

From: Weinstein, Jason
To: Sweeney, Laura (SMO)
Sent: 3/15/2011 5:16:20 PM
Subject: RE: can you resend me...

thx

From: Sweeney, Laura (SMO) [mailto:Laura.Sweeney2@usdoj.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2011 1:15 PM
To: Weinstein, Jason
Cc: Cooper, Renata; Wroblewski, Jonathan
Subject: RE: can you resend me...

Here you go (though would need to add to responses that

DP

DP

ATF INVESTIGATIVE TACTICS /GUNRUNNER

Q: What has the Department done to respond to allegations from ATF agents that ATF facilitated the sale of the guns and have employed tactics to allow illegal weapons to flow across the U.S. – Mexican border?

A: Fighting criminal activity along the Southwest Border – including the illegal trafficking of guns to Mexico – has been a priority of this Administration and this Department of Justice. The mission of ATF and other law enforcement agencies is to stop the flow of illegal weapons and drugs across the Border – and it will continue to be.

I'm not going to comment on the specifics of any operation, but I'm aware of the questions that have been raised by ATF agents. I take those very seriously, and that's why I have asked the Inspector General to get to the bottom of it.

Q: Are you concerned that the previous IG report cited "significant weaknesses" with Project Gunrunner, including failures to adequately provide information to other agencies and target major traffickers? What has the Department done to respond to that report?

A: The OIG report on Project Gunrunner provided important recommendations that ATF and the department took seriously and have been working to implement these past few months. I would note that this report detailed the aggressive approach ATF took toward straw purchasers – which I believe is the subject of some of the questions raised now.

As I said, I'm aware of the questions that have been raised by ATF agents. I take those very seriously, and that's why I have asked the IG to get to the bottom of it.

Q: Does ATF routinely engage in this so-called tactic of "letting guns walk" as alleged by agents so they can track where they end up?

A: I'm not going to comment on specific investigative techniques but can tell you that ATF's mission is to stop the illegal trafficking of guns across our borders.

Keep in mind, it is legal to purchase guns in this country. At any time, a law-abiding citizen can walk into a federal firearms licensee, or licensed gun dealer, and purchase one or more firearms without any special requirement from the federal government. That makes gun investigations by their very nature different from investigations into drugs.

Q: Did you or anyone at the Department approve of the Fast and Furious Operation or any change in policy that allowed guns to cross the border to Mexico?

A: Just as a general matter, I don't approve most of the ground-level operations of ATF or other component agencies. But in any case, good, smart, effective law enforcement requires nuanced and difficult judgments as we try to catch and interdict people whose only goal is to evade law enforcement.

What I can say is that fighting criminal activity along the Southwest Border – including the illegal trafficking of guns to Mexico – has been a priority of this Administration and this Department of Justice. The mission of ATF and other law enforcement agencies is to stop the flow of illegal weapons and drugs across the Border – and it will continue to be.

I'm not going to comment on the specifics of any operation, but I'm aware of the questions that have been raised by ATF agents. I take those very seriously, and that's why I have asked the Inspector General to get to the bottom of it.

Q: Was anyone at the Department aware that the Fast and Furious operation was allowing guns to flow across the border to Mexico?

A: As I and others have said, fighting criminal activity along the Southwest Border – including the illegal trafficking of guns to Mexico – has been a priority of this Administration and this Department of Justice. The mission of ATF and other law enforcement agencies is to stop the flow of illegal weapons and drugs across the Border – and it will continue to be.

Q: There were reports that the Department is considering making changes to the Fast and Furious operation. Is the Department considering any action to suspend or alter ATF's efforts along the SW Border?

A: The mission of ATF and other law enforcement agencies is to stop the flow of illegal weapons and drugs across the Border – and it will continue to be. I'm aware of the questions that have been raised by ATF agents. I take those very seriously, and that's why I have asked the Inspector General to get to the bottom of it. I understand that ATF has also said it is reviewing its firearms trafficking strategies.

Q: Why were the illegal immigrants arrested near the scene of Agent Terry's fatal shooting released without being charged?

A: I believe the U.S. Attorney's Office in Arizona has explained that there was no evidence tying these particular individuals to the shooting of Agent Terry. My understanding is that these individuals have entered guilty pleas to illegal entry charges, and as a result, will be deported back to Mexico.

MEXICO

Q: Will the United States seek to ensure U.S. law enforcement agents can carry weapons in Mexico, in light of the recent shootings?

A: As the President said last week, Mexican law prohibits that. We have to make sure our agents are safe and protected, wherever they are stationed. We will continue a dialogue with our Mexican counterparts to ensure that we are doing everything in our power to ensure their safety.

Q: You previously said you would consider seeking changes from your Mexican counterparts. Are you backing off from that statement?

A: We will continue to work with our Mexican counterparts to make sure our agents are safe and protected. As the President said, however, allowing them to carry weapons would require a change in Mexican law.

Q: What responsibility does the United States bear for the violence in Mexico, given that most of the weapons are coming from the United States, and the demand for drugs comes from this country?

A: Working within the legal confines of our existing laws, the Department is committed to eliminating the threat posed by Mexican drug cartels influencing the drug market domestically and plaguing our Southwest Border, and we will continue to coordinate with the Department of Homeland Security and other federal, state and local agencies to ensure that we achieve our goal cooperatively and efficiently.

As we've said, we understand that we have a shared responsibility to combat these cartels, and through our law enforcement efforts, as well as training and assistance we provide, we are living up to that responsibility.

From: Weinstein, Jason (CRM)
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2011 1:12 PM
To: Sweeney, Laura (SMO)
Cc: Cooper, Renata (CRM); Wroblewski, Jonathan (CRM)
Subject: RE: can you resend me...

That would be great – thanks!

From: Sweeney, Laura (SMO) [mailto:Laura.Sweeney2@usdoj.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2011 1:12 PM
To: Weinstein, Jason
Cc: Cooper, Renata; Wroblewski, Jonathan
Subject: RE: can you resend me...

Here are the general TPs – would you also like the general Q&A about FF/gun trafficking as well?

- Fighting criminal activity along the Southwest Border – including the illegal trafficking of guns to Mexico – has been a priority of this Administration and this Department of Justice.
- The mission of ATF and other law enforcement agencies is to stop the flow of illegal weapons and drugs across the Border, and it will continue to be. The department is aware of the questions that have been raised by ATF agents. We take those very seriously, and that's why the Attorney General has asked the Acting Inspector General to get to the bottom of what happened.
- The Attorney General has made it clear to the law enforcement agencies and prosecutors working along the Southwest Border that no one in the Department should allow guns to illegally cross the border into Mexico. If we find out that guns are illegally going across the border into Mexico, we are going to stop them.
- Keep in mind, it is legal to purchase guns in this country so at any time, a law-abiding citizen can walk into a federal firearms licensee, or licensed gun dealer, and purchase one or more firearms without any special requirement from the federal government. That makes gun investigations by their very nature different from investigations into drugs.
- As we have said, our mission is to stop the illegal trafficking of guns into Mexico, but in any case, good, smart, effective law enforcement requires nuanced and difficult judgments as we try to catch and interdict people whose only goal is to evade law enforcement.

From: Weinstein, Jason (CRM)
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2011 1:08 PM
To: Sweeney, Laura (SMO)
Cc: Cooper, Renata (CRM); Wroblewski, Jonathan (CRM)
Subject: can you resend me...

...the TPs based on what the AG testified to about Fast and Furious? Laura Duffy is testifying before the Sentencing

Commission on Thursday and when we prep her tomorrow, I want her to be armed with his TPs. Thanks!

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