

**TESTIMONY OF INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS SPECIALIST
LORREN D. LEADMON, SR.**

**ON JULY 26, 2011, BEFORE
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM**

Good morning, Chairman Issa, Ranking Member Cummings and distinguished members of the committee. My name is Lorren Leadmon, and I am honored that you have summoned me here today to serve as a witness for the citizens of the United States. I am an Intelligence Operations Specialist with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosive (ATF) and a law enforcement veteran with 40 years of dedicated service.

I am appearing before you today with a heavy heart, laden with sorrow, to provide this committee with testimony that I hope will prove to be useful. First, I would like to express my grief by extending a sincere apology on behalf of myself and likeminded ATF colleagues to the family of Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry. Likewise, I offer an apology to all the Mexican law enforcement officers and military personnel placed in harm's way while confronting the violent criminals armed by the targets and their associates in the Fast and Furious investigation.

I started my employment with ATF in December 2004 in the Office of Strategic Intelligence and Information (OSII). I was designated to support ATF's Project Gunrunner from the inception of the initiative in April 2005. In July 2008, I became the team leader of the newly established Field Intelligence Support Team for the Southwest Border (SWB FIST). The team works in partnership daily with OSII personnel assigned at the El Paso Intelligence Center and ATF personnel working in Mexico. Each of the partners work toward the common goal of determining the location and circumstances surrounding firearms recovered throughout Mexico, identifying the criminal element associated with the firearms, collecting intelligence pertaining to the criminal elements and ensuring the firearms are traced. The team coordinates the information with the case agents and the field intelligence groups. A major function of the team is to identify firearms trafficking trends and patterns and to establish links between firearms trafficking cases and seizure events.

The team is dedicated to ATF's strategic mission as set forth in the 2007 Project Gunrunner Southwest Border Initiative Report that is summarized as follows:

Working with its domestic and international law-enforcement partners, ATF will deny the "tools of the trade" to the firearms-trafficking infrastructure of the criminal organizations operating in Mexico through proactive enforcement of its jurisdictional areas in the affected border States in the domestic front, as well as through assistance and cooperative interaction with the Mexican authorities in their fight to effectively deal with the increase in violent crime. In the report, the expected strategic outcome was to be the following: Suppression of the firearm and explosive-

related violence occurring on both sides of the border through effective law-enforcement collaboration involving the focused training, investigation, and interdiction of illicit trafficking and illegal use of firearms, explosives, and ammunition.

The Southwest Border Field Intelligence Team first learned of the Fast and Furious investigation on or about November 20th, 2009, after I located a related seizure event in Sonora, Mexico. The Mexican authorities recovered 42 firearms from two transporters in a vehicle that had just crossed the border from Arizona. With the assistance of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), I was able to obtain the firearms information, submit the traces and ascertain the results of the investigation. Thirty-seven (37) of the firearms were initially determined to have been purchased by persons in the Fast and Furious investigation. The investigation in Mexico revealed that the firearms were to be delivered to a person that was affiliated with a violent criminal organization. This information became the foundation for the fact that all the firearms obtained in the Operation Fast and Furious investigation were potential crime guns and murder weapons predestined to be utilized by outlaws and assassins affiliated with a violent criminal organization in Mexico.

In the months leading up to the end of February 2010, the Fast and Furious purchasers were buying the types of firearms preferred by drug trafficking organizations in record numbers. By this time, they had purchased more than 1,000 firearms with some of the purchasers procuring them in lots of 10 to 20 firearms at a time. At the same time, approximately 200 firearms from this investigation were recovered in the United States and Mexico. The types of firearms, the volume of the purchases, the seizures and circumstances surrounding the seizures, along with information provided by our law enforcement partners, fully corroborated the fact that these firearms were being acquired by a violent criminal organization in Mexico.

From December 2009 to the beginning of March 2010, I conducted numerous briefings on the investigation with the ATF senior management staff in headquarters. During each briefing, I provided detailed information depicting the progression of the acquisition of the firearms and described the location, number, type and identity of the purchaser for each firearm recovered. I provided a briefing to the Acting Director in the first part of December 2009 concerning firearms trafficking to Mexico in which he was briefed on the upstart of the Fast and Furious case. He later attended one of the field operations briefings in the first part of January.

In March 2010, I conducted a video conference briefing with the managing officials from the four ATF border divisions, an attorney from the Department of Justice and every one of the ATF senior management staff except the Acting Director. With the assistance of the group supervisor in charge of the Fast and Furious investigation, I provided a briefing outlining the amount of firearms purchased and expenditures up to the end of February along with the number of firearms seized and the seizure location. The totals briefed are the same as previously stated. The issue of the firearms not being seized by the case agents was brought up and briefly

discussed. From this point on, our team continued to monitor the case and offered assistance but only briefed the status of the case a few times.

