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## U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,  
Firearms and Explosives

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[www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov)

August 4, 2022

REFER TO: 2021-0106

This responds to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request October 27, 2020, and received by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) on November 10, 2010, in which you requested records concerning the ATF's social media policy. Your request has been assigned number 2021-0106. Please refer to this number on any future correspondence.

In response to your request, we have processed a total of 23 pages of responsive material. We are releasing 23 pages in full. Each page of this production indicates whether it is being released in full (RIF) or released in part (RIP). Individual redactions identify the exemption pursuant to which the redacted material has been withheld. If pages were withheld in their entirety, a deletion sheet is included noting the reason for the withholding.

For your information, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of the FOIA. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(c). This response is limited to those records that are subject to the requirements of the FOIA. This is a standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

You may contact our FOIA Public Liaison, Zina Kornegay at (202) 648-7390, for any further assistance and to discuss any aspect of your request. Additionally, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, Room 2510, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001, e-mail at [ogis@nara.gov](mailto:ogis@nara.gov); telephone at 202-741-5770; toll free at 1-877-684-6448; or facsimile at 202-741-5769.

If you are not satisfied with my response to this request, you may administratively appeal by writing to the Director, Office of Information Policy (OIP), United States Department of Justice, 441 G Street, NW, 6th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20530, or you may submit an appeal through OIP's FOIA STAR portal by creating an account following the instructions on OIP's website: <https://www.justice.gov/oip/submit-and-track-request-or-appeal>. Your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted within 90 days of the date of my response to your request. If you submit your appeal by mail, both the letter and the envelope should be clearly marked "Freedom of Information Act Appeal."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Siple".

Adam C. Siple  
Chief  
Information and Privacy Governance Division

Enclosure

**Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives**



# Social Media Standard Operating Procedures

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## 1) INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1) PURPOSE

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to provide details and explanation of procedures to manage and operate the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' (ATF) official social media platforms. This SOP clearly states the rules governing the use of ATF's social media networks and establishes uniform guidelines for their use. With this in mind, this SOP is intended as a capacity-building tool to strengthen the ability of ATF's social media presence in order to deliver greater impact.

### 1.2) STRATEGY

A social media strategy is necessary to make sure that ATF's social media platforms are in alignment with its mission: "To protect communities from violent criminals, criminal organizations, the illegal use and trafficking of firearms, the illegal use and storage of explosives, acts of arson and bombings, acts of terrorism, and the illegal diversion of alcohol and tobacco products." The strategy provides guidance to employees responsible for social media accounts and helps mitigate the risks posed by using highly interactive third-party platforms.

ATF's social media platforms will be used to decrease the communication gap between citizens' perception of ATF's operations and the actual work ATF performs. The purpose of ATF's social media platforms are to have methods of communication for:

- Public service: Directly responding to public questions, complaints and inquiries.
- Crisis management: Having a finger on the pulse of an unfolding crisis and responding, assisting and diffusing quickly.
- Campaign and promotion management: Spreading the word about a meeting or event that ATF wants its community to hear and talk about.
- Public loyalty: Keeping the public engaged and interested in the ATF and law enforcement communities.
- Keeping tabs on similar agencies: Understanding the successes and failures of similar parties, and using this information as best practices.
- Engagement: Actively engaging key publics on designated social networks through intentional communication, unity of voice, freedom of information, timeliness and accuracy while maintaining security and privacy to strengthen organizational credibility.
- Building credibility/public trust: Key elements of ATF building trust when posting content and maintaining its social media platforms include:
  - Being open with the public when declaring what ATF's core values and principles are.
  - Developing methods of engagement to maintain dialogue with key publics.
  - Deliberating mirror imaging of actions and the information we communicate.
  - Taking certain risks with negative public statements, respond to some comments when it's a moment to educate and allow for the public to also defend ATF's position.

