

Washington, DC (July 13, 2011) – Rep. Gus Bilirakis (FL-09), a member of the House Homeland Security Committee, is demanding answers from Attorney General Eric Holder about reports that the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) have purposely allowed firearms to pass into the possession of criminals and other dangerous third party organizations.

"I find it very troubling that the United States government would willfully allow weapons to be acquired by dangerous criminal and drug trafficking organizations, thus compromising our strategic and national interests," Bilirakis said. "This appears to be an extremely misguided effort by the ATF and DOJ and I hope that we do not allow such flawed programs to continue to threaten the safety of the United States."

On Tuesday, Bilirakis sent a letter to Holder and ATF Acting Director Kenneth E. Melson seeking further explanation about "Operation Fast and Furious" and "Operation Castaway."

On Wednesday, he sent a letter to Immigrations and Customs Enforcement Director John Morton demanding answers regarding ICE's involvement in the operations. The letter was co-signed by Reps. Michael McCaul (TX), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management, and Candice Miller (MI), Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security.

Two weapons found at the scene of the murder of U.S. Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry were traced back to the ATF's "Operation Fast and Furious," and reports now indicate that ATF's Tampa Field Division trafficked as many as 1,000 firearms to the dangerous MS-13 gang in Honduras through a similar program known as "Operation Castaway."

[Read the letter to Attorney General Holder and Acting Director Melson by clicking here](#) .

[Read the letter to Director Morton by clicking here](#) .

Read and watch news of the ongoing story below:

"Several lawmakers are questioning the Obama administration about whether the controversial 'Fast and Furious' gunrunning probe may have had a cousin in Florida that resulted in guns being trafficked to Central America. Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Fla., penned a letter Tuesday to Attorney General Eric Holder and ATF Acting Director Kenneth Melson inquiring about a program known as 'Operation Castaway.' Other top lawmakers are also starting to look into it, though ATF claims the program was above board and not similar to Operation Fast and Furious at all."

- [Fox News "ATF Florida Gun Probe Earns Congressional Scrutiny in Wake of 'Fast and Furious'"](#)

"Now a Florida Congressman Gus Bilirakis has written a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder demanding to know about reports that the ATF was involved in similar operations including trafficking arms and dangerous street gangs in Honduras. Is this the final straw? How much did Attorney General Eric Hold know and will he be forced to step down?"

- [Fox Business "Follow the Money"](#)

"Republican lawmakers are alleging that Operation Fast and Furious may have had a twin in Tampa: Operation Castaway. The new revelations have come to light as Florida Republican Rep. Gus Bilirakis fired off a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder and acting ATF Director Ken Melson asking them for answers about the newly discovered program. 'In recent days, it has come to light that the ATF and DOJ have participated in the act of 'gun walking' beyond the acts conducted within the scope of 'Operation Fast and Furious,'" Bilirakis wrote to Holder and Melson."

- [Daily Caller "Did Operation Fast and Furious have a Tampa twin, Operation Castaway?"](#)

"On Tuesday, Bilirakis wrote a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder and Acting ATF director Kenneth Melson asking, among other things, if Operation Castaway 'allowed weapons to be trafficked to Honduras' and if the agency has accounted for all the guns involved. 'I find it very troubling that the United States government would willfully allow weapons to be acquired by dangerous criminal and drug trafficking organizations, thus compromising our strategic and national interests,' Bilirakis wrote. 'This appears to be an extremely misguided effort by the ATF and DOJ and I hope that we do not allow such flawed programs to continue to threaten the safety of the United States.' Today, Bilirakis sent a similar letter to ICE director John Morton."

- [Tampa Tribune "Federal gun investigations draw Congressional scrutiny"](#)

"Bilirakis lambasted the idea that the government would 'willfully allow weapons to be acquired by dangerous criminal and drug trafficking organizations in direct contravention to our strategic and national interests.'"

- [Newsmax.com "Fed Gun Sting in Fla. Mirrored Fast and Furious, Republicans Say"](#)

"Rep. Gus Bilirakis (FL-09), a member of the House Homeland Security Committee, sent a letter yesterday to AG Eric Holder and ATF Acting Director Kenneth E. Melson demanding answers about the so-called Operation Castaway. He followed up today with a letter to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) director John Morton."

- [Michelle Malkin "ICE faces heat over Tampa gunwalking allegations"](#)

"Congressman Bilirakis leaves no doubt where he stands, after getting a belly full of Operation Fast and Furious, and wondering if Operation Castaway will prove to be more of the same: ... 'These actions have already resulted in the loss of human life and property. I hope that you would agree that we must not allow flawed programs to continue to operate to the detriment of the safety and security of the United States of America.'"

- [Human Events "Eric Holder, you've got mail"](#)

"Referencing his membership on the House Committee on Homeland Security and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Bilirakis asked for answers to the following questions, including whether ATF Tampa and DOJ 'allowed weapons to be trafficked to Honduras.'"

- [Gun Rights Examiner "Bilirakis questions Holder, Melson on Tampa gunwalking allegations"](#)