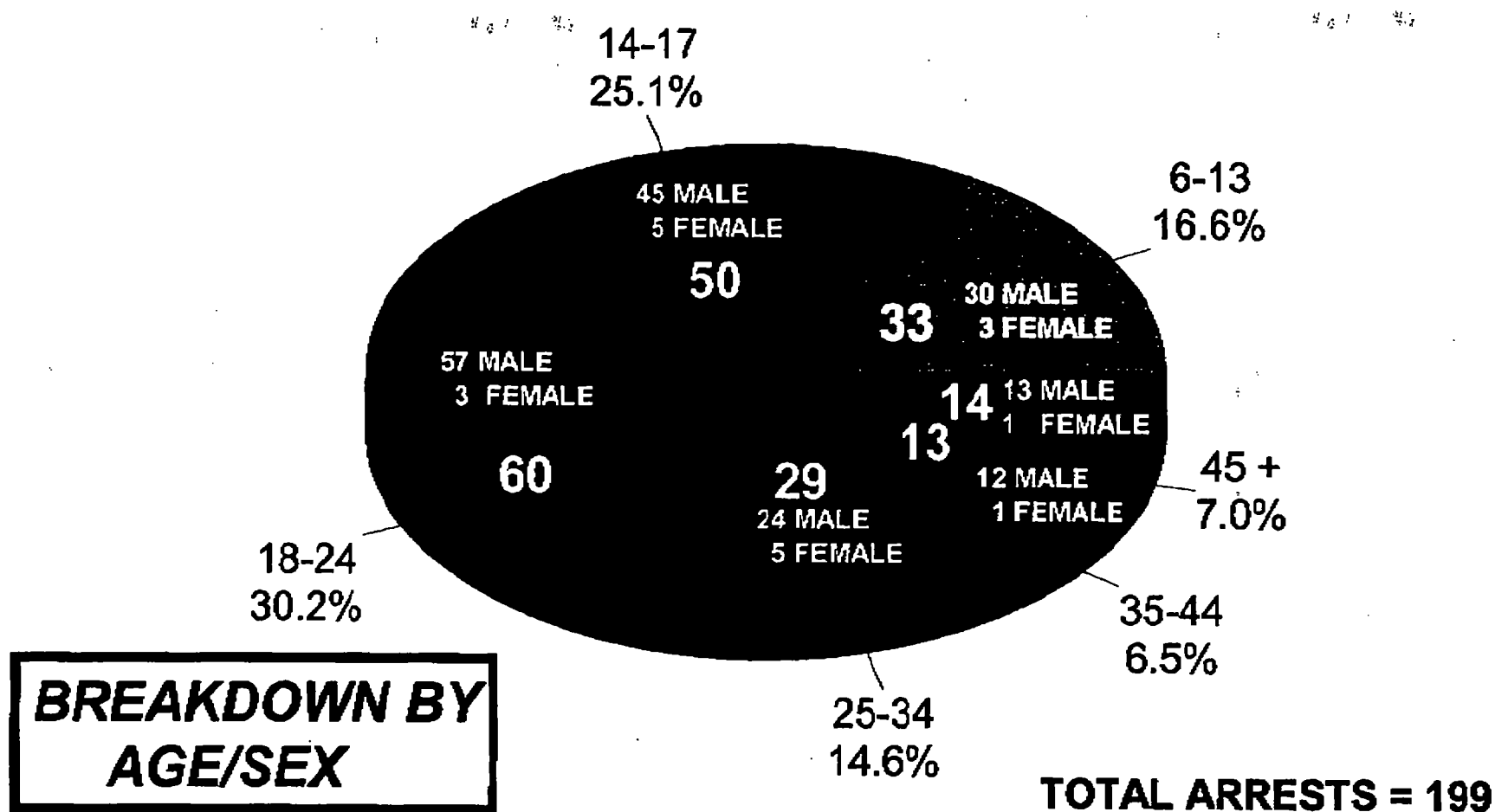


FIVE (5) ADDITIONAL CAUCASIAN SUBJECTS ARRESTED FOR ARSON/BOMBING OF AN AFRICAN AMERICAN HOUSE OF WORSHIP AND A NON AFRICAN AMERICAN HOUSE OF WORSHIP.

199 SUBJECTS TOTAL

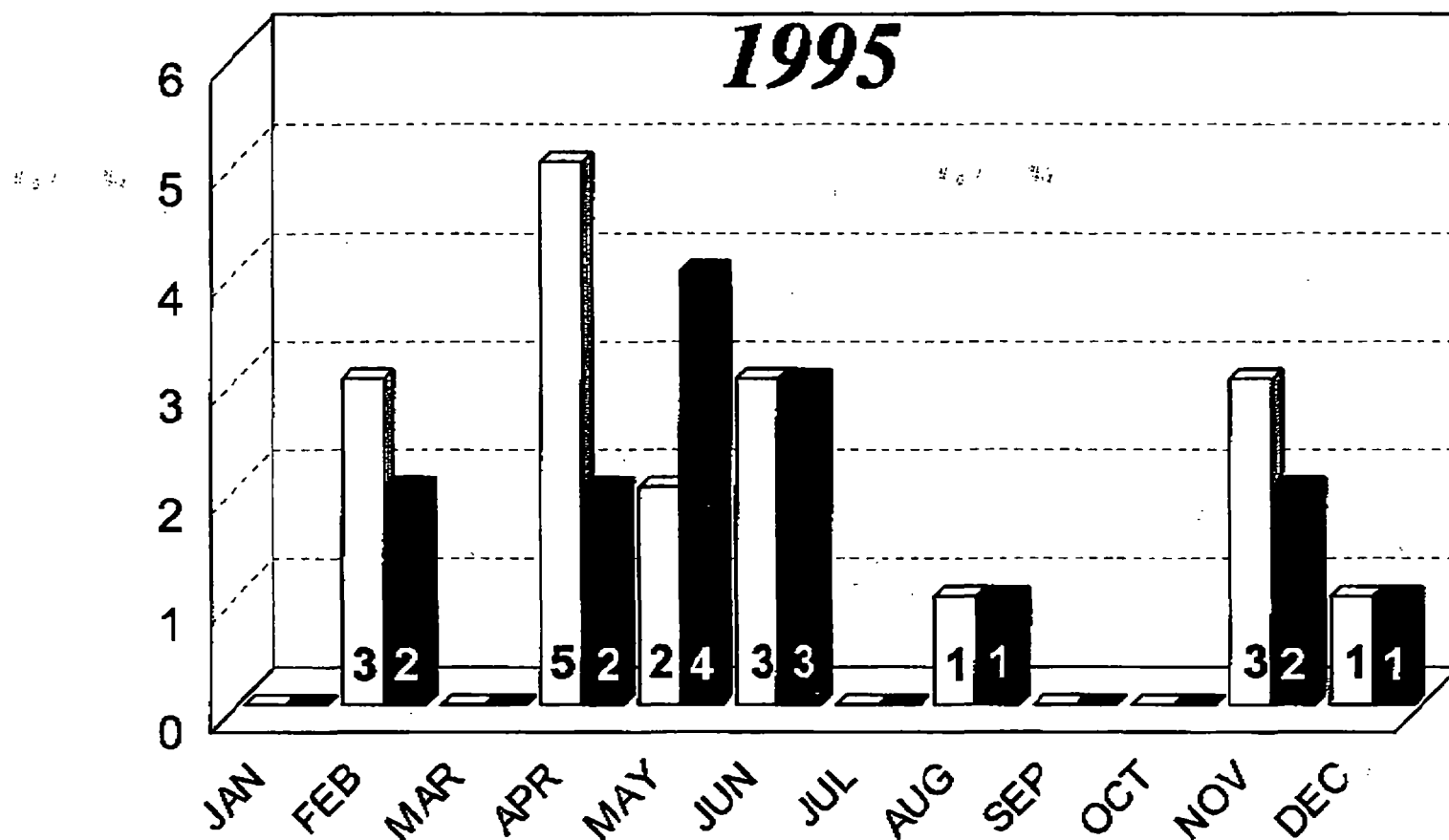
**NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE
SUBJECTS ARRESTED FOR CHURCH
ARSONS/BOMBINGS/ATTEMPTED BOMBINGS
IN THE UNITED STATES**

JANUARY 1, 1995 - MAY 27, 1997



NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE

CHURCH ARSON/BOMBING/ATTEMPTED BOMBING INVESTIGATIONS RESULTING IN ARRESTS NATIONWIDE

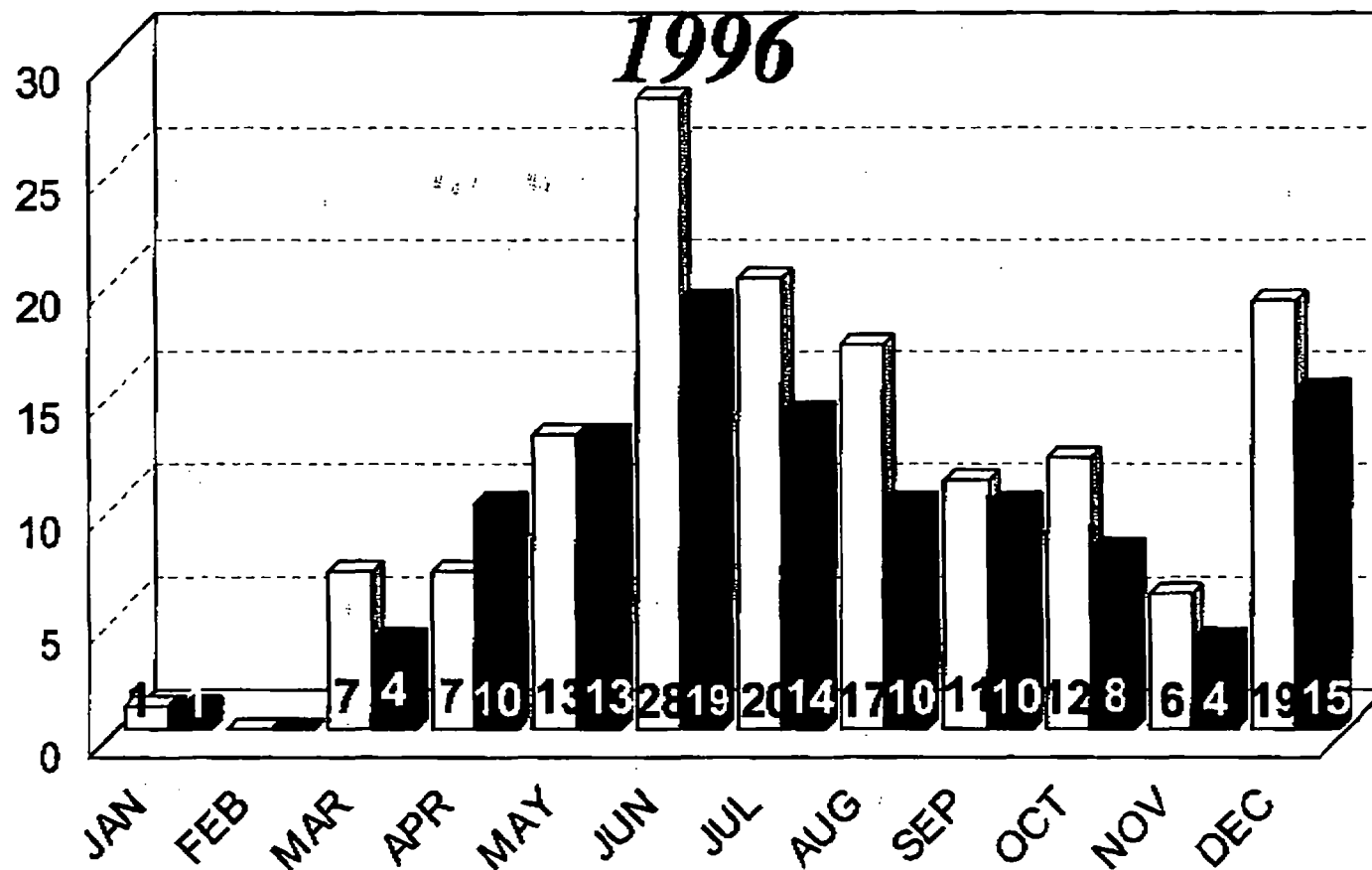


☐ INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED - 18
☒ INCIDENTS SOLVED BY THESE ARRESTS - 15

