

SOUTHWEST BORDER INITIATIVE BRIEFING PAPER

SUBJECT: The Southwest Border Initiative was organized by those ATF field divisions with jurisdiction contiguous to the U.S./Mexican border (Los Angeles, Phoenix, Houston, and Dallas), and is intended to reduce firearms trafficking into—and firearm related violent crime in—the Republic of Mexico.

PURPOSE: This briefing paper briefly outlines the proposed consolidated plan, and establishes goals for the Southwest Border Initiative (SWB).

ISSUES/PROBLEMS:

- Information sharing between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement agencies relating to firearms violence needs to be increased.
- Formalized liaison is needed between ATF special agents assigned to border areas and their Mexican law enforcement counterparts.
- There are limited manpower and resources available to ATF field divisions and field offices with jurisdiction over areas contiguous to Mexico.
- There is limited actionable intelligence related to firearms trafficking from the U.S. into Mexico and related firearms violence.

ACTION or FOLLOW-UP:

- Diplomatic and Law Enforcement Coordination
Special Agents in Charge or designee:
 - Coordinate meetings as needed with the offices of the Mexican Consular General and the U.S. Consular General to address implementation and ongoing maintenance of the initiative.
 - Establish the manner and instruments of information-sharing among ATF, other domestic law enforcement agencies, and the Mexican government related to firearms crimes and recoveries within Mexico.
- U.S. Federal Agency Cooperation and Intelligence
ATF will coordinate the resources of other interested Federal law enforcement agencies, and establish a SWB contingent within the El Paso Intelligence Center to act as a clearinghouse for information gleaned as a result of the initiative.
- Seizure Incident Responses
Field operations personnel within the affected offices will be identified as points-of-contact to provide the proper firearm investigative assistance to Mexican law enforcement.
- Provide Training
Short Term

- ATF will provide firearms identification training to appropriate Mexican law enforcement personnel in order to increase the effectiveness of firearms traces. Due to attrition and the rotational basis of these organizations' assignment practices, this needs to be conducted on an ongoing basis and at various venues.

Long Term

- Provide instruction in the proper use of the E-Trace application.
- Conduct firearms trafficking training structured specifically to the nuances of illicit firearms movement between the United States and Mexico.
- Increase explosives detection canine capabilities.

- Industry Operations' Role

Industry Operations personnel within the involved divisions will be tasked with identifying common source FFLs for firearms recovered in Mexico through the Trafficking Inspection Program (TIP), conducting secondary market inspections, and conducting outreach efforts to the industry.

- Mission Needs

Short Term

- Diplomatic passports and letters of authorization are needed from the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico for assigned personnel to enable them to carry firearms while completing assigned duties within Mexico.
- Mexico based cellular telephones.
- Level IV armored vehicle ("hard car") and Mexican insurance.
- SENTRI passes for expedited passage through border facilities.
- Discretionary funds for assigned personnel.
- Language training for assigned personnel.
- Personal investigative equipment (e.g., high resolution digital camera, etc.).
- Reproduction of ATF publications in Spanish (e.g., Firearms Identifiers and Tracing Guide).

Long Term

- Additional field/satellite offices in various locations with close proximity to the U.S./ Mexico border (i.e., Yuma, Sierra Vista, Douglas, Nogales, and El Centro), including Industry Operations and K-9 assets. Additional field offices within the affected divisions, centrally located, specifically tasked with the initiation of firearms trafficking investigations, targeting the identified trafficking corridors.
- Continued and expanded use of the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) system incorporating evidence recovered in firearms-related violent crimes in Mexico.
- Highway traffic monitoring and interdiction programs in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security and State Highway Patrol components.
- Additional Intelligence Research Specialists assigned to offices in border cities, as well as a dedicated SWB entity within the Southern California Regional Crime Gun Center (SCRCGC).

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- Achieve comprehensive tracing of viable suspected crime guns recovered in Mexico
- Reduce the number of unsuccessful traces.
- Increase NIBIN capabilities in border and trafficking corridor areas, as well as incorporate firearms recovered in Mexico.
- Increase prosecutions of U.S./Mexico firearm sources, leading to reduced firearms related violence in Mexico.
- Increase information sharing between U.S. and Mexico law enforcement agencies.
- Successfully analyze, identify, and monitor U.S./Mexico firearms trafficking and related firearms related violence.
- Establish a self-sustaining relationship with Mexican counterparts to ensure continued success.

