

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 31, 2013

Acting Director B. Todd Jones
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms
99 New York Avenue, NE
Washington, DC20226USA

Dear Acting Director Jones,

I was concerned to read recent press reports detailing how a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (BATF) sting operation in the Riverwest neighborhood of Milwaukee resulted in substantial, uncompensated damage to the private property of one of my constituents. The operation resulted in firearms finding their way into the hands of criminals.

According to a January 30, 2013 article in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, agents of the BATF operated a "sting" operation out of a storefront on East Meinecke Avenue under the name Fearless Distributing. Although the store appeared to sell clothing, jewelry, and drug paraphernalia, its real purpose appears to have been the buying of drugs and illegal guns. Reports indicate that the operation did not lead to the apprehension of any major drug dealers or infiltrate any criminal gangs and resulted in criminal charges against only 30 individuals, primarily for relatively minor offenses.

Although I fully understand the value of undercover operations to properly enforce our drug laws and firearms regulations, I was disturbed by the treatment of several citizens during the conduct of this particular undertaking. My office was contacted earlier this month by Mr. David Salkin, who owned the commercial property rented by BATF agents. They entered into a rental contract under false identities and without declaring their intent to use the property for a sting operation. Mr. Salkin claims he is owed approximately \$15,000 by the BATF, due to unpaid utility bills and damage to the structure left behind when agents abandoned his building at the end of the operation. This includes holes in the walls, damage to the doors, and damage caused by the overflowing of a toilet. When Mr. Salkin attempted to settle the unpaid balance of these funds with local BATF officials, he was eventually threatened and told his actions amounted to harassment of BATF agents. I wrote to BATF legislative affairs about this matter on January 11, 2013, asking for a full and fair investigation into the matter. To my knowledge, there has been no response to my office or Mr. Salkin concerning such an investigation.

The costs of this operation go well beyond the harm done to Mr. Salkin's property. In September of last year, an agent parked his vehicle at a coffee shop while it contained three firearms: two handguns and a fully automatic M-4 .223 carbine, the very same type of rifle carried by members of the United States

military. When the vehicle was burglarized, all three weapons were stolen. Only one of the handguns has been recovered. The remaining handgun and the fully automatic rifle remain unaccounted for, and are likely on the streets in the hands of criminals. This occurrence is troubling - especially in light of what can only be characterized as BATF's gross mismanagement of "Operation Fast and Furious." This was the sting operation in which BATF agents allowed as many as 2,000 firearms and to "walk" into the hands of dangerous drug traffickers.

With the President calling on Congress to give BATF expansive new powers under a so-called assault weapons ban and other broad gun control measures, I believe it is incumbent on the BATF to fully explain why incidents of mismanagement, such as last year's events in Milwaukee, continue to occur. Therefore, I respectfully request a full briefing on this operation and how it was so mishandled. I would greatly appreciate a response to this request by February 15, 2013.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
United States Senate