



One Hundred Fourteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2016

The Honorable Thomas E. Brandon
Director
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20226

Dear Director Brandon:

We write regarding the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' (ATF) recent announcement that the April 2013 West Fertilizer Facility fire and explosion in West, Texas was an intentional act, though the motivation, be it terroristic or criminal, is unknown.

The fire and explosion at the West facility killed 15 people, including a dozen first responders, and injured over 200 people. According to the Chemical Safety Board, volunteer firefighters from the area were unaware that ammonium nitrate, an agriculture chemical with explosive properties, was stored at the facility.

Given that this incident may be determined to be an act of terrorism, the Committee on Homeland Security has a strong interest in understanding the findings of your investigation. As such, we request a briefing on the investigation to not only learn more about your conclusions but also the level of interagency collaboration between ATF and the Department of Homeland Security on this investigation and, through the Interagency Working Group on Improving Chemical Facility Safety and Security, on working to prevent incidents such as the West explosion in the future.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, if you have any questions, please contact Hope Goins, Chief Counsel for Oversight at 202-226-2616 or hope.goins@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Richmond', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Cedric L. Richmond

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies