

This special issue of *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior* features a group of contributors who reflect on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' actions to stop the illicit flow of firearms to Mexico, mainly from the United States, and on the Mexico's strategy in this area.



Foreword

In light of the high indices of firearm-related violence in Mexico, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to cooperate with the competent authorities of the federal public administration to curtail the flow of illegal firearms into the country, mainly from the United States.

Following the handing down of this mandate, in June 2019 I met with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and proposed we complement the existing strategy that focused on addressing the concerns of U.S. authorities regarding the flow of drugs and migrants—many in transit—from south to north with one designed to address flows—mainly of illegal firearms—from north to south. It was agreed we would commence joint operations in December of that same year and we have since decided to reinforce this decision with a comprehensive strategy. For this special issue of *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior*, we have called on gun experts to discuss the various points of our strategy with articles that are at once thought-provoking and pragmatic, and that are backed up by hard data.

The review has been divided into two sections, the first of which provides a diagnosis and recommendations on how to stop 70% of north-south traffic in firearms between Mexico and the United States. Based on records of the number of weapons recovered and information provided by our network of border consulates, we have compiled a map of firearm routes that takes in some of the most violent parts of Mexico, where the financial and human toll of crimes committed using firearms is heaviest. At this point, I would like to commend the Ministry of Security and Citizen Protection, the National Intelligence Center and members of the Mexico-United States High-Level Group on their efforts to help combat organized and cross-border crime.



Meeting on security between Mexican and U.S. authorities. The U.S. delegation was headed by Attorney General William Barr and the Ambassador Christopher Landau, January 16, 2020.

The scope of our analysis has been broadened with the input of consuls and experts, who shed light on the various social and political aspects of the problem, like the August massacre in El Paso, Texas, which was ruled a hate crime; the enormous challenge the increasingly popular gun fairs of Texas pose; the mass exchange of merchandise of all kinds that takes place daily at the San Ysidro border crossing connecting Mexico with the richest state in America—confirming that we are, indeed, the number one trading partner of the United States; and the impact of new legislation in the state of Virginia, home of the National Rifle Association. With the assistance of our Office of the Legal Consultant, we also provide an analysis of mechanism to protect Mexican citizens from the sale and trafficking of arms in the United States.

In the second part, given that the United States is the main supplier of these weapons to Mexico and the rest of the world, we decided to look at regional frameworks, such as the Organization of American States and its Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials (CIFTA).



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Likewise, a comprehensive strategy should not, however, overlook the other 30% of firearms that enter Mexico illegally and that, according to official records, are mostly European-made, reason why representatives of Mexico to international organizations have drawn up roadmaps based on the multilateral commitments assumed by these countries. Within the framework of the Arms Trade Treaty, the most noteworthy of these commitments is the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, the U.N. Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and other options set forth by the Security Council in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to deal with the devastating consequences of armed violence, which is on the rise and that, as a shared responsibility, we simply cannot continue to turn a blind eye to.

To close, our representatives to the European Union and our rapprochements with Europol offer readers informed views on the flow of European weapons. We can only trust that countries that export firearms are aware of the risk of these being used for illicit purposes and are prepared to enforce the necessary controls.



Meeting between Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard and U.S. Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, June 21, 2019.

This two-pronged strategy completes a circle that seeks to check the flow of illicit firearms from the United States to Mexico—which represents a mere 2.2% of the U.S. market—and create commitments with other major exporters of firearms, with whom we share common ground in many areas. It is also a roadmap that sits naturally with our pacifist approach and that addresses the arms cycle as a whole, from their manufacture, exportation and transformation right through to their final destination and impact.

We firmly believe these efforts to stop illicit trafficking in firearms cannot bear fruit without the participation of a series of different actors and consensus on various fronts, all with the support of civil society. Regrettably, armed violence contributed to a reduction in the life expectancy of Mexico's male population by 15 years in the 2005-2015 (0.55 years) period compared to the 1995-2005 period (1.17 years),* reason why we intend to make every effort to see that ending it is given priority on both the binational and global public agendas.

Marcelo Ebrard Casaubon

Minister of Foreign Affairs

* See José Manuel Aburto and Hiram Beltrán-Sánchez, “Upsurge of Homicides and Its Impact on Life Expectancy and Life Span Inequality in Mexico, 2005-2015”, in *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 109, no. 3, March 2019, pp. 483-489, available at <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2018.304878> (date of access: March 17, 2020).