



## Fact Sheet Combating Arms Trafficking

“But I will not pretend that this is Mexico's responsibility alone. The demand for drugs in the United States is what is helping to keep these cartels in business. This war is being waged with guns purchased, not [in Mexico], but in the United States.”

*Barack Obama  
President  
United States of America*

Both the U.S. and the GOM are working to eliminate trans-border firearms trafficking. Law enforcement officials are actively pursuing illegal arms traffickers in order to seize and trace illegal firearms on both sides of the border and arrest and prosecute those responsible. These aggressive measures serve to reduce arms traffickers' incentive to obtain firearms in the United States to sell to Mexican criminal organizations for their use as “tools of the trade” in criminal activity.

### Achievements:

#### **Investigation, Prosecution and Regulation**

- **GRIT-** In 2009, ATF's Gun Runner Impact Team (GRIT) initiative targeted gun traffickers in the U.S. GRIT brought 100 experienced Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) special agents to southern Texas to investigate more than 1,000 criminal leads. Nearly 1,100 firearms license inspections were conducted, involving 70,000 firearms and resulting in 440 violations and 276 federal firearms trafficking-related criminal cases. ATF is currently assisting the PGR in prosecuting two firearms trafficking cases and has identified five additional trafficking cases for PGR review.

The GRIT teams seized over 440 illegal firearms, 141,440 rounds of ammunition, \$165,000 in U.S. currency, and additional drugs and explosive devices in the U.S. ATF is planning additional GRIT teams to continue this success.

- **Armas Cruzadas-** Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Mexican authorities launched Operation Armas Cruzadas, a counter smuggling program in Mexico that relies on bilateral intelligence sharing and law enforcement efforts with vetted Mexican units. The program has resulted in the seizure of 1,880 weapons, more than \$7.9 million, 206,412 rounds of ammunition, and the arrests of 257 individuals on criminal charges, resulting in 147 criminal indictments and 96 convictions.
- **CEIT-** In 2009, ATF formed the Combined Explosives Investigations Team (CEIT) to respond to explosives incidents and to train Mexican partners in the identification, safe-handling, and analysis of seized explosives evidence. The CEIT team has responded 29 times to incidents in Mexico and disabled 166 explosive devices.
- **Regulation of United States Firearms Industry** – ATF has a responsibility to the public to revoke the licenses of Federal Firearms License holders (FFLs) in cases of willful violations of the law and regulations, intentional disregard for regulatory requirements, or participation in criminal acts. ATF has had:
  - 587 total FFL revocations since FY2006
  - 64 FFL revocations in FY2009 (11 along southwest border)
  - 11,375 FFL compliance inspections nationwide for FY2009
- **Straw Purchasers** – Mexico has begun working to obtain a comprehensive list of straw purchasers and other persons who have a history of acquiring arms to share with U.S. authorities.

#### **Tracing Technology Tools in Action**

- **Tracing Data** – ATF and its Mexican partners have increased their tracings of firearms seized in Mexico through the e-Trace program, providing valuable intelligence and tracing data to U.S. and Mexican authorities.
  - 3,216 traces in FY 2007
  - 7,194 traces in FY 2008
  - 28,415 traces in FY 2009
  - 39,369 traces in FY 2010

U.S. Embassy Mexico City • 5080-2000  
Public Affairs Section (PAS)  
mexico.usembassy.gov

- **Spanish e-Trace** – ATF and Mexico have deployed Spanish e-Trace, a web-based system that allows Mexican investigators to trace weapons known to originate in the U.S. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by US and Mexican authorities in October 2010 that establishes the conditions of the e-Trace partnership between ATF and Mexico which is designed to strengthen efforts to combat firearms trafficking. Additionally, expansion of the e-Trace system to all thirty-two Mexican Attorney General state branch offices is underway, and Mexico is working to link the tracing data to its criminal justice data system, “Plataforma Mexico.”
- **Integrated Ballistics Identification Systems (IBIS)** – Four IBIS, which link bullets and casings to weapons to build cases against criminals, were purchased by the US for Mexican forensics labs in 2009.

### Training and Collaboration

- **Communication** – CENAPI, Mexico’s Center for Analysis, Planning, and Information, in coordination with Mexico’s Secretariat of Defense, provides monthly bi-national bulletins on secured weapons and relevant seizures. ATF Special Agents also attend meetings with the analysts of CENAPI.
- **Arms Trafficking Workshops** – Three bilateral arms trafficking workshops in 2009 resulted in established protocols that clarified roles and responsibilities for weapons tracing procedures. U.S. and Mexican officials also have a work plan in place to significantly improve judicial cooperation, intelligence sharing, and the detection of weapons movement.
- **Specialized Training** – In March 2010 ICE provided training to 18 Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA) officials on Crossed Arms, a domestic Mexican program that tracks firearms trafficking cases. ATF provided courses on explosives and evidence collection to representatives from SEDENA, the Attorney General’s office, the Navy, and Mexican State agencies in April 2010.
- **Information and Investigations** – Mexico shares data and information in preliminary investigations, investigations into straw purchasers, prosecutions, and other judicial proceedings with US authorities.
- **Training for Prosecutors** – ICE, ATF, FBI, and DOJ are providing best practices training to prosecutors from the Mexican Attorney General’s office.
- **K-9 Teams** – As of November 2010, a total of 50 canines and 44 handlers from Mexico’s Customs agency (SAT) have been trained in the detection of drugs, weapons, ammunition, and currency. Five handlers were certified as instructors. Ten K-9s have been supplied to the Attorney General’s office. ATF has also conducted canine training for Mexican trainers at the Federal Investigative Agency and SSP on several occasions.
- **e-Trace Training and Train-the-Trainer for Spanish e-Trace** – As requested by the Government of Mexico, ATF will provide e-Trace training to CENAPI personnel in each Mexican state. Implementation of the Train-the-Trainer model will be expanded to the entire Spanish e-Trace program, with three of six trainings completed to date.

### Prosecutions/Judicial Cooperation

- **Protocols for Evidence**— U.S. and Mexican authorities are in consultation to establish protocols to ensure evidence in firearms trafficking cases is admissible in both U.S. and Mexico courts. A high-level meeting took place in December 2010 and the implementation process will begin in early 2011.

### Future Directions-

#### **Build Investigative Capacity**

- **Vetted Unit** – A specialized, vetted unit to work in collaborations with the U.S. on arms trafficking investigations and prosecutions, made up of 110 certified agents from Mexico’s Attorney General’s office and the Federal Police, is being created to link firearms to drug cartels for prosecution.
- **IBIS Expansion** – The U.S. will soon provide two additional IBIS machines to Mexico.
- **Increase Judicial Prosecutions for Firearms and Explosive trafficking** – U.S. and Mexican authorities are engaged in a high level working group to increase the number of firearms and explosive trafficking cases prosecuted on both sides of the border.

#### **Tracing/Information Technology**

- **IBIS Information Sharing**– The U.S. and Mexico will be linked to provide comprehensive ballistic identification information for weapons seized on either side of the border.