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**Memorandum**

November 28, 2005

**TO:** Honorable Jim Gibbons  
Attention: Tray Abney

**FROM:** William J. Krouse  
Specialist in Domestic Security  
Domestic Social Policy Division

**SUBJECT:** ATF's National Firearms Registration and Transfer Record:  
Issues Regarding Data Accuracy, Completeness, and Reliability

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Per your request, this memorandum addresses questions you have raised concerning the accuracy, completeness, and reliability of registration and transfer records on machineguns, destructive devices, and other firearms regulated under the National Firearms Act (NFA). These records are maintained by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) in the National Firearms Registration and Transfer Record (NFRTR). As CRS has received several requests for similar information about NFRTR accuracy and completeness, the material in this memorandum may be included in future memoranda or a report.

### Summary

As described below, since at least the late-1970s, questions regarding the accuracy, completeness, and reliability of NFA records maintained by the ATF have come up in the course of NFA-related criminal cases.<sup>1</sup> In the mid-1990s, NFA-related issues — including the problems with ATF recordkeeping — were brought to the attention of the House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight,<sup>2</sup> as well as the House and Senate Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government Appropriations Subcommittees.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division, *Memorandum: Response to letter from Senator McClure*, by Philip B. Heymann and Lawrence Lippe, Nov. 29, 1979, pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Inspector General, *Special Report on Allegations Concerning the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearm's Registration and Recordkeeping of the National Firearms Registration and Transfer Records*, OIG-99-009, (Washington: Oct. 26, 1998), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on the Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government Appropriations, *Treasury Postal Service, and General Government Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1997, Part 5, Testimony of Member of Congress and* (continued...)

