

**Southwest Border Initiative  
(Project Gunrunner)**

**Biweekly Update**

**April 5, 2010**

The following is a biweekly update on significant events related to the Southwest Border Initiative. The information is collected from the different ATF offices involved in this initiative and intended for ATF use only.

**FIELD OPERATIONS**

**DALLAS FIELD DIVISION**

**Investigations:**

**El Paso Field Office**

781035-09-0058 [ATF] On March 17 and 18, 2010, Agents with ATF El Paso, ICE El Paso and El Paso County Sheriff's Department conducted surveillance of Uniforms of Texas in order to identify prohibited individuals buying ammunition. These operations were conducted based on intelligence received that El Paso Barrio Azteca (BA) gang members were being recruited to provide assistance to BA members in Cd. Juarez, Mexico, to include providing firearms, ammunition and personnel in support of violent actions in Cd. Juarez. As part of the operation on March 18, an ICE UCA and [ATF] ordered a predetermined amount of ammunition from the store owner, [ATF] which was picked up later the same day. When [ATF] returned to the store to pick up the ammunition, agents discovered that the ammunition was packed loose (no packaging) in 3 black canvas bags, which were then placed in the spare tire compartment of [ATF] trunk by one of the store's employees. Investigation into the owner of the Uniforms of Texas store continues.

[ATF] was sentenced to 16 months imprisonment on March 5, 2010, after pleading guilty to 18 USC 922 (g)(5)(B) – nonimmigrant alien in possession of ammunition.

781035-09-0051 [ATF] Negotiations with [ATF] are in progress to purchase a firearm and a bullet proof vest. [ATF] is considered a violent convicted felon.

781035-09-0038 [ATF] Currently in negotiations to purchase a destructive device from [ATF]

781035-10-0024 [ATF] Arrested [ATF] 1

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**ATF** a convicted felon and Barrio Azteca gang member, for felon in possession charge during operation Knock Down on 3/20/10. ATF will conduct the investigation jointly with DEA.

781035-10-0022 – 831 Camp North East, Fabens, TX Firearms Seizure: All 10 firearms have been sent to the Walnut Creek Lab for fingerprint and DNA Analysis and will then be forwarded to FTB for classification of possible NFA firearms.

781035-10-0025 **ATF** ATF seized two pistols and two long guns that were possessed by a convicted felon believed to be a Barrio Azteca gang member, **ATF** has not been arrested yet, as we are awaiting certified documents, prints and photo, to be certain of his identity. An ATF agent placed **ATF** has been traveling back and forth between Juarez and El Paso. There is some intelligence to indicate **ATF** may have some involvement with Juarez Cartel hit squads, so we are gathering information regarding **ATF** to assist with investigations related to violence in Ciudad Juarez and El Paso. The four firearms in this investigation have been sent to the Walnut Creek Lab for DNA Analysis.

**Fort Worth Field Office:**

781040-08-0110 FIRE AND ICE: The Task Force continues to monitor the **ATF** placed near a suspect's residence. Surveillance has been unsuccessful in locating this suspect. The Task Force has also been communicating with law enforcement in the San Diego area in an attempt to locate wanted suspect Alberto Solorio, who is believed to be in southern California.

On 03/26/10, defendant **ATF** was the first to be sentenced in this case. **ATF** received a 20 year sentence. Three additional defendants are scheduled to be sentenced this week on 04/02/10.

**HOUSTON FIELD DIVISION**

**Investigations:**

**McAllen I**

782055-09-0077 Gladiator Guns and Ammo (FFL): Previously, ATF received information pertaining to an individual named **ATF** who had purchased several firearms at Gladiator Guns and Ammo in Roma, Texas. According to the information received, **ATF** was purchasing firearms from Gladiator Guns and Ammo without filling out the required ATF Form 4473. During an interview of **ATF** she admitted to straw purchasing approximately 8 to 12 firearms for an individual named **ATF**

782055-08-0024 **ATF** On March 29, 2010, **ATF** was sentenced in the Southern District of Texas, Brownsville for charges brought about during a joint investigation with ICE. **ATF** was sentenced to 87 months in prison, 36 months supervised release and a \$6,500 fine for Illegally Exporting Firearms and Conspiracy to Export Firearms. **ATF** was previously convicted of Dealing Firearms without a License by ATF in 2003. **ATF** received 10 months for violating his supervised release for the previous ATF charge. Sentences are to run concurrent. **ATF** has admitted to being involved in the purchase and illegal smuggling of approximately 2,000 – 3,000

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firearms into Mexico between the years of 1994 and 2007. Prior to this sentencing, [ATF] has been a fugitive in Mexico for the last 18 months. Mexican Officials recently captured [ATF] and returned him into the U.S. to face these charges.