STATUS (May 18, 2007)

Create SWB Gunrunner Branch at the El Paso Information Center (EPIC)

Chief – ATF IC)

Program manager – ATF assigned to EPIC, stationed in Houston)

ATF Investigative Analysts (EPIC)

Investigative Research Specialists (Vacancy Announcement, located at EPIC)

On May 14, 2007, the Phoenix Field Division SAC met with Dr. Abel Murrieta Guitierrez, the Attorney General for Sonora, Mexico. He asked to meet with ATF to discuss ATF firearms and explosives training and firearms trafficking issues.

ATF SACs are traveling to Mexico City the week of June 11-15 to meet with the U.S. Ambassador, Mexican Attorney General Ramirez, Deputy Attorney General Vasconcelos, Director of Public Safety Genaro Garcia Luna, SSP Deputy ATF ACIFA (Customs) Deputy Taviel Ruiz, and possibly CENAPI Director Ardelio Vargas. ATF will present a Spanish-language briefing about proactive ATF activities addressing their concerns about illegal firearms flow to Mexico. The presentation will discuss specific activities, division by division and on a national level, to focus attention on the issue. (It will not be a generic “you must trace your guns” speech.)

During the week of May 21, SAC Newell has scheduled a meeting with the Mexican Consul General, who is stationed in Phoenix. They will discuss firearms trafficking and border violence issues.

The Phoenix Field Division has been hitting Spanish media outlets in recent weeks with a Spanish version of “Don’t Lie for the Other Guy” campaign.

The El Paso RAC has recently met with the Sheriff of Luna County in New Mexico and offered assistance along with signing them up for E-Trace. The RAC has also met with the Police Chief of Columbus, New Mexico and the Sheriff of Brewster County, Texas. These three areas have

seen an increase in violence involving firearms. They are progressing with their investigations and have recently signed up a new Task Force Officer from New Mexico.

The El Paso RAC has helped to organize a firearms serial number restoration training class for the border area and it will also be attended by three Mexican National police officers who do restoration work in Mexico.

The Los Angeles Field Division has begun to provide firearms trafficking and interdiction training to the California Highway Patrol and other State and local law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction along the transportation corridors to Mexico. Incorporated in this training is point-of-contact information and protocols for ATF post-seizure response.

PHOENIX

The Phoenix Field Division has recently initiated two major multi-agency gun show operations focusing on pre-identified straw purchasers for individuals from Mexico. In each of these gun show operations ATF has identified and/or arrested numerous straw purchasers of “weapons of choice” in furtherance of ongoing firearms trafficking investigations, not only of guns going to Mexico but also to street gangs in Los Angeles and in the local area.

The Phoenix Field Division has initiated a Pawn Broker initiative as part of the Industry Operations National Pawnbroker Initiative. ATF is focusing on border FFLs and weapons of choice (.223s, 7.62s, etc.). This initiative is being led from the Tucson and Yuma offices.

OCDETF-funded “Operation Southbound” continues to be a model case for the Southwest OCDETF Region’s “Operation Gatekeeper” due to ATF’s ability to link these firearms directly to Mexican drug trafficking organizations and their intermediaries or “gatekeepers”. To date ATF has seized 470 firearms, nearly 30,000 rounds of ammunition, narcotics valued at \$4.8 million, and nearly \$350,000 in cash as a result of this investigation.

The logo for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) is displayed in large, bold, black capital letters. The letters are contained within a dashed rectangular border.

To date, Phoenix Group I has initiated 134 cases related to the Southwest Border Initiative.

STAFFING/RESOURCES

The Yuma Satellite office is up and running, with **ATF** and **ATF** on board, all on detail. They are working out of the DEA Yuma Field Office. DEA is very grateful for the assistance and presence of the office and ready to assist in any way to ensure ATF gets what is

needed to succeed, as is the Sheriff of Yuma County, who is keenly aware of the need for an ATF office in Yuma, and the Chief of Yuma Police Department. ATF is in the process of identifying three senior agents and an IOI to permanently relocate to Yuma by October 1, 2007.

DALLAS

The Dallas Field Division has about 55 active SWB cases ongoing. The Intel Group continues to monitor SWB cases, provides assistance to the case agents, and maintains open communication with the other ATF border divisions and HQ Intel.

A Dallas Group III SWB investigation appears to have identified an FFL who is providing firearms and intelligence information to straw purchasers who then transport the firearms to Mexico.

