

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

Prepared Remarks of H. Marshall Jarrett, Director of the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys

Good Morning. It is my pleasure to be here this morning as part of the United States Attorney community to express our commitment in the battle against violent crime and illegal firearms trafficking. The primary example of our commitment to this battle is the exemplary work of the 540 Assistant U.S. Attorneys in the five Southwest Border districts, handling national and district-level priorities which include drug trafficking, firearms trafficking, violent crimes, and immigration offenses. Although the Assistant U.S. Attorneys in these five border district offices comprise only eleven percent of the nation's AUSAs, they have been responsible for initiating 35 percent of all felony cases filed in U. S. District Courts nation-wide.

The problem of illegal firearm trafficking is not simply a Southwest Border problem. Yes, we are concerned about the violence caused by the flow of illegal firearms across the border. And we are also concerned about the violence caused by the flow of illegal firearms from source states to our cities within the United States.

As the flow of illegal firearms from the U.S. into the hands of the Mexican cartels contributes to the violence along the Southwest Border, so does the flow of illegal firearms from source states into the hands of gangs and drug dealers in our major cities, also cause violence.

We are committed to stopping the river of illegal weapons - both to Mexico and throughout this country. And to do that we need to employ a comprehensive strategy that focuses on the cases in the source states. That strategy would include aggressively pursuing: the straw purchase case; the corrupt FFL cases; and the highway interdiction cases where weapons are found.

Also, we need to pursue the cases along the border: the illegal export cases; the border stop cases; the public corruption cases that arise out of illegal firearm trafficking business.

And we need to pursue the organizations that traffic across the border: the criminal enterprises that are buying the guns that come south and sending the drugs north.

The only solution is a comprehensive solution. And for a comprehensive solution to succeed we need to work together, cooperatively.

The prosecutors must work with each other across districts.

The agents must work with each other across agencies and the prosecutors and agents must work together cooperatively.

And we all must work with the state, local and the Mexican authorities.

There are several examples of how the Executive Office for United States Attorneys will support these cooperative efforts:

- In August, we will be hosting a four day training at the National Advocacy Center on investigating and prosecuting Southwest Border Firearms Trafficking Cases. At that training we will bring together a number of agencies including ATF, DEA, FBI, CBP, and ICE, to train about 60 AUSAs and 80 agents. Because of the importance of this initiative, Federal, state, local and Mexican law enforcement personnel will participate in the training.
- In October, we are sponsoring a Violent Crime Coordinators Training, again at the NAC, where we will include as an integral part of the training, important sessions on investigating and prosecuting illegal firearms trafficking.
- Also, AUSAs working in EOUSA in Washington are participating in policy working groups which are examining aspects of the violence and firearms trafficking issues.
- AUSA Tate Chambers, our National Project Safe Neighborhood Coordinator, and former USA Gretchen Shappert work on gang violence for EOUSA and bring a wealth of experience to our effort.
- In the upcoming weeks, the Department will be allocating 28 new attorney positions to the United States Attorney's offices to support violent crime, firearms trafficking, and immigration enforcement. These will supplement the over 60 attorney positions allocated last year. In addition, the President has requested an additional \$8.1 million for fiscal year 2010, which translates to approximately 50 attorney and 25 support positions to support these same initiatives. The Department will continue to seek resources in future years to ensure our success in this effort.

Later today you will hear about two very successful investigations and prosecutions: Operation Delta Blues out of Northern Mississippi and Northern Illinois; and Operation Angels Cottage out of New Mexico. Both successful operations were investigated by ATF and prosecuted by U.S. Attorneys' offices. I would like to use one as an example of how we worked well with each other for a successful outcome. Briefly, Delta Blues involved two ATF offices and two U.S. Attorneys' offices. The ATF in Chicago noticed that a number of firearms recovered there could be traced back to the four FFLs in Oxford, MS. The number of firearms recovered was significant enough that an investigation was initiated. Ultimately, the investigation established that straw purchases of firearms in Mississippi were ending up in the hands of gang members in Chicago. The combined efforts of these offices resulted in numerous prosecutions and seizures primarily by the Northern District of Illinois U. S. Attorney and ATF in Chicago. However, a critical role was played by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Mississippi and by the ATF office in New Orleans, where those offices investigated and prosecuted four defendants.

Finally, I want to restate the importance of teamwork. Working with their law enforcement partners, the United States Attorneys' offices along the Southwest Border will identify the most pressing law enforcement threats and jointly craft investigative and prosecutorial strategies that leverage our resources in the most effective way possible. As the Chief Law Enforcement Officers in their districts, the U.S. Attorneys are in a unique position to appreciate the impact that local issues, juries, judiciary, and others have on design and implementation of effective enforcement strategies. I know that each U.S. Attorney realizes fully the importance of ensuring that everyone works together. They understand that alone we can only address small pieces of the problem. But by working together we can address the entire problem from the straw purchases in Oxford, Mississippi to the cartels in Juarez, Mexico.

The message I bring to you today is that the United States Attorney community is dedicated to doing its part to stop the river of illegal weapons.

Thank you.