

**Violent Crime and Firearms Trafficking Summit**  
**Albuquerque, NM**  
**June 30, 2009**

**Prepared Remarks of David Ogden, Deputy Attorney General**

Thank you, Marshall, for that kind introduction and to Ken Melson and ATF for inviting me to speak with you this morning. I want to commend Ken and his staff at ATF for organizing this excellent program on one of the most important sets of issues facing the Department and the country today -- it is an honor to help kick it off.

Let me begin by welcoming all the law enforcement officers, agents and prosecutors. Thank you for taking the time to come from across the country to participate in this conference. You are on the frontlines of our fight against violent crime and firearms trafficking. By coming together here in forums like this, you help bring the coordinate and combined force of your agencies to bear on this vital task of making our streets and neighborhoods safe. Thank you for your personal contributions and commitment.

I am very pleased to be joined here on stage by four fine colleagues and leaders. Ken, Marshall, and Lanny represent and lead essential components of what is a unified effort, cutting across the entire Department of Justice, to address illegal firearms trafficking. It is only through the combined efforts of ATF, the U.S. Attorney's Offices and the Criminal Division - working together in a coordinated strategy - that we can be truly effective in intercepting, prosecuting and shutting down gun trafficking networks.

John Morton - a fine former colleague at DOJ -- also represents and leads a key component of our unified effort. When we learned that John was leaving us for DHS, we were, of course, sorry to lose such a valued colleague and a gifted lawyer, but we were also thrilled to know that we would have a great partner at ICE. In the short time that John has been at DHS, it is clear that he is an asset to our common cause. With these fine leaders working together and with each of you, we will prevent the flow of guns that is fueling the escalating violence and drug trafficking that threatens our safety and the safety of the Mexican people.

I wish I could participate in the entire program.

**The Southwest Border is the Front Line of the Fight Against Illegal Gun Trafficking**

I'd like to take a moment to say a few words about our efforts to prevent firearms from traveling across the border to Mexico and contributing to the alarming rise of drug cartel violence there. Keeping guns out of the hands of the Mexican drug warlords is a top priority for the Department, and a key element of our campaign against them. It is one that the President and the Attorney General have promised to address quickly and aggressively.

For the past three months, I've been leading the Department's efforts against the Mexican cartels. All of the Department's law enforcement agencies – ATF, DEA, FBI, and U.S. Marshals Service, together with our partners at DHS and Treasury – are central players in our strategy which utilizes multi-agency, intelligence-based, prosecutor-led task forces. The federal law enforcement components are joined by attorneys from the 94 United States Attorney's Offices and the Department's Criminal Division as well as our hundreds of partners in state, local, tribal, and international law enforcement agencies. Interdiction and border security are central to our task. But our partnership also uses shared intelligence and law enforcement tools including prosecution to directly attack the powerful criminal drug trafficking organizations. Our efforts have resulted in extraordinary recent enforcement successes like Project Reckoning and Operation Xcelerator.

Stepping up the fight requires new resources and we've already jumpstarted the process. For example, ATF has reassigned 100 agents to the Southwest Border to focus on these very issues. I want to thank Ken and all the ATF field offices represented here for answering the call and picking up the slack that must follow from pulling that many agents from your offices. To assist this effort, we have obtained additional funding for Project Gunrunner. These funds will allow ATF to open five new field offices and support their efforts to better detect, deter and combat firearms trafficking offenses. DEA, the Marshal's Service, the US Attorneys offices and the FBI have also added resources and sharpened their focus.

### **Increased Cooperation between the Department and DHS**

But folks, we will be successful only if we take a cooperative, coordinated approach – across all levels of government, both domestically and internationally -- to communicate to illegal firearms traffickers that their activities will no longer be tolerated. When we work together, we have a substantial impact.

The Departments of Justice and Homeland Security know that our success depends on working closely together and together we are laying the groundwork for greater success. Last week, DOJ and DHS signed a new Memorandum of Understanding to make sure that our law enforcement components are fully coordinated on investigations involving firearms trafficking, drug trafficking and other serious crimes. The two agencies announced that ICE would participate fully in the key Fusion Centers that coordinate cases on a national and international scale. This marks a significant milestone. From now on, an ATF agent in Las Cruces, an ICE agent in El Paso, an FBI agent in Laredo or a DEA agent in Tuscon can “connect the dots” when working on seemingly disparate investigations that are actually part of a larger firearms trafficking enterprise.

