



ATF Fact Sheet

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PROJECT GUNRUNNER

ATF is deploying its resources strategically on the Southwest Border to deny firearms, the “tools of the trade,” to criminal organizations in Mexico and along the border, and to combat firearms-related violence affecting communities on both sides of the border. In partnership with other U.S. agencies and with the Government of Mexico, ATF refined its Southwest Border strategy. ATF developed Project Gunrunner to stem the flow of firearms into Mexico and thereby deprive the narcotics cartels of weapons. The initiative seeks to focus ATF’s investigative, intelligence and training resources to suppress the firearms trafficking to Mexico and stem the firearms-related violence on both sides of the border.

Firearms tracing, in particular the expansion of the eTrace firearms tracing system, is a critical component of Project Gunrunner in Mexico. In 2008, ATF deployed eTrace technology in the nine U.S. consulates in Mexico. ATF has conducted discussions with the government of Mexico regarding the decentralization of the firearms tracing process to deploy Spanish-language eTrace to other Mexico agencies.

In the past two years, ATF has seized thousands of firearms headed to Mexico. Trends indicate the firearms illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border are becoming more powerful. ATF has analyzed firearms seizures in Mexico from FY 2005-07 and identified the following weapons most commonly used by drug traffickers:

- 9mm pistols;
- .38 Super pistols;
- 5.7mm pistols;
- .45-caliber pistols;
- AR-15 type rifles; and
- AK-47 type rifles.

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Most of the firearms violence in Mexico is perpetrated by drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) who are vying for control of drug trafficking routes to the United States and engaging in turf battles for disputed distribution territories. Hundreds of Mexican citizens and law enforcement personnel have become casualties of the firearms-related violence. DTOs operating in Mexico rely on firearms suppliers to enforce and maintain their illicit narcotics operations. Intelligence indicates these criminal organizations have tasked their money laundering, distribution and transportation infrastructures reaching into the United States to acquire firearms and ammunition. These Mexican DTO infrastructures have become the leading gun trafficking organizations operating in the southwest U.S.

ATF has dedicated approximately 100 special agents and 25 industry operations investigators to the SWB initiative over the past two years. ATF has recently assigned special agents to Las Cruces, N.M.; Yuma, Ariz.; as well as El Paso, Laredo, Houston, Brownsville, San Antonio, Corpus Christi and McAllen, Texas. New industry operations investigators have been assigned to Houston, McAllen and San Antonio. These assignments are part of a broad plan to increase the strategic coverage and disrupt the firearms trafficking corridors operating along the border.

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