United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 9, 2011

Via Electronic Transmission

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr. Attorney General U.S. Department of Justice 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder:

During our meeting on January 31, I provided you with copies of my recent letters to Acting ATF Director Kenneth E. Melson. I had received serious allegations from ATF whistleblowers. ATF agents told my staff that the agency allowed the sale of assault rifles to known and suspected straw purchasers for an illegal trafficking ring near the southwest border. Authorities allegedly recovered two of those weapons at the scene of a firefight near the southwest border on December 14, 2010. Customs and Border Protection Agent Brian Terry lost his life in that firefight and may have been killed with one of those two rifles. That is why I requested nearly two weeks ago that the ATF brief my staff as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, the reaction to my request has, so far, been little more than delay and denial. I finally received a letter at close of business on Friday, February 4, in response to my request. It came not from the ATF, but from the Justice Department. In that letter, the Department categorically denied that the ATF "knowingly allowed the sale of assault weapons to a straw purchaser..." The Department said the ATF makes "every effort to interdict weapons that have been purchased illegally and prevent their transportation into Mexico."

However, as I explained in my initial letter to Acting Director Melson, the allegations I received are supported by documentation. It is already public record that federal agents arrested Jaime Avila on December 15, 2010—the very same day that CBP Agent Terry died. The ATF had been tracking Avila's firearms purchases because Avila was a suspected trafficker since at least November 2009. According to the whistleblowers, at least one gun dealer wanted to stop participating in sales like those to Avila sometime around October 2009. However, the ATF allegedly encouraged the dealer to continue selling to suspected traffickers and asked the dealer to forward information about the sales to the Bureau.

¹ Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, "Multiple Sale Summary," Nov 25, 2009 (Attachment 1).

The dealer who sold the weapons allegedly recovered at the scene of Agent Terry's death met with both ATF representatives and Assistant U.S. Attorneys as early as December 17, 2009 to "discuss his role as [a Federal Firearms Licensee] FFL during this investigation."² On January 9, 2010, Jaime Avila bought three more firearms at the same Glendale, Arizona gun dealer and his purchase was entered into an ATF database two days later. By January 13, ATF added Avila to a suspect person database for the investigation. 4 On January 14, ATF entered the firearms Avila purchased five days earlier into the National Tracing Center's Suspect Gun Database.⁵

On January 16, 2010, Avila bought three AK-47 variant, Romanian WASR-10 assault rifles from the same dealer with the serial numbers 1983AH3977, 1979IS1530, and 1971CZ3775.⁶ ATF entered these weapons into the National Tracing Center's Suspect Gun Database three days later. Over the next several months. ATF continued to track Avila's multiple firearms purchases in near real-time, including two purchases of .50 caliber rifles in June 2010.8

After the shooting of CBP Agent Terry, law enforcement officials recovered from the scene two assault rifles. On December 16, 2010, ATF's trace results confirmed that serial numbers 1983AH3977 and 1971CZ3755 match two of the three rifles purchased by Avila and tracked by the ATF nearly a year earlier. In addition to these specific weapons, the indictment of Avila and others references approximately 769 firearms. Of those, the indictment refers to the recovery of only about 103 weapons. So, where are the other approximately 666 weapons referenced in the indictment? Why did the ATF not seize them?

The Justice Department's reply asked that Committee staff stop speaking to law enforcement personnel about these matters. However, if not for the bravery and patriotism of law enforcement personnel who were willing to put their careers on the line, this Committee would have been forced to rely on nothing more than rumors in the blogosphere and a Justice Department denial to resolve these allegations. We need more than that. To be an effective check on Executive Branch power, we need cold, hard facts. We will seek them from whatever source is necessary.

Unfortunately, the Justice Department's letter suggested that my attempts to seek information about these matters might be politically motivated. I understand the Department needs to "protect ... law enforcement personnel ... from inappropriate

² Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, "Management Log for Case: 785115-10-[redacted]," Dec 17, 2009 (Attachment 2).

³ Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, "Multiple Sale Summary," Jan 11, 2010 (Attachment 3),

⁴ E-mail from ATF Program Analyst to ATF Agents, Jan 13, 2010 (Attachment 4).

⁵ Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, "Suspect Gun Summary," Jan 14, 2010 (Attachment 5).

⁶ Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, "Suspect Gun Summary," Jan 19, 2010 (Attachment 6).

⁸ Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, "Suspect Gun Summary," Jun 8 and Jun 16, 2010 (Attachment 7).

⁹ Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, "Significant Information Report," Dec 16, 2010 (Attachment 8).

10 Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, "Firearms Trace Summaries," Dec 16, 2010 (Attachment 9).

political influence." However, there is a difference between inappropriate political influence and appropriately holding officials accountable to the American people. I try to conduct non-partisan oversight of the Executive Branch. Regardless of which party controls the White House or the Congress, I do my best to ask tough questions. If you have any evidence that there is anything "inappropriate" about my motives in this matter, please let me know. Otherwise, I respectfully request that the Department avoid such implications in the future.

Finally, I want to share with you a portion of an e-mail from Carolyn Terry, Agent Terry's stepmother. She wrote yesterday:

It's hard to accept that our son was shot and murdered with a gun that was bought in the U.S. We have not had any contact from the Border Patrol or any other agents since returning home on the 22nd of [January]. Our calls are not returned. I truly feel that our son's death is a cover-up and they hope that we will go away. That will not happen. We want to know who allowed the sale of that gun that murdered our son. Any help will [be] appreciated. We are the victims of this case and we want some answers.¹²

The Terry family deserves answers. The whistleblowers have expressed a desire to honor Agent Terry's memory by disclosing this information. The Justice Department should work to do the same. The best way to honor his memory is to come clean.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley Ranking Member

Church Granley

The Honorable Patrick Leahy cc:

Chairman

United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Robert S. Mueller, III

Director

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Kenneth E. Melson **Acting Director**

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives

The Honorable Alan D. Bersin

Commissioner

United States Customs and Border Protection

¹¹ Letter from the Justice Department to Senator Charles E. Grassley, Jan 31, 2011. ¹² E-mail from Carolyn Terry, Feb 8, 2011.

BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES

NATIONAL TRACING CENTER

Phone: (800)





MULTIPLE SALE SUMMARY

Multiple Sale Number:

ATF

Entered Date: November 25, 2009

Field Division: PHOENIX

DEALER INFORMATION

Business Name:

Licensee Name:

Address: 5140 W PEORIA AVE STE 110

GLENDALE, AZ 85302

Phone: (623)

FFL Number:

PURCHASER INFORMATION

Purchase Date:

Name:

ATF

11/24/2009

Address:

PHOENIX, AZ 85035

DOB:

Race: HISPANI

POB: LOS ANGELES, CA UNITED STATES

ID 1: AR DRIVER'S LICENSE

Purchaser may be associated with other trace(s)/multiple sale(s).

Weapon Summary

• •			Weapon Count; (5/2)			*
Manufacturer	Model C	Caliber	Serial Number	AS Re V	Importer	Origin
F.N. (FN HERSTAL)	FIVE- 5 SEVEN	17	38619554	Kistól		BG
F.N. (FN HERSTAL)	FIVE- 5 SEVEN	i7	186195644 (5)	PISTOL	•	BG
¬N. (FN HERSTAL)	FIVE- 5' SEVEN		386194225	PISTOL		BG
N. (FN HERSTAL)	FIVE- SEVEN	7(0)	386195542	PISTOL		BG
F.N. (FN HERSTAL)	FIVE- SEVEN	\mathfrak{H}	386193543	PISTOL		BG

Multiple Sale: M20090200525 FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Management Log for Case: 785115-10 Case Title Date: 01/04/2010

User:

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES

NATIONAL TRACING CENTER



Phone: (80)

