



Senate Bans Further DOJ Gunwalking Operations

Responding to the fierce controversy and surprising developments surrounding the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' (ATF) botched Operation Fast and Furious gun-walking program, the United States Senate voted unanimously on Tuesday to block the Justice Department from taking part in any further gun-smuggling probes like that which characterized Operation Fast and Furious.

The provision was part of a \$128 billion spending Senate bill that funds the Justice Department's various operations, as well as those of a number of other Cabinet agencies for the 2012 budget year, in which we are already underway.



The measure to halt all further gun-walking operations from the DOJ was introduced as an amendment. The amendment, written by Sen. John Cornyn III (R.-Tex., above left) reads: No funds made available under this Act shall be used to allow the transfer of firearms to agents of drug cartels where law enforcement personnel of the United States do not continuously monitor and control such firearms at all times.

Cornyn, who serves on the Finance, Judiciary, Armed Services and Budget Committees, said when he introduced the amendment, When 2,000 firearms go missing, and at least one is found at the crime scene of a murdered U.S. Border Patrol agent, we must do everything possible to ensure that such a reckless and ill-advised operation like Fast and Furious is not repeated.

For the first time in a long time, there was complete bipartisan support in the Senate for the measure. *The Blaze* reports, The 99-0 vote would block the government from transferring guns to drug cartels unless federal agents continuously monitor or control the weapons. The amendment's sponsor, Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, called the vote just the first step towards ensuring that such a foolish operation can never be repeated by our own law enforcement.

According to the Justice Department, the legislation reflects current DOJ policy, since the Justice Department had reportedly stopped the gun probing program in the wake of the Fast and Furious controversy. Despite these claims, however, Congress felt compelled to pre-empt any further ordeals in the aftermath of Operation Fast and Furious.

Operation Fast and Furious was part of an effort to combat the gun smuggling of Mexican drug cartels. The plan was intended to pursue the prosecution of the entire cartel network. The program virtually permitted the release of ATF weapons on the streets so that the ATF could gather intelligence and see where the guns ended up.

The program predictably had a number of unfortunate consequences, including the murder of border patrol agent Brian Terry. The operation also proved to have increased the rate of violence and deaths in



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Mexico, and weapons that were permitted to walk by the ATF reportedly turned up at a number of drug crime scenes.

The House Oversight Committee released a report that cited a number of negative findings pertaining to the program, all of which indicated an utter callousness on the part of the ATF towards potential problems that would arise. According to the report:

- Agents expected to interdict weapons, yet were told to stand down and just surveil. Agents therefore did not act. They watched straw purchasers buy hundreds of weapons illegally and transfer those weapons to unknown third parties and stash houses.
- ATF agents complained about the strategy of allowing guns to walk in Operation Fast and Furious. Leadership ignored their concerns. Instead, supervisors told the agents to get with the program because senior ATF officials had sanctioned the operation.

The congressional report ultimately determined that the ATF did not have the means to adequately track the guns and should have been able to foresee the negative consequences that would have resulted from such an operation.

The ATF was not the only agency implicated in the ordeal, however. Months ago, BigGovernment.com wrote of the role the DOJ played in the program:

DOJ relies on a narrow, untenable definition of gunwalking to claim that guns were never walked during Operation Fast and Furious. Agents disagree with this definition, acknowledging that hundreds or possibly thousands of guns were in fact walked. DOJ's misplaced reliance on this definition does not change the fact that it knew that ATF could have interdicted thousands of guns that were being trafficked to Mexico, yet chose to do nothing.

Attorney General Eric Holder has done his best to distance himself from the failed operation and adamantly claimed that he was unaware of the operation until it became the subject of public controversy. But the House Oversight Committee produced a number of memos that proved Holder had known about Operation Fast and Furious sooner than he indicated.

Both Holder and House Oversight Committee chairman Darrell Issa have [sparred](#) through a series of letters. Issa contends that there was widespread knowledge within the Justice Departments senior ranks that gunwalking was occurring. Issa claims Holders letters have done nothing but obfuscate, shift blame, berate and attempt to change the topic away from the departments responsibility in the creation, implementation, and authorization of this reckless program.

Cornyn specifically [referenced](#) Holder when he introduced his amendment: In addition to this amendment, Mr. Holder owes Americans a full accounting on all alleged gun-walking operations, including a response to allegations of another Texas-based scheme, and I encourage him to come up to Capitol Hill to do so as soon as possible.

Some contend that the failure of the operation was in fact intentional. Earlier this week, National Rifle Association President Wayne LaPierre charged that the program was a plot against gun rights in the United States.

According to LaPierre, it was the Obama administrations [intent](#) to make it appear that the guns were coming from the United States so they could stick more gun [control] legislation on honest American gun owners of the United States.

LaPierre continued, We wouldn't know about this at all if [Terry] had not been killed and some of the



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good, honest, decent federal agents down the line had enough of the stench coming out of Washington and started to use the Whistleblower Act to go public and call the Justice Department out on this whole rotten, stinking scheme, LaPierre told Newsmax. “Otherwise thousands of guns would still be going over the border into the Mexican drug cartels and the President and the Attorney General and the Secretary of State would all be running around going, ‘90 percent of the guns come from America’ in an attempt to seek political advantage and in an attempt to enact more gun control laws on honest American citizens and use this whole issue politically against the Second Amendment of the United States.

It certainly would not be the first time this administration would point to a crime and use it as an opportunity to further infringe upon civil liberties. When Representative Gabrielle Giffords was severely injured during a shooting [rampage](#) in Arizona at the start of the year, Democrats responded by calling for stricter restrictions on guns. One Democrat went so far as to demand a [ban](#) on all threatening language or symbols.

Though LaPierres assertions cannot be confirmed or disproved at this juncture, revelations over the role that the DOJ and ATF in the presence of American weapons in the hands of drug cartels will certainly dispel any arguments in favor of stricter gun control, at least in this case.

As House Republicans continue to probe the DOJ and ATF on details of Operation Fast and Furious, one wonders just how much more will be revealed.



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