

## A 'Fast and Furious' Fight in the House

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### Botched ATF probe at center of contempt vote against Holder has a complex history

The now-infamous Fast and Furious gun trafficking probe is returning to center stage as part of an “only in Washington” passion play — a fight over executive privilege. But the breathless showdown expected today on the floor of the House — and the accompanying rhetoric — obscures some important context about the botched investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, led by Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., has been investigating Fast and Furious for months. The Justice Department has given the panel 7,600 documents on the case, but Issa and his investigators want other documents they believe to be crucial. President Obama, however, has countered by asserting executive privilege over some of the material. And so the House will likely vote on a contempt of Congress recommendation against Attorney General Eric Holder. No sitting attorney general has ever faced a contempt vote.

Against that backdrop, a standard narrative has emerged about Fast and Furious, describing the operation as a seemingly ludicrous effort that allowed hundreds of firearms to “walk” to the Mexican drug cartels by way of so-called straw purchasers.

Indeed, there is much about Fast and Furious to question — but it’s simplistic to

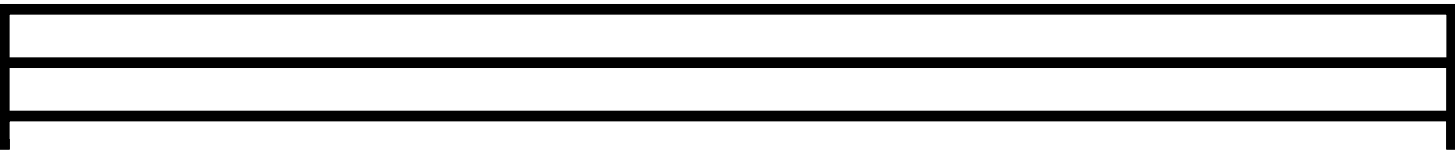
view the probe in isolation. A look behind the curtain reveals a more complex back story — a story about a rudderless, under-staffed agency responding to Justice Department pressure, while dealing with inadequate laws, paltry sentences and disinterested U.S. Attorneys.

Much of that context was detailed by the Center for Public Integrity during the early days of the Fast and Furious scandal, and it's still both relevant and illuminating today.

We invite you to read our earlier [piece](#).



Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) and Attorney General Eric Holder AP



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