Print Date Fax: (800)

MULTIPLE SALE SUMMARY

Multiple Sale Number:

ATF

tered Date: January 11, 2010

Field Division: PHOENIX

DEALER INFORMATION Business Name: Licensee Name: Address: ATF GLENDALE, AZ 85302

Phone: (623)

FFL Number: 98602353

Manufacturer

F.N. (FN HERSTAL)

F.N. (FN HERSTAL)

PURCH/	ASER INFOR	MATION	
Purchase Da	te: (11/09/2010	,
Name:	A	TF	İ
Address:			j
	PHOENIX, A	Z 85035	ar gar,

POB: LOS ANGELES, CA UNITED STATES

Race: HISPANI

ID 1: AZ DRIVER'S LICENSE

ID 2:

DOB:

Purchaser may be associated with other trace(s)/multiple sale(s).

Weapon Count Weapon Count When Importer Origin FIVE- 57 38620350 FISTOL BG FIVE- 57 186293509 PISTOL BG

SEVEN
N. (FN HERSTAL)
FIVESEVEN

386206145~

Weapon Summary

PISTOL

BG

Sex: Male

Multiple Sale: M20100004614
FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

From: Sent:

To: Cc:

Subject: Attachments: Wednesday, January 13, 2010 10:39 AM

Suspect Person Entries - IN# 785115-10- (VCAB#

Suspect Person Entries - IN# 785115-10- (VCAB# 785115-10-), pdf; OSII-Survey Form (3) (

pdf; FTS Queries - IN#

785115-10- (VCAB#), pdf; OSII-Survey Form (3) (2) pdf; FIREARMSDATARESTRICTIONS - FY09 pdf

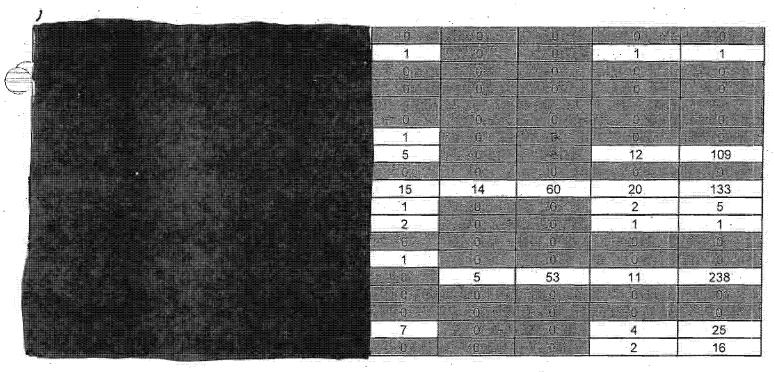
Dear ______,

Per your request, 42 subjects have been added to the Suspect Person Database for IN# 785115-10. Attached are PDF files based on queries executed in the Firearms Tracing System (FTS), and a Suspect Person Information Report revealing the information currently entered into the Suspect Person Database for this investigation. Please see below for a summary of the information found within the FTS.

By entering these subjects into the Suspect Person Database, queries of the FTS will be conducted on a monthly basis and any new associations will be forwarded to you. If you should have any questions or need assistance, please feel free to contact me at the number below.

When information is provided by e-mail, a copy is also provided to the Intelligence Group Supervisor and designated FIST (Field Intelligence Support Team) member.

Last Name	First Name	Middle Name	DOB	Traces	Multiple Sale Reports	# of Firearms in M/S	Suspect Gun Reports	# of Suspect Guns
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Please be advised that the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2009, Public L. 111-8, which became effective on March 12, 2009, restricts the disclosure of any part of the contents of the Firearms Tracing System or any information required to be kept by Federal Firearms Licensees pursuant to 18 USC 923(g), or required to be reported pursuant to 18 USC 923(g)(3) and 923(g)(7).

