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## ATF officials reassigned in latest Fast and Furious fallout

By Richard A. Serrano

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Two top supervisors at ATF headquarters in Washington -- the deputy director and the assistant director for all field operations -- have been reassigned as the beleaguered agency attempts to remake itself amid the fallout from a failed gun-tracking operation along the Southwest border called Fast and Furious, according to two sources briefed on the changes.

William J. Hoover, the No. 2 man at ATF, will become special agent-in-charge of the agency's Washington field office, while Mark Chait, who ran all of the field investigations around the country, is being reassigned as head of the Baltimore field office.

Thomas Brandon, who was sent to Phoenix to run the field office there and help it recover from the repercussions of Fast and Furious, will be taking Hoover's spot as deputy director.

The new assignments, along with other job changes, were announced today by Todd Jones, the U.S. attorney in Minneapolis who was named acting head of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives this year. He succeeded ATF chief Kenneth Melson, who was reassigned to a lower-level position in the Justice Department.

Hoover had broad supervision over Fast and Furious, was given routine updates on the "gun walking" operation, and grew concerned over the number of firearms getting into Mexico without any U.S. indictments on this side of the border.

He tried to get it shut down six months after it began in the fall of 2009. But he failed, and the program continued until January of this year. During that time, a U.S. Border Patrol agent was killed in Arizona and two Fast and Furious weapons were recovered at the scene.

Under the program, the ATF allowed the illegal purchase of countless weapons and expected agents to track them to Mexican drug cartels.

Instead, more than 2,000 were lost and many turned up in at least 170 violent crime scenes in Mexico.

The furor has prompted a congressional investigation and a review by the Justice Department's inspector general's office.

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