- Not over moderating social media networks to the point of disrupting freedom of information and public opinion.
- Managing ATF's reputation and relationships built on social networks by ensuring there are adequate methods to maintain decorum, rules of engagement and site/content moderation.
- Providing full disclosure of who ATF is when engaging in the social media platforms.

Social media operations are most effective when they are strategically incorporated as part of an organization's outreach, program design and implementation, and monitoring and evaluating efforts. Every action ATF takes on social networks is part of a larger social media marketing strategy. That means every post, like and comment is guided by a plan and drive toward pre-determined goals.

<b>ATF's Social Media Mission</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ATF's organizational objectives are the same as ATF's mission.</li> <li>• ATF's social media activities support the agency's mission by (1) increasing transparency, (2) supporting inter- and intra-organizational collaboration, and (3) enabling innovative forms of public participation and engagement.</li> <li>• Like other federal agencies, ATF's strategy is to engage and interact with citizens in a natural conversation style instead of passively issuing reports, memos and press releases. This puts a "face" on what has often been seen as a faceless bureaucracy.</li> </ul>
<b>ATF's Social Media Strategy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate and use technology to promote democracy, human right and governance.</li> <li>• Use social media to support greater citizen participation and transparent political process.</li> <li>• Strengthen mutual accountability among ATF, government institutions and citizens by creating real-time and direct interaction and organizing.</li> <li>• Get social media inspiration from industry leaders. Turn to similar law enforcement agencies for inspiration when it comes to what content types and information get the most social media engagement.</li> <li>• Use social media listening to see how ATF can distinguish itself from similar law enforcement agencies and appeal to consumers ATF may be missing.</li> <li>• Listen to ATF's audience. Learn the target audiences' habits, when they share and why, and use that as a basis for a social media marketing plan.</li> <li>• Listen to trending topics.</li> </ul>
<b>ATF's Social Media Goals</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To share information that communicates ATF's culture, mission activities and achievements.</li> <li>• To be <i>the</i> source of breaking ATF news and protect the public by providing information on matters of national security and during emergencies.</li> <li>• To show the real ATF. Often viewed as the agency that takes people's guns, ATF is instead an agency that regulates the laws on alcohol, tobacco, firearms, and explosives; is out in the community to promote safety and encourage collaboration; and values differences, professionalism, integrity, diversity, commitment, innovation, and excellence.</li> </ul>

### **1.3) ROLES**

The key roles of staff who are regularly involved in ATF's social media operations are below.

#### **Public Affairs Chief**

Oversees the Public Affairs Division (PAD), therefore makes sure the social media team is performing sufficiently. This sometime includes being the final set of eyes to edit and approve of posts before they go live.

#### **Public Affairs Deputy Chief**

The second in command of PAD, therefore makes sure the social media team is performing sufficiently. When the public affairs chief is unavailable, this sometimes includes being the final set of eyes to edit and approve of posts before they go live.

#### **Social Media Manager**

Manages ATF social media platforms; develops strategic plans for each social media platform; edits and writes content for all social media platforms; oversees social media editorial calendar; modifies social media SOP as necessary; monitors social media comments; monitors mentions of ATF in social media; performs social media analytics; and runs social media campaigns. Keeps PAD staff apprised of all social media issues so regional liaisons can continue to remind their PIOs of campaigns or the need for content during their monthly PIO calls. Decides which member of the social media team will be the POC for content submissions for campaigns.

#### **Social Media Specialists**

Edits and writes content for all social media platforms; edits visuals and creates collages for social media; assists with social media editorial calendar; monitors social media comments; monitors mentions of ATF in social media; runs social media campaigns; and assists with media events. Acts for the social media manager when necessary.

#### **Public Affairs Specialists**

Assists the social media team if the team has questions on submissions that a PIO has sent. This is so field divisions aren't receiving multiple calls from PAD. If there is a breaking story after hours, it is the regional liaison's responsibility to input the social media content or to work with the on-duty individual to input the content. Reminds PIOs of the need for content on the monthly PIO calls. Reaches out to the field divisions to get their most wanted information. Provides necessary information to social media team for content.

#### **PIOs**

Manages their field divisions' Twitter accounts. Works with PAD (the social media team and their respective liaisons) to keep them abreast of breaking news tweets and provides further information on posts when necessary (i.e., when PAD wants to create a Facebook or Instagram post from one of their tweets).

**Digital Media Division**

This division is in charge of ATF's YouTube account. The division creates the videos, but also works with social media manager to come up with video ideas and to cross promote social media platforms.

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## 2) PLATFORMS

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ATF currently has permission from the Department of Justice (DOJ) for five official social media accounts: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Tumblr. ATF does not use Tumblr. DOJ also gives permission for ATF field divisions to have Twitter accounts.

By profiling ATF's audience's habits on social media, ATF is able to gain a clear perspective on where each of the social media profiles stands with its audience. Every social network has a different audience and should be treated differently. Cross-promoting social accounts helps grow the reach of content. Therefore, ATF includes regular messaging (in moderation) on its channels that alerts followers on one network about the existence of ATF's profiles on other networks.

### 2.1) FACEBOOK

#### Overview

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites in the world, with more than 1.35 billion monthly active users. ATF's official Facebook account was established in July 2014, but launched in January 2015. Through this platform, ATF's primary focus is to educate and inform the public about ATF's missions, operations and people. ATF's Facebook handle is "ATF" and the account is linked to the [socialmedia@atf.gov](mailto:socialmedia@atf.gov) email address.

#### Mission Statement

ATF will use Facebook to educate, inform and have a two-way conversation with the general public. The Facebook page will share information about ATF's missions, people and operations in a timely manner, and will also be used for crisis communication.

#### Target Audience

The target audience for ATF's official Facebook account is the general public including industry.

#### Editorial Calendar

ATF shares at least two posts a weekday on Facebook based on when the majority of its followers are online. Posts are timed accordingly to balance out when information is shared. Also, posts are often shared on weekends and over holidays. Content is also often supplemented with re-posts of content from credible sources. Original posts are mostly scheduled ahead of time using Hootsuite or Facebook's scheduling ability, but should not be scheduled out more than 36 hours in advance for sharing of new and current news.

#### Best Practices

- Look at what is nationally trending and determine if there is a way to tie in ATF content.
- Know how the Facebook algorithm shares posts. Videos are shared more than photos and photos are shared more than text/links. Knowing this allows the social media team to reach the most people with its content.

## **Management**

The social media manager manages the official ATF Facebook page and is responsible for all items per this SOP.

### **2.2) TWITTER**

#### **Overview**

Twitter allows millions of users to share stories, links and ideas with people throughout the world through 140-character tweets. Twitter is one of the primary social media outlets used by news organizations and a platform where people can join in on national and international conversations using various hashtags. ATF's headquarters Twitter account was established in January 2012. ATF's Twitter handle is "@ATFHQ" and the account is linked to the [socialmedia@atf.gov](mailto:socialmedia@atf.gov) email address. There are also 26 field division Twitter accounts, including ATF's National Center for Explosives Training and Research (NCETR).

#### **Mission Statement**

ATF will use Twitter to disseminate news and interesting facts that can be used by media sources. The Twitter account will share this information in a timely matter, and will also be used for crisis communication and instantaneous releases of information (live-tweeting).

#### **Target Audience**

The target audience for ATF's Twitter account is the media.

#### **Editorial Calendar**

ATF posts at least one original tweet per day, which will sometimes include weekends and holidays. This can be supplemented with retweets of other content from credible sources. When ATF retweets a post, it shows that ATF is engaged and listening. It also makes the original poster more likely to follow ATF and more likely to retweet its posts.

