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PARTICIPANT: Mr. Attorney General, last week you announced a leadership change at the ATF. Can you tell us why you chose that time to announce it, given the ongoing General's probe and the congressional inquiry? Do you feel like -- what was your reason for that?

MR. HOLDER: The change was made with the best interest of ATF at heart. I reached the -- made the determination that a leadership change was appropriate in order to allow the men and women at ATF to focus on their critical public safety mission and to make sure that we had the leadership in place that would be helpful in that regard.

Todd Jones is a person I've known for a good number of years. He's been a great United States Attorney and great Assistant United States Attorney, and I think he will bring wonderful leadership to the ATF. I spoke to Ken Melson about the need for the change, and he agreed with me.

PARTICIPANT: Was he reassigned instead of asked to leave?

MR. HOLDER: Ken, I think, has served this department well over the course of some three decades. He has a particular expertise in the forensic area, and he was reassigned so that he could take advantage of that expertise.

PARTICIPANT: Congressman Issa says that he wants to get to the bottom of who else at the Justice Department approved that botched operation. Do you know who else at the Justice Department approved that

botched operation and what's going to happen to those people?

MR. HOLDER: Well, one of the things that we have ongoing is an Inspector General investigation, and we'll certainly see, I think, at the end of that exactly who was involved, exactly who made the decisions, and what was clearly, I think, a flawed enforcement effort.

But the notion that somehow or other that this things leaches into the upper levels of the Justice Department is something that at this point I don't believe is supported by the facts, and I think as we examine and as all the facts are, in fact, revealed, we'll see that is not the case.

We are cooperating with the investigation. We have made people available for interviews. We have turned over documents. We have conducted briefings, and our hope is that we will get to the conclusion of this investigation and the congressional effort as well relatively soon so that we can finally say with some purpose and with some degree of certainty and without any kind of political considerations exactly what happened and who made the calls.

PARTICIPANT: Do you have any estimation about when the investigations might be finished?

MR. HOLDER: Well, those are kind of hard things to decide. The IG is working on this, I think, very diligently. I can't say how long it's going to take, but I have no sense of how long the congressional investigation will take.

PARTICIPANT: We'll take one more question.

PARTICIPANT: Republicans on the Hill say that although the investigation may not have reached into the upper echelons of the Justice Department, the upper echelons should have known about it as leaders of the department. What do you say about that?

MR. HOLDER: There are an awful lot of things that go on in the Justice Department. There are

operations fast and furious. I'm sure there are operations fill in the back going on right now that people here in the department are not aware of. We put down -- one of the things that I have tried to do as Attorney General is to place in the field the responsibility and the discretion for enforcement activities, setting broad parameters here in the department with the expectation that those parameters would be followed and filled in by specific enforcement actions, and the people, the men and women in the field, do a great job.

You know, it is -- it's kind of something that I think certain members of Congress would like to see the notion that somehow or other high level people in the department were involved. Like I said, I don't think that is going to be shown to be the case, which doesn't mean that the mistakes were not serious. I took very seriously the allegations that were raised and asked the Inspector General to conduct an investigation, and we have looked through e-mails. We have looked through a whole variety of things to try to determine what happened.

And so we will see what the IG comes up with. My hope would be that Congress will conduct an investigation that is factually based and not mired with politics.