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The Federal Bureau of Investigation

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported that it has approximately 38,000 employees as of April 2025. It employs intelligence analysts, language specialists, scientists, and information technology specialists, in addition to special agents, and is headed by a Director, who is appointed to a 10-year term by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. The FBI is a part of the Department of Justice, and the Director of the FBI reports to the U.S. Attorney General and the Director of National Intelligence. Broad changes to FBI operations and structure since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States (9/11) have underscored its dual law enforcement and intelligence missions, among which counterterrorism is the first priority.

Budget

A sizeable increase in the FBI's budget has accompanied the reprioritization and reorganization of the FBI since 9/11. Much of this expansion has gone to bolstering FBI counterterrorism and intelligence capacities. Nominal appropriations for the FBI have more than tripled, from \$3.3 billion in FY2001 to \$10.7 billion in FY2025. In inflation-adjusted terms, appropriations for the FBI increased 83%. (Inflation-adjusted amounts are in FY2025 dollars. Appropriations were adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index.)

The FBI is funded through two accounts in the annual Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. The Salaries and Expenses account funds the FBI's operational expenses, while the Construction account provides funding for capital projects. The majority of the FBI's funding is provided through the Salaries and Expenses account.

Mission and Priorities

The FBI's mission is to protect the American people and uphold the Constitution. The FBI has authority to investigate all federal crime not assigned exclusively to another federal agency (28 U.S.C. §533). It also provides criminal justice services to federal, state, municipal, tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies and partners.

The FBI describes its priorities as

- protecting the United States from terrorist attack,
- protecting the United States against foreign intelligence operations and espionage,
- protecting the United States against cyber-based attacks and high-technology crimes,
- combating public corruption at all levels,

- protecting civil rights,
- combating transnational/national criminal organizations and enterprises,
- combating major white-collar crime, and
- combating significant violent crime.

The FBI's order of these top eight priorities has not changed since 2002, when it announced them as a response to 9/11.

Investigative and Intelligence Work

The FBI's 55 field offices in the United States and its legal attachés abroad do much of the FBI's investigative and intelligence work, while three branches in the FBI Headquarters coordinate these efforts. Two—the FBI's National Security Branch and its Intelligence Branch—reflect the focus of the FBI on counterterrorism and intelligence since 9/11. The third—the Criminal, Cyber, Response, and Services Branch—includes cybercrime as well as investigative programs that can be seen as more traditional aspects of the FBI's mission.

The National Security Branch

The National Security Branch broadly manages FBI attempts to thwart terrorists and spies (the FBI's first two priorities). Within the National Security Branch there are several divisions, directorates, and centers, including

- **Counterterrorism Division:** responsible for counterterrorism investigations conducted by Joint Terrorism Task Forces throughout the country. The division focuses on disrupting financial, weaponry, and material support and the prosecution of those who plot or commit acts of terrorism. The FBI is the lead agency for federal terrorism investigations (28 C.F.R. §0.85(l)).
- **Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorate:** coordinates efforts designed to prevent, mitigate, and respond to the use of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons.
- **Threat Screening Center:** maintains the consolidated watch list of known or suspected terrorists and individuals with connections to transnational organized crime, and shares Terrorist Watchlist information with other federal and law enforcement agencies.
- **Counterintelligence Division:** works to counter the activities of foreign spies; protect the secrets of the U.S. Intelligence Community; and protect critical assets such as advanced technologies and sensitive information in the defense, intelligence, economic, financial, public

health, and science and technology sectors. The division also seeks to prevent weapons of mass destruction from being obtained by criminals or terrorists.

Terrorism Investigations. The FBI, through the Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs), plays the chief role in coordinating federal counterterrorism investigations across the United States, bringing together federal, state, and local agencies in the process. JTTFs are multiagency teams of investigators, analysts, linguists, and other specialists who investigate terrorism and terrorism-related crimes. Among their many roles, the agents, task force officers, and intelligence professionals working on JTTFs gather leads, evidence, and information related to terrorism suspects. They analyze and share this information to help develop cases for prosecution, most often in federal court.

The FBI Intelligence Branch

The work of the Intelligence Branch is not restricted to any one of the FBI's eight priorities. Rather, intelligence collection, production, and dissemination can be found throughout the FBI's priority programs. According to the FBI, this branch oversees intelligence policy. It includes the Directorate of Intelligence, the FBI's dedicated national intelligence workforce. The directorate has responsibility for all FBI intelligence functions and includes intelligence elements and personnel that reside at FBI Headquarters, each of its field offices, and in some of the FBI's legal attaché offices abroad. Intelligence collection, analysis, exploitation, and dissemination are at the core of FBI efforts to stop national security threats.

The Criminal, Cyber, Response, and Services Branch

Among its investigative responsibilities, the Criminal, Cyber, Response, and Services Branch manages FBI casework related to the FBI's other six priorities. The branch includes two divisions covering these issues:

- The **Criminal Investigative Division** oversees investigations in more traditional FBI priority areas:

Public Corruption. FBI investigations in this area focus on violations of federal law by public officials; fraud tied to federal government procurement, contracts, and federally funded programs; public corruption along the nation's borders and points of entry; environmental crime; and election fraud.

Civil Rights. The FBI explains that it is the primary federal agency responsible for investigating allegations regarding violations of federal civil rights statutes. More recently, the FBI's civil rights investigations have focused on hate crimes, color of law violations (i.e., government officials, acting under their authority, depriving people of rights protected by U.S. law or the Constitution), and Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act violations (18 U.S.C. §248).

Transnational/National Criminal Organizations. The FBI seeks to eliminate transnational organized crime groups that pose a threat to the security of the United States. Such groups are involved in international drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, human trafficking, money laundering, firearms trafficking, illegal gambling, extortion, counterfeiting goods, and cybercrimes.

White-Collar Crime. The FBI generally focuses on complex white collar crime investigations—often with a nexus to organized crime activities—that are international, national, or regional in scope and where the FBI's expertise or capabilities can increase the likelihood of successful investigations. The FBI works with other federal investigative or regulatory agencies when conducting white collar crime investigations. The FBI's white collar crime program addresses corporate fraud, securities and commodities fraud, money laundering, mortgage and financial institution fraud, health care fraud, and intellectual property rights enforcement.

Significant Violent Crime. The FBI continues to play a role in preventing and responding to violent crime in communities across the country. The FBI places an investigative emphasis on violent crimes with a federal nexus, such as criminal street gangs, crimes against children, child prostitution, bank robberies and other violent robberies, carjackings, kidnappings, fugitives and missing persons, crimes in Indian Country, and assaults and threats of assault on the President and other federal officials.

- The **Cyber Division** focuses on high-level intrusions by state-sponsored hackers and global cyber syndicates as well as the most prolific botnets (networks of private computers unwittingly infected by malware, controlled by an attacker, and used to carry out malicious activity). The division addresses other cybercrimes as well. The FBI leads the multiagency National Cyber Investigative Joint Task Force, which coordinates cyber threat investigations. The FBI maintains cyber task forces at each of its field offices that respond to local cybersecurity threats and incidents.

Criminal Justice Services

The FBI also provides a wide range of services to federal, state, local, tribal, foreign, and private sector partners as well as the general public. For example, the Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division provides the public with crime statistics through the Uniform Crime Reporting program. CJIS maintains the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, which is used by federally licensed gun retailers to help determine whether a prospective purchaser is eligible to buy firearms. Finally, CJIS operates the National Crime Information Center, which is a clearinghouse of crime data that can be accessed by nearly all criminal justice agencies nationwide.

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