#### **Best Practices:**

- i. Look at what is nationally trending and determine if it is appropriate and there is a way to relate it to ATF.
- ii. Use ATF's approved hashtags (see the appendix for the ATF-approved hashtags).

## **Management**

The social media manager manages the headquarters ATF Twitter page and is responsible for all items per this SOP. PIOs manage their field divisions' Twitter accounts.

#### **Live Tweeting**

Live-tweeting events is an opportunity to enhance overall messaging via Twitter and grow followership. However, there is a delicate balance between too much and too few retweets.

When applicable, adding some “happening now” live-tweets can make for great fillers on content, but should be planned in advance. An example would be ATF’s director speaking at an important event or ceremony.

Even though live tweets are supposed to be live, many times the event, such as a press conference, is happening at a field division. In this case, the PIO will send the social media team (and copy the public affairs specialist in charge of that region) the text and photo or video for the post. In addition, like all posts, live tweets should be edited before they go live.

## **2.3) INSTAGRAM**

### **Overview**

Instagram is a quick, easy way to share high-quality pictures and videos of ATF’s mission, people and operations with the general public. Instagram has 150 million active users and the engagement rate is 15 times higher than Facebook. ATF’s official Instagram account was established in September 2015. ATF’s Twitter handle is “@atfhq” and the account is linked to the [socialmedia@atf.gov](mailto:socialmedia@atf.gov) email address.

### **Mission Statement**

ATF will use Instagram to educate and inform the general public of its mission, people and operations by showcasing photos and short video clips that are interesting to the eye along with text to put the pictures and videos into perspective. ATF will also use Instagram to supplement other social media platforms while conducting campaigns (i.e., Throwback Thursday).

### **Target Audience**

The target audience for ATF’s Instagram account is the general public, with specific focus on the younger audience. With more than 90 percent of the active users being under the age of 35, Instagram is a platform for ATF to focus on the 18- to 34-year-old age bracket. Similar to other photo-heavy platforms, Instagram skews heavily toward women—68 percent of its users are female.

### **Editorial Calendar**

ATF posts on Instagram at least four times a week, which will sometimes include weekends and holidays. Also, while none of ATF’s campaigns rely solely on its Instagram account for success, campaigns allow for cross promotion between tools.

### **Best Practices**

- i.) Look at what is nationally trending and determine if it is appropriate and there is a way to relate it to ATF.
- ii.) Use ATF's approved hashtags (see the appendix for the ATF-approved hashtags).

## **Management**

The social media manager manages the official ATF Instagram page and is responsible for all items per this SOP.

### **2.4) YOUTUBE**

#### **Overview**

YouTube allows billions of people to watch and share originally-created videos. ATF's YouTube handle is "ATFHQ" and the account is linked to the [webmaster@atf.gov](mailto:webmaster@atf.gov) email address. ATF joined YouTube in June 2009.

#### **Target Audience**

The target audience for ATF's YouTube account is the general public. While it attracts an even split of women and men, YouTube is still fairly male dominated. Men spend 44 percent more time on the site per month, and of 51 categories of YouTube content measured by OpenSlate, men make up the majority of viewers in 90 percent of them.

#### **ATF Use**

ATF uses YouTube to educate, inform and entertain the general public of its mission, people and operations. It is also used to cross promote the other ATF social media platforms.

## **Management**

ATF's Digital Media Division (DMD) manages the official ATF YouTube page and is responsible for all items per this SOP. The division also works closely with the social media manager to develop content ideas as ATF's YouTube videos are also cross promoted on ATF's Facebook and Twitter pages.

### **2.5) HOOTSUITE**

Hootsuite allows for posts to be scheduled ahead of time. This is particularly useful for planning ahead for evenings, weekends and holidays.

ATF also uses Hootsuite to create and manage conversations since it is a valuable tool when managing social media platforms. The tool allows for independent "streams" to be set up for searching and filtering through various posts. This is particularly useful when researching what is being said in regards to a specific topic.