**McAllen II (IO)**

782110-2010-0022 SEA: [ATF] March 23, 2010 – Glick Twins (5-74-38825), the annual compliance inspection of this licensee resulted in trafficking referral #782110 2010 0022. The referral contains three linked individuals that have purchased 23 weapons of choice from McAllen area firearms dealers in the past three weeks. After observing a subject purchase a WOC with funds from a roll of \$100 bills, IO was able to link two additional purchasers to this subject. Additional subjects were identified by reviewing same day/FFL purchases of like firearms, and further cross referencing this data with border crossings both north and southbound. The referral was accepted.

**McAllen III**

782115-10-0023 [ATF] On March 19, 2010, ATF was contacted by the owner of Southwest Hay and Feed, an FFL, who provided information on [ATF] was attempting to purchase five WASR-10 rifles. On March 20, 2010, ATF McAllen Group III and ICE BEST RGV conducted surveillance on [ATF] and observed him obtain the firearms from the FFL. A short time later, the surveillance teams followed [ATF] to an apartment complex, where he secreted the firearms into the front and rear bumpers, and an interior hidden compartment in his Chevrolet Suburban. Agents then followed [ATF] to the Anzalduas Bridge in Mission, Texas, where he and [ATF] attempted to enter the Country of Mexico. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) assistance was obtained to conduct a search of the vehicle. CBP recovered the aforementioned firearms and fifty rounds of .40 caliber ammunition.

[ATF] has been arrested and will be indicted on violations of 18 USC 924(a)(1)(A), 18 USC 922(a)(6) and 22 USC 2778. The USAO in McAllen, Texas has declined prosecution of [ATF]

782115-10-0004: [ATF] This investigation involves the straw purchase of a Bushmaster .50 caliber rifle from the Austin, Texas area. Subjects involved in this straw purchase organization live in the Rio Grande Valley Area of Texas and traveled to Austin to purchase this firearm. So far in this case, the recruiter is a convicted felon and has been indicted and arrested for felon in possession and making a false statement to an FFL. The straw purchaser has also been indicted and arrested for making a false statement to an FFL. This investigation is ongoing and it is believed that this straw purchasing organization is involved in purchasing several more firearms that have yet to be identified. At the time of the recruiter's arrests, agents found a receipt for a .50 caliber rifle upper.

**San Antonio III**

782090-10-0030: [ATF] From information received from San Antonio IOI Group II, San Antonio III is currently investigating [ATF] (DOB [ATF]) and two other individuals who have been purchasing large quantities of ammunition, predominately .40 cal, .9mm, and .45 cal, from multiple Wal-Mart location in San Antonio, Texas.

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From transaction records, ATF has found [ATF] has purchased nearly 140,000 rounds of ammunition, totaling approximately \$49,000, with a single credit card since June 2009. Additionally, ATF has found from video surveillance that [ATF] routinely gives the two accompanying individuals, who had been identified by ATF as convicted felons, cash to buy the maximum store limit of six additional boxes of ammunition each on several different occasions. ATF is currently working this case jointly with ICE.

**LOS ANGELES FIELD DIVISION**

No new updates provided for this period.

**PHOENIX FIELD DIVISION**

**Liaison, Training, Media, and Other SWB Interaction:**

On March 20 and 21, the Tucson III Office of Industry Operations conducted an outreach initiative by participating in the Crossroads of the West Gun Show in Tucson. Approximately 200 industry members participated in this show. Industry Operations Investigators reached out to the community and the industry by answering questions and providing handout materials to gun show attendees related to Project Gunrunner and compliance with firearm laws and regulations.

On March 27 and 28, Phoenix Industry Operations Groups III and VI conducted community outreach at the Arizona Game and Fish Department Outdoor Exposition. Information provided to the industry and general public included Project Gunrunner and firearm safety in the home. ATF was one of 177 exhibitors who participated in this event drawing approximately 33,000 attendees.

**Investigations:**

**Phoenix Group VII (OCDETF Strike Force)**

785115-09-0003 [ATF] This approved ATF OCDETF investigation (#SWAZP0491) is being worked jointly with the DEA as part of the OCDETF Strike Force in Phoenix, Arizona. Based on activity previously reported, all four suspects have been formally indicted on narcotics and firearm charges by a grand jury sitting in the District of Arizona. Motions and hearings are now underway prior to any plea or trial.

785115-10-0004 [ATF] et al: This is an approved ATF OCDETF investigation (# SWAZP0496) that is a large scale conspiracy of more than twenty straw purchasers. This group has purchased over 1,100 high powered, high dollar firearms for more than \$700,000.00 in cash. More than 150 crime guns have been recovered in Mexico with short times to crime. On March 15, 2009, a Federal T-III Court Ordered Audio Intercept, for which ATF was the affiant, was signed by Federal judge in District of Arizona. Surveillance has identified several additional target residences believed to be “stash” houses, as well as additional straw purchasers. One suspect [ATF] traveled to El Paso, Texas three times in one week. Telephone numbers intercepted on telephone pen registers are being run through the DEA with several “hits” to narcotics trafficking cases they are actively investigating.

**Tucson Group I**

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785065-10-0043 [ATF] On March 20 and 21, Tucson Group I worked the Crossroads of the West Gun Show, in Tucson. [ATF] a B1B2 Visa card holder, had a U.S.C. purchase firearms and ammunition for him. [ATF] was arrested and charged with 18 USC 922(g) (5) (B) as an alien unlawfully possessing firearms while in the U.S. under a non-immigrant visa. [ATF] was observed handling and carrying firearms and ammunition and will be indicted for 18 USC 922(g) (1) as a felon in possession of firearms and ammunition.

785065-10-0044 [ATF] ATF special agents and Tucson police officers observed [ATF] purchase 5,000 rounds of Wolf .223 caliber ammunition at the same gun show. Investigation and interview resulted in admissions by [ATF] that he is a convicted felon.

785065-10-0045 [ATF] and [ATF] were observed leaving the same gun show with an AR-15 type rifle, a 9mm pistol, a stun gun, two rifle rated body armor vests, brass knuckles and more than 500 rounds of ammunition. [ATF] told special agents he was in the U.S. illegally. A consent search found the 9mm pistol in the glove box of the vehicle. A pat-down search of [ATF] found a single 9mm cartridge in his pocket matching those found in the pistol (RWS Head stamp). He was arrested and charged with 18 USC 922(g) (5) illegal alien in possession of a firearm and ammunition.

785065-10-0046 [ATF] and two other males were observed and videotaped looking at (WOC) firearms at the same gun show. [ATF] was contacted outside the gun show by police officers and special agents and possessed a bag containing 100 cartridges of 9 mm ammunition and a black nylon holster. A records search found he was possibly prohibited due to an Endangerment/Domestic Violence conviction out of Santa Cruz County. A Tucson Police Department query found he was suspected of alien and narcotics smuggling. [ATF] was transported to the ATF Field Office for processing. The U.S. Attorney's Office advised that [ATF] be released until his domestic violence conviction was confirmed. It is anticipated that he will be indicted at a later date. [ATF] was with [ATF] who was determined to be a prior-deported convicted felon. [ATF] was remanded to the custody of the U.S. Border Patrol for removal/deportation proceedings.

**Las Cruces Group I**

785095-10-0010 [ATF] Since May of 2009, [ATF] has purchased a total of 19 AK-47 style rifles. All of the rifles have been submitted as suspect guns, but no recoveries have been reported. During the course of this investigation, special agents subpoenaed [ATF] bank records. Special agents are in the process of obtaining bank records on a second account. The cooperating FFL has not been contacted by DOMINGUEZ in regard to additional purchases. ATF has utilized [ATF] [ATF] and taken aerial photographs of the residence in El Paso, Texas where he lives. This investigation continues.

**OFFICE OF STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE AND INFORMATION**

**Significant Events Occurring This Period:**

On March 17, Milenio Diario de Tampico Online reported that the Barrio Azteca gang have been indicated by Mexican and U.S. authorities as the direct perpetrators of the massacres in Villas de Salvatcar and, probably, the murders of three people linked to the U.S. consulate. With dual citizenship, aided by U.S. passports, and with more than 2,000 members in Mexico and Texas, Barrio Azteca has in recent months become the most powerful, and apparently uncontrolled, group of hit men in Ciudad Juarez, even above Los Zetas and Los Pelones, agents from the FBI and from the El Paso sheriff and police told Milenio.

The March 21 edition of Mexico City Proceso published a possible explanation for the deaths of three individuals who were linked to the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juarez on March 13. According to Proceso, the murders could have been a reprisal against the U.S. Government for its support to the fight against organized crime launched by the administration of President Calderon. What may have triggered the attacks was an article published by the Washington Post last on February 24, claiming officials from both the U.S. and Mexican federal governments had met behind closed doors in El Paso, Texas to devise a strategy to face the drug cartel's violence, which is already seeping into U.S. territory. The article stated U.S. agents would be stationed in Ciudad Juarez with the intention of exchanging intelligence with their Mexican counterparts. This information, which was denied by Mexican Ambassador to the United States, State/Privacy was later "confirmed" by the El Diario newspaper, which is based in El Paso. After the article was published, U.S. Consul Raymond McGrath expressed his concern such revelations could "endanger" the consulate. On March 9, the consul reported a bomb threat to Mexican authorities, who increased surveillance of the consulate.

On March 23, Monterrey El Norte reported that Mayor Mauricio Fernandez Garza of San Pedro Garza Garcia acknowledged that Alberto Mendoza Contreras, "El Chico Malo," who was recently arrested as the alleged head of the Beltran Leyva Cartel in the municipality, was an informant for the "rough group" of the city's police force. The mayor implemented this special police intelligence unit specifically to eradicate organized crime from San Pedro.

On March 24, Mexico City Canal 11 reported that a U.S. security cabinet comprised of high-level officials visited Mexico, including U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair, among others. They met with their Mexican counterparts to revise the Merida Initiative and the collaborative efforts that will be needed to put an end to the wave of violence that has engulfed the country and is already spreading to the U.S. Clinton and Foreign Relations Secretary Patricia Espinosa Cantellano gave a joint press conference, signed a cooperative agreement and announced pilot programs to combat crime that will be launched in Ciudad Juarez, El Paso, Tijuana and San Diego.

On March 24, Ciudad Juarez Diario.com.mx reported that the Secretariat of Public Security (SSP) deployed 450 more Federal Police officers to Ciudad Juarez yesterday. The new agents will assist in patrols and other police operations.

On March 24, Mexico City Reforma reported that the Mexican and U.S. governments signed an agreement to exchange information on the criminal records of Mexican nationals scheduled for repatriation from the U.S. This agreement aims to ensure that the Mexican

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authorities will be informed of the repatriation of any Mexican nationals charged with serious crimes in the U.S. The agreement was signed by Mexico's Interior Secretariat, and by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

On March 25, Mexico City Milenio.com reported that Federal Police arrested **ATF** **ATF** who is charged with being the largest smuggler of that drug into the U.S. El Rey, who had the capability to smuggle up to 200 kilograms of heroin (worth \$12 million) every month, worked alone, even though he had ties with other drug cartels, from which he received support. El Rey will be turned over to judicial authorities to begin the procedures for his extradition as requested by U.S. authorities.

On March 26, Milenio Diario de Tampico reported that two guards at the Santa Adelaida state prison in Matamoros allowed 41 inmates to escape early yesterday morning. The two guards remain at large. Authorities are questioning 120 prison workers and have arrested 50 of them.

On March 31, Ciudad Juarez Diario.com.mx reported that Coordinated Operation Chihuahua officials confirmed that **ATF** is considered a co-participant in the March 13 shooting deaths of three people linked to the U.S. consulate in Ciudad Juarez. Preliminary investigations show that the target of the attack was **ATF** who worked for the El Paso County Sheriff's Office in the county jail, because he was a "threat" to the members of the Los Aztecas gang. **ATF** allegedly helped locate the victims before fellow members of the Los Aztecas gang committed the crime.