ATF

ATF

HOUSTON

Houston I Field Office

Operation Zebra

ATF

Additional investigation revealed that the firearms of choice are .223 caliber and 7.62mm rifles, and Beretta and FN pistols. During a 15-month time frame, the organization has made a total of

ATF

It is believed that this organization is being funded by at least two well known Mexican Cartels known as Gulf Cartel and Sinaloa Cartel. The following events involving firearms purchased in Houston have been reported in Mexico:

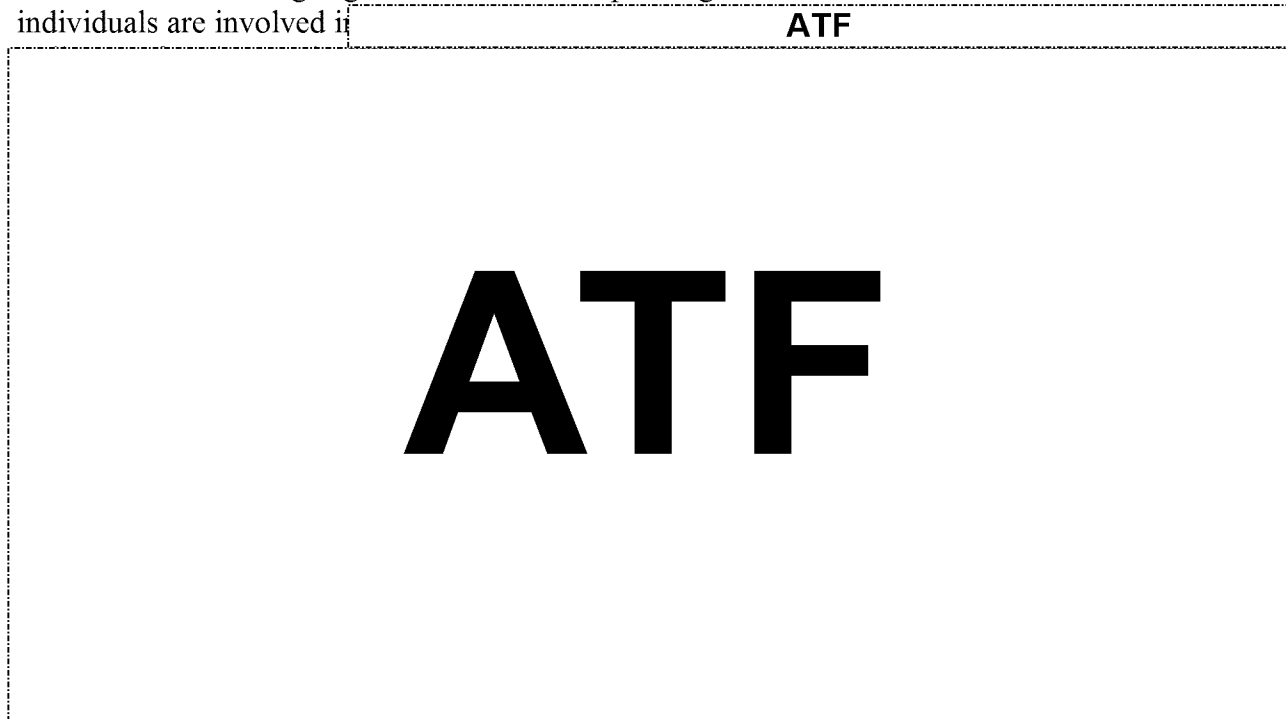
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Laredo Field Office

ATF

The Laredo Field Office is currently targeting members of the Zetas (Gulf Cartel Enforcers) drug and firearm trafficking organization who are operating out of the Laredo and Dallas areas. These individuals are involved in

ATF



McAllen Field Office

ATF

ATF

LOS ANGELES

Gun Show Task Force

This task force represents a collaborative effort using dedicated resources from the U.S. Attorneys Office and the Los Angeles District Attorney - Riverside County office. ATF will coordinate with these partners and target illicit sources of firearms at suspect area gun shows using criminal enforcement and industry operations resources and personnel from the California Department of Justice and the Los Angeles Sheriffs Department. These shows represent a significant source of Mexico-bound firearms from secondary markets.

San Diego Field Office

ATF

On May 16, 2007, an ATF special agent in San Diego was advised by his Mexican Federal law enforcement counterpart that two of the weapons involved were in custody. The SA retrieved the necessary trace information for two firearms, a Colt AR-15 223 rifle and a Glock 9mm pistol.

ATF

ATF

Riverside Field Office

HOMICIDE – 7 law enforcement personnel in Acapulco, Guerrero, MX

On February 6, 2007, seven law enforcement employees were murdered during attacks on two State Investigative Police offices of the Guerrero State Attorney General in Acapulco, Guerrero, Mexico. On that same date, a Smith and Wesson SIGMA model 9mm caliber pistol was recovered with other weapons in the vicinity. The firearm was traced through state records to the

ATF

ATF

Los Angeles Field Office

On March 16, 2007, \$207 million in cash, seven firearms and two silencers were seized from a pseudoephedrine trafficking organization headed by a Chinese-born Mexican citizen. This network is believed to be connected with the methamphetamine producers in Mexico. The

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