



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on September 20, 2012

## Blasted as Whitewash, Fast and Furious Report Blames ATF and DOJ

The highly anticipated [Justice Department Inspector General report](#) (from Inspector General Michael Horowitz, pictured) on the Obama administration's deadly "[Fast and Furious](#)" scheme that armed Mexican cartels was released Wednesday, laying the blame on more than a dozen senior officials within the department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF). Critics, however, are already tearing the "[whitewash](#)" document apart.



Several establishment media outlets quickly trumpeted the claim that the report "clears" disgraced Attorney General Eric Holder of wrongdoing in [the scandal](#), which saw thousands of American firearms handed to criminals with help from the U.S. government. But gun rights activist David Codrea, who played a central role in exposing the gun-running scandal, [said](#) the hasty media proclamations "could not possibly reflect adequate scrutiny and analysis that effectively assess its findings."

Of course, Holder was [held in contempt of Congress](#) earlier this year for his role in the ongoing cover-up and refusing to hand over documents subpoenaed by Congress, not to mention his [allegedly false testimony](#). He is currently being [sued by lawmakers in federal court](#) as activists separately work to [have his law license revoked](#).

However, despite the media claims about the Inspector General's findings, lawmakers and critics of the investigation are already pointing to fact errors in the report. Some analysts who have followed the scandal closely are even calling the whole investigation a "whitewash" — especially because of the senior officials who refused to cooperate and the factual mistakes already uncovered thus far.

"We concluded that the conduct and supervision of the investigations was significantly flawed," the Inspector General report said. It added that that Fast and Furious and a previous federal gun-trafficking scheme were marked by "a series of misguided strategies, tactics, errors in judgment and management failures." Those alleged failures supposedly led to the scandalous arming of cartels, and ATF claimed to take full responsibility for them. But critics say there is much more to the story.

According to the investigation, 14 federal officials in Washington and Arizona "bore a share of responsibility for ATF's knowing failure in both these operations to interdict firearms illegally destined for Mexico, and for doing so without adequately taking into account the danger to public safety that flowed from this risky strategy."

At least two of those officials, former ATF boss Kenneth Melson and Deputy Assistant Attorney General Jason Weinstein, resigned or "retired" moments after the report was released. In addition, another dozen U.S. officials in ATF and the DOJ should be investigated to determine whether "disciplinary" action is required, the report said.

Hundreds of people have already been killed with Fast and Furious guns including U.S. Border Patrol agent Brian Terry. Official e-mails and documents later revealed that the two "drug lords" being



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targeted in the scheme [were already working for the FBI](#). Top officials were also [caught trying to use the resulting chaos to advance more restrictions on the Second Amendment](#) rights of Americans — hardly surprising after Holder was [caught on video](#) proposing a tax-funded scheme to, in his words, “brainwash” people against guns.

The controversial findings were presented in the 500-page report dubbed “A Review of ATF’s Operation Fast and Furious and Related Matters.” The document shows, among other glaring problems, that multiple top officials in the DOJ and the White House refused to be interviewed as part of the investigation.

“The White House did not produce to us any internal White House communications, noting that ‘the White House is beyond the purview of the Inspector General’s Office, which has jurisdiction over Department of Justice programs and personnel,’” the report states. Among the Fast and Furious characters who declined to be interviewed was a member of Obama’s National Security Staff, Kevin O’Reilly.

Another top official involved in the scandal who refused to cooperate was the chief of the Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Arizona, Patrick Cunningham, according to the Inspector General report. Cunningham had [earlier invoked his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination](#) after he was subpoenaed to testify by Congress.

After the report was released, the Senate Judiciary Committee’s Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), one of the main lawmakers pushing for an investigation into the deadly scheme, issued a statement slamming Fast and Furious. He also suggested that because top administration officials refused to cooperate with the Inspector General investigation, the final report remains incomplete.

“Operation Fast and Furious was the height of irresponsibility on the part of a number of people from the ATF Phoenix field office all the way up to the Justice Department headquarters,” Sen. Grassley said. “And, we still don’t know the full extent of any White House involvement because they refused to be transparent and provide documents requested by the Inspector General. It’s clear that both the ATF and the Justice Department failed to provide meaningful oversight of Operation Fast and Furious.”

