



### Why This Matters

In March 2011, media reports asserted that while investigating an international weapons smuggling ring, Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) members used a dangerous methodology in which they observed suspicious weapons purchases, but took no effective action to seize the weapons. As a result, weapons were smuggled to Mexican drug trafficking organizations.

A Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Arizona official informed HSI headquarters officials that two of these weapons were found at the scene of the murder of a U.S. Border Patrol Agent.

### DHS Response

ICE concurred with all three of our recommendations.

ICE is currently reviewing its past practice to determine whether HSI Arizona senior leaders fulfilled their duty to enforce weapons smuggling statutes. ICE is also assessing whether the HSI SAC office's management of Operation Fast and Furious adhered to ICE standards for its senior leaders. In doing so, ICE will review its policies and practices; and will conduct refresher training as needed.

ICE is currently working to enhance its policy, Accountability Requirements for Enforcement Operations Involving Contraband and Other Sensitive Items.

### For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202)254-4100, or email us at [DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov](mailto:DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov)

## DHS Involvement in OCDETF Operation Fast and Furious

### What We Determined

We determined that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) had minimal involvement in the OCDETF Operation Fast and Furious. Senior DHS officials in Washington, DC had no awareness of the methodology used by the task force to investigate Operation Fast and Furious until March 2011. Similarly, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) headquarters officials did not learn about the methodology until December 2010, when the operation was almost over. HSI personnel in Arizona did not inform ICE headquarters about the investigative methodology while the operation was underway.

The task force was primarily staffed by personnel from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), but other law enforcement officers participated as well. The HSI special agent assigned to Operation Fast and Furious was involved in some of the investigative activities that allowed weapons to be lost and ultimately smuggled into Mexico. Most HSI personnel in Arizona who received information about the operation recognized that the task force was using a flawed methodology, which was contrary to ICE policy and practices for weapons smuggling investigations. However, the HSI Special Agent in Charge (SAC) did not draw the same conclusions about the operation from that information.

We have concerns that the HSI SAC did not understand the flawed investigative methodology, and that HSI Arizona did not pursue viable investigative leads.

### What We Recommend

We recommend that the Director of ICE:

- 1) Assess whether HSI Arizona senior leaders fulfilled their duty to enforce the weapons smuggling statutes for which DHS maintains jurisdiction.
- 2) Determine whether the HSI SAC office's management of Operation Fast and Furious, which allowed an HSI special agent to participate in investigative activities that violated ICE policy and practice, adhered to ICE standards for its senior leaders.
- 3) Enhance ICE policy, Accountability Requirements for Enforcement Operations Involving Contraband and Other Sensitive Items, to ensure that the language in the ICE/ATF MOU does not continue to foster an expectation that HSI SACs resolve all conflicts with ATF in the field. The language of the policy should be modified to state that the duty to report conflicts covered by the policy overrides the ICE/ATF MOU language, which may seem to place the responsibility on SACs to resolve all conflicts at the field level.