The information, which is being provided per your request, is for official law enforcement use only and may only be disseminated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to a Federal, State, local, tribal, or foreign law enforcement agency, or a Federal, State, or local prosecutor, solely in connection with and for use in a criminal investigation or prosecution; or a Federal agency for a national security or intelligence purpose. This disclosure restriction shall not be construed to prevent the sharing or exchange of such information among and between Federal, State, local, or foreign law enforcement agencies, Federal, State, or local prosecutors, and Federal national security, intelligence, or counterterrorism officials; or the publication of statistical aggregate data regarding firearms traffickers and trafficking channels, firearms misuse, felons, and trafficking investigations. If you have questions regarding these restrictions please contact ATF legal counsel prior to disclosing any of the information provided in this correspondence outside of ATF.

Please complete the attached OSII Customer Satisfaction Survey form. Click on the "Mail" box located at the bottom of the form and then click on "Serid" Satisfaction Survey form.

Sincerely,

Program Analyst
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Office of Strategic Intelligence and Information
Violent Crime Intelligence Division
Violent Crime Analysis Branch
Main Office #: (304)
Direct #: (304)
Fax #: (304)

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES

NATIONAL TRACING CENTER

Fax:(800)





Phone: (800)

Print Date

SUSPECT GUN SUMMARY

Suspect Gun Number Entered Date: January 14, 2010

PHOENIX FD GROUP VII **201 E WASHINGTON ST STE 940** PHOENIX, AZ 85004

Badge No:

Investigation No: 785115-10

INDIVIDUAL INFORMATION **DEALER INFORMATION** Business Name: Namer* ATF Licensee Name: Address ATF PHOENIX/AXX85035 ATF Address: 5 Race: HISPAN Sex: Male GLENDALE, AZ 85302 Date: 01/09/2010 Phone: (623) Height: Weight: FFL Number 8 DRIVER'S LICENSE #: ATF Edg. Invoice#:

The firearm(s) listed below was entered into the Firearms Kacing System as a suspect gun. You have requested NTC maintain a lookout for the firearm(s) if any of the suspect guns in this report are traced by another agency and/or individual, your Division's Firearms Trafficking Coordinates (FTC) will be notified in writing by the NTC. The notification will include the identity of the officer and/or agency requesting the trace. It will be incumbent upon the FTC or yourself to contact the firearms trace requestor? The NTC will not release any information concerning your suspect gun(s).

		pon Count:	3		
Manufacturer	Workel	Caliber	Serial Number	Type	 Importer
F.N. (FN HERSTAL)	OFIVE-SEVEN	57	386203502	PISTOL	 FNH USA LLC. FREDERICKSBURG VA
F.N. (FN HERSTAL)	FIVE-SEVEN	57.	386203509	PISTOL	 FNH USA LLC. FREDERICKSBURG VA
F.N. (FN HERSTAL)	> FIVE SEVEN	57	386206115	PISTOL	FNH USA LLC. FREDERICKSBURG VA

Suspect Gun: S20100000059 FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES

NATIONAL TRACING CENTER







SUSPECT GUN SUMMARY

Suspect Gun Number:

ATF

Entered Date: January 19, 2010

PHOENIX FD GROUP VII 201 E WASHINGTON ST STE 940 PHOENIX, AZ 85004

Badge No:

Investigation No: 785115-10-

INDIVIDUAL INFORMATION

Name Address

DOB

Height:

PEOENTAL/AZ-85035

Weight:

ATF

Race: HISPAN

Sex: Male

展 (1) (1)

IC

Date: 01/16/2010

#:

DEALER INFORMATION

Business Name: Licensee Name:

Address:

GLENDALE, AZ 85302

Phone: (623

FFL Number

Invoice #

 ATF

The firearm(s) listed below was entered into the Firearms Kacing System as a suspect gun. You have requested NTC maintain a lookout for the firearm(s). If any of the suspect guns in this report are traced by another agency and/or individual, your Division's Firearms Trafficking Coordinato (FTC) will be notified in writing by the NTC. The notification will include the identity of the officer and of agency requesting the trace. It will be incumbent upon the FTC or yourself to contact the firearms trace requestor. The NTC will not release any information concerning your suspect gun(s).