INFORMATION DISPLAYED
BY DATE OF SUBJECT'S ARREST

NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE

CHURCH ARSON/BOMBING/ATTEMPTED BOMBING INVESTIGATIONS RESULTING IN ARRESTS NATIONWIDE

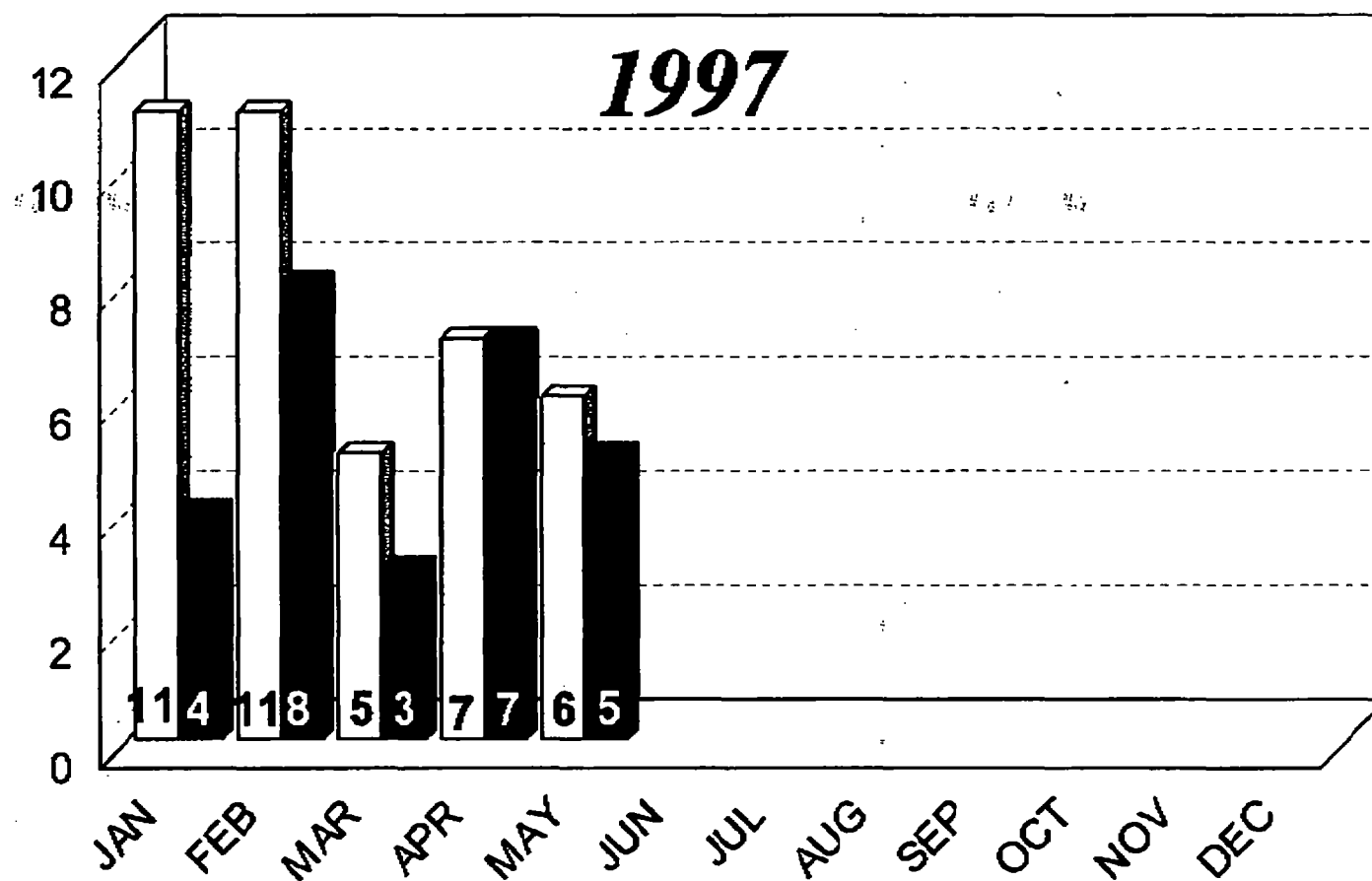


☐ INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED - 141
☒ INCIDENTS SOLVED BY THESE ARRESTS - 108

INFORMATION DISPLAYED
 BY DATE OF SUBJECT'S ARREST
 CHART REFLECTS ACTIVITY
 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 1996

NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE

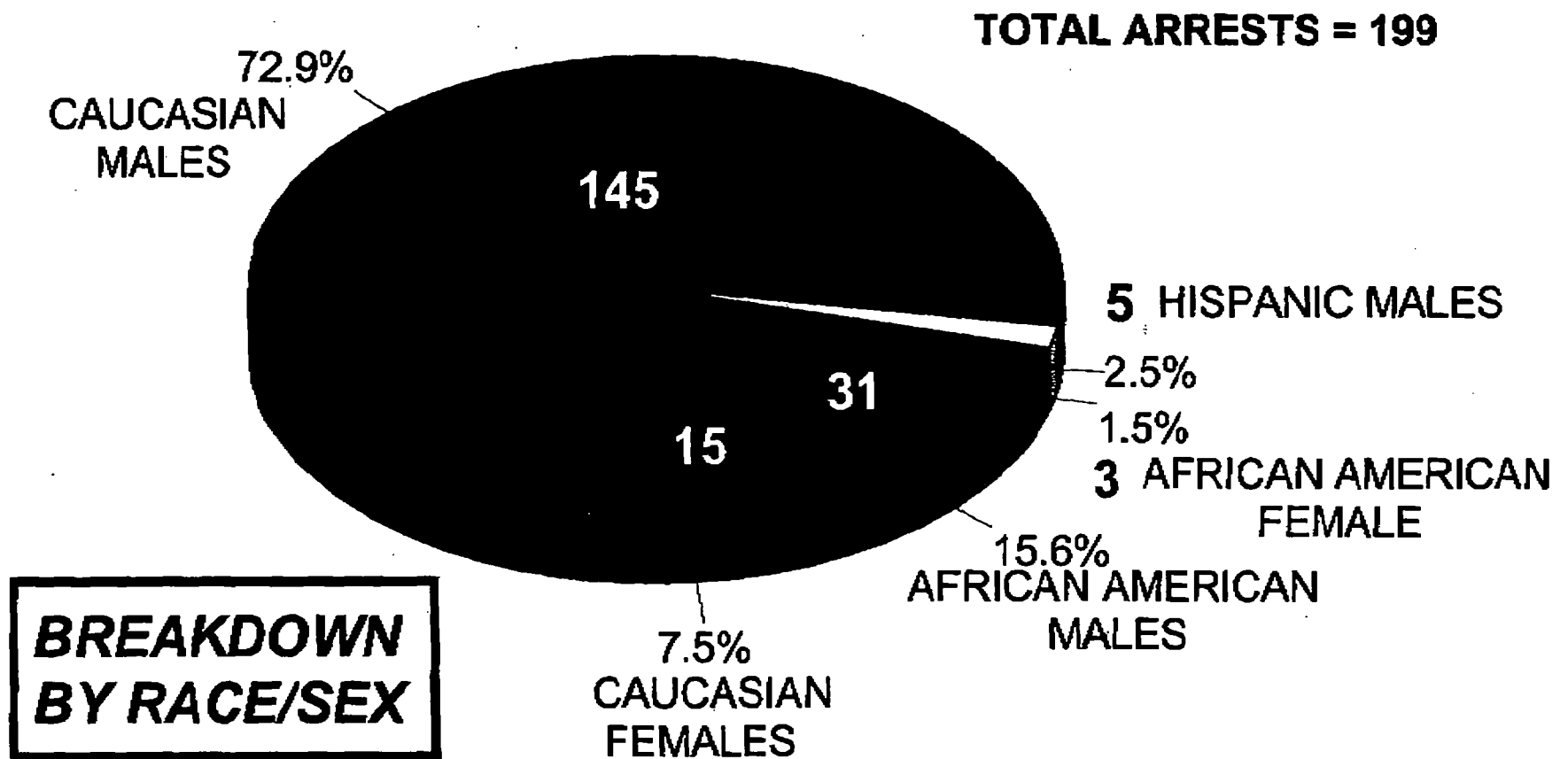
CHURCH ARSON/BOMBING/ATTEMPTED BOMBING INVESTIGATIONS RESULTING IN ARRESTS NATIONWIDE



□ INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED - 40
■ INCIDENTS SOLVED BY THESE ARRESTS - 27

INFORMATION DISPLAYED
BY DATE OF SUBJECT'S ARREST
CHART REFLECTS ACTIVITY
THROUGH MAY 27, 1997

**NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE
SUBJECTS ARRESTED FOR CHURCH
ARSONS/BOMBINGS/ATTEMPTED BOMBINGS
IN THE UNITED STATES
JANUARY 1, 1995 - MAY 27, 1997**

