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Authorities try to keep guns from drug cartels

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By Donna Leinwand, USA TODAY



Enlarge By Raul Arboleda, Getty Images

U.S., Mexican and Colombian officials are taking new steps to stop U.S.-based gun-smuggling networks that arm violent Mexican drug cartels with guns, like these seized AK-47 assault rifles seen here.

U.S., Mexican and Colombian officials are taking new steps to stop U.S.-based gun-smuggling networks that arm violent Mexican drug cartels.

The focus on gun smuggling comes as new Drug Enforcement Administration data out today show street prices of cocaine reaching near record levels. The three countries have shared intelligence to target major drug cartels in successful prosecutions, which appears to have slowed the flow of cocaine into the USA.

MEXICO: Gang killings more than double in 2008

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The high prices "suggest that we are placing significant stress on the drug delivery system," DEA Intelligence Chief Tony Placido says. The DEA will work with Mexico and Colombia to staunch cash and weapons going south, he says, now that "we've got less pressure on us from the contraband flowing north."

He says the "vast majority of guns" seized at Mexican crime sites come from the USA.

Violent crimes in Mexico have jumped 116% since last year, Mexican Attorney General Eduardo Medina Mora says.

"The Second Amendment allows U.S. citizens to bear arms. The amendment was never meant to arm foreign criminal groups," he says. He adds that Mexican criminals take advantage of looser U.S. gun laws.

Of the nearly 29,000 weapons Mexican police seized in the past two years, 16,000 were assault rifles, he says.

Mexico's strict gun control laws make it nearly impossible for anyone who's not an officer to buy a gun legally, says William Newell, who heads the Phoenix field division for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Drug cartels set up networks in the USA to buy guns and smuggle them to Mexico, he says.

The ATF has expanded access to its gun-tracing system to nine U.S. consulates in Mexico and deployed more agents on the border, says William Hoover, assistant director of field operations. The agency asked Mexico to station one of its federal agents in the ATF's Phoenix office, he says.

About 95% of the guns recovered and traced in Mexico come from the USA, Newell says. Recent data show a surge in seizures of .50-caliber guns that can pierce armored cars.

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leopard_colony wrote: 8h 40m ago

Assault rifles are NOT coming from this country . In the US we are only allowed castrated self loading copies. No full auto fire is allowed like real assault rifles. It is possible to modify any rifle to full auto given time and skill. So the assault rifles captured in Mexico are likely modified after being smuggled into Mexico. By the way sub machine guns are the easiest to make, so stopping the flow of firearms will just change the tye used by Mexican drug gangs. Google "expedient firearms" for examples.

Full-auto weapons aren't illegal here if you go through the right channels for registration with the ATF. The lack f border security makes it easy to transport them back and forth though, no matter where they come from.

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[leopard_colony](#) (4 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 12/11/2008 10:04:54 AM

Assault rifles are NOT coming from this country . In the US we are only allowed castrated self loading copies. No full auto fire is allowed like real assault rifles. It is possible to modify any rifle to full auto given time and skill. So the assault rifles captured in Mexico are likely modified after being smuggled into Mexico. By the way sub machine guns are the easiest to make, so stopping the flow of firearms will just change the tye used by Mexican drug gangs. Google "expedient firearms" for examples.

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[leopard_colony](#) (4 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 12/11/2008 9:59:59 AM

"Mexico's strict gun control laws make it nearly impossible for anyone who's not an officer to buy a gun legally" That is an exaggeration, Mexicans are allowed bolt action rifles with limit of 5. They have to be purchased from the government owned store. The lifetime limit of 5 can be sold, allowing wealthy to have large collections.

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[John Doe 2](#) (44 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 12/11/2008 1:31:39 AM

Build the fence and put our troops on the border to stop the invasion of our country by Mexico and help keep guns from gong into Mexico.

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[Shamybeatdrum](#) (13 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 12/10/2008 11:37:11 PM

hillbilly45 wrote: 57m ago

great, now mexico's violence is our fault? we are such a bad infuence. sarcasm!!

The lack of border security on either side helps.

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[hillbilly45](#) (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 12/10/2008 10:39:27 PM

great, now mexico's violence is our fault? we are such a bad infuence. sarcasm!!

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