On April 1, Mexico City Canal 11 reported that Sedena issued a report on the "narco-roadblocks" and violent incidents that have recently taken place in both Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas states. Sedena reported 18 alleged criminals died during clashes with law enforcement and 7 more were arrested. The military seized a considerable amount of weapons from the criminals: 59 firearms, 532 clips, 61 hand grenades, 10 rifle grenades, 42 40mm caliber grenades, three grenade launchers, four rocket launcher projectiles, 12,970 rounds of ammunition, 8 homemade explosive artifacts, 27 vehicles and telecommunication equipment.

On April 1, Mexico City El Universal reported that in March 2010, 958 deaths were reported in the war among organized criminal groups. That is the highest number of deaths in one month since 2005, when President Felipe Calderon started the war on organized crime.

**Significant Seizure Events This Period:**

No new updates provided for this period.

**Trace Requests for Mexico Recoveries:**

**FY 10 Trace Requests Thus Far:**

There were 35,113\* trace requests submitted involving Mexico recoveries between October 1, 2009 and March 29, 2010, of which 142 are pending completion. The break down by agency is as follows:

- Total Trace Requests by ATF 269
- Total Trace Requests by DHS 391
- Total Trace Requests by Mexico 7

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34,450

- Total Trace Requests From Other Agencies 3

\*These numbers do not include 11,564 duplicate traces.

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OFFICE

### Mexico City

#### **Liaison, Training, Media, and Other SWB Interaction:**

On March 22, representatives from ATF Mexico Office, (SSP) International Affairs Office, Anti-Terrorism Section, and the General Directorate of International Affairs, participated in a conference call with the National Tracing Center. The SSP contingent queried if there could be direct connection between eTrace and Plataforma Mexico and how long would it take to create this connectivity. The ATF program manager for Spanish eTrace responded that there cannot be any direct connection between eTrace to external applications; however, there can be electronic connection between the two applications through the electronic transfer of data (batch filing). The ATF program manager for Spanish eTrace explained how this process can be conducted and sent the Mexico City Analyst Chief an example of a program which was written for this purpose. This program was forwarded to [ATF] and will be given to [ATF] the SSP Chief of Technical Issues for the two applications. [ATF] will contact the ATF program manager for Spanish eTrace to ensure that the program is written properly and coordinate any technical issues associated with the electronic transfer of data between SSP and ATF. ATF and SSP personnel also reviewed the eTrace MOU to ensure that SSP account users were identified, so that accounts could be activated once the MOU is signed.

During this reporting period, SSP [ATF] indicated that she would soon send the list of 100 SSP personnel who were to receive eTrace training. SSP, in conjunction with the SSP Academy in San Luis Potosi, had identified a number of ATF courses which they would like presented to them and would also send the students' names in the near future, so that the vetting process could begin. Finally, [ATF] would like to meet with MCO personnel to discuss Integrated Ballistics Information System issues which are affecting the SSP.

On March 22, an ATF employee from the New York Field Division reported to the ATF Mexico Office (MCO) for a 30-day detail. His duties include assessing the best way for the MCO to effectively handle oficios (official requests) from the Deputy Prosecutor's Office of Investigation Specializing in Organized Crime (SIEDO). He will also assist in the processing of outstanding oficio requests.

On March 24, a representative from the ATF Mexico Office attended the monthly Firearms Coordination Group (GC-Armas) meeting at CENAPI Headquarters in Mexico City. Discussions focused on the relevant firearms seizures in Mexico and the importance on the delivery of official information. It is now required that all information being requested or in a response to an oficio must be certified with an official seal. ATF Mexico Office will coordinate eTrace and firearms-related activities with GC-Armas personnel at CENAPI



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Headquarters one day a week beginning on April 6.

On March 25, CEIT members traveled to Tuxtla, [ATF] Chiapas Mexico via state-owned aircraft to conduct post blast examination, and evidence collection relative to an IED attack that occurred 3 weeks ago against government officials by Los Zetas members. This resulted in the death of one perpetrator, and critical injury to a second.