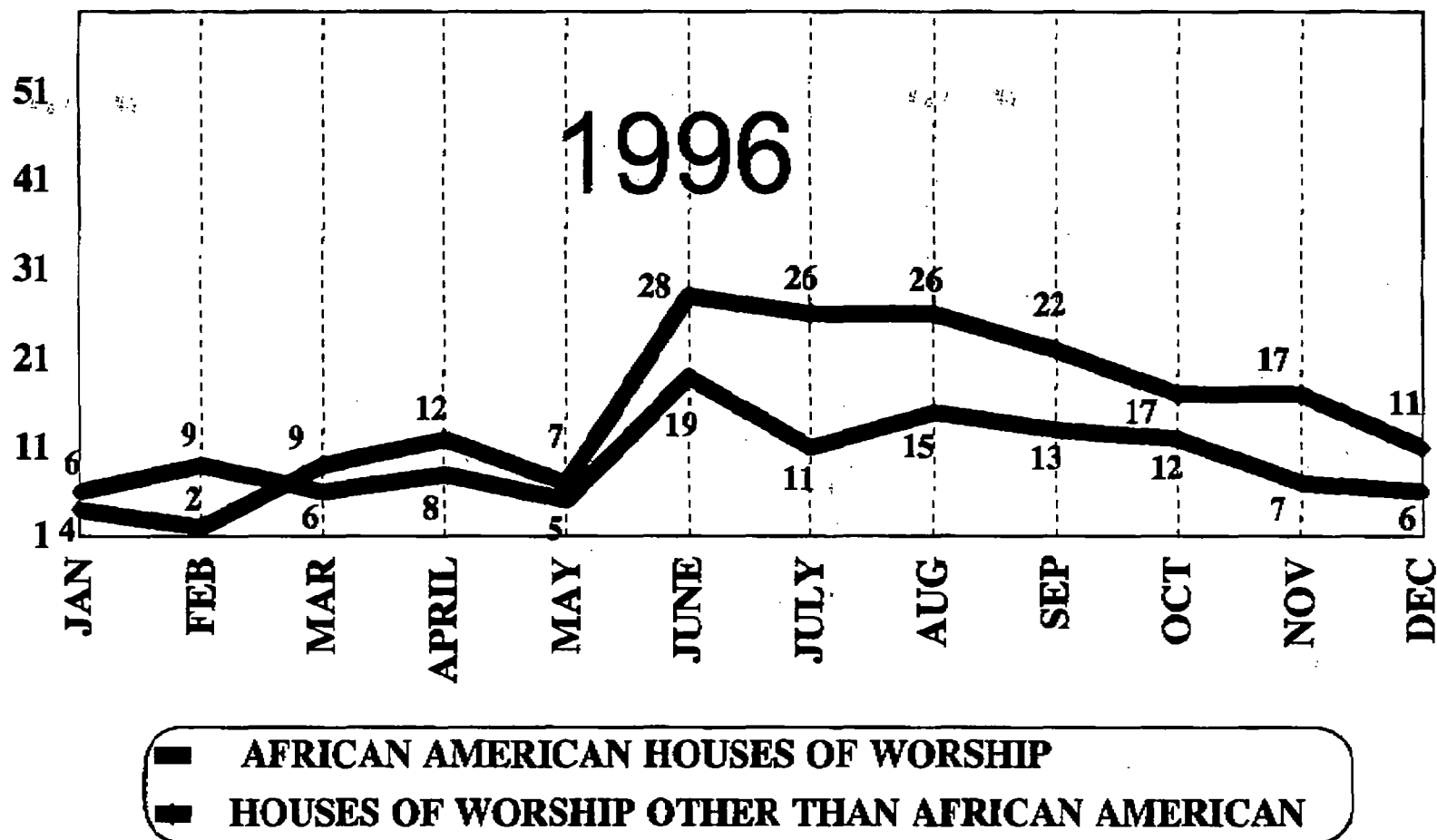


NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE
CHURCH ARSON/BOMBING/ATTEMPTED BOMBING INVESTIGATIONS

117 - AFRICAN AMERICAN HOUSES OF WORSHIP

181 - OTHER HOUSES OF WORSHIP

TOTAL INCIDENTS NATIONWIDE - 298



JANUARY 1, 1996 - DECEMBER 31, 1996

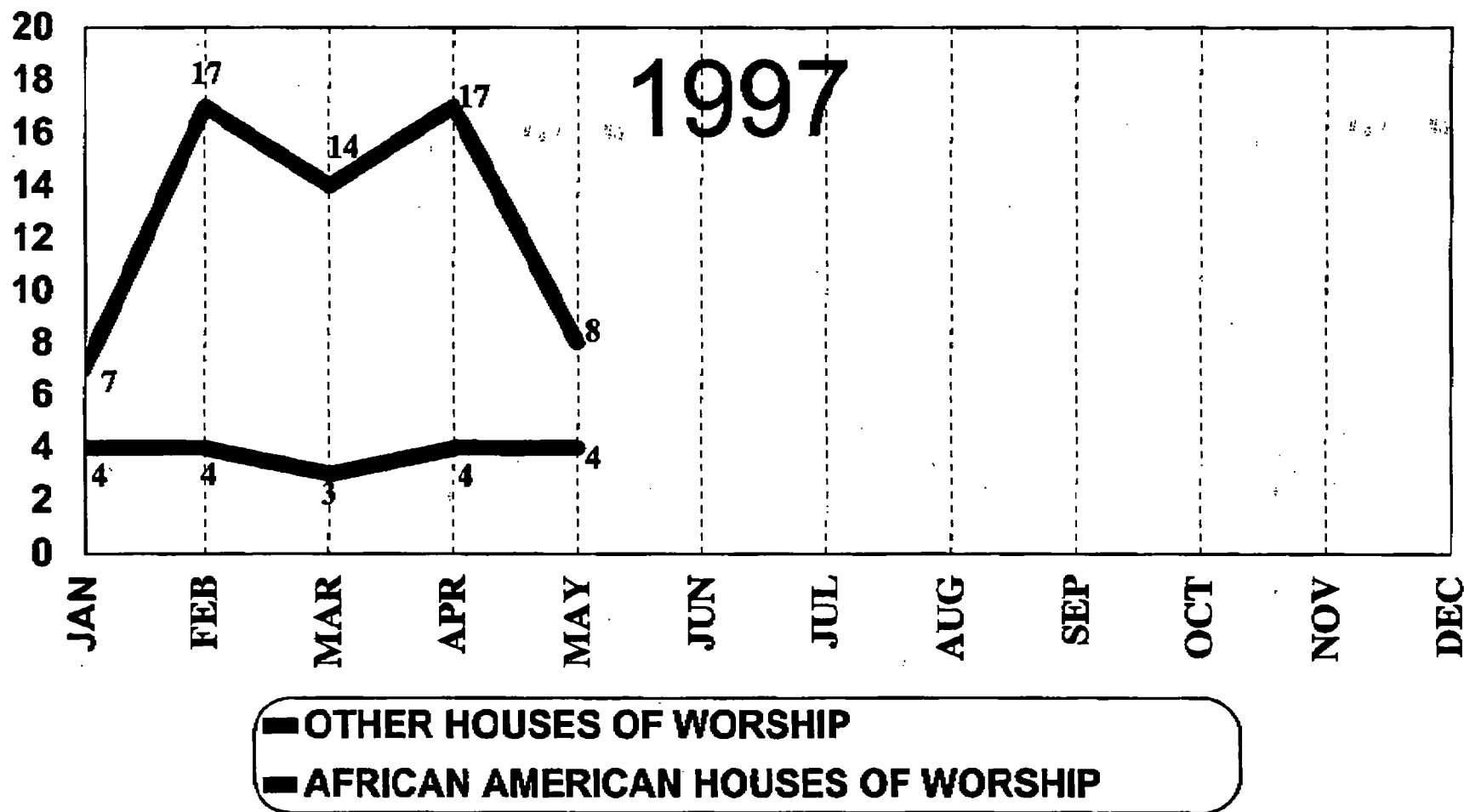
NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE

