

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM G. MCMAHON
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BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES
BEFORE THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

JULY 26, 2011

Good morning Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cummings, and distinguished Members of the Committee. I am Bill McMahon, Deputy Assistant Director, Office of Field Operations at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Thank you for inviting me to this important hearing.

Let me be clear from the outset; as the ATF Senior Executive in charge of the Western Region, I share responsibility for mistakes that we made in the Fast and Furious investigation. The advantage of hindsight and the benefit of a thorough review of this case - clearly points me to things that I would have done differently. However good our intentions, regardless of our resource challenges, and notwithstanding the difficult legal hurdles we face in fighting firearms traffickers - we made mistakes.

But know that I am very proud of the men and woman who risked their lives investigating this case. Under tremendous pressure, they continue to work this case and many others we have in the American southwest. Please do not let our failings impact their noble deeds.

Mr. Chairman, I was the Assistant Special Agent in Charge in New York City on September 11, 2001. Our offices were in the World Trade Center. I have witnessed great human suffering brought to bear by those to whom violence is a stock in trade. This is one of the reasons I was so committed to bringing down the complex network of criminals operating in our homeland and bringing violence on both sides of our southern border. But in our zeal to do so, and in the heat of the battle, mistakes were made. And for that I apologize.

Mr. Chairman, I am also no stranger to the great and ultimate sacrifices made by my fellow law enforcement officers. I have lost friends in the line of duty. Whether it is in the rubble of the World Trade Center, on the streets of our communities, or in desert southwest; nothing hurts more than losing a fellow law enforcement officer in the line of duty. With that in mind, I want to extend my sincere condolences to the Terry family. And while the investigation into his tragic murder remains ongoing, and because of this, I may not be able to comment on that investigation, please know that I honor his great sacrifice and am truly sorry for his family's loss. With that in mind, I appear before you today of my own free will, to answer to the best of my ability questions you have regarding this Operation and my role in it. Thank you.