Weapon Summary

Manufacturer ROMARM/CUGIR

ROMARM/CUGIR ROMARM/CUGIR

Wodel OWASR-10

WASR-10

WASR-10

Weapon Count: 3

762

762

Caliber Serial Number 762 1983AH3977

1979IS1530

1971CZ3775

RIFLE RIFLE

Type

RIFLE:

Importer

CENTURY ARMS INC (CAI),

ST. ALBANS, VT

CENTURY ARMS INC (CAI),

ST. ALBANS, VT

CENTURY ARMS INC (CAI), ST. ALBANS, VT

Suspect Gun: S20100000088 FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES

NATIONAL TRACING CENTER







Print Date

SUSPECT GUN SUMMARY

Suspect Gun Number

Entered Date: June 08, 2010

PHOENIX FD GROUP VII 201 E WASHINGTON ST STE 940 PHOENIX, AZ 85004

Badge No:

Investigation No: 785115-10

DEALER INFORMATION

Business Name Licensee Name **ATF**

SCOTTSDALE, AZ 85260

Phone: (480) Ext:

Invoice #: .

FFL Number:

INDIVIDUAL INFORMATION

Addres

Name()

PHOENLY/AX 85035

Race: HISPAN

Sex: Male

Height:

Weight:

Date: 06/04/2010

DE AZDRIVER'S LICENSE #

The firearm(s) listed below was entered into the Firearms Wacing System as a suspect gun. You have requested NTC maintain a lookout for the firearm(s) if any of the suspect guns in this report are traced by another agency and/or individual, your Division's Firearms Trafficking Coordinato (FTC) will be notified in writing by the NTC. The notification will include the identity of the officer and/or agency requesting the trace. It will be incumbent upon the FTC or yourself to contact the firearms trace requestor. The NTC will not release any information concerning your suspect gun(s).

Weapon Summary

Manufacturer

BARRETT FIREARMS MEG CO

Weapon Count: 1

50 BMG

Caliber Serial Number

14775

Type

Importer

Suspect Gun: \$20100000905 FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY Page 1 of I

BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES

NATIONAL TRACING CENTER



ax:(800)



Print Date

SUSPECT GUN SUMMARY

Suspect Gun Number

ATF

SCOTTSDALE, AZ 85260

ATF

Entered Date: June 16, 2010

PHOENIX FD GROUP VII 201 E WASHINGTON ST STE 940 PHOENIX, AZ 85004

Badge No:

Investigation No: 785115-10

DEALER INFORMATION

Address:

Invoice #:

Phone: (480)

FFL Number: 98604053

Business Name:

Licensee Name:

INDIVIDUAL INFORMATION

Addres

PROENLE/AZ 85035 Race: HISPAN

Sex: Male

Weight:

Date: 06/15/2010

Height: E. Gar

SDRIVER'S LICENSE

The firearm(s) listed below was entered into the Firearms. Nacing System as a suspect gun: You have requested NTC maintain a lookout for the firearmys). If any of the suspect guns in this report are traced by another agency and/or individual, your Division's Firearms Trafficking Coordinator (FTC) will be notified in writing by the NTC. The notification will include the identity of the officer and or agency requesting the trace. It will be incumbent upon the FTC or yourself to contact the firearms trace requestor. The NTC will not release any information concerning your suspect gun(s).

