

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear President Obama:

We write to express our grave disappointment with the Administration's decision to reject the emergency implementation of a proposal from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to require federal firearms licensees (FFLs) to report multiple sales of a very narrow group of long guns, including semi-automatic assault rifles. This rule would give ATF agents a critical investigative tool to crack down on illegal gun trafficking by Mexican drug cartels along the US-Mexico border.

We must do everything we can to secure the border, strengthen our anti-gun-trafficking efforts, and help the Mexican government fight the drug cartels. The Mexican drug cartels are killing people at a staggering rate – more than 30,100 since 2006. And long guns are widely known as the cartels' weapon of choice. The Department of Justice's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that the percentage of crime guns recovered in Mexico that are long guns, like semiautomatic assault rifles, has increased from 20 percent in Fiscal Year 2004 to 49 percent in Fiscal Year 2009. They also found that long-guns tend to have a shorter time-to-crime than handguns and shorter time-to-crime intervals generate more valuable leads for ATF.

Furthermore, we know that the drug cartels are getting their guns from the United States. Since 2006, the ATF has seized more than 10,000 firearms and nearly one million rounds of ammunition destined for Mexico, where the public is not allowed to purchase or possess guns. Authorities in Mexico say most of the guns used in police assassinations and cartel bloodshed originate in the United States and have pressed the U.S. to reduce the flow of weapons south.

Earlier this month, Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) agents in Douglas, AZ, stopped a suspicious pickup being driven by a 26-year-old woman identified as a U.S. citizen and resident of Safford, AZ. A search of the vehicle revealed that the Safford woman was attempting to smuggle three assault rifles out of the U.S. by concealing them under the hood and inside the firewall that had been modified to smuggle contraband. CBP officers seized the 3 assault rifles and the vehicle. The woman was turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement for further investigation and prosecution.

With the death toll rising and the use of a very narrow group of long guns increasing, the criteria for "emergency implementation" should have been easily satisfied by this request from ATF.

We must do everything we can to assist law enforcement in the fight against gun trafficking, including the appointment of a permanent director for ATF. We urge you to implement this rule as quickly as possible to give law enforcement just one more tool to fight this terrible crime. Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

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Cc: The Honorable Eric Holder, Attorney General

Cc: The Honorable Jacob Lew, Director of Office of Management and Budget

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