## **Management**

The social media manager, public affairs chief and deputy chief have full administrative access to ATF's Hootsuite account, meaning they can approve posts. The social media specialists and public affairs specialists have limited access, meaning they can post content for approval.

## 2.6) FIELD DIVISION ACCOUNTS

The PIOs for each field division and NCETR manage their respective Twitter pages. Before opening their accounts, each PIO underwent a trial period with the headquarters social media team to make sure they were well-versed in creating and writing tweets and that ATF is speaking with one voice.

### Breaking News

The Office of the Director requests that a “BREAKING NEWS” tweet be transmitted by the appropriate field division as soon as possible whenever ATF is responding to an incident garnering national attention. Per PGA leadership, it is required that the below format and graphic be used when doing breaking news tweets.

BREAKING: ATF is [responding to/en route to the scene of] a [reported shooting/explosion] at [name of school, building, etc.] in [city, state].



This format stands out to reporters as the ATF standard for breaking news as they sift through tweets and many use these tweets directly in their articles or broadcasts. No other variation of “BREAKING” should be used (i.e., Happening Now, #BreakingNews, etc.) and “BREAKING” should not be used in any non-breaking news tweets. If a field division has photos to go along with the breaking news, the PIO should post them in follow-up tweets.

Also, it is imperative that PIOs communicate these events to their PAD liaisons as soon as possible so that the appropriate ATFHQ retweet can be made. Doing so also allows PAD the ability to notify ATF leadership and make the mandatory DOJ notifications regarding ATF’s response to large scale national events.

If a critical incident is making national news, the tweet by the field division will be retweeted by the headquarters account. If a field division fails to do a breaking news tweet in a timely manner, the headquarters social media team will tweet one if directed by PAD, PGA or ATF leadership.

## Approved Twitter Accounts

The ATF HQ Twitter account follows all field division Twitter accounts.

After opening a Twitter account, PIOs were to immediately work to get the account [verified](#). PIOs also needed to register their field division Twitter accounts with GSA's digital registry at <https://usdigitalregistry.digitalgov.gov/> (making sure the agency selected for the account is "Department of Justice") and making sure their POC and accounts are updated on the DOJ site: <https://portal.doj.gov/sites/pao/SMCoP/Lists/Points%20of%20Contact/Grouped%20by%20Component.aspx>. Lastly, PIOs needed to register with Archive Social so all tweets are archived, per DOJ policy: <https://secure.archivesocial.com/external/accounts/connect?h=MXd6dThqeSMmI2UxMHh1OTIsODB0bWlpN3IxaHh4NjQ3enMjJiNlzM4cnkyaWI0cjV5NGxoczFoeTY4emZo>. Direct questions about archiving with Archive Social to [support@archivesocial.com](mailto:support@archivesocial.com).

In addition, PAD has the authority to provide additional policy reminders, training and/or guidance, if necessary, to a PIO regarding a field division's posts and/or Twitter account as a whole. If a field division is not tweeting appropriately, adequately or professionally, PGA has the right to put an account on probation.

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### 3) CONTENT

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#### 3.1) SOURCES

There are several sources of content for ATF's social media platforms.

**1) Field Divisions**

The social media team, along with the assistants of the PAD public affairs regional liaisons, are responsible for retrieving this information, determining if the information should be shared on social media, and for posting the information.

**2) News**

When the social media team finds relevant local or national news, they create posts with a link to the news story.

**3) Rewards**

The social media team retweets or creates reward or wanted posts from information received on the field division accounts or using the most wanted page on the ATF.gov website.

**4) Infographic**

DMD creates infographics with information on ATF or ATF-related topics.

**5) ATF's Website**

Content, such as stories, press releases and facts on ATF's website are used to generate content.