During the week of March 28, MCO personnel met with representatives from the Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA) and the Secretariat of the Navy (SEMAR) to discuss explosive evidence recovery protocols. Both SEDENA and SEMAR were receptive and appreciative of the suggestions proposed by the MCO.

During the week of March 28, MCO and DEA personnel met to coordinate training for Special Investigations Unit personnel. MCO personnel also participated in a conference call with International Training in order to better coordinate the MCO training calendar.

### **Monterrey**

#### **Investigative Assistance:**

From March 17-19, an ATF Explosive Enforcement Officer (EEO) and a Mexico City Investigator travelled to the Monterrey Field Office to assist Nuevo Leon State Police Crime Laboratory personnel in the examination of an IED using a cell phone initiation that recently detonated in Nuevo Leon.

Between March 18 and 23, ATF personnel from the Monterrey Consulate Office went to the Nuevo Leon PGR and Nuevo Leon State Police Crime Laboratories several times to view firearms, grenades and other materials seized by Mexican authorities from the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas. They submitted numerous firearms to be traced; the results will be forwarded to ATF Mexico City for analysis and referrals will be issued to the appropriate field divisions.

On March 18, FBI personnel assigned to the Monterrey Consulate Office requested assistance from ATF personnel to transfer DNA evidence to Nuevo Leon State Police Laboratory in order to conduct DNA database comparisons regarding a missing U.S. citizen.

During the week of March 22, ATF personnel from the Monterrey Consulate Office coordinated with the ATF National Laboratory and the Nuevo Leon State Police Crime Laboratory to transfer castings of the shell casings recovered from the scene of the murders of a U.S. citizen and a Mexican investigator. The castings will be sent to the ATF National Laboratory for tool mark examination.

### **Tijuana**

#### **Liaison, Training, Media, and Other SWB Interaction:**

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On March 22, ATF personnel attended an Emergency Action Committee meeting at the U.S. Consulate in Tijuana. Discussions focused on pro-active training to reduce concerns of locally employed staff and U.S. employee regarding carjacking, physical/psychological trauma, kidnappings, armed robberies, and IED recognition. This meeting came about due to the recent tragedy in Ciudad Juarez.

**Ciudad Juarez**

**Investigative Assistance:**

As of March 24, ATF personnel from the Mexico Country Office continue to assist the US/Mexican investigative teams in the homicide investigation of American Consulate employees.

**OFFICE OF TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

ATF plans Spanish e-trace roll out training for the week of April 26, 2010, at the U.S. Consulate in Monterrey.

**ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

On March 17-19, 2010, FSN [ATF] and EEO [ATF] traveled to Monterrey, Mexico to assist PGJ with the examination of a post-blast IED. The device was a cell-phone activated IED, which used a homemade explosive (HME) as the main charge. Mexican authorities have not encountered a cell-phone activated HME in this configuration. (For further information see USBDC Bulletin; Case Agent SA [ATF] [ATF] ATF IN: 701531-10-0011.) While examining the cell phone device, a lab technician opened up a small box which contained three live grenades. One of the grenades was in a dangerous configuration. An immediate Render Safe Procedure (RSP) had to be performed. Had the grenade been dropped or jarred hard enough, it would have set off all three of the grenades, seriously injuring or killing the ten lab technicians in that area. The three grenades were later disassembled and determined to be live.

On March 19, 2010, FSN [ATF] and EEO [ATF] moved all of the counter-IED gear from McAllen, Texas, to Mexico City, Mexico.

On March 25, 2010, SSA [ATF] FSN [ATF] and EEO [ATF] traveled to Tuxtla, [ATF] Chiapas, Mexico to assist in the post-blast examination of a portable mobile radio device. The PGJ state lab in Chiapas informed ATF that a device of this nature has never been encountered in that area. State officials recovered a similar device to the one that detonated and EEO Green was able to exploit the device further. More information will be provided in a USBDC Bulletin at a later date.

On March 30, 2010, representatives of the CEIT met to discuss explosives training and future missions. Those present were DAO Lt. Col [ATF] ATF (FSN [ATF] EEO [ATF] SEDENA (Cap [ATF] [ATF] SEMAR (Cap. [ATF] 10

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