

From: Burke, Dennis (USAAZ)
To: Cunningham, Patrick (USAAZ)
CC: Scheel, Ann (USAAZ); Hernandez, Rachel (USAAZ); Sherwood, Robert (USAAZ) <Contractor>; Morrissey, Mike (USAAZ); Hurley, Emory (USAAZ); Kelly, Kristen (USAAZ) 6
Sent: 3/6/2011 4:10:54 PM
Subject: Re: Proposed Materials For Bill Newell for DC

Yes. Thx.

From: Cunningham, Patrick (USAAZ)
Sent: Sunday, March 06, 2011 02:52 PM
To: Burke, Dennis (USAAZ)
Cc: Scheel, Ann (USAAZ); Hernandez, Rachel (USAAZ); Sherwood, Robert (USAAZ) <Contractor>; Morrissey, Mike (USAAZ); Hurley, Emory (USAAZ); Kelly, Kristen (USAAZ) 6
Subject: Proposed Materials For Bill Newell for DC

Dennis:

As Newell, Needles and **ATF** work in DC today to prepare for ATF and IG inquiry **DP**
DP issues are in Green and our answers from various emails we have sent are in black. **DP**
DP The proposed answers to Senator Grassley's letter on March 3 are not enclosed as Mike, Emory and I are still reviewing. You have a draft of those to review as well.

Please let me know if you would like to forward, have me forward or just hold. Thanks! PJC

A. On the Status of F and F lead indictment, **ATF**

Questions: **ATF**

Answer:

ATF

ATF

B.

ATF

ATF

Main Justice position on the issue of Sanctioning or encouraging arms sales, the Quote of Assistant Attorney General Ronald Weich in his February 4, 2011 letter:

“At the outset, the allegation described in your January 27 letter-- that ATF “sanctioned” or otherwise knowingly allowed the sale of assault weapons to a straw purchaser who then transported them into Mexico—is false.”

C. On the issue of “walking guns” or the timely seizure of guns:

Neither the USAO nor ATF was engaged in an effort “to let guns flow to straw buyers” or to “walk” guns that could have been seized under any lawful theory with available facts to prove the theory.

The guns flow FROM straw buyers and until agents observe illegal conduct they cannot treat them as anything other than ordinary buyers. At the time of transfer of the firearms from the FFL to the straw purchaser based upon the facts available to the FFL at the time of the sale, the sales to the “straw purchasers” are lawful; and seizure of the weapons in the hands of those purchasers without evidence of criminality would violate the United States Constitution and would be an unlawful seizure and deprivation of property rights without cause. (Fourth and Fifth Amendments).

In these investigations, there may come a point over the course of an investigation where ATF believes, though it is well short of proof beyond a reasonable doubt required in criminal cases, that they can prove that a particular person only buys guns for the purposes of illegal trafficking. However, seizure of the guns at that point may not be legal because purchasing multiple long guns in Arizona is lawful, transferring them to another is lawful and even sale or barter of the guns to another is lawful unless the United States can prove by clear and convincing evidence that the firearm is intended to be used to commit a crime. (18 USC 924 (d))

In short, the law does not permit agents to take guns away from anyone who buys ten AKs at a time solely because they bought multiple guns.

D. When weapons sales were monitored and those guns later turned up in crime scenes, had ATF somehow “authorized” the sales that ATF could have ordered stopped, or did ATF somehow not seize the guns appropriately or in a timely fashion?:

The number one concern for DOJ is interdicting guns that are unlawfully transferred to persons in the United States and in Mexico who will then commit crimes with those guns. The purpose of this investigation was to locate those guns, interdict those guns and bring those responsible for their unlawful purchase, transfer, finance and use to justice.

The full array of rights available to indicted defendants is also available to those persons suspected of committing gun crimes, and the government cannot violate legitimate gun owners rights by prematurely seizing their guns.

DOJ’s goals of the investigation were two-fold: 1. Interdiction of the weapons that were purchased or possessed in furtherance of the unlawful trafficking conspiracy; and 2. Investigation with an emphasis on discovering other members of the trafficking organization, particularly the leaders of the organization who procure the guns from straw purchasers and have them smuggled into Mexico to the Cartels. There seems to be some misconception on the part of the press and members of congress that the minute that ATF suspects that someone is a straw purchaser, agents can arrest that person and seize all of their guns. As explained above, that seizure would be unlawful, and ATF may only seize when a lawful basis for seizure can be proven under the US Constitution and statues passed by Congress.

The question seems to connote that ATF can promulgate a “No Sell” list like a “No Fly List”, under which FLLs would be prohibited from selling any guns to any person on the list. ATF has no such power and ATF cannot interfere with the operation of commerce and prohibit a gun store from making a lawful sale to lists of suspects based upon nothing more than mere suspicion. These lists might well be long and would curtail a person’s rights to purchase arms without any due process.

How is it that a person becomes a suspect in a straw purchase investigation? If they are buying multiple handguns, it could be because of multiple sales reports to ATF, notifying the bureau that a suspect is buying large quantities of handguns. If they are buying only long guns, they may not become a suspect until guns they have purchased can be traced after being recovered at a crime scene, or an FFL voluntarily notifies ATF of an unusually large purchase. But a multiple purchase by itself, or the recovery of a firearm at a crime scene does not establish that the original buyer of the gun is an “unlawful straw purchaser.” If it did, then when a person buys a gun and then decides they don’t shoot it well, or it recoils too much, or they really can’t afford the ammunition, and sells it, out of the paper, or a gun show, or to a friend, if the next owner of the gun commits a crime with it, the original purchaser would become a suspect as an “unlawful straw purchaser” and a suspect in a gun trafficking case.

And your question presupposes that ATF agents should never let mere suspects possess a firearm. Your question seems to presume that once ATF identifies a suspect, they can treat that suspect as though they were a “prohibited person”, never again allowed to possess a firearm, regardless of the fact that they have not been convicted of a crime. If this were the case, ATF could stop any person they label a suspect and take any gun they have away from them. This means that if you (1) bought two 5.7 mm pistols because you wanted one for the home and one for the office, or (2) bought three AR type rifles for you and your two sons to target shoot, or

(3) you sold one of your guns to your brother in law, who resold it to a co-worker who took it into Mexico and got caught with it, then you are an “unlawful straw purchaser” suspect and the next time you buy a gun, with your own money, for a hunting trip, ATF should take it away from you.

E.

ATF

F. Regarding the LA Times and CBS News stories, they do not account for the fact, or rebut in any way, that this District is actively prosecuting unlawful weapons and ammunition traffickers.

ATF

ATF