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Operation Fast and Furious Fast Facts

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Attorney General Eric Holder answers questions while testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee on June 12, 2012.

(CNN) — Here's a look at [Operation Fast and Furious](#). From 2009-2011, the Phoenix Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), along with other partners, allowed illegal gun sales in order to track the sellers and purchasers, who were believed to be connected to [Mexican drug cartels](#).

Facts

During the Fast and Furious investigation, nearly 2,000 firearms were illegally purchased for \$1.5 million, according to a DOJ inspector General report. Hundreds of guns were later recovered in the United States and Mexico.

In 2010, two of the weapons linked to Fast and Furious turned up near the scene of the murder of Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry in the Arizona desert.

Whistleblowing led to investigations by the Senate Judiciary Committee and the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. During the House investigation, Attorney General Eric Holder was cited for contempt.

Fast and Furious was one of the operations under Project Gunrunner, part of the Department of Justice's broader National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy.

Operation Fast and Furious was not the ATF's first "gun walking" investigation, which allowed illegally purchased firearms to "walk" out of gun shops. It was preceded by Operation Wide Receiver, which began in 2006.

Timeline

October 31, 2009 - Phoenix-based ATF agents get a tip from a local gun shop about suspicious purchases of assault rifles by four individuals. The agents begin investigating whether the individuals were "straw purchasers" working for a large-scale illegal gun trafficking organization. The probe later comes to be known as Operation Fast and Furious.

December 14, 2010 - Terry is killed during a shootout in the Arizona desert. Five of the men involved in the shootout are later convicted of murder. One associate is later convicted on conspiracy and firearms offenses in connection with the killing. The last suspect is arrested in 2017 and awaiting trial.

January 25, 2011 - The US Attorney's office in Arizona announces that 34 suspects have been indicted for firearms trafficking from the United States to Mexico. The DOJ inspector general later reports that 20 of the defendants were caught via Fast and Furious.

January 27, 2011 - Senator Chuck Grassley of the Senate Judiciary Committee sends a letter to Kenneth Melson, acting director of the ATF, regarding the agency's firearms trafficking investigation and allegations that the ATF allowed hundreds of assault weapons to be smuggled to Mexico. He notes that two of the guns may have been used by Terry's killers.

March 3, 2011 - Melson announces the formation of a panel to “review the bureau’s current firearms trafficking strategies employed by field division managers and special agents.”

April 1, 2011 - The House Oversight Committee issues a subpoena for ATF documents.

May 3, 2011 - Holder testifies before the House Judiciary Committee. He says that he first heard of Fast and Furious only over the past few weeks.

June 2011 - Whistleblowers testify on Capitol Hill.

July 12, 2011 - Sources tell CNN that an estimated 1,400 weapons were lost by the ATF.

July 26, 2011 - The House Oversight Committee holds a second hearing.

August 30, 2011 - The DOJ removes Melson as acting director of the ATF and he is reassigned to the Office of Legal Policy. B. Todd Jones takes Melson’s place as acting director of the ATF.

October 12, 2011 - The House Oversight Committee issues a subpoena for communications from Holder and other DOJ officials related to the federal gunrunning operation.

November 8, 2011 - Holder testifies before the Senate Judiciary Committee. “This operation was flawed in its concept and flawed in its execution,” he says.

February 1, 2012 - Terry’s family files a \$25 million wrongful death lawsuit in federal court. The lawsuit is later dismissed.

February 2, 2012 - Holder testifies before the House Oversight Committee. He says that DOJ officials will be held accountable for Fast and Furious.

June 12, 2012 - Holder rejects calls for his resignation from Republicans during a House Oversight Committee hearing.

June 20, 2012 - Republicans on the House Oversight Committee recommend that Holder be cited for contempt of Congress for failing to turn over documents relating to Fast and Furious. They make the recommendation after President Barack Obama asserts executive privilege over some documents sought by the committee.

June 28, 2012 - The House of Representatives votes 255-67 to hold Holder in criminal contempt of Congress. This is the first time in American history that the head of the Justice Department has been held in contempt by Congress.

July 6, 2012 - The White House and the DOJ announce that Holder will not face criminal prosecution under the contempt of Congress citation.

July 31, 2012 - The first of a three-part joint Congressional report is released. The report prompts the resignation of William Hoover, the deputy director of the ATF.

August 13, 2012 - The House Oversight Committee files a civil lawsuit against Holder over Fast and Furious documents. On January 19, 2016, a federal judge orders the DOJ to release thousands of pages of documents.

September 19, 2012 - The DOJ Inspector General releases a report on the operation, concluding that Holder was not informed of Fast and Furious until 2011. The inspector general finds 14 employees of the ATF and the DOJ responsible for management failures. After the report is released, Melson retires, and a deputy assistant attorney general resigns.

October 29, 2012 - The second part of a three-part joint Congressional report is released.

December 12, 2012 - The DOJ announces that a gun trafficker, Jaime Avila has been sentenced to 57 months in prison for his role in buying weapons that were found at the site of Terry's shooting death.

January 2013 - Although not present at the shootout that resulted in Terry's murder, Rito Osorio-Arellanes is sentenced to eight years in prison after pleading guilty to conspiracy to interfere with commerce by robbery.

February 10, 2014 - Manuel Osorio-Arellanes is sentenced to 30 years in prison for first-degree murder, in connection with Terry's death.

November 3, 2014 - Under court order, the Justice Department turns over nearly 65,000 pages of Fast and Furious-related documents. The documents were previously withheld under the Obama administration's claim of executive privilege.

October 1, 2015 - Two additional suspects in Terry's death, Jesus Leonel Sanchez-Meza and Ivan Soto-Barraza, are found guilty of first-degree murder and other charges. They later receive life sentences.

October 19, 2015 - Rosario Rafael Burboa-Alvarez is sentenced to 27 years in prison after pleading guilty to first degree murder in Terry's death.

April 8, 2016 - The DOJ releases additional documents pertaining to Fast and Furious, as

ordered by a federal judge.

April 12, 2017 - Heracio Osorio-Arellanes, a fugitive cartel member wanted in connection with Terry's death, is arrested in Mexico. He is later found guilty of first-degree murder and other charges and is sentenced to life in prison.

June 7, 2017 - The third part of the Congressional report is published.

October 2017 - Jesus Rosario Favela-Astorga, the last of seven suspects wanted in connection with Terry's death, is arrested in Mexico.

May 8, 2019 - The House and the Justice Department announce to a federal appeals court that they reached a settlement in the Operation Fast and Furious court case on April 10, 2019. In the deal, both sides state that they are abandoning their appeals and lawsuit despite disagreeing with the prior court's orders.

January 31, 2020 - Favela-Astorga is extradited to the US.



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