Weapon Summary

50 BMG - 14753

Manufacturer

BARRETT FIREARMS MFG CO

Weapon Count: 1

Caliber Serial Number

Type

RIFLE

Importer

Suspect Gun: S20100000978 FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY Page 1 of 1

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives



DATE: 12/16/2010

FROM: Phoenix Field Division			· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
FIELD OFFICE: Phoenix VII Field Office			
CASE INFO	ORMATION		
CASE NUMBER: 785115-10-			, V
CASE TITLE:			
SPECIAL AGENT: ATF	TELEPHONE NUMBER		
SYNOPSIS OF INC	IDENT/ACTIVITY		,
Arrest of ATF			
narrative of in	CIDENT/ACTIVITY		, , ,
On January 16, 2010. ATF purchased three (3) AK-47 variant rifle death of a U.S. Border Patror agent in Southern Arizona law enforcement of variant rifles purchased by ATF ion 01/16/2010 were recovered in the are	fficers/agents conducted a se		
On December 15, 2010, ATF agents located ATF and subsequently interfrearm purchase. In summary ATF admitted to ATF agents that he straw	viewed and arrested him on v purchased these firearms f	charges stemming from or or an unidentified Hispar	this Japuary 16, 2010, lic male.
ATF I was held overnight and ATF agents have prepared a criminal compiles three (3) AK-47 variant rifles on 01/16/2010 and are presenting it to a	laint for ATF on fir Federal Magistrate today (I	rearm charges relating to 2/16/10.)	the straw purchase of

BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES

NATIONAL TRACING CENTER

Phone: (800)

Fax:(800)

U (5) S

Print Date:

FIREARMS TRACE SUMMARY

Trace Number

ATF

Request Date: December 15, 2010

Completion Date: December 16, 2010

INTEL GROUP IV PHOENIX 201 EAST WASHINGTON ST STE 940

PHOENIX, AZ 85004

PHONE: (602)

Ext:

FAX (602)

Badge No:

Investigation No: 785070-104

FIREARM INFORMATION

Manufacturer: ROMARM/CUGIR

Model: GP WASR 10/63

Caliber: 762

Serial Number: 1971CZ3775

Type: RIFLE

Country: ROMANIA

Importer: CENTURY ARMS INC (CAI),

Obliterated!

Identifying Marks

NIBIN

Gang Name:

RECOVERY INFORMATION

Recovery Date: 12/15/2010

Time to Crime:

RIORICO, AZ 85648

Possessor:

QQB:

PÒB:

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

THE NATIONAL TRACING CENTER (NTC) HAS EXPERIENCED A DELAY IN OBTAINING THE INFORMATION ON THE HISTORY OF THE FIREARM YOU ARE REQUESTING TO BE TRACED.

Additional Remarks:

The information in this report must be validated prior to use in any criminal proceedings.

Trace: T20100289614

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Page 1 of 1

BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES

NATIONAL TRACING CENTER







Print Date:

FIREARMS TRACE SUMMARY

ATF Request Date: December 15, 2010 - Completion Date: December 16, 2010 Trace Number:

INTEL GROUP IV PHOENIX

201 EAST WASHINGTON ST STE 940

PHOENIX, AZ 85004

PHONE: (602)

Ext:

FAX (602)

Badge No:

Investigation No: 785070-104

FIREARM INFORMATION

Manufacturer: ROMARM/CUGIR

Model: GP WASR 10/63

Caliber: 762

Serial Number: 1983AH3977

Type: RIFLE

Country: ROMANIA

Importer: CENTURY ARMS INC (CAI),

Obliter ated

Ldentifying Macks

MAIN

Gang Name:

RECOVERY INFORMATION

Recovery Date: 12/15/2010

Time to Crime:

RIORÍCO ÁZ 85648

Possessor:

POB:

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

SUMMARY OFRESULT

THE NATIONAL TRACING CENTER (NTC) HAS EXPERIENCED A DELAY IN OBTAINING THE INFORMATION ON THE HISTORY OF THE FIREARM YOU ARE REQUESTING TO BE TRACED.

Additional Remarks:

The information in this report must be validated prior to use in any criminal proceedings.

Trace: T20100289612 FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY Page 1 of 1