CHURCH ARSON/BOMBING/ATTEMPTED BOMBING INVESTIGATIONS

19- AFRICAN AMERICAN HOUSES OF WORSHIP

63 - OTHER HOUSES OF WORSHIP

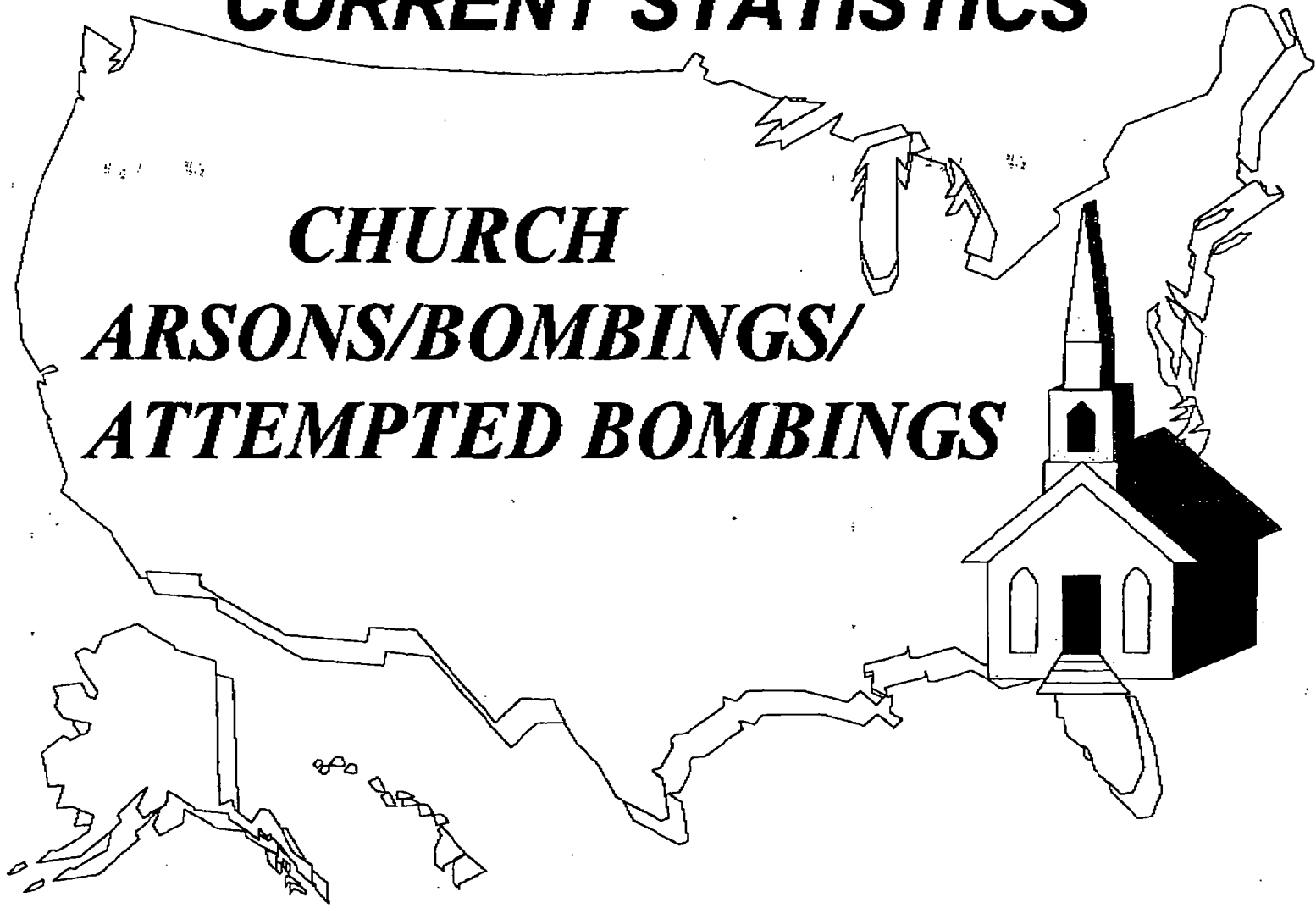
TOTAL INCIDENTS NATIONWIDE - 82



JANUARY 1, 1997 - MAY 27, 1997

***NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE
CURRENT STATISTICS***

***CHURCH
ARSONS/BOMBINGS/
ATTEMPTED BOMBINGS***

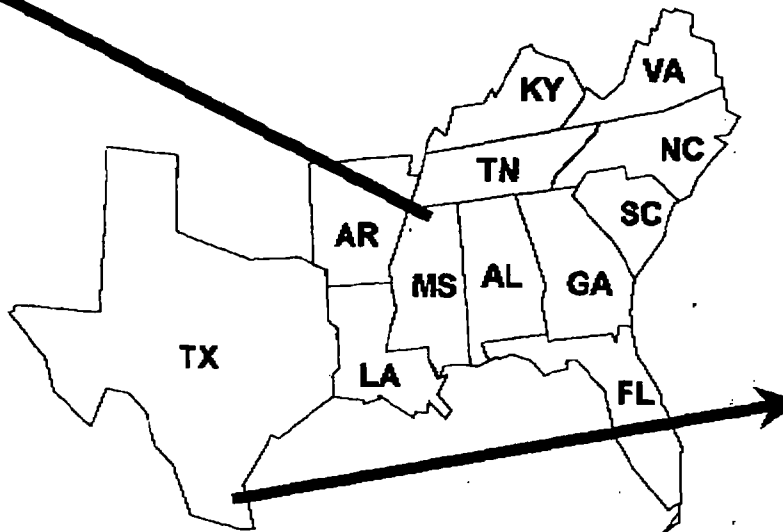


NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE

AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH FIRE INVESTIGATIONS IN THE SOUTH

January 1, 1995 to May 27, 1997

NOVEMBER 1, 1995
 * Lynch Chapel United Methodist - Clinton, MS
 MARCH 5, 1996
 St. Paul CME - Hatley, MS
 MARCH 20, 1996
 New Mt. Zion Baptist - Ruleville, MS
 MARCH 30, 1996
 * El Bethel Church - Senatobia, MS
 JUNE 17, 1996
 Kossuth, MS
 Mt. Pleasant Church
 Central Grove Mission
 JUNE 30, 1996
 House of Prayer - Greenville, MS
 AUGUST 4, 1996
 Beacon Baptist - Yazoo City, MS
 SEPTEMBER 6, 1996
 * First James Creek Missionary - Noxubee Co., MS
 SEPTEMBER 9, 1996
 * First Missionary Baptist - Gulfport, MS
 OCTOBER 9, 1996
 House of Prayer, Church of God - Greenville, MS
 OCTOBER 28, 1996
 Mt. Olive Church of God - Tiptonville, MS
 DECEMBER 11, 1996
 * Mallalieu Methodist Church - Meridian, MS
 APRIL 9, 1997
 Lakeview Missionary Baptist - Sledge, MS



JANUARY 29, 1995
 Miles Chapel Christian Methodist - Houston, TX
 FEBRUARY 18, 1995
 Love Fellowship Church of God - Houston, TX
 JUNE 5, 1995
 * Victory Baptist - Denison, TX
 NOVEMBER 14, 1995
 Greater Gospel Temple - Dallas, TX
 FEBRUARY 12, 1996
 Real Rock Church - Houston, TX
 FEBRUARY 16, 1996
 * Real Rock Church - Houston, TX
 APRIL 12, 1996 Bombing
 Southwest Community Baptist - Houston, TX
 MAY 14, 1996
 * Long Ridge CME - Waskom, TX
 JUNE 9, 1996
 * New Lighthouse of Prayer - Greenville, TX
 JUNE 10, 1996
 * Church of the Living God - Greenville, TX
 JUNE 18, 1996
 On Track Baptist - Houston, TX
 SEPTEMBER 10, 1996
 Church of Living God - Dallas, TX
 SEPTEMBER 26, 1996
 Soul Inspiration - Dallas, TX
 OCTOBER 17, 1996
 Garza Street Ch. of Christ - Dallas, TX
 OCTOBER 21, 1996
 God's Gospel Temple - Dallas, TX
 OCTOBER 23, 1996
 Sardis Primitive Baptist - Mexia, TX
 NOVEMBER 20, 1996
 Full Gospel Powerhouse - Wichita Falls, TX
 DECEMBER 7, 1996
 Hopewell UMC - Centerville, TX
 JANUARY 4, 1997
 Harp Baptist Church - Fairfield, TX
 MARCH 18, 1997
 Garden Geth. C.O.G. - Houston, TX
 March 22, 1997
 * Macedonia Baptist - Ferris, TX
 April 8, 1997
 * West Oakland Bapt - Beaumont, TX

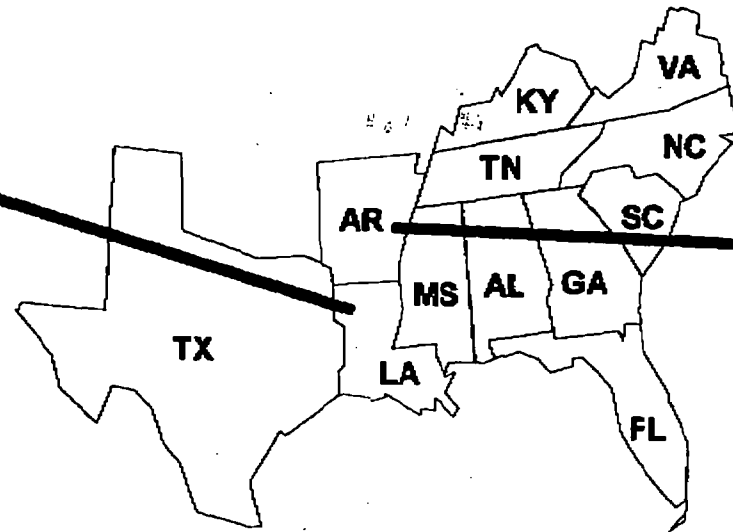
* Arrest Made

NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE

AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH FIRE INVESTIGATIONS IN THE SOUTH

January 1, 1995 to May 27, 1997

MAY 24, 1995
Mt. Corinth Baptist, Vivian, LA
FEBRUARY 1, 1996
Zachary, LA
Cypress Grove Baptist
Baker, LA
Sweet Home Baptist
Thomas Chapel Benevolent Society
St. Paul's Free Baptist
APRIL 8, 1996
Oak Ridge Baptist - Calvin, LA
APRIL 11, 1996
St. Charles Baptist - Painscourtville, LA
JUNE 24, 1996
New Birth Temple - Shreveport, LA
JUNE 28, 1996
Greater Ebenezer - New Orleans, LA
AUGUST 2, 1996
St. Abraham Baptist - Shreveport, LA
SEPTEMBER 29, 1996
St. Johns Baptist - Houghton, LA
DECEMBER 1, 1996
Samuel Temple - New Orleans, LA
DECEMBER 10, 1996
* New Birth Miss. Bap. - Lik. Charles, LA
FEBRUARY 2, 1997
Vision Baptist - Baton Rouge, LA



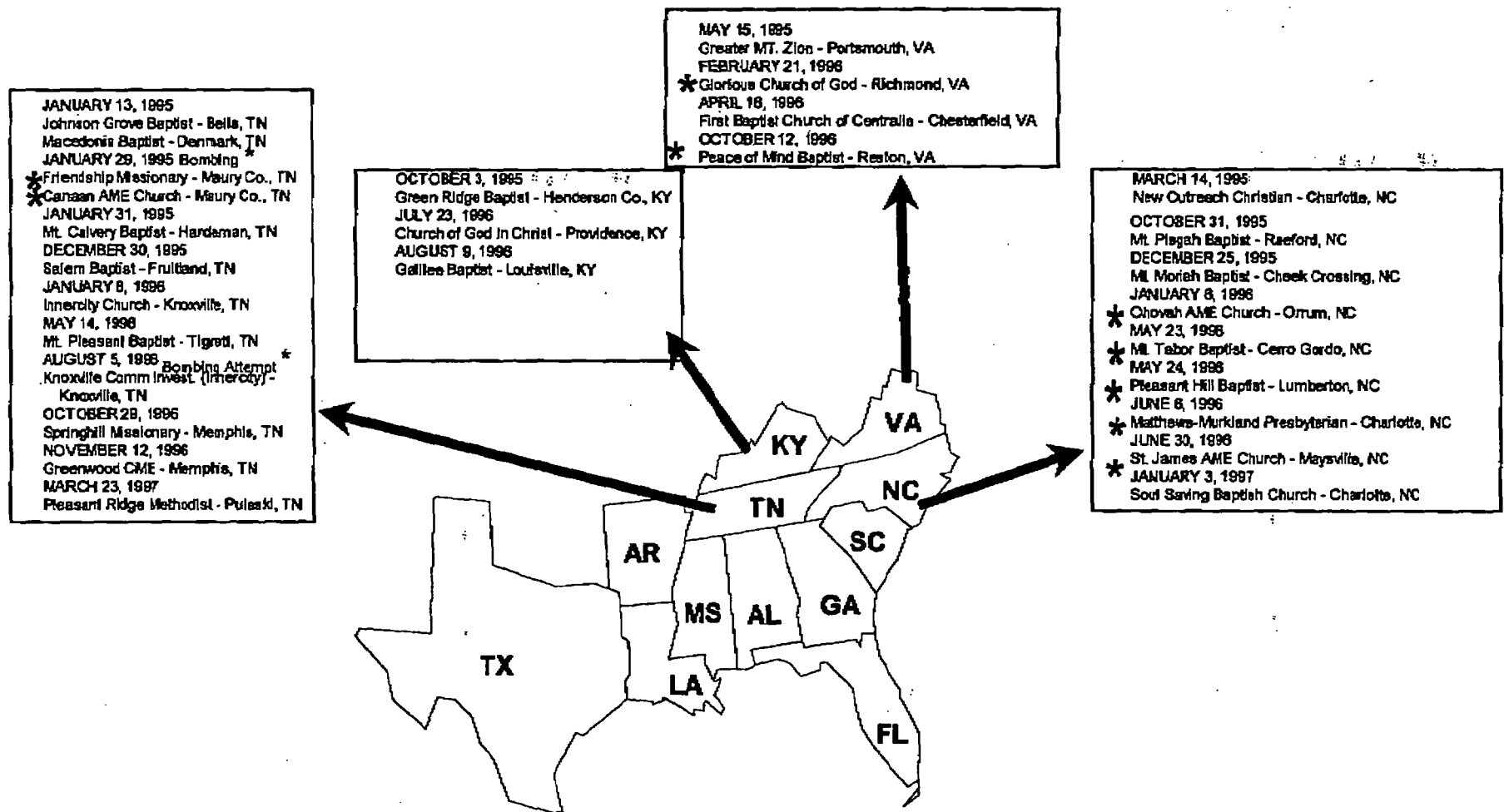
JULY 20, 1996
Clayborn Chapel AME - Arkadelphia, AR
JULY 27, 1996
New Calvary Church - Camden, AR
AUGUST 20, 1996
Mt. Zion Missionary - Marvel, AR
AUGUST 21, 1996
St. Matthews Missionary - Turner, AR
SEPTEMBER 28, 1996
Fradonia Missionary Baptist - Helena, AR
NOVEMBER 17, 1996
Princess Chapel Missionary - Luxora, AR
APRIL 2, 1997
El Bethel COG In Christ - Beardon, AK