According to Sen. Grassley, there are other serious shortcomings already uncovered as well — and the massive report was just released. Among the biggest problems: a factual error that largely absolves one of the key Fast and Furious players involved in the cover-up from any real responsibility.

“We’ve already noticed that the report contains a factual error that lets Assistant Attorney General Lanny Breuer off the hook,” Sen. Grassley explained. “The report accepts Breuer’s version of events, claiming that he hadn’t ‘proposed edits, commented on the drafts or otherwise indicated he had read them.’ In fact, emails show that he received drafts of the February 4 letter and commented on them before it was sent, which he later denied to Congress.”

The Inspector General report also claims, for example, that Holder “did not learn about Operation Fast and Furious until late January or early February 2011.” However, as *The New American* and other sources have documented, the disgraced Attorney General was publicly bragging about the deadly scheme as early as 2009.

“Last week, our administration launched a major new effort to break the backs of the cartels,” Holder told a gun-trafficking conference in Mexico on April 2, 2009, during a speech that is [still online on the Justice Department’s website](#). “My department is committing 100 new ATF personnel to the Southwest border in the next 100 days to supplement our ongoing [Project Gunrunner](#).”



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House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) also commented on the report, saying it was good overall but that questions surrounding a cover-up remain. “The Terry family wants the answer for the initial failure and for the cover-up,” he [said](#) about the slain border agent’s family. “We don’t know, or will never know, why such a reckless or foolish tactic was done, continued and covered up.”

Rep. Issa also said that Weinstein’s resignation was just the “tip of the iceberg,” adding that there needed to be “real reform” in the Justice Department. “Contrary to the denials of the Attorney General and his political defenders in Congress, the investigation found that information in wiretap applications approved by senior Justice Department officials in Washington did contain red flags showing reckless tactics and faults Attorney General Eric Holder’s inner circle for their conduct,” he said.

Inspector General Michael Horowitz, who is set to discuss the report during a hearing with lawmakers, defended his findings. “We operated with complete and total independence in our search for the truth, and the decision about what to cover in this report and the conclusions that we reached were made solely by me and my office,” he said. Apparently the report relied on reviews of over 100,000 documents and interviews with some 130 people.

But experts are not buying the report. [Law Enforcement Officers Advocates Council](#) (LEOAC) chief Andy Ramirez, for example, called it “a joke,” pointing out the Inspector General does not represent an independent and neutral entity. The law enforcement expert who has testified before Congress on multiple occasions said that, according to his sources, Holder, Homeland Security boss Janet Napolitano, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and even the White House were intimately involved in the scandal — or at the very least aware of it.

“The IG works for the U.S. Attorney General,” Ramirez told *The New American*, calling for a GAO investigation and an independent special prosecutor to determine the facts. “There have been so many years of willful lies in official statements, testimony, and legal actions they have almost zero credibility. In fact, the cover-ups by, at minimum, the administrations of George W. Bush and Barack H. Obama are so well known and noted by insiders that this report is a joke.”

Gun rights activist and popular blogger Mike Vanderboegh, who helped in originally exposing the Fast and Furious scandal together with ATF whistleblowers, also [slammed](#) the latest report as a “whitewash” and suggested that criminal prosecutions should be forthcoming. “Now we will see if all those promises that the [Oversight] Committee was waiting for the OIG report merely to impeach it with other documents and witnesses was true — or if this is the end of the line for the hopes of justice and the rule of law,” he said.

Vanderboegh, [top NRA officials](#), and countless analysts — based on evidence released so far — have suggested that Fast and Furious was more likely an operation aimed at arming cartels to attack U.S. gun rights. Other reports have [concluded that it was part of a high-level strategy, including involvement by the CIA](#), to support certain criminal empires at the expense of others. Despite the latest report, however, critics say the truth about Fast and Furious remains hidden — at least for now.

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*Photo: Michael Horowitz, the Justice Department's inspector general, speaking before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee a day after he faulted the department for disregard of public safety in "Operation Fast and Furious," Sept. 20, 2012: AP Images*



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