



Fast and Furious Scandal Grows

Congressman Darrell Issa (R-Calif., left), Chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, is not impressed with the explanations given by Attorney General Eric Holder and other Department of Justice spokesmen about Operation Fast and Furious — the gun-walker scandal in which ATF officials oversaw the transfer of 2,000 weapons across the border to brutal Mexican drug cartels, mainly the Sinaloa group. He is calling for a formal review by someone outside the government:



Wed like to have a true special prosecutor, particular when its obvious if Eric Holder didnt know, its because he didnt want to know or because he wasnt doing his jobWed like to know who did know and why they didnt brief the attorney general.

Holder in May said that he did not know when he first heard about the operation. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano claimed that she did not know about the operation until after some weapons sold by federal officers to Mexican drug cartels were found to have been used to murder Border Patrol agents. The sales were out of the Phoenix office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (still known as ATF) in collaboration with the FBI. Napolitano served as Governor of Arizona before taking her federal position. FBI Director Robert Mueller also professed ignorance of the operation. Issa responded to those statements:

So, one of our questions is, why wouldnt you have known? When was it appropriate for you to be briefed on this and who was keeping it from you? And that becomes the next opportunity with Secretary Napolitano or Eric Holder. One of our questions is: Where do you spend your days and why arent you briefed on something like this?... People are picking their words very carefully.

Certainly there are FBI individuals that knew what the director did not know. Certainly there are Homeland Security briefings in which there should have been more. One of the problems was this is what was called an OCDEFT operation, which means the FBI was an active part of it. Joint funding was used. So, if one were to say, did DEA know, did the FBI know, the answer is yes. Did the director know? I take him at his word the answer is no.

The Phoenix ATF office illegally sold more than 2,000 firearms under the program with the supposed intention of tracking those weapons to Mexican drug cartels. The reaction of the federal government to the subsequent scandal was to reassign ATF Director Kenneth Melson and to fire the U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona. Issa has expressed doubt that the Department of Justice will be more aggressive in pursuing possible wrongdoing by higher ranking officials in that agency. Interestingly, other ATF officials involved in Fast and Furious were actually promoted after the incident, including William McMahon, William Newell, and David Voth, who oversaw the operation in the Phoenix office.

In Fast and Furious, ATF agents were specifically forbidden from either interfering with the illegal sales of firearms, intercepting firearms smugglers, or retrieving illegally sold weapons. If Holder and



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on September 22, 2011

Napolitano have hidden their knowledge of the operation in sworn statements to Congress, whether or not the original operation was legal or not, their perjured testimony would be a crime for which they could be indicted.

[Andre Howard, owner of Lone Wolf Trading Company](#), the gun store which sold many of the weapons for the Fast and Furious operation, recently revealed through his attorney, Larry Gaydos, that he made tapes of his conversations with ATF agents after he began to suspect that they were lying to him. Gaydos told Fox News:

Andre was acting under the direct supervision of the Department of Justice and ATF. And he thought he was making a difference and that these people were being arrested and there were going to be indictments and that there were going to be prosecutions. He is appalled at the position being taken by the Department of Justice and the lack of candor and lack of cooperation with Congress.

ATF agent Larry Alt has also come forward to reveal that because he and another agent, John Dodson, opposed Fast and Furious, they were both reassigned to unattractive jobs:

We were transferred from the group. We were placed in positions away from the investigation itself, denied access to the investigation. I would view that as a measure of control and if your want to call it a cover up, that would be an accurate statement.

A growing number of observers believe that there is more than enough questionable behavior and dubious sworn statements involved with Fast and Furious to merit the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate the operation. And now House Oversight Committee Chairman Darrell Issa has publicly called for such a move.



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