



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

April 12, 2011

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Grassley:

This responds to your letter to Michele Leonhart, Administrator of the Department's Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), dated March 15, 2011, requesting documents and a briefing about DEA's role in an ongoing law enforcement operation known as Operation Fast and Furious. The Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) is the lead law enforcement agency for that investigation.

Operation Fast and Furious is an ongoing criminal investigation of an extensive gun-trafficking enterprise. The investigation was approved by the multi-agency Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Program. OCDETF seeks to combine the resources and expertise of member agencies, which include DEA and ATF, to disrupt and dismantle organizations responsible for illegal narcotics trafficking, weapons trafficking, and money laundering. Through the OCDETF Program, the DEA Phoenix Division has been indirectly involved in Operation Fast and Furious. Upon invitation from ATF, DEA participated in the press conference held in Phoenix on January 25, 2011, along with ATF, the Internal Revenue Service, and the United States Attorney's Office.

DEA is not in a position to provide records or a briefing about the continuing investigation at this time, consistent with the Department's long-standing policy regarding the confidentiality of on-going criminal investigations. This policy is based upon our strong interest in protecting the independence and effectiveness of our law enforcement efforts.

Generally speaking, however, when another Department component leads an OCDETF investigation, DEA works cooperatively to support drug-related aspects of the investigation. Such cooperation means that DEA may share investigative expertise, report leads, and provide manpower to assist in an investigative or enforcement operation as requested by the lead investigative agency.

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Page Two

We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact this office if we may provide additional assistance regarding this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'RW', is positioned above the typed name.

Ronald Weich
Assistant Attorney General

cc: The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman