

Opening remarks, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms seminar: arson for profit

Senator Daniel K. Akaka Papers

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HONORABLE DANIEL K. AKAKA
OPENING REMARKS
BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS
SEMINAR: ARSON FOR PROFIT

NOVEMBER 5, 1986

GOOD MORNING.

IT IS A DISTINCT PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE HERE THIS MORNING TO SHARE IN THE OPENING DAY OF THE BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS SEMINAR ON ARSON RELATED CRIMES.

INDEED, TODAY IS A VERY SPECIAL DAY FOR ME. AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, TODAY IS SPECIAL FOR ME BECAUSE I CAN SAY THAT THE PEOPLE OF HAWAII'S 2ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT HAVE ONCE AGAIN OFFERED ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE THEIR REPRESENTATIVE TO THE U.S. CONGRESS.

TODAY IS ALSO SPECIAL FOR ME BECAUSE IT AFFORDS ME THIS CHANCE TO JOIN YOU IN THE LAUNCHING OF A PROGRAM WITH WHICH I HAVE BECOME FAMILIAR BY VIRTUE OF MY POSITION AS A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE.

LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THOSE WHO HAVE OFFERED THEIR ENERGIES AND THEIR ENTHUSIASM IN AN EFFORT TO BRING THIS SEMINAR TO HAWAII. THEY ARE PEOPLE WHO YOU WILL GET TO KNOW VERY WELL IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS: OPERATIONS OFFICER/SPECIAL AGENT, "SONNY" WILSON, AND RESIDENT AGENT-IN-CHARGE, JOANNE ROCHER. IT IS TRULY BECAUSE OF THEIR ORGANIZING WORK THAT WE ARE HERE TODAY, AND I THINK THEY DESERVE A SPECIAL HAND.

I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN BY GIVING YOU A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS. COMMONLY KNOWN AS "ATF", THE BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS IS A COMPLIANCE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT BUREAU WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY.

ATF HAS A MULTI-MISSION RESPONSIBILITY TO ENFORCE FEDERAL LAWS ON FIREARMS, EXPLOSIVES, ARSON, ALCOHOL AND CIGARETTE SMUGGLING. ATF ALSO REGULATES THE ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES INDUSTRIES.

THOUGH NOT WIDELY KNOWN, ATF HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE AS FAR BACK AS 1791 WHEN THE FIRST FEDERAL TAX ON DISTILLED SPIRITS ^{WAS} ~~IS~~ IMPOSED.

THE REASON FOR WHICH I AM TELLING YOU THIS IS BECAUSE I THINK THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO KNOW THAT THIS BUREAU HAS PIONEERED THE ARSON FIELD. AS THE PREMIERE AGENCY IN ENFORCING ARSON INVESTIGATIONS, ATF IS ONE OF OUR GOVERNMENT'S MOST HIDDEN JEWELS. THE INFORMATION AND TRAINING WHICH WILL BE TRANSMITTED TO YOU DURING THE NEXT THREE DAYS IS REALLY THE RESULT OF THOSE YEARS OF SERVICE. IN SHORT, THESE PEOPLE ARE THE EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELD.

ATF HAS BEEN ACTIVELY INVESTIGATING ARSON RELATED CRIMES FOR MANY YEARS. IN FACT, ATF HAS INVESTIGATED ARSON RELATED CRIMES FOR LONGER THAN ANY OTHER BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT. I THINK THAT IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT WHEN OTHER BRANCHES WERE SLOWLY TAKING

AFFIRMATIVE STEPS IN EXERCISING THEIR ARSON INVESTIGATIVE AUTHORITY, ATF HAD ALREADY BEEN EFFECTIVELY PUTTING INTO OPERATION LOCAL ARSON PROGRAMS. AS LONG-AGO AS THE 1970'S, FOR EXAMPLE, ATF HAD INSTITUTED LOCAL FORCES IN MORE THAN TWENTY UNITED STATES CITIES. THESE TASK FORCES, COMPOSED OF LOCAL POLICE AND FIRE PERSONNEL AS WELL AS FEDERAL INVESTIGATORS, HAD INITIATED DOZENS OF ARSON INVESTIGATIONS BY THE END OF 1978. INDEED, IT WAS BECAUSE OF THE BUREAU'S RECORD IN THIS FIELD THAT A DECISION WAS MADE TO RESUSCITATE THE AGENCY AT A TIME WHEN THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION WAS ATTEMPTING TO DISMANTLE THE BUREAU.

AND, IT IS BECAUSE OF THE BUREAU'S ACHIEVEMENTS THAT IT CONTINUES ITS WORK TODAY.

FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS, THE BUREAU HAS OFFERED ITS EXPERTISE IN ARSON CONTROL THROUGH A PROGRAM WHICH BRINGS STATE, LOCAL AND FEDERAL OFFICIALS TOGETHER. WE ARE PRIVILEGED, THIS WEEK, BECAUSE WE ARE BEING OFFERED THIS PROGRAM RIGHT HERE IN OUR OWN BACKYARD. ORDINARILY, AS YOU KNOW, THE PROGRAM IS OPERATED IN THE BUREAU'S GEORGIA HEADQUARTERS. AND, THE BARRIERS IMPOSED BY THE COSTS OF SENDING OUR STATE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO GEORGIA HAVE BEEN DRASTIC ENOUGH TO PREVENT ADEQUATE PARTICIPATION.

SOME FACTS YOU MAY BE INTERESTED IN: IN 1985, ATF SUBMITTED 193 SIGNIFICANT ARSON CASES FOR PROSECUTION. THIS EQUALED OUT TO SOME 538 DEFENDANTS. ALL IN ONE SHORT YEAR. IN ADDITION, THROUGH ITS SYSTEM OF CAPTURING FRAUDULENT CLAIMS, ATF HAS TO

DATE SAVED THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY MORE THAN \$300,000,000 DOLLARS.

LET US, THEREFORE, BE QUICK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE RESOURCES THAT THIS GROUP HAS TO OFFER. WHILE THIS SEMINAR DOES NOT REPLACE THE BUREAU'S TWO-WEEK LONG PROGRAM, IT CERTAINLY WILL PROVIDE US WITH AN IDEA OF WHAT CONSTITUTES ARSON VIOLATION, AS WELL AS A METHOD OF ARSON INVESTIGATION.

I AM PLEASED TO SEE SO MANY OF YOU HERE TODAY TO TAKE PART IN A MATTER OF SUCH GRAVE IMPORTANCE TO ALL OF US. AS W. BLACKSTONE ONCE SAID, "ARSON IS AN OFFENCE OF VERY GREAT MALIGNITY AND FREQUENTLY MORE DESTRUCTIVE THAN MURDER ITSELF, OF WHICH TOO IT IS OFTEN THE CAUSE...." WE MUST CERTAINLY BE QUICK TO STIFFLE IT.

THANK YOU, AGAIN, AND WELCOME TO WHAT I BELIEVE MAY BE ONE OF THE MOST VALUABLE EXPERIENCES YOU WILL PARTICIPATE IN.