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MEDIA ADVISORY

OBAMA ADMINISTRATION MAY GIVE ATF NEW POWER TO FIGHT TRAFFICKING OF U.S. GUNS TO MEXICO

In response to continued drug-cartel violence along the US-Mexico border, ATF requested authority to require border-state dealers to report bulk sales of certain types of rifles

Arizona gun dealers supplying guns to the Mexican cartels at the highest rates

Proposal to curb gun trafficking along the US-Mexico border was recommended by over 550 coalition mayors

Firearms Policy Experts Available for Interview

The Obama Administration recently announced an emergency proposal to require southwest border gun dealers to report multiple sales of semi-automatic assault rifles. This will give the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) crucial information for investigating and cracking down on illegal gun traffickers, particularly those who supply weapons to drug cartels in Mexico. The rule will be effective for 180 days once the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) gives its approval. Mayors Against Illegal Guns recommended this policy to the Obama Administration in August of 2009 as part of its *Blueprint for Federal Action on Illegal Guns*. That report had 40 concrete proposals to take guns out of the hands of criminals without passing new laws.

The drug war continues to claim lives at an alarming rate. More than 30,100 people have been murdered since 2006, according to the Mexican government. Violence has spilled over the border into to the U.S., claiming the lives of fourteen U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Agents since 2006, including Agent Brian Terry who was killed in the line of duty on December 15, 2010 by a suspect armed with an AK-47.

The violence in Mexico is fueled by guns purchased in the United States and trafficked across the border. The Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General (OIG) reports that 90 percent of firearms recovered and traced in drug related crimes in Mexico originated in the United States.

ATF officials have also testified to Congress that AR-15s, AK-47s and other high capacity “long guns” are the preferred weapons for Mexican drug cartels and that these weapons were overwhelmingly traced to U.S. sources. According to the OIG, the percentage of crime long guns recovered in Mexico has increased from 20 percent in 2004 to 48 percent in 2009.

Last year, Mayor Against Illegal Guns conducted an analysis that shows that the four southwest border states were the source of 75 percent of these firearms. When controlling for population, Arizona exports guns recovered in Mexican crimes at a higher rate than any other U.S. state. For more information, please read the coalition’s *Issue Brief: the Movement of Illegal Guns Across the U.S.-Mexico Border* at http://www.mayorsagainstillegalsguns.org/downloads/pdf/issue_brief_mexico_2010.pdf

The new rule when implemented would require gun dealers operating in the four border states to report bulk purchases of certain rifles, including semiautomatic weapons, weapons that are .22 caliber or greater, and weapons that are able to accept a detachable magazine. ATF has the ability to require multiple sales reports through its existing Demand Letter authority.

Reporting bulk sales gives law enforcement a powerful tool in the war against gun trafficking. Federally licensed gun dealers are already required to complete multiple sale reports for handgun sales, and this data has provided the ATF with valuable investigative information. In 2008, ATF initiated roughly 300 criminal investigations connected with 25,000 illegal guns from information gathered in multiple sale reports. Adding rifles to the list of required multiple sale reports will give ATF greater ability to crack down on Mexican drug gangs, while posing a very limited burden on law abiding gun dealers. Implementation of this policy could not come at a more important time.

ATF has the clear authority to require multiple sales reports of long guns through its existing “Demand Letter” authority, which allows the agency to require federal firearms licensees to submit records for inspection, including records of importation, production, receipt, sales, or other disposition of firearms. The information included in multiple sales reports falls within the scope of the ATF’s existing authority and does not require legislative approval.

ATF requested the authority from OMB to implement this rule change by January 5, 2011. Approval has yet to be granted.

For more information on the coalition’s proposals to better enforce existing gun laws, please read *The Blueprint for Federal Action on Illegal Guns*: http://www.mayorsagainstillegalsguns.org/downloads/pdf/blueprint_federal_action.pdf

Available for Interviews

- **Edgar Domenech**, former Deputy of ATF who conducted VA Tech investigation and current New York City Sheriff

- **John Feinblatt**, Chief Advisor to NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg for Policy and Strategic Planning
Arkadi Gerney, Special Advisor to Mayor Bloomberg on firearms policy and staff for Mayors Against Illegal Guns,

About Mayors Against Illegal Guns

Since its inception in April 2006, Mayors Against Illegal Guns has grown from 15 mayors to over 550. Mayors Against Illegal Guns has united the nation's mayors around these common goals: protecting their communities by holding gun offenders and irresponsible gun dealers accountable, demanding access to trace data that is critical to law enforcement efforts to combat illegal gun trafficking, and working with legislators to fix gaps, weaknesses and loopholes in the law that make it far too easy for criminals and other prohibited purchasers to get guns.