The Fast and Furious case agents and managers continued the practice of not interdicting any firearms. Over the course of this investigation, the targets and associates of the Fast and Furious investigation have purchased in excess of 2,000 firearms. Our team identified a total of 34, .50 caliber rifles purchased by these individuals. Two weeks ago, the reported amount of firearms recovered stood at 590. There were 363 firearms, to include one .50 caliber rifle, reported seized in the United States. The vast majority of these firearms were recovered by other Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies at stash houses, while being transported to the border, while attempting to cross the border or at holding locations along the border. At the time, there were 227 firearms, to include five (5) .50 caliber rifles, reported recovered in Mexico. However, the number of firearms is continually rising. There are approximately 1,430 firearms, to include twenty-eight (28) .50 caliber rifles, in this investigation that have yet to be recovered. I am saddened by the fact that these firearms are in the hands of violent criminals. The vast majority of them, if not all of them, are in Mexico. It will take years to determine the extent of the carnage that all the Fast and Furious firearms will inflict throughout Mexico and the United States.

From the point we first learned of this investigation, the SWB FIST and OSII management strived to assist the Phoenix Field Division in this investigation. However, the Phoenix team did not engage our team in the spirit of cooperation. It became evident that they were reluctant to exchange information with us. Shortly after making the initial contact with the case agent, our team was restricted from accessing the case file, asserting that Rule 6(e) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure applied. After intervention on the part of OSII managers, I was given access to the file, but it took several weeks and additional prodding before my other team members were allowed access.

In November 2010, our team began to collect intelligence surrounding the kidnapping of the brother of the ex-attorney general for the State of Chihuahua. Several suspects were arrested, and several firearms were recovered in Mexico. The Mexican authorities did not trace the firearms; however, our team was able to obtain limited information on the firearms. Our team notified the Phoenix team after we determined that two of the firearms recovered in this incident had been purchased by individuals in the investigation. Within a couple of hours, our access to the case file was cut off. After another intervention from OSII managers, our access was restored the next day.

An ATF agent from another field division and an agent from another agency with investigations connected to the purchasers in the Fast and Furious investigation contacted me for assistance. They complained that the Phoenix agents would not provide them with the purchase information of the firearms in their cases. I saw that they were provided the information.

The strategy in the Fast and Furious investigation did not take into account the safety of the citizens of the United States and Mexico and blindly concentrated only on the goals of their investigation. The blatant disregard for public safety has had tragic consequences that will continue into the unforeseen future. It will take years to determine how many people will be affected and how egregious the affects will be. I regret that I did not find a way to stop the flow of these crime guns. In hindsight, I should have been more aggressive in voicing within ATF—and, if need be, all the way up to the Attorney General—that this practice was ludicrous. I had the opportunity, for more than 20 years, to observe the Attorney General while he served the citizens of the District of Columbia. In 1994, my homicide cold-case squad suffered a tragic loss when a gunman entered our office armed with a fully automatic machine gun and murdered two (2) agents, a detective sergeant and wounded my partner. I will never forget the concern and support the Attorney General gave us during these troubled times. Six months later, he was by our side again after the loss of another agent by another crazed gunman armed with a machine gun. From these interactions, I am fully aware of his stance concerning the interdiction of crime guns and public safety. I firmly believe that if he was aware of the circumstances surrounding the flow of firearms in this investigation, he would have halted them in their tracks.

In spite of all of this, I want to make it absolutely clear that I am proud of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the men and women with whom I serve. Each of us at ATF is enduring the public shame and embarrassment brought about by the actions on the part of the handful of agents, attorneys and their supervisors who orchestrated this operation. It is truly a sad time for each of us at ATF, and the impact of all this has been devastating. I hope that once this committee moves past this investigation, you will return to the task of finding ways to deny all criminal organizations from obtaining U.S.-sourced firearms.

Biography for Witness Lorren D. Leadmon

Lorren D. Leadmon, Intelligence Operations Specialist, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Intelligence Operations Specialist (IOS) Leadmon has 40 years of dedicated law enforcement experience. He started his employment with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) in December of 2004 in the Office of Strategic Intelligence and Information (OSII). He was designated to support ATF's Project Gunrunner from the inception of the initiative in April 2006. In July 2008, he was selected to his current position as the team leader of the Field Intelligence Support Team for the Southwest Border. He retired in December of 2004 after 34 years of dedicated service with the Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, D.C. In 1974, he began his career as criminal investigator and conducted investigations targeting violent criminals at the city and federal level for 30 years. He worked for decades with federal agencies in investigating homicides and other violent acts associated with drug trafficking and organized crime. His last assignment began in 1992 with the founding of the Metropolitan Police Department and FBI Major Case/Cold Case Squad. This renowned and highly decorated squad was in charge of or participated in numerous high profile and major case investigations. Additionally, this highly cohesive squad closed hundreds of cold case homicides.