



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on October 14, 2013

Obama ATF Tries to Censor Fast and Furious Whistleblower

The Obama administration, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) in particular, are under fire from across the political spectrum again after they were publicly exposed trying to censor a key whistleblower in the [Fast and Furious](#) federal gun-running scandal by preventing him from publishing a book about it. Claiming that publication of ATF Special Agent John Dodson's manuscript would harm agency morale, [official documents](#) show that the [out-of-control](#) bureaucracy sought to violate the First Amendment in an apparent effort to avoid further scrutiny of its lawless activities. However, that attempt failed miserably, and the scandal is back in the headlines with a vengeance.



The Fast and Furious revelations showed, among other deadly serious scandals, that the ATF, disgraced Attorney General Eric Holder's Justice Department, and [other top officials](#) conspired to send thousands of high-powered weapons to Mexican drug cartels at U.S. taxpayer expense. Many of those guns were [used to murder Mexican citizens and even U.S. law-enforcement officers](#). It was later learned from official documents that the supposed "drug lords" allegedly being "investigated" [were already on the FBI payroll](#), and that the administration was [plotting to use the Fast and Furious violence](#) to advance its unconstitutional assault on the Second Amendment.

After it sparked a wave of national and even global outrage, the administration tried to downplay the gun-running scheme as a mere "botched investigation" — and much of the media parroted that line. However, the [ham-handed coverup](#) and [multiple lies under oath](#) by top officials eventually resulted in Holder [being held in criminal contempt of Congress](#). Separately, a federal lawsuit by U.S. lawmakers against the DOJ aimed at securing documents in the case recently [moved forward](#) despite the administration's [effort to stop it](#). The recent news even has some analysts [publicly wondering](#) whether senior officials might soon face justice.

Meanwhile, the fallout surrounding the scandal is far from finished, as Dodson's book remains a hot topic nationwide. The ATF whistleblower's saga, *The Unarmed Truth: My Fight to Blow the Whistle and Expose Fast and Furious*, is already written. It has also received support from top U.S. lawmakers investigating the scandal, according to the *Washington Times*, which first [reported](#) the censorship story. The scheme to block publication also appears to be in legal trouble as forces all across the political spectrum rally behind Dodson's efforts.

In an interview with CNN about his book, the ATF whistleblower blasted Fast and Furious and noted that there was a lot of information in his manuscript that has not yet been publicly reported. "It was the



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design of the operation, the methodology and the strategy that was employed that was in error from the beginning. And that's a lot of what I think people don't understand," Dodson [said](#). "We didn't feel like we were doing our jobs at all. The reason I came to Phoenix in 2009 was to combat firearm trafficking. When we got here, we weren't doing the basic fundamentals of law enforcement."

The Obama administration, of course, has been seeking to coverup the scandal from the start — going so far as to [repeatedly lie to Congress under oath](#) and eventually even claim "[executive privilege](#)" to stop lawmakers from obtaining evidence. Apparently, the administration does not want the public learning more details either. Most recently, multiple bureaucrats cited various justifications to quash publication of the manuscript. "This would have a negative impact on morale in the Phoenix [field division] and would have a detrimental effect on our relationships with DEA and FBI," Dodson's supervisors [claimed](#) in rejecting the request.

Top lawyers for the scandal-plagued agency agreed with the decision in a letter, claiming supervisors could kill the request for "any" reason. "An employee's supervisory chain may disapprove any outside employment request for any reason, at any supervisory level," ATF lawyer Greg Serres wrote in an August 29 letter to Dodson about publication of his book. (Emphasis in original.) "The Office of Chief Counsel cannot approve outside employment requests in lieu of the supervisory chain's disapproval. Therefore, your request to engage in outside employment is denied."

Responding to the agency's claims last week, Dodson lashed out. "To put that blame on the book or the manuscript to me is absurd, when it's the actions, it was the program, it was what we did to cause that damage," he was [quoted](#) as saying in news reports after a TV interview. "In the right context, the book and everything else could be used to help rebuild that, but ATF refuses to do so. They'd still rather ... try to pretend like it never happened and hope that you and all your viewers out there will forget about it."

Dodson also noted that he hopes to serve as an example for other public servants in similar positions who may feel the need to expose government lawlessness, which the administration is working fiendishly to prevent. He plans to publish the book in January, however, no matter what the administration and the ATF have to say about it.

After the latest scandal surrounding attempted censorship of the brave whistleblower erupted, the backlash was swift and bipartisan. Conservatives in Congress and even the American Civil Liberties Union, among others, are now reportedly involved in helping Dodson get permission to publish the book. Two senior lawmakers, Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa (R-Calif.), even wrote the forward to the book after taking a lead role in congressional investigations on Fast and Furious. Both are now seeking more information from ATF.

In a stinging [six-page letter](#) to ATF Deputy Director Thomas Brandon from ACLU attorneys, meanwhile, the liberal organization said it was "very troubled" by the agency's arguments, which it believes "run afoul of constitutional protections" for government employees. The agency, for example, cited a policy that "grants supervisors the discretion to censor critical speech simply because it annoys or embarrasses the ATF," the letter stated. "Given the national importance of both the Fast and Furious operation and ATF practices more broadly, ATF faces an extremely high burden in demonstrating that its interests outweigh Agent Dodson's right to speak — and the public's right to hear — his views about Operation Fast and Furious."



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The ATF is claiming through spokespeople that the censorship scandal is not about the First Amendment, it's about an agent "trying to profit from information gained as an employee." It remains unclear whether or not the administration would allow Dodson to publish his book for free. The ATF claims various federal bureaucracies are still "reviewing" the manuscript looking for information that the American public is not allowed to have.

As the *Washington Times* pointed out in its report, it is not the first controversy surrounding ATF censorship aimed at concealing problems and potentially even criminal activity within the out-of-control agency. Last year, ATF boss B. Todd Jones [came under severe criticism](#) after he was caught threatening agents with "consequences" for blowing the whistle to lawmakers or the media. Indeed, despite ludicrous claims about being the "most transparent" administration in history, the current president has presided over an unprecedented crusade against whistleblowers, journalists, and others seeking to expose the truth.

While Holder and Obama are currently abusing their purported authority in a bid to avoid prosecution and cover up details about Fast and Furious, analysts say it will be hard to escape justice forever if the pressure stays on. It is time for Congress and the courts to get serious about the law, accountability, and reining in criminal activity at government agencies. The families of those murdered by Fast and Furious guns — [including U.S. Border Patrol agent Brian Terry](#) and [others](#) — deserve answers, and more importantly, justice.

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