**6) Trends**

The social media team pays close attention to what is trending, which means a topic emerges on social media as a popular trend. If a trend is relevant to ATF and if there is content to post regarding the trend, a post can be created. However, all parties should keep in mind that trending topics should be posted immediately as the popularity is fickle. Also, all parties should research the trend (click on the hashtag) before creating a post to make sure it is appropriate for ATF to be a part of that topic. Those who clear posts should be notified of the immediacy of clearing the post so they know that it should go live as soon as possible to follow the trend.

**7) Information from Related Government Agencies**

This includes, but is not limited to the Department of Justice, such as re-posts of U.S. Attorney's ATF gun cases.

**8) Holiday/Observances**

The social media team pays close attention to upcoming holidays and observances and creates original content.

**9) Campaigns**

To promote an event or topic, the social media team may create or partner on campaigns.

For outside content, such as a special law enforcement award that is not ATF-related, content should mainly circle back to being ATF-specific. ATF does not promote much outside content because its accounts are mainly to disseminate its own news. Though there may be some promotion of outside orgs/events/awards, too much of that becomes a turn off to those following ATF for its news. This is in order to remain a news source, not a spam source.

In addition, content should be written in Associate Press Style.

### **3.2) LINE OF DUTY DEATHS**

The ATF headquarters Twitter account follows the ATF Survivor Protocol Order regarding employees who have deceased. Pursuant to the order, only line of duty deaths (LODDs) will be displayed on social media. The only platforms that they will be displayed on is Twitter. These LODD posts will include law enforcement and fire officials from the federal, state and local levels. Other deaths, including those of ATF Special Agents, that are not LODDs will not be displayed.

### **3.3) GRAPHICS AND VIDEO**

It is highly encouraged that all posts have some type of media attached to them – either photos, images or videos. Give credit when credit is requested. Also, if using photos from an outside, non-government source, the graphics and videos must be royalty-free.

### **3.4) HASHTAGS**

A hashtag is a word or a phrase that starts with the hash or pound character (#) to mark a topic in a post on social networks. Hashtags make posts more searchable, and easier for others to find. Hashtags that are “trending” often pertain to breaking news events; sports and entertainment events; discussions of politicians, celebrities, and other public figures; or are even related to campaigns that brands and organizations promote.

It is important to always research hashtags before using them to prevent using one that conflicts with ATF’s messaging or that is inappropriate. While many hashtags may be clear what they are used for (#MerryChristmas), hashtags can sometimes be misleading. ATF should always know what conversation it is joining before it joins it. It has become a regular occurrence throughout the government and military services to use hashtags in social media posts.

It is best practice to use ATF's approved hashtags (see the appendix for the ATF-approved hashtags). For non-approved hashtags, it is a good idea to do some research to find out about the established hashtags on the topic of a post. To use a hashtag to get more people to see posts, it’s important to make sure that ATF is using a hashtag that many users know or follow already. For example, “#Explosives” on Instagram has fewer users than “#Explosive.” However, ATF can also create a hashtag so the audience can follow along a certain event or discussion, such as “#AskATF” if ATF wants to host a question and answer campaign.

Even though a hashtag is often a jumble of several words, the first word should be capital so the audience can easily comprehend the hashtag.

### **3.5) EDITORIAL CALENDAR**

The headquarters social media team uses an editorial calendar to gather planned content and projects for the headquarters social media accounts. For example, if the director is making a presentation at a conference, this is an event that is known in advance that can be put on the editorial calendar. Also, observances that ATF will feature (i.e., Halloween) can be found on

this list. The editorial calendar consists of an Excel spreadsheet for each month, with activities further broken down by day, POC, etc. This document is for the headquarters social media team only as it is specific to headquarters only.

For PIOs and PAD staff alike, a shared calendar with content possibilities is located on the [PGA PIO Sharepoint site](#).

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## 4) POSTING AND CLEARANCE

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All content posted is considered on the record and in the public domain. It will be available for a long period of time, and can be published or discussed in the media. All posts should serve the greater purpose of communicating the mission of ATF. It is best practice to not use acronyms that are not commonly known and to use plain language whenever possible.