*** Arrest Made**

NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE

AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH FIRE INVESTIGATIONS IN THE SOUTH

January 1, 1995 to May 27, 1997

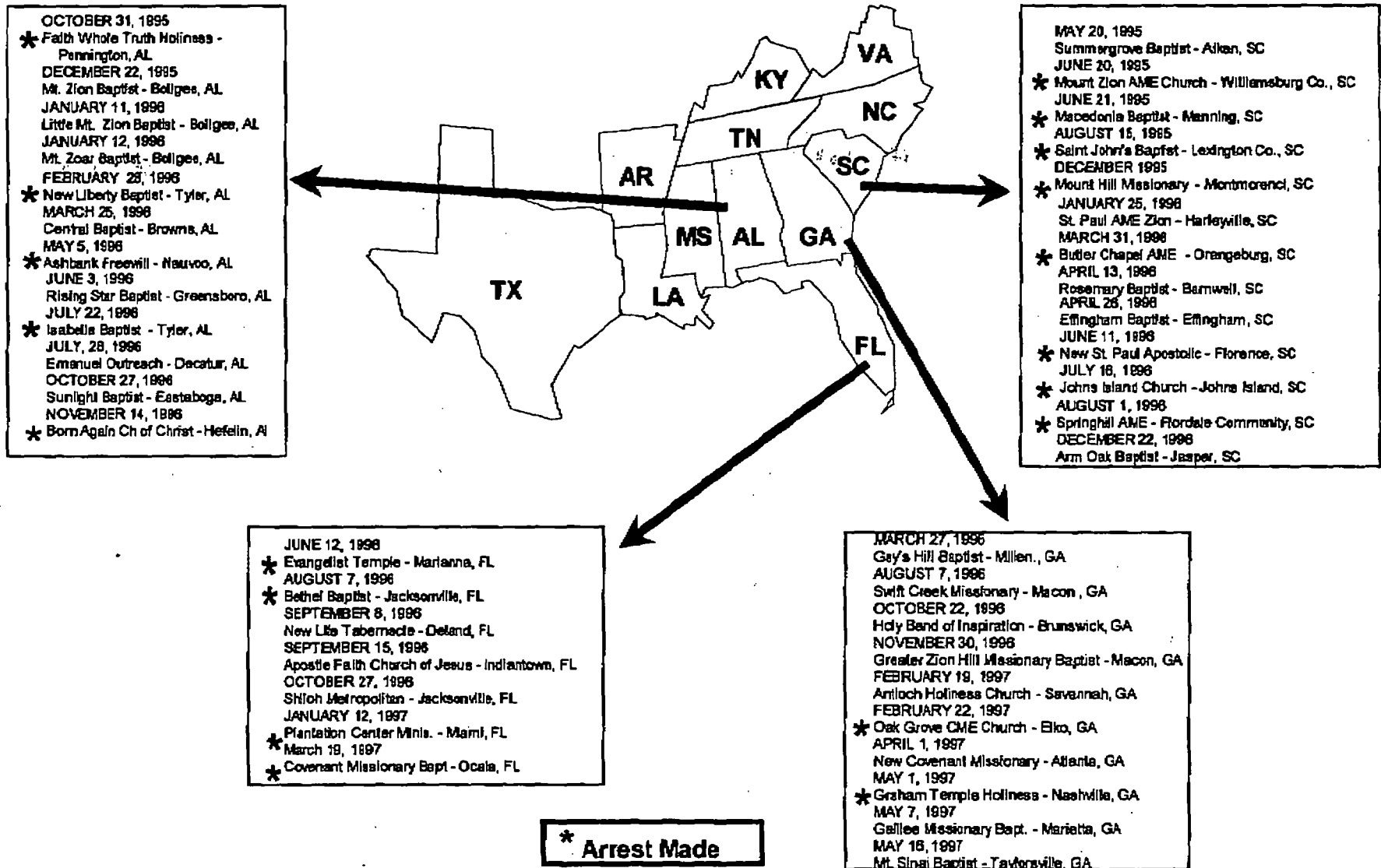


* Arrest Made

NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE

AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH FIRE INVESTIGATIONS IN THE SOUTH

January 1, 1995 to May 27, 1997



→ *Crime
Church Arsons*Total Pages: *16*

LRM ID: REJ178

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
Washington, D.C. 20503-0001**

Tuesday, July 15, 1997

LEGISLATIVE REFERRAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Liaison Officer - See Distribution below

FROM: *[Signature]* James J. Jukes (for) Assistant Director for Legislative Reference

OMB CONTACT: Ronald E. Jones

PHONE: (202)395-3386 FAX: (202)395-3109

SUBJECT: JUSTICE/TREASURY Oversight Testimony on Church Arson Investigations

DEADLINE: 9:00 am firm Wednesday, July 16, 1997

In accordance with OMB Circular A-19, OMB requests the views of your agency on the above subject before advising on its relationship to the program of the President. Please advise us if this item will affect direct spending or receipts for purposes of the "Pay-As-You-Go" provisions of Title XIII of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990.

COMMENTS: If we do not hear from you by the above deadline, we will assume you have no objection to the proposed testimony.

DISTRIBUTION LIST**AGENCIES:**

39-Federal Emergency Management Agency - Ernest B. Abbott - (202) 646-4105
54-HUD - Jeff Lischer - (202) 708-1793
118-TREASURY - Richard S. Carro - (202) 622-0650

EOP:

Jose Cerda III
Leanne A. Shimabukuro
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John E. Thompson
Jonna M. Long
Joslyn G. Mack

LRM ID: REJ178
Investigations

SUBJECT: JUSTICE/TREASURY Oversight Testimony on Church Arson

**RESPONSE TO
LEGISLATIVE REFERRAL
MEMORANDUM**

If your response to this request for views is short (e.g., concur/no comment), we prefer that you respond by e-mail or by faxing us this response sheet. If the response is short and you prefer to call, please call the branch-wide line shown below (NOT the analyst's line) to leave a message with a legislative assistant.

You may also respond by:

(1) calling the analyst/attorney's direct line (you will be connected to voice mail if the analyst does not answer); or

(2) sending us a memo or letter

Please include the LRM number shown above, and the subject shown below.

TO: Ronald E. Jones Phone: 395-3386 Fax: 395-3109
Office of Management and Budget
Branch-Wide Line (to reach legislative assistant): 395-3454

FROM: _____ (Date)
 _____ (Name)
 _____ (Agency)
 _____ (Telephone)

The following is the reponse of our agency to your request for views on the above-captioned subject:

Concur

 No Objection

No Comment

See proposed edits on pages

Other: _____

FAX RETURN of _____ pages, attached to this response sheet

DISCUSSION DRAFT 7/14/97

**JOINT STATEMENT OF
JAMES E. JOHNSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY (ENFORCEMENT)
DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
AND
ISABELLE KATZ PINZLER, ACTING ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
CO-CHAIRS, NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND REGULATORY RELIEF
SENATE COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS
JULY 17, 1997**

Mr. Chairman, Senator Bryan, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today to update the Subcommittee on the federal government's efforts to investigate and prosecute individuals responsible for the deplorable act of setting fire to houses of worship.

At the outset, we want to commend you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership in speaking out against church fires and in helping to bring these incidents to the forefront of our Nation's consciousness. Along with Senator Kennedy, you sponsored the bill that became the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996. That statute, passed last year with unanimous, bipartisan votes in both Houses, and signed promptly by the President, has provided us with the tools we need to combat these heinous crimes. Equally important, Congress' prompt enactment of the Church Arson Prevention Act, and the strong support of the Clinton Administration, showed the Nation in no uncertain terms that the federal government was determined to do everything within its power to bring church arsonists to justice, to prevent additional fires, and to assist victimized congregations in their rebuilding efforts.

We have made remarkable progress in the past year:

- The rate of arrest (35%) in church arson cases is more than double the rate of arrest for arsons generally (16%). Federal and state authorities now have arrested 216 suspects in connection with 159 arsons committed at churches and other houses of worship since the beginning of 1995. More than three quarters of all of the defendants arrested in the past two and one-half years have been arrested since June 1996, when the President established the National Church Arson Task Force ("NCATF" or "Task Force") to oversee the investigation and prosecutions of incidents of church arson.
- Since the beginning of 1995, 123 defendants have been convicted in federal and state prosecutions in connection with fires at 80 houses of worship.
- Overall, the NCATF has opened investigations of 451 arsons, bombings or attempted bombings that have occurred at houses of worship since January 1, 1995.

Our testimony today will provide the Subcommittee with the current status of the coordinated church fires investigations and prosecutions. Secretary Andrew Cuomo, of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, will discuss the joint efforts of HUD, the National Council of Churches, the Congress of National Black Churches, and others in helping the congregations of burned churches to rebuild. Separate written statements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Community Relations Service of the Department of Justice will describe the fine work those agencies have done preventing fires, calming the tensions that have resulted in many of the communities in which churches have been burned, and assisting in the rebuilding effort.

