



Written by [James Heiser](#) on July 18, 2011

Another ATF Arms Sales Scandal: "Operation Castaway"

Operation Castaway — like its sibling, Operation Fast and Furious — began with the purported mission of decreasing the illegal sale of firearms. In the latter operation, the ATF's Phoenix office used gun stores in the Southwest to track so-called "straw purchases" that placed firearms in the hands of foreign criminals. (In a "straw purchase," a person, usually an American citizen, buys firearms with the intention of reselling them to individuals who cannot legally own them.) "Operation Castaway" allegedly operated in Florida with a similar mission, and ended in the same way: Rather than the "sting" operation being contained in a way that would have prevented the weapons from getting into the hands of foreign criminals, the firearms purchased in Florida flowed freely into Central America.



Members of Congress are calling for further investigation of Operation Castaway. Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.) has written to Attorney General Eric Holder and ATF Acting Director Kenneth Melson in an attempt to gain more information regarding the operation, only to receive an evasive response similar to that given to Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) and Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa). [According to a Fox News story](#), the guns placed into the hands of criminals through the Florida operation have been traced to several specific crimes:

Court documents from the Operation Castaway takedown claim that at least five firearms from the illegal sales of the main suspect ended up later being connected to crimes, several in Puerto Rico. One pistol was recovered in Colombia after being used in a homicide.

But an ATF official told FoxNews.com that the investigation, which targeted Florida gun dealer Hugh Crumpler III, did not appear to be designed like Fast and Furious. Though Justice and ATF have not yet formally responded to Bilirakis, the official explained that ATF got involved in the Crumpler case after the fact, and was not using the investigation to track firearms sales across international lines. "We became involved with Crumpler at the first opportunity of realizing that criminal activity was afoot," the official said. "Once we were able to put our case together, establish probable cause ... then at that point, we did so at the soonest opportunity to stop the illegal activity."

While Operation Castaway was clearly a much smaller scale undertaking than Operation Fast and Furious, the ATF still managed to lose control of the firearms involved to the point that weapons were carried out of the United States and used in the commission of crimes.

The full implications of both bungled ATF operations are still unknown. Despite the fact that the responsibility for the Fast and Furious fiasco rests solely on an agency of the federal government,



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President Obama has actually issued yet [another unconstitutional executive order](#), this time requiring federal firearms licensees in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas to report all purchases of multiple rifles by the same person in a five-day span. The incompetence of an agency of the federal government to engage in tracking gun sales led to further efforts to track even more sales. With the ongoing "crisis" of the national debt absorbing the attention of the news media, Obama's aggressive assault on gun ownership is in danger of receiving far less scrutiny than it deserves.

Canada Free Press is now referring to Operation Fast and Furious as "[Obama's Watergate](#)":

Nearly forty years later, another "scandal," exponentially larger than Watergate, has the potential to bring down the occupant of the oval office along with other high ranking officials. While no one was murdered as a result of Watergate, two law enforcement officers are dead because of the current "scandal" that is leading closer and closer to the highest levels of the Obama administration, including the Department of Justice and the U.S. State Department.



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