In addition, today ATF and ICE are signing another agreement to ensure coordination between the Departments on firearms investigations. This new agreement will help ensure seamless cooperation by maximizing the agencies' ability to work closely together to stem the illegal flow of arms in and out of the United States. This

means more integrated and efficient investigations into breaking up illegal firearms trafficking networks. Now ATF agents and ICE agents who are tracking separate leads concerning the same illegal firearms trafficking organization will more effectively share their intelligence, avoid conflicts and potentially pool their efforts.

These are just two recent examples of a new era of partnership between the Departments which the Attorney General and I are deeply committed to -- like Secretary Napolitano and Deputy Secretary Lute.

### **Increased Cooperation with Mexico**

We also know our partnership can't stop at the border. Victory in this fight requires that we forge a closer working relationship with our Mexican partners across the border. The Calderon Administration has shown extraordinary courage and resolve in attacking the cartels head-on and we are working with them in this initiative.

To that end, the Attorney General was in Mexico earlier this year to express his personal commitment to using all available resources to stem the southbound tide of firearms and bulk cash. The Department is undertaking a broad review of our firearms trafficking strategy to ensure that we have sufficient resources and coordination to be as effective as we can.

The Department also is fully committed to ATF's *eTrace* initiative with our Mexican counterparts. *eTrace* allows law enforcement agencies to identify trafficking trends of drug trafficking organizations and other criminal organizations funneling guns into Mexico and from the United States. *eTrace* also assists in developing investigative leads in order to stop firearms traffickers and straw purchasers before they cross the border.

### **Firearms Trafficking Is a Nationwide Problem that Requires a Nationwide Strategy**

As Ken and others have mentioned this morning, the problem of firearms trafficking is more than a Southwest Border issue, it's a nationwide problem that requires a nationwide commitment. Firearms trafficking going on away from the border supports equally damaging gang violence and drug trafficking.

As you know, firearms trafficking cases take time to develop and are not always glamorous. Prosecuting individual straw purchasers may not seem in isolation to have a lot of jury appeal or to be making a dent in the trafficking problem. But that straw purchaser was not a victimless "paperwork" violation -- it was the action that provided the guns to the drug trafficker, who used them in horrific acts of violence. Pursing that seemingly unglamorous case each of you -- as prosecutors and agents -- help reduce violence outside your jurisdictions.

Teamwork, coordination and aggressive prosecution has a dramatic impact at

home. The NIJ recently released an evaluation of programs that strive to reduce gun crimes. These Project Safe Neighborhoods programs were built on successful examples in the late 1990s like Boston's Ceasefire, Richmond's Project Exile, and the Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative.

The research found that cities deploying a coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach of enforcement, deterrence, and prevention strategies experienced a 4.1 percent decrease in violent crime, compared with a decline of less than 1 percent elsewhere. Furthermore, in cities where federal prosecutors were most active in targeting gun crime, violent crime went down more than 13 percent, in contrast to an almost 8 percent increase where federal prosecution for firearms offenses was lower.

That's important information for prosecutors and law enforcement officials to have. It can encourage jurisdictions to try new approaches centered on cooperation and coordination. Research shows that it works.

### **Conclusion**

Let me close by saying how grateful the Department is to the law enforcement officers, agents and prosecutors here today. We share your mission and will do everything in our power to support the important work you do every day for the cause of justice.

To that end, the Department is convening this summer at the National Advocacy Center the first-ever training conference on firearms trafficking across the Southwest Border. This conference will mark the first time we have brought together ATF, ICE, DEA, FBI and U.S. Attorneys to train agents and prosecutors on firearms trafficking investigations and prosecutions. I hope many of you can be there.

As vanguards in this work, you carry a heavy burden. The task is difficult, dangerous and vitally important. The Attorney General and I appreciate your efforts, and assure you that you have the full support of the Department of Justice.

Thank you.