

From: Schmalzer, Tracy (OPA)
To: 'Schultz, Eric'
Sent: 10/7/2011 4:01:02 PM
Subject: FW: AG Letter to Hill / Fast and Furious
Attachments: Letter from the Attorney General 10 7 11 (2).pdf

Folks - attached is a letter from the Attorney General sent to members of Congress today regarding the oversight investigation into ATF's Fast and Furious Operation. DP } Tracy

Excerpts below:

"I have not spoken at length on this subject out of deference to the review being conducted, at my request, by our Department's Inspector General. However, in the past few days, the public discourse concerning these issues has become so base and so harmful to interests that I hope we all share that I must now address these issues notwithstanding the Inspector General's ongoing review.

"... I simply cannot sit idly by as a Majority Member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform suggests, as happened this week, that law enforcement and government employees who devote their lives to protecting our citizens be considered "accessories to murder." Such irresponsible and inflammatory rhetoric must be repudiated in the strongest possible terms. Those who serve in the ranks of law enforcement are our Nation's heroes and deserve our Nation's thanks, not the disrespect that is being heaped on them by those who seek political advantage. I trust you feel similarly and I call on you to denounce these statements.

"... in 2011, after the controversy about this matter arose, I took decisive action to ensure that such operations are never again undertaken. First, I referred the matter to the Department's Inspector General for review so the facts underlying it could come out. Second, I instructed the Deputy Attorney General to reiterate to our prosecutors and law enforcement components that Department policy prohibits the design or conduct of undercover operations which include the uncontrolled crossing of guns across the border. In addition, new leadership is now in place both at ATF and in the United States Attorney's Office in Arizona. It has become clear that the flawed tactics employed in Fast and Furious were not limited to that operation and were actually employed in an investigation conducted during the prior Administration. Regardless, those tactics should never again be adopted in any investigation."

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"Much has been made in the past few days about my congressional testimony earlier this year regarding Fast and Furious. My testimony was truthful and accurate and I have been consistent on this point throughout. I have no recollection of knowing about Fast and Furious or of hearing its name prior to the public controversy about it. Prior to early 2011, I certainly never knew about the tactics employed in the operation and it is my understanding that the former United States Attorney for the District of Arizona and the former Acting Director and Deputy Director of ATF have told Congress that they, themselves, were unaware of the tactics employed. I understand that they have also told Congress that they never briefed me or other Department leadership on the misguided tactics that were used in Fast and Furious. Of course, that is not surprising for, as Chairman Issa made clear in an interview on CNN just this week, even the former Acting Director of ATF "has said he didn't know about" the tactics being used in the field by his agency.

"In the past few days, some have pointed to documents that we provided to Congress as evidence that I was familiar with Fast and Furious earlier than I have testified. That simply is not the case and those suggestions mischaracterize the process by which I receive information concerning the activities of the Department's many components. On a weekly basis, my office typically receives over a hundred pages of so-called "weekly reports" that, while addressed to me, actually are provided to and reviewed by members of my staff and the staff of the Office of the Deputy Attorney General. The weekly reports contain short summaries of matters that the agencies deem of interest that week. Sometimes, the summaries are simply a sentence-long and other times they consist of a paragraph. In some cases, the summaries are of policy-related issues or upcoming events. In other cases, the summaries are brief, high-level reviews of pending matters or investigations. It is important to look at the documents supposedly at issue here and, for that reason, I have attached them to this letter and am making them public in the form they previously were provided by us to Congress. Please note that none of these summaries say anything about the unacceptable tactics employed by ATF."

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"As I have said, the fact that even a single gun was not interdicted in this operation and found its way to Mexico is unacceptable. Equally unacceptable, however, is the fact that too many in Congress are opposed to any discussion of fixing loopholes in our laws that facilitate the staggering flow of guns each year across our border to the south. I cannot help but note that

at the same time that some members of Congress understandably criticize the Fast and Furious operation, they vehemently refuse to consider whether ATF has the resources and legal tools it needs to do its job -- tools that would be entirely consistent with the constitutional rights of law-abiding citizens."

"Until we move beyond the current political climate -- where real solutions take a back seat to both political posturing and making headlines on cable news programs, and is deemed more important than actually solving our country's difficult challenges -- nothing is going to change. I hope we can engage in a more responsible dialogue on this subject in the future. There is much we all need to do together to stop gun violence on both sides of the border and make our Nation safer."