Inspections of Firearms Sellers Under the White House's 2021 Zero Tolerance Policy

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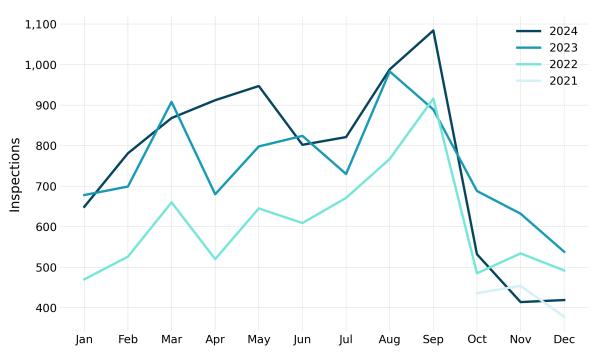
This document shares key findings from my analysis of publicly available Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) inspection data. The ATF, which conducts the nation's inspections of licensed firearms sellers (Federal Firearms Licenses or FFLs), launched these limited data on its website soon after the White House announced its "zero tolerance" policy.

The Biden Administration announced this policy in June 2021, explaining that it had zero tolerance for "rogue gun dealers" and planned to "crack down" on them with increased inspections as part of a wider gun control and public safety strategy. So I examined the number of inspections from October 2021 through 2024 to measure the ATF's response under the Biden Administration.

The Number of Inspections Grew from 2022 to 2024

The number of ATF inspections grew each year. Figure 1 shows this increase, accounting for seasonal patterns. The ATF inspected firearms sellers (known as Federal Firearms Licensees) the most during late summers.

Figure 1.



The Number of Inspections Varied by Field Office

Dallas, Kansas City and Columbus—cities in the south and midwest—had the most inspections over the full period of data (Figures 2 and 3). Field offices in the west and northeast tended to have fewer inspections. These differences are likely because ATF field offices receive more funding when they have more licensees in their area. ATF has likely set up more offices where they have more licensees.

Figure 2.

ATF Inspections by Office, Oct 2021 - Dec 2024

ATF inspections by Office, Oct 2021 – Dec 2024								
Columbus 2,822	Detroit 796	Philadelph 632	hia	Baltimore 475 Los Angeles 477		Newark 238		
						St. Paul 446	New York 363	
	Denver 852	New Orle 644	ans ,	Atlanta 591	Wash 5	nington 529	Seattle 513	
Kansas City 3,049	Miami 878	Louisville 751		San Fran 747		o N	Nashville 747	
	Charlotte 1,179		Boston 1,148			Tampa 1,050		
Dallas 3,217			Phoenix 1,556		Chicago 1,200			

Figure 3.

ATF Inspections by Region, Oct 2021 - Dec 2024

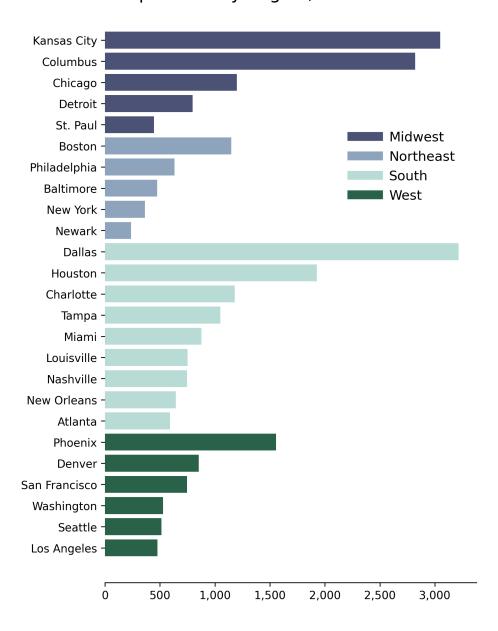
Midwest 8,313

South 10,984

West 4,674

Looking at offices by region in Figure 4 shows more offices in the south than the other regions.

ATF Inspections by Region, Oct 2021 – Dec 2024



Inspection Results Also Varied by Field Office

Field offices that issued the most warnings and revoked the most licenses (Figures 5 and 6) were similar to those that had the most inspections (Figure 2). These similarities suggest that so-called rogue gun dealers are not concentrated in or attracted to any particular area.

Figure 5.

ATF Warnings by Office, Oct 2021 - Dec 2024

	Warrings by Office	,		-			
Kansas City 43	Louisville 24	Seattle 13	Philadelphia 12	St. Pa		Newark 5 Atlanta 6	
	Charlotte 25	New York 14	Detroit 12	Los Ango 12	os Angeles 1		
Miami 49	Boston 28	Baltimore 20	e Chic 1		Ho	ouston 19	
Dallas 68	Washington 30	Nashville 29		C	Columbus 28		
	Tampa 41	Denver 41			Phoenix 34		

Figure 6.

ATF Revoked Licenses by Office, Oct 2021 - Dec 2024

ATT Nevoked Electises by Office, Oct 2021 Dec 2024						
Washington 30	Miami	Houston 14	San Francisc 8	Atlanta Los Angeles		
	21		New York 10	4 K Baltimore 7		
Charlotte 43	Chicago 21	St. Paul 16	Philadelph 12	nia Seattle 11		
	Detroit 22	Nashville Louisvi 20 19		e Denver 19		
Kansas City 60	Columbus 24	Dalla 23		Boston 22		
	Phoenix 30	New O 28		Tampa 25		