President Clinton established the National Church Arson Task Force in June 1996 to promote the coordination of law enforcement investigations of church fires. Still active approximately one year later, the NCATF has brought together the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), the FBI, Justice Department prosecutors, victim/witness coordinators, the Community Relations Service and the U.S. Marshals Service, in partnership with state and local prosecutors and other law enforcement officials. Hundreds of ATF and FBI investigators have been deployed to work with more than 80 federal prosecutors and state and local authorities. This is the largest current civil rights investigative effort and one of the largest series of arson investigations in history.

Each of the component agencies of the Task Force brings particular resources and talents to the efforts of the Task Force. The expertise of ATF in conducting arson investigations, particularly in making cause and origin determinations, and the expertise of the FBI in conducting civil rights investigations, have proved highly beneficial to the success of the NCATF. The Civil Rights Division has extensive experience in directing hate crimes prosecutions and in enforcing the criminal civil rights statutes used in prosecuting racially motivated church arsons. The Community Relations Service and victim/witness coordinators in local United States Attorney's Offices work closely with victim congregations. We have met at least once a week since June of last year with senior representatives of all of the agencies that make up the Task Force, and we report to the President through the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Treasury.

Coordination of Federal and State Law Enforcement Efforts

Coordination among federal agencies and between state and federal law enforcement officials is essential in an investigative effort of this size and scope. To that end, the Attorney

General directed each of the 93 United States Attorneys across the country either to establish a local task force focusing on church arsons or to add church fires to the jurisdiction of an existing local law enforcement task force. Along with representatives of the United States Attorney's Offices, the local task forces consist of state and local law enforcement and fire protection officials, victim/witness coordinators, and representatives of the local field offices of the ATF, FBI, and CRS.

In addition to the local task forces, the NCATF has an operations team in Washington that is staffed by special agents of the ATF and the FBI, by seasoned federal prosecutors from the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division, and by senior prosecutors on detail from United States Attorney's Offices across the country. The operations team is led by Karla Dobinski, a deputy chief of the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division. The operations team works with the local task forces to investigate incidents, analyze potential connections between and among incidents, and prosecute cases in federal and state courts. Due to the high priority of these matters, many federal cases are prosecuted jointly by NCATF prosecutors and Assistant United States Attorneys. Cases prosecuted by state prosecutors in state courts are closely monitored by the NCATF.

The coordination among federal agencies, and between federal and state authorities, has been remarkably successful. As Sgt. Terry Sult, of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (North Carolina) Police Department, stated recently about a successful investigation: "It is because of the multitude of law enforcement agencies working together across jurisdictional lines ... and being able to work as a team that this was such a success. ... It makes our goals much more obtainable."

The Task Force has taken the following steps in carrying out its responsibilities:

Investigative Protocol. The NCATF has established a formal protocol for its investigations and prosecutions. This protocol sets forth procedures for the immediate exchange of information among task force agencies and for the development of a comprehensive investigative plan for each incident. The protocol ensures that investigators pursue all lines of inquiry, including whether the crime was motivated by race or religion and whether any given incident is connected to any other.

Unified Database. The NCATF has created a database of statistical information about ongoing investigations. The Task Force also uses ATF and FBI databases and computer systems to track and analyze evidence about attacks on houses of worship and to generate investigative leads.

Training. The NCATF has conducted several training sessions for its constituent agencies. ATF experts trained FBI agents and Department of Justice prosecutors regarding arson investigations. Civil Rights Division prosecutors and FBI experts trained ATF agents regarding civil rights investigations and prosecutions.

Tip Line. The NCATF has established a toll-free tip line for citizens to report information on church arsons. That toll free number is 1-888-ATF-FIRE. To date, NCATF has received more than 1500 calls through that service. The ATF and FBI also have offered rewards for information in a number of arson cases.

Threat Assessment Guide. The NCATF has updated and distributed a Church Threat Assessment Guide containing valuable information on the steps that may be taken to prevent fires at houses of worship and the steps to follow after an incident has occurred. Working with the

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Task Force has distributed more than 500,000 of these booklets.

Outreach

Without the confidence and cooperation of the congregations whose houses of worship burned, many of these investigations -- which were difficult at the outset -- would have been destined to fail. Faced with criticism of law enforcement from some congregations, the NCATF took steps early on to ensure constructive working relationships between law enforcement and the affected communities. Within a week of its formation, the NCATF met with FBI and ATF Special Agents in Charge and United States Attorneys from the Southeast region to discuss the perceptions within the affected communities and to emphasize the critical importance of pursuing church fires investigations with vigilance, dispatch, and sensitivity to the needs of the victims. Following these meetings, the agents and prosecutors, together with representatives of the Community Relations Service, worked to improve lines of communications with the affected communities and to make clear their solemn commitment to these investigations.

President Clinton, Vice President Gore, Secretary of the Treasury Robert Rubin and Attorney General Janet Reno have worked to bring church arsons to national attention, speaking out forcefully of the commitment of the federal government to solve these cases and meeting with ministers from many of the burned churches. Secretary Rubin and Attorney General Reno instructed us to remain in close contact with the affected communities.

To highlight the importance of community outreach, we have traveled to several communities in which churches have been burned. This past spring, we went to Western Tennessee to meet with investigators and prosecutors, as well as with pastors, congregations and

community leaders. Like earlier trips, this visit not only gave us a chance to view personally the devastation that the church fires have wrought, but gave us an opportunity to express the government's commitment in a very real and visible way. The trip also gave us the chance to witness the renewed spirit of communities that have come together to rebuild their houses of worship. We plan to visit other communities that have suffered church fires, either later this summer or early this fall.

The Community Relations Service (CRS) has been an important partner in the Task Force's outreach efforts. Working with CRS, the NCATF has developed and distributed to every ATF and FBI supervisor and United States Attorney a "Best Practices" guide for conducting community outreach activities.

The Community Relations Service also has played an essential role in the federal government's efforts to assist in the rebuilding of burned churches. Because of its experience working in the community, CRS has been particularly well-suited to work alongside the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Task Force in this very important pursuit. The CRS Church Burning Response Team has facilitated rebuilding efforts in more than 30 communities in Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Mississippi.

Statutory Authority and Resources

The support of Congress has been essential to our ability to respond effectively to these crimes. At the time the Task Force was formed, the federal government had authority to investigate and prosecute suspicious fires at houses of worship under several statutes. These statutes include the Anti-Arson Act of 1982, which makes it a federal crime to use fire to destroy

property used or affecting interstate commerce (18 U.S.C. 844(i)), and criminal civil rights statutes, which make it a federal crime either to desecrate religious real property or a house of worship or to conspire to deprive persons of their civil rights (18 U.S.C. 241 and 247).

With your leadership, Mr. Chairman, the Congress passed, and the President signed, the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996. This Act, which became law on July 3, 1996, removed a cumbersome interstate commerce requirement previously contained in 18 U.S.C. 247, eliminated a \$10,000 damage requirement, and increased the maximum sentence for arson to 20 years' imprisonment. The new law greatly strengthened the hand of law enforcement in the battle against perpetrators of church arsons. There have been three successful prosecutions under the amended Section 247 so far: one for the July 22, 1996 fire at the Church of God of the Prophecy in Dyersburg, Tennessee; a second for the September 19, 1996 fire at the Church of Christ in Henderson, Nevada; and a third for the March 23, 1997 fire at the Macedonia Baptist Church in Bristol, Texas. Other cases involving violations of the new statute are pending.

The 1996 Church Arson Prevention Act also authorized a HUD loan guarantee program that can be used for church rebuilding, and authorized additional personnel at the Treasury Department and the Justice Department, including the Community Relations Service, to respond to the fires.

Congress also has provided essential resources for our efforts. In August 1996, in a supplemental appropriation for fiscal year 1996, Congress provided \$12 million to support ATF's role in the Task Force. Congress appropriated an additional \$12 million in ATF's fiscal year 1997 direct funding to support arson investigations, particularly those directed toward religious

institutions. Additional funds for Task Force activities by the Justice Department, the FBI and CRS also were appropriated or reprogrammed.

In addition to Congress' assistance, the Justice Department has been able to provide immediate and direct assistance to local jurisdictions through the Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). Pursuant to the President's directive, and with the approval of Congress, BJA awarded grants to counties in 13 states to intensify their enforcement and surveillance efforts around vulnerable houses of worship. The states were: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Oklahoma, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. More than 500 counties received a total of more than \$2.7 million in awards. More than half of these funds were used to pay the overtime costs of increased police and sheriff patrols and to hire additional part-time law enforcement officers. Additional funds were used to pay for security measures, such as lighting and security systems, and to fund educational efforts aimed at arson prevention.

Complementing the government's efforts to respond to the church fires has been a tremendous outpouring of assistance and support from the American people. These attacks on our houses of worship are rightly seen as a threat to our common sense of sanctuary, and they have generated a shared sense of outrage. People have crossed lines of faith, race and region to engage in a united effort to rebuild and protect our houses of worship. Religious groups, volunteer organizations, unions, insurance companies, financial institutions, and civil rights organizations all have pitched in to tackle this problem. We would like to recognize one person in particular, whose efforts have inspired all of us to work that much harder in responding to this call. The Reverend Mac Charles Jones was a principal leader for the Burned Churches Fund at

the National Council of Churches. Mac died in March, and the world is diminished by his loss.

We mourn the loss of a forceful leader, a constructive critic, and a friend.

Results to date

The men and women of the ATF, FBI, the Treasury and Justice Departments, together with their partners in local law enforcement, have had striking success. The Task Force has opened arson investigations of 451 fires that have occurred at houses of worship since January 1, 1995. This number does not include fires that the investigators have determined to have been accidental. Nor does it include acts of vandalism or other desecration at houses of worship, which continue to be investigated and prosecuted by the FBI, the Civil Rights Division and United States Attorneys. Of the 451 arson investigations, 171 involve fires at African American churches. More than three quarters of the 171 fires at African American churches have occurred in the southern part of the United States.

As a result of the exceptional partnership among federal, state and local law enforcement, many of the incidents investigated have been solved, mainly by a combination of federal and state arrests and prosecutions. Since January 1995, arrests of 216 suspects have been made in connection with 159 fires at churches and other houses of worship. This rate of arrest (35%) is significantly higher than the general arrest rate for arsons, which is approximately 16%, according to Department of Justice statistics.

And Mr. Chairman, we are pleased to report that in your home state of North Carolina our arrest rate is even higher: state and federal officials have made arrests in 10 of the 20 church fires and bombings that have occurred in North Carolina since the beginning of 1995. Already, 11 defendants have been convicted in 8 of those cases. The fine work of the local task forces in

North Carolina continues. Just last week, on July 11, 1997, a federal grand jury in Charlotte returned an indictment against two defendants arising from the May 3, 1997 arson of the St. John's Missionary Baptist Church, in Caldwell County. The 50% arrest rate in North Carolina is a true testament to the work of the local task forces in your state.

The number of arrests made throughout the country in church fires has increased significantly since the formation of the NCATF. More than three quarters of all of the defendants arrested for church arsons since January 1995 have been arrested since the formation of the Task Force in June 1996.

