



## U.S. - Mexico At a Glance

### Combating Illicit Firearms

June 2009



Weapons fuel narco-violence along the border and in the interior of Mexico. ATF collaborates with Mexico to deny criminals access to illegal firearms.

ATF estimates that 90% of the firearms recovered from crime scenes in Mexico originated in the United States.

Firearms trafficking associated with crime – guns encountered along the U.S.-Mexico border – is a top priority for all ATF Field Divisions.

The U.S. and Mexico seek innovative solutions on information sharing that respect each country's sovereignty and that comply with our respective constitutions and statutes.

The principal objective of the illegal firearms trafficking enforcement actions of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF) in Mexico is to deny criminals access to firearms and reduce violence levels by decreasing the availability of illicit firearms. ATF received an additional \$10 million from the 2009 Supplemental Appropriations Act to augment its programs such as:



- **Developing an explosives and firearms detection canine facility** and provide enhanced training to detect firearms shipments inside Mexico.
- **Providing technical assistance to forensics personnel** at Mexico's National Forensics Laboratory.
- **Implementing eTrace nationwide in Mexico.** This firearms tracing system allows each state to obtain trace data from firearms recovered within its geographic jurisdiction. Using eTrace, ATF and its Mexican counterparts have traced more than 90,000 firearms seized in Mexico since 1996. Firearms tracing helps identify straw purchasers, traffickers and trafficking networks and patterns, allowing law enforcement to target and dismantle the infrastructure supplying firearms to drug trafficking organizations in Mexico.

ATF's **Project Gunrunner** targets arms smugglers along the U.S.-Mexico border. Some of the successes in the last year include:

- In August 2008, ATF Tucson arrested three members of the Arellano-Felix organization for attempting to purchase \$194,000 worth of machine guns and grenades. All three were convicted on arms trafficking charges and are currently in jail serving their sentences.
- In September 2008, three members of a firearms trafficking organization were convicted for felony arms trafficking after attempting to purchase a machine gun and handguns. Arms previously trafficked by this group have been traced to crimes committed in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.
- On December 24, 2008, ATF Agents in Phoenix arrested two straw purchasers for alleged violations of federal firearms laws, and seized 23,000 rounds of ammunition, 15 firearms, and \$3400 cash.
- On January 10, 2009, ATF arrested 4 individuals for federal firearms violations with the intent of trafficking 22,570 rounds of ammunition into Mexico.
- For the past 18 months, ATF and Mexican counterparts have also been working together closely to quickly respond to grenade seizures in Mexico in order to properly identify and trace these explosives. As a result, a variety of military ordnance has been positively identified and traced. This information is shared with international partners and disseminated to state and local law enforcement by the United States Bomb Data Center.

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