

Was the U.S. Government Complicit in the Murder of Americans?

In December of 2010, U.S. Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry was shot and killed by Mexican bandits who were attempting to cross the border in Arizona.

After investigating the incident, officials discovered something familiar with the guns used in his death. They were weapons sold and trafficked to Mexico, where they would end up in the hands of that country's most violent drug cartels, all with the U.S. Department of Justice's knowledge—and support.

Operation Fast and Furious, as it was called, was a program in which Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives agents ATF agents allowed more than 2,500 AK-47s and other firearms to be purchased and trafficked by known Mexican cartel members. When Congress demanded answers, however, they were met with stonewalling and a declaration of executive privilege by the White House.

After losing a challenge in federal court to the assertion of executive privilege, the Justice Department announced it was turning over thousands of pages of records to the House Government Oversight Committee. Those records were subpoenaed in January of 2011, and eventually led the first-ever vote to hold a sitting Attorney General—then Eric Holder—in Contempt of Congress over his refusal to provide them.

“The Department of Justice is pleased that the district court continued to recognize that the deliberative process component of the executive privilege exists and was a valid basis for the department to withhold certain documents when requested by the House in 2011,” Justice Department spokesman Patrick Rodenbush said Friday. “Although the Department disagrees with

the district court's conclusion that the privilege was overcome in this particular case by disclosures and statements made in other contexts, the Department has decided not to appeal the court's judgment and has provided a production of documents to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform."

One of the first members of Congress to ask questions about the government's involvement in the death of Terry—and, potentially other Americans—was now-Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa). He and House Oversight Committee Chairman Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) had maintained pressure on the Obama Administration for more than four years to get access to the documents.

They said Friday the document release—despite numbering in the thousands of pages—fails to comply with the congressional subpoena issued one month after Terry's death.

"Given that even after years of stonewalling these are only a fraction of the documents that were subpoenaed by the House of Representatives, at this point, the usefulness remains to be seen," Grassley said. "I look forward to seeing what was actually produced, and what President Obama continues to refuse to be transparent about. It shouldn't have taken a lengthy court battle to get this far. The rest of the documents should be turned over so that the litigation can end and the American people can know the whole truth."

"What we need from the president is an explanation of why he felt these documents couldn't have been seen by the American people and why there has been no real accountability for the officials involved," Issa added. "Was he protecting the failed gunwalking operation or the cover-up?"

Operation Fast and Furious is expected to have wide-ranging implications. When Mexican cartel leader "El Chapo" Guzman was captured last year, guns from the operation, including a

large-caliber rifle used to shoot at a police helicopter, were found in his hideout.

Whistleblowers in the ATF and Justice Department have also suggested Mexican citizens have been killed as a result of the program, and most of the guns are still missing and being used to carry out violent crimes in Mexico and potentially in the U.S.