The 216 arrests have resulted in a large number of convictions. Since January 1, 1995, 123 defendants have been convicted in federal and state prosecutions in connection with fires at 80 houses of worship. Thirty-five defendants have been convicted of federal charges; of these, 14 have been convicted of federal civil rights offenses.

Federal charges are pending in a number of cases, and grand jury investigations are ongoing in many others. State prosecutions also have been initiated in consultation with federal prosecutors or investigators. The NCATF actively monitors these prosecutions to ensure that any federal interest is vindicated and that accurate information is compiled regarding law enforcement's response to attacks on houses of worship.

There are still many cases that have yet to be solved, however, and new fires continue to occur. Arson cases are among the most difficult criminal cases to solve. Forensic evidence is often destroyed with the fire, and because some of the churches burned are located in isolated, rural areas, often there are no eyewitnesses. For these reasons, it can often take years to solve arson cases.

The Task Force remains committed to expending the necessary time, resources and effort to solving these crimes and prosecuting those who are responsible.

As you know, information relating to an ongoing investigation may not be released publicly before the investigation is concluded. We therefore are constrained in the information we are able to provide. However, we are able to make some preliminary observations from the charges we have brought, and the convictions we have obtained, up to this point.

As indicated by our charging decisions, we have concluded that some of the church fires were motivated by racial hostility. Fourteen defendants have been convicted of federal civil rights charges in connection with fires in Nevada, Tennessee, Texas, and South Carolina. Additional defendants have been prosecuted in state courts for church arsons in which evidence indicated a racial animus. Overall, however, we have found that there have been a range of motives, from blatant racism and religious hatred, to financial profit, personal revenge, burglary or vandalism.

We also have considered the possibility that the church fires, particularly those at African American churches, were the result of a broad conspiracy. The Task Force has found that only a few of the fires are linked by common defendants. Conspiracy charges have been filed in a limited number of cases. These conspiracies, though, have tended to be confined to the small geographic areas where the arsons have occurred. Investigators continue to pursue the question whether broader conspiracies have been responsible for some of the fires, but to date the evidence has not established the existence of a national conspiracy.

There is still much work to be done before charges are filed in other cases. While it was the number of fires at African American churches that brought these crimes to national attention,

the NCATF will continue to investigate and prosecute attacks on all houses of worship, regardless of their denomination or racial composition.

Burning a church may implicate federal anti-arson and civil rights laws, and it warrants swift and certain investigation and prosecution. The work of the NCATF continues to be vital to our efforts to prevent these heinous crimes, and to prosecute those responsible, whether they are motivated by racial hostility, religious bigotry, financial profit, revenge, or simply a desire to burn down a symbol of authority in the community. The number of church fires reported to the Task Force each month has fallen since the formation of the Task Force, but far too many places of worship continue to be burned. The commitment of resources and attention to this work by federal, state and local authorities has been essential to the success of the Task Force, and the Task Force remains dedicated to solving these crimes and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Just last month, the Task Force submitted its First Year Report to the President. On June 10, 1997, Vice President Gore, Attorney General Reno, Secretary Rubin, Secretary Cuomo, and FEMA Administrator Witt all met here in Washington with more than 60 ministers of burned churches and other religious leaders. Our meeting was very successful, and the participation of so many of our government's highest ranking officials should leave no doubt about the Administration's extraordinary commitment to our task.

In closing, we again want to emphasize how important it has been that Congress and the Administration have worked together to address this issue. We must continue our unified approach.

We have seen how law enforcement working together can produce tremendous investigative successes. We have seen how government agencies and private groups working

together can help rebuild a house of worship. And we have seen how Americans from all walks of life working together can come together as one and make a real difference. We are committed to building on the progress that we have seen to date and to eliminating the divisions in our society. The federal effort continues to prosecute the arsonists, rebuild the burned houses of worship, and prevent more fires. There is more work to be done. We are committed to seeing the task completed. As the President said last summer, "We must rise up as a national community to safeguard the right of every citizen to worship in safety. That is what America stands for."

Total Pages:

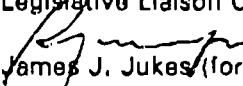
LRM ID: REJ184

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
Washington, D.C. 20503-0001

Thursday, July 17, 1997

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TO: Legislative Liaison Officer - See Distribution below

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OMB CONTACT: Ronald E. Jones

PHONE: (202)395-3386 FAX: (202)395-3109

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EOP:

Jose Cerda III
Leanne A. Shimabukuro
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LRM ID: REJ184

SUBJECT: JUSTICE Oversight Testimony on Church Arson Investigations

**RESPONSE TO
LEGISLATIVE REFERRAL
MEMORANDUM**

If your response to this request for views is short (e.g., concur/no comment), we prefer that you respond by e-mail or by faxing us this response sheet. If the response is short and you prefer to call, please call the branch-wide line shown below (NOT the analyst's line) to leave a message with a legislative assistant.

You may also respond by:

(1) calling the analyst/attorney's direct line (you will be connected to voice mail if the analyst does not answer); or

(2) sending us a memo or letter

Please include the LRM number shown above, and the subject shown below.

TO: Ronald E. Jones Phone: 395-3386 Fax: 395-3109
Office of Management and Budget
Branch-Wide Line (to reach legislative assistant): 395-3454

FROM: _____ (Date)
 _____ (Name)
 _____ (Agency)
 _____ (Telephone)

The following is the response of our agency to your request for views on the above-captioned subject:

Concur

No Objection:

No Comment

See proposed edits on pages

Other: _____

 FAX RETURN of pages, attached to this response sheet

**STATEMENT OF ROSE OCHI, DIRECTOR
COMMUNITY RELATIONS SERVICE (CRS), U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
BEFORE THE SENATE BANKING COMMITTEE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND REGULATORY RELIEF
JULY 17, 1997**

Mr. Chairman, Senator Dryan and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on the activities of the Community Relations Service (CRS), U.S. Department of Justice, in partnership with the President's National Church Arson Prevention Initiative.

In the past year, the work of the Community Relations Service (CRS), the Federal government's "peacemaker" for racial conflict, took on special relevance. President Clinton established the National Church Arson Task Force, a coordinated and comprehensive Federal effort to aggressively investigate and prosecute perpetrators of malicious arsons. As a principal partner of the Task Force, CRS mobilized a Church Burning Response Team (CBRT) that provides conflict prevention and resolution assistance to local officials, law enforcement authorities, clergy, and other community leaders in managing racial tensions that arise from these church arsons.

CRS could not have organized the Church Burning Response Team without the bipartisan support of the members of Congress in passing the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996. In light of the drastic downsizing of CRS, our ability to respond was directly enabled by the statute's authorization for the Attorney General to reprogram Department of Justice funds to underwrite the work of the CBRT. For your leadership in sponsoring that bill, Mr. Chairman, we are most appreciative.

The CRS Response Team focuses its work in those communities where African American churches have been burned or desecrated -- the sites where there is the greatest potential for racial conflict. CRS recognizes that not all Black church arsons are motivated by racial animus and that some may have been motivated by other reasons, while some of the fires were accidental. Irrespective of the motivation or cause of the fire, there are often heightened racial tensions in Black communities when houses of worship are destroyed.

To date, conciliation specialists on the CRS Response Team have helped ease racial tensions over church fires in more than 180 rural, suburban, and urban communities. They work "on the ground" with local communities helping to eliminate racial distrust and polarization, promote multiracial cooperative rebuilding efforts, train law enforcement and community leaders, and create partnerships between minority communities and law enforcement.

There are five specific services which the CRS Church Burning Response Team has provided local communities. The first service is to mediate community conflicts. The second one is to ease racial tensions by facilitating dialogues between concerned officials and citizens. The third service is to design and present training programs for law enforcement and other public agencies. The fourth service is to provide technical assistance on the establishment of church arson prevention programs. And the fifth service is to assure good understanding and information about financial programs and services available to rebuild the churches.

For this Senate hearing, our focus is on this fifth service provided by CRS. By virtue of its partnership in the Federal response effort and its role in working with communities, CRS is in a particularly advantageous position to help with the rebuilding process. The CRS Response Team has assembled and disseminated information about church reconstruction resources available from charitable organizations and government agencies. To date, the CRS Response Team has assisted in approximately thirty communities in Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Mississippi by facilitating the churches' rebuilding efforts.

Initially, CRS conciliators found that most congregations were not prepared nor knowledgeable about the rebuilding process and available resources. Many of the affected churches are located in remote areas, have small memberships and limited resources, and are unfamiliar with the government processes associated with funding applications. Many do not have insurance on the church buildings, which compounds the difficulty in securing funds for reconstruction. Even if they have insurance, the settlement proceeds may not fully cover the costs of rebuilding the church. For many congregations, the aftermath of an arson brings fear, confusion, anger and a profound sense of alienation. However, through the combined efforts of CRS and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), many of these congregations have been able to secure funds and rebuild.

For some communities, tensions revolved around non-financial matters related to the rebuilding effort. CRS conciliators are experienced professionals who can help to resolve these tensions. For example, in Tennessee, CRS helped two communities settle disputes over the rebuilding of their churches. When the Tigrett Mount Pleasant Baptist Church's application for a building permit was denied due to unsuitable soil conditions, CRS worked with the church's minister, and county and State officials to reach a settlement, which cleared the way for new construction. In Columbia, Tennessee, CRS mediated an agreement between the Friendship Baptist Church and city government over the location of the new church.

CRS' role is not only to serve and support communities that have experienced church burnings, but also to prevent new arsons in vulnerable communities. This part of the CRS Response Team's work has particular significance due to the fact that church arsons have profound economic and social costs. Because houses of worship are unifying forces within their communities and acknowledged sanctuaries of deep faith and renewal, their destruction, particularly when motivated by racial animus, engenders a profound sense of devastation, loss, isolation and anger. Recognizing these emotional consequences, CRS is working with the

Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime to provide services to the victims of church arsons.

As part of its strategy for church arson prevention, CRS Response Team has provided technical assistance to religious and community leaders and law enforcement representatives, on the establishment of church arson prevention programs. For example, in Houston and San Antonio, Texas, CRS helped establish community education seminars on church arson prevention. The local police departments have instituted church arson prevention patrols as a result of these seminars. On national, State, and local levels, CRS is consulting with representatives of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and other members of the National Arson Prevention Initiative to identify and encourage arson prevention training programs.

CRS's work is far from finished. Just this month, there were two separate incidents of church burning and desecration in Mobile, Alabama. In those communities where churches are ravaged by fire, CRS specialists will continue to provide conflict prevention services and information regarding financing of rebuilding efforts.