### 4.1) POSTING

The majority of headquarters posts are scheduled using Hootsuite as follows:

- 1) Type the text in the Hootsuite scheduler.
- 2) Shorten any URL that goes along with the post.
- 3) Add the graphic(s) or video.
- 4) Add hashtags if necessary/relevant (aim for no more than three; see hashtag information below)
- 5) Schedule the date and time of the post
- 6) After hitting schedule, swipe to the right so the designated clearers can be alerted that a post is awaiting their clearance.
- 7) The clearers edit the post and give final approval.

Messages are timed strategically, meaning throughout different periods of the day, as to not overburden the audience.

The social media team is responsible for posting the majority of content; however, public affairs specialists/PAD liaisons are also responsible for creating social media posts when necessary.

There are some occasions where it is best to post directly on the platform as opposed to Hootsuite. For example, to make a Facebook album, it needs to be created directly on the platform. Only those authorized to clear posts should post directly to platforms and any social media specialists who has been authorized to do so.

### DEADLINES

The deadlines of posts vary. Evergreen posts can be posted when the social media manager sees fit. However, timely posts should be posted accordingly. For example, if the director requests live tweeting at an event, the social media team will obtain the information in order to get the posts out immediately.

### 4.2) CLEARANCE

All posts should be edited by at least one or two people before they go live. Editors will pay attention to wording, AP style, typos, correct statistics, hashtags and even if a post should or should not be scheduled. All posts should be proofread and spell checked. Any links should be tested prior to publication to ensure they are directed to the right page.

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## 6) COMMENTS

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ATF only responds to comments when it is an opportunity to educate by providing guidance/clarification, links to the ATF website or laws. The social media team monitors the comments. Moderation of comments, including censoring and deleting, is prohibited except in extreme situations (i.e., terrorist threats). The social media team use its best judgment when choosing which comments to respond to on social media sites.

As a best practice, each post ATF makes should be moderated closely for at least the first 15 minutes after posting. This allows the social media team to see any initial comments that may correct a spelling or factual issue in the post, that can be immediately change.

Some additional best practices include:

1. Post only approved content. Have a method in place to ensure thorough content review before posting.
2. Avoid the tendency to defend and protect every comment made. Given time, social networks sometimes self-correct negative aspects. Let users explain and work out the issues and ideas being expressed.
3. Do not stray from negative comments. An open forum comes with certain risk of negativity and to shy from it will tarnish credibility. However, responses must be vetted/approved and accurately express ATF's position without editorializing or straying from the facts.
4. Replace errors or misrepresentations of ATF with facts not arguments.
5. Stay in ATF's lane. Do not comment on what ATF does not know.
6. No endorsements. Do not use ATF's name to promote products, opinions or causes other than those already officially endorsed by ATF.
7. Admit mistakes.
8. If uncertain whether a response is necessary, refer to the appropriate ATF expert for guidance
9. In the rare case that a comment needs to be deleted following DOJ's criteria, it is necessary to keep a log of all malicious material that has been deleted.

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## 7) ANALYTICS

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Social media listening, tracking, monitoring and engagement tools allows organizations to execute their social media strategy. This enables organizations to become socially-engaged enterprises, with strong insight into social media through metrics, measurement, sentiment and analytics.

Social media monitoring not only helps determine public sentiment surrounding ATF, but can also be used to deal with crisis situations, benchmark similar law enforcement agencies, generate interest from potential audiences, and group support for the bureau. Social media monitoring helps ATF reach out to a whole new audience.

ATF measures impact, engages top management in the interpretation of the data, and is ready to adjust its tactics accordingly. Measuring the impact of social media activities in the public sector is crucial to demonstrating the value of social networking services. Social media applications have the potential to improve responsiveness, reach, efficiency, and even cost savings in government.

