THE MOST CONTEMPTIBLE ATTORNEY GENERAL IN US HISTORY

The chairman of the House Oversight Committee wants to find out who knew what when about the Gunwalker/Fast & Furious scandal, and if it had a purpose other than the one we've been told. But the Justice Department is stonewalling his requests -- and two subpoenas -- for documents.

In more than a year, Justice has supplied only a handful of documents in just 10 of the 22 categories requested.

So Rep. Darrell Issa, R-CA, is preparing to cite Attorney General Eric Holder for contempt of Congress.

Border Patrolman Brian Terry was killed in a firefight with suspected illegal immigrants in Arizona near the Mexican border the night of Dec. 14, 2010. The suspects fled, leaving behind two AK-47 variant rifles at the scene. They'd been purchased at a gun shop in Phoenix by a "straw buyer" for a Mexican drug cartel.

A few weeks later, Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Ia, wrote to the Department of Justice with questions. A whistleblower within the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives had told him ATF had deliberately let those guns, and many others, "walk" to Mexico.

Not so, Justice responded. "ATF makes every effort to interdict weapons that have been purchased illegally and prevent their transportation to Mexico."

That was false (i.e., a lie), Assistant Attorney General Lanny Breuer admitted later. ATF let about 2,000 guns "walk" to Mexican drug cartels. They were used in 150 shootings through last March, said Mexico's attorney general. The toll has since risen to about 300, estimated the chairman of the Justice Committee in Mexico's Chamber of Deputies.

Gunwalker was run by the ATF office in Phoenix, Justice said next. It was a "rogue" operation about which senior officials in Washington knew nothing. Doubt was cast on this story when it was learned there were similar programs in Texas and Florida.

Mr. Holder told the House Judiciary Committee last May he'd heard about Gunwalker "for the first time over the last few weeks." Documents obtained by CBS News indicate he'd been briefed on the scandal nearly a year before that, Sharyl Attkisson reported.

The purpose of Gunwalker, also known by the code name "Fast and Furious," was to trace weapons from straw buyers to cartel kingpins so they could be arrested, Justice said. But there was no way to trace them once they crossed the border, four ATF agents told Mr. Issa's committee

last June. ATF hadn't informed Mexican authorities -- or even its own agents in Mexico -- of the operation.

Justice's implausible story became more so when Ms. Attkisson reported ATF had taken the lead suspect into custody -- and then let him go.

ATF supervisor David Voth was "just delighted about" Gunwalker guns showing up at crime scenes in Mexico, a whistleblower said. And now there's something worse than Gunwalker:

The State Department is selling surplus military weapons to the Los Zetas drug cartel, a former head of the Drug Enforcement Administration's intelligence center told the El Paso Times last July.

"More than 90 percent of the guns recovered in Mexico come from the United States, many from gun shops that line our shared border," Barack Hussein Obama said at a press conference in Mexico in April, 2009.

That wasn't true (i.e., a lie). Of 100,000 weapons recovered at Mexican crime scenes, only 18,000 were manufactured, sold, or imported from the United States, and just 7,900 came from sales by licensed gun dealers, ATF Deputy Assistant Director William McMahon told a House Homeland Security subcommittee that July. Drug cartels get most of their deadliest weapons from Central American militaries, according to cables sent by the U.S. embassy in Mexico.

This is how the phony 90 percent figure was arrived at. Of the 100,000 weapons recovered at crime scenes in 2007 and 2008, Mexican authorities asked ATF to trace 11,000 they thought may have originated in the U.S. ATF was able to trace 6,000. Of these, nearly 90 percent originated in the U.S. But only 18 percent of all guns found at Mexican crime scenes have been traced to the U.S.; only 8 percent from sales by licensed gun dealers.

ATF officials discussed using the Gunwalker gun sales they permitted as a reason for imposing new gun control regulations, according to documents obtained by CBS News. The president told her privately he was working on gun control "under the radar," Sarah Brady of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence said last year.

"Was (Gunwalker) actually an attempt to advance gun-control efforts by an administration that has blamed Mexican violence on easy access to U.S. weapons?" asked Investors' Business Daily last June.

The answer may be in the documents Rep. Issa seeks.

The "mainstream" media -- apart from Ms. Attkisson of CBS and Richard Serrano of the Los Angeles Times -- have been incurious. If it were a Republican administration that had facilitated the transfer of 2,000 sophisticated weapons to some of the most vicious criminals on earth, and

then tried to cover it up, you can bet the farm they'd show more interest.

If the House finds the attorney general in contempt, he could, in theory, be imprisoned for a year. The more likely result of a contempt citation would be to prod a somnolent media into paying more attention to one of the biggest scandals in American history.

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