

ATF Instructs at Massachusetts Volunteer Law Enforcement Officers Conference

By Jeffrey G. Cosgrove
Office of Science & Technology

On November 12, 2011, members of the ATF Worcester Field Office provided instruction to the Massachusetts Volunteer Law Enforcement Officers Association Conference (MA-VLEOA) held at the Boylston Police Academy. Municipalities and county sheriff's departments in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are authorized by state statute to organize auxiliary units to augment the regular officers. Prior to deployment on the street, most auxiliary officers are required to graduate from a 242-hour reserve intermittent police academy with a curriculum mandated by the Massachusetts Municipal Police Training Committee. Given the fiscal restraints, many of these communities are hard pressed to provide professional officer development. Responding to this need for ongoing training, Auxiliary Captain Marc Spigel of the Framingham Police Department created the MA-VLEOA. More than 130 volunteer officers attended a two-day training event sponsored by MA-VLEOA. Training covered Firearms and Defensive Tactics to Verbal Judo and many skills in between.

Special Agent/Certified Fire Investigator (CFI) John Pijaca, Forensic Auditor J.G. Cosgrove and Detective/Task Force Officer (TFO) Michael Sabatalo were among the instructors. Special Agent Pijaca spoke to the attendees about the National Response Team and ATF's fire and explosives enforcement mission. Pijaca informed the attendees of the many assets that ATF can bring to any arson/explosives investigation, such as the Fire Science Laboratory in Ammendale, Maryland; Fire Protection Engineers and the certification process resulting in the CFI designation.

Forensic Auditor Cosgrove spoke about the unique skill set the ATF forensic auditor can bring to arson fraud investigations. Cosgrove informed the students that although the law does not require the government to prove why someone committed the crime, the establishment of motive is very important in any investigation, especially one



Special Agent John Pijaca, Forensic Auditor J.G. Cosgrove and Detective Michael Sabatalo with the NRT Truck at the MA-VLEO Conference. Photos by Wayne Dion

built upon circumstantial evidence. Although the instruction dealt primarily with ATF's unique role as the only federal law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over crimes of arson and explosives, attendees were encouraged to ask any questions about ATF's overall mission.

Detective Sabatalo spoke to the group about the importance of the TFO program, emphasizing that part of ATF's mission is to build partnerships with state and local law enforcement in order to enhance public safety.

"By working side by side, on a daily basis, the local detective and the federal agent can both do their jobs better," said Sabatalo.

The federal government has assets and statutes unavailable to the local government, whereas the local detectives have an enhanced knowledge of the criminal elements in their community that is built on service in the same venue. By joining forces, law enforcement initiatives have enhanced effectiveness.

"We were very grateful to the ATF. Having members of a federal law enforcement agency donate their time to our conference speaks volumes as to the agencies commitment to work in partnerships with local law enforcement," MA-VLEOA President/Captain Marc Spigel said.