### 7.1) TOOLS

Hootsuite as well as each social media platform provides analytics for each platform. The social media team provides a monthly report to PAD leadership on the first workday of each month to show the growth of follows and a monthly report on the tweet activity of the field divisions' Twitter accounts.

The headquarters social media team pays attention to what headquarters tweets end up on @GreatGovTweets, a service from @measuredvoice showcasing great examples of U.S. government social-media messages, with the occasional high-five.

ATF also follows other related agencies and industry leaders to see how it can distinguish itself and appeal to its audience, get social media inspiration, and learn their habits, when they share and why, and use that as a basis for our social media marketing plan.

### 7.2) MONITORING MENTIONS

All social media parties, especially the social media team, monitor the mentions of ATF on all platforms using Hootsuite and from each individual platform. By monitoring ATF's mentions, ATF is able to:

- 1) See what is being said about ATF in the news.
- 2) Gauge what others are saying about ATF.
- 3) Generate content.

For any interesting, relevant or need-to-know posts, the social media team sends the post(s) to PAD staff. This is so all parties are informed of what is being mentioned about ATF by others on social media. If the posts are about a particular region and do not need to be shared with all

of PAD staff, the social media team sends the post to the appropriate liaison for awareness and for the liaison to determine if it's something that needs to be shared with a particular PIO.

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## **8) SECURITY AND MAINTENANCE**

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### **8.1.) PASSWORDS**

Passwords for social media accounts should be changed at least twice a year and consist of all elements that make for a strong password: upper and lowercase letters, numbers and special characters. Throughout the accounts, two-step verification is, and should be, enabled at all times. This verification step links a phone number to the account for an added security step, sending a notification text to the registered phone when a login attempt is made.

### **8.2) ACCOUNT VERIFICATION**

Verification badges help visually confirm the authenticity of social media accounts. The badge on ATF's platforms ensures to outside audiences that the account actually belongs to ATF. The verification checkmark only appears to the right of our account name, and "Verified Account" appears in a popup if a user points his or her cursor at it.

### **8.3) TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

The generic Facebook email account for technical assistance is [gov@fb.com](mailto:gov@fb.com). The generic Twitter email account for technical assistance is [gov@twitter.com](mailto:gov@twitter.com). The Instagram Help Center (<https://help.instagram.com>) has FAQs and information to answer most questions as they arise. The HootSuite Help Desk can be reached at [support@hootsuite.com](mailto:support@hootsuite.com).

### **8.4) IMPOSTERS**

Report any ATF imposter social media accounts directly to the social media platform's representatives. See email addresses above.

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## 9) EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

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If an emergency occurs, an important component of the preparedness program is the crisis communications plan. ATF must be able to respond promptly, accurately and confidently during an emergency in the hours and days that follow. Many different audiences must be reached with information specific to their interests and needs. The image of ATF can be positively or negatively impacted by public perceptions of the handling of the incident.

During an emergency, ATF's social media team will follow one of the two standard operating procedures: CIMIST or COOP.

### **CIMIST**

An example of when this was implemented is during the Boston Marathon bombing and Navy Yard shooting.

If CIMIST is implemented, there will be at least two social media team members designated to handling the social media.

See the CIMIST SOP for further information about this emergency plan.

### **COOP**

Continuity of Operations (COOP) is the initiative that ensures that federal government departments and agencies are able to continue operation of their essential functions under a broad range of circumstances including all-hazard emergencies as well as natural, man-made, and technological threats and national security emergencies. Today's threat environment makes COOP planning even more critical.

See the COOP SOP for further information about this emergency plan.

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## 10) APPENDIX

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### **Current Hashtags**

#ATFJobs

#CrimeGunIntel

#DisruptTheShootingCycle

#DOJProjectGuardian

#EOW (End of Watch)

#LastAlarm

#LODD (Line of Duty Death)

#NIBIN

#NoBetterPartner

#SheIsATF