Total Pages: _____

LRM ID: REJ182

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
Washington, D.C. 20503-0001**

Wednesday, July 16, 1997

LEGISLATIVE REFERRAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Liaison Officer - See Distribution below

FROM: James J. Jukes (for) Assistant Director for Legislative Reference
OMB CONTACT: Ronald E. Jones
PHONE: (202)395-3386 FAX: (202)395-3109

SUBJECT: Federal Emergency Management Agency Oversight Testimony on Church Arson Investigations

DEADLINE: 3:00 PM TODAY Wednesday, July 16, 1997

In accordance with OMB Circular A-19, OMB requests the views of your agency on the above subject before advising on its relationship to the program of the President. Please advise us if this item will affect direct spending or receipts for purposes of the "Pay-As-You-Go" provisions of Title XIII of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990.

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**RESPONSE TO
LEGISLATIVE REFERRAL
MEMORANDUM**

FROM: _____ (Date)
 _____ (Name)
 _____ (Agency)
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_____ Concur
 _____ No Objection:
 _____ No Comment:
 _____ See proposed edits on pages _____
 _____ Other: _____
 _____ FAX RETURN of _____ pages, attached to this response sheet

STATEMENT OF
JAMES LEE WITT, DIRECTOR
THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND
REGULATORY RELIEF
COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

July 17, 1997

JUL 16 1997 11:27 TO: L. SHIMABUKURO FROM: JONES, R. E. P. 4/9

Chairman Faircloth, Ranking Member Bryan, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to submit this testimony for the record on the President's National Arson Prevention Initiative.

The inclusion of FEMA today at this hearing is a clear indication of the partnership and cooperation that exists within the Federal government to combat the terrible crime of arson. Not only is the Federal government unified in its commitment to apprehend those responsible for burning houses of worship and prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law, but the agencies represented here today, and several who are not present, are committed to preventing an arson fire from happening in the first place.

Let me first explain the National Arson Prevention Initiative in the context of the overall Administration's church arson efforts. You have heard today about the successful investigation and prosecution activities of the National Church Arson Task Force and about the Church Rebuilding Initiative led by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. While the National Arson Prevention Initiative has its roots in the tragic series of church fires that have occurred, the scope of the Initiative itself is much broader. The church fires have been a catalyst for bringing the issue of arson to a national stage.

Arson is a serious national problem. Arson robs, injures, and kills thousands of family and friends every year. In the United States, it is the leading cause of property loss due to fire and the second leading cause of fire death. Billions of dollars are lost in arson fires every year. The indirect economic losses from arson are even greater.

Arson is a serious national problem, but it is fundamentally a local problem. The goal of the National Arson Prevention Initiative is to promote arson awareness and prevention efforts to individuals and communities. In the end, communities must take ownership of their particular arson problems and be part of their solutions. Real and lasting arson prevention can be Federally inspired; it cannot be Federally driven. When the President announced the National Arson Prevention Initiative in late June last year, he asked FEMA to coordinate public and private sector resources to combat arson. From the outset, this Initiative has tried to apply all available resources to support local solutions to this local problem.

FEMA has been joined in the arson prevention cause by the Departments of Justice, the Treasury, Housing and Urban Development, Education, Agriculture, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and the Corporation for National Service. And just recently, the National Guard Bureau has gotten involved. The cooperation has been unprecedented.

But it is not just Federal agencies that are involved in this Initiative. A wide range of constituent groups and stakeholders have taken up the charge. Early on, the leaders of eight national fire service organizations resolved before the President to work within communities across the country to prevent arson. The two million members of the fire and emergency services have followed through on this commitment.

individuals and communities. In the end, communities must take ownership of their

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In addition, FEMA continues to work closely with national law enforcement organizations, church and voluntary groups, the insurance industry, and a myriad of crime prevention organizations. All of these organizations have a core of strong members and extensive networks that we have capitalized on to promote arson prevention. We continue to be impressed by the interest and involvement of the Southern governors who have demonstrated leadership on the issue of arson prevention.

With the cooperation among all levels of government, national organizations, and the private sector, we have been able to accomplish a great deal, in a relatively short period of time. The efforts of the National Arson Prevention Initiative have been focused in three critical areas: public education and outreach, coordination of resources, and coalition building.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Within days of the announcement of the Initiative, FEMA established the National Arson Prevention Clearinghouse available through a toll-free number (1-888-603-3100) and accessible through FEMA's World Wide Web Site (www.fema.gov). The Clearinghouse has received over 15,000 telephone inquiries from all fifty States, the District of Columbia, and the Caribbean territories. I am proud to report that in its first year of operation, we have reached over one million individuals and organizations with arson prevention information.

Through this Clearinghouse, we provide information on available arson prevention training and grants. Working with the Insurance Committee for Arson Control and the fire service, we are able to provide fire safety and security inspections of houses of worship to those that request it. We also coordinate the delivery of arson prevention workshops across the country with the International Association of Arson Investigators. Callers to the Clearinghouse not only can find out how to organize arson and church watch programs, but also request more intensive technical assistance in fire investigation and arson task force evaluations. We have even been able to place arson inspection centers in communities with the support of State Farm Insurance. In recent months, the issue of juvenile firesetting has received a great deal of attention from local news outlets, national media, and talk shows. The Clearinghouse has served as a referral center for parents of juvenile firesetters to get help from trained mental health professionals.

Fortunately for FEMA, a number of organizations have donated materials for distribution through the Clearinghouse. The Church Mutual Insurance Company, the National Fire Protection Association, the Grinnell Mutual Insurance Company, and the International Association of Arson Investigators have made significant contributions of camera-ready art and printed materials to support this initiative. The National Church Arson Task Force updated the Church Threat Assessment Guide, and FEMA has reproduced and distributed this document through the Clearinghouse with great results. In fact, we completed a massive distribution of information in cooperation with the National Council of Churches last Fall.

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In addition to sending out arson prevention brochures and pamphlets, the Clearinghouse collects reports of exemplary practices and successful models in arson prevention. We also refer questions about rebuilding houses of worship, donating monies to churches, insurance availability, and, of course, ongoing investigations to the appropriate organizations and agencies. All of the partners of the Initiative noted earlier have aggressively promoted the Clearinghouse and the assistance available through it.

COORDINATION OF RESOURCES AND GRANTS

Within the Federal government, resources were redirected and programmed to support State and local arson prevention efforts as part of this Initiative. These resources were closely coordinated as part of the Initiative to maximize their benefit.

- Last summer, FEMA distributed \$774,000 in training grants to all fifty States and the District of Columbia to enhance State and local arson investigation and prevention capabilities. This funding has afforded increased access to arson investigation training programs offered by the our U.S. Fire Administration's National Fire Academy, by allowing more deliveries of the Academy's 2-day and 6-day courses. By the end of this fiscal year, an estimated 2,500 students will receive arson investigation training through the Academy's resident, regional, and direct delivery programs.

Additionally, this May, as part of National Arson Awareness Week, FEMA announced \$635,000 to support arson prevention programs in each of the States, the District, and the territories.

- The Bureau of Justice Assistance, under the Department of Justice, made grants of \$4,600 available to 586 counties in 13 targeted Southern States to enhance church surveillance and arson prevention efforts. There were 1,291 counties eligible to apply for the \$6 million announced by the President last June. Of the approximately \$2.7 million awarded, 13.5 percent has been used to hire part-time officers, 60.9 percent was used for law enforcement overtime, and 25.6 percent for other church arson prevention activities. The remaining funds will be used to provide 13 Statewide Church Arson Prevention Training Conferences in the targeted States, and four conferences outside the southern region, as well as provide technical assistance and support to State and local governments. North Carolina is slated to host the first conference this Fall.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development authorized the use of existing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Public Housing Assistance (PHA) funds to support arson and other crime prevention strategies in communities. These are funds that communities receive annually. PHA funds may be used for developing place-based crime prevention strategies. CDBG funds can also be used to help prevent crime or arson directed at churches or other vulnerable institutions.

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- The Department of Education awarded \$1.8 million in a national grant competition under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program for hate crime prevention activities. Seven grants were awarded to public and private non-profit organizations, including educational institutions, in Arizona, California, Connecticut, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. All of the projects are designed to have a broad impact within the State.
- Efforts continue on the \$2 million in grants awarded by FEMA under the Arson Prevention Act of 1994. Resulting projects on arson case management protocols, investigative training programs, domestic violence as a cause of arson, and juvenile firesetters should serve as models to share with States and communities nationwide. Participating in these demonstration grants are the States of Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, and a consortium from New England that includes Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island.

COALITION BUILDING

There are two key community-based efforts in arson prevention that should be highlighted. The first involves the community outreach of the Federal agencies, and the second involves a coalition building effort that is currently underway.

Perhaps the greatest example of the emphasis of the Initiative on grassroots action has been the efforts of AmeriCorps and VISTA volunteers in six Southern States. Last year, 44 volunteers from the Corporation for National Service were assigned to 18 rural communities in which church arsons had occurred, and to 73 potentially vulnerable communities in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Volunteers performed some 129 church threat assessments and organized over 70 community meetings on arson and fire prevention. Nearly 50 in-depth community arson vulnerability assessments were initiated. Many low cost improvements were made to church properties to make them less vulnerable to arson. Church arson watch groups were started in southwest Georgia and South Carolina. In many States, business partners pledged financial support for arson prevention efforts. Many donations of goods, services and cash were made to assist churches with arson and general fire prevention activities.

Over the last several months, Treasury's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and Justice's U.S. Attorneys, Community Relations Service, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation participated in many community meetings on church arson prevention.

FEMA has recently launched a pilot project in four communities to build grassroots coalitions for arson prevention. Three of the pilot communities have been touched in some way by a fire in a house of worship: Macon, Georgia, Nashville, Tennessee, and Charlotte, North Carolina.

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were selected based on a number of factors including recent fire and arson activity, population size, community leadership, fire and law enforcement support, and access to media outlets for public education. We also have another pilot community located outside the South in Utica, New York. This is a community that is experiencing a serious arson problem. All of these communities have come together and formed grassroots partnerships for arson prevention. The cities of Charlotte, Macon, and Utica launched their coalitions during Arson Awareness Week with a series of events designed to raise awareness and mobilize prevention actions by citizens.

These pilot communities will serve as prevention models for the nation. The lessons they learn as they come together to combat arson will assist other communities across the country. The concept of forming coalitions to address local problems is not a new one. However, it is new in arson prevention, and FEMA and the communities are learning a great deal from the experience. This approach is a model for how we should do business.

However, with all of our best efforts in arson prevention in communities throughout the nation -- the Federal agents, fire chiefs, sheriffs, church leaders, small business owners, and teachers -- the work is still not done. Arson is a problem that just will not go away. The cooperation in evidence at the hearing today has been focused on a symptom of a much larger problem in this country. A problem that we must all remain committed to solve. FEMA is committed to the cause of arson prevention and to working to support communities in keeping America from burning.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to submit this testimony.