



FACT SHEET • September 2026

The Weapons Trade from the U.S. to Mexico

Mexico is suffering from historic levels of gun violence, disappearances, and forced displacement — fueled by a steady flow of firearms from the United States, through both the illicit market and licensed exports.

135K

Guns bought in the U.S. in 2022
for trafficking into Mexico

At least 70%

Of traced guns in Mexico
were U.S.-sourced (2019–24)

257K

Gun homicides in Mexico
from 2010 through 2024

133K+

People registered as
disappeared in Mexico

The Situation

From 2010 through 2024, Mexico experienced more than **257,000** gun homicides. A gun was used in nearly **two out of every three** murders in the country. On average, **six women** are murdered with firearms every day.

More than **133,000** people are registered as disappeared and not located in the official Mexican government registry, and the rate of disappearance has increased dramatically over the last three years. A firearm was likely involved in the majority of these cases.

Rifles — especially assault rifles and .50 caliber sniper rifles — are central to the power of criminal organizations: a Mexican Prosecutor General's Office official told an international delegation in 2023 that more than **80%** of firearms used in gun homicides are long guns.

MIGRATION & DISPLACEMENT

A recent survey found that more than half of migrants seeking asylum at the U.S. border had experienced persistent, unrelenting gunfire before arriving. About **4.5 million** migrants were released in the U.S. after crossing the Mexican border — both legally and illegally — between October 2018 and July 2025 (AP). More than **379,000** people in Mexico have fled their homes because of violent conflict.

Mexico's Army is the sole authorized importer and legal seller of firearms in the country. Assault weapons and high-capacity magazines are illegal to purchase in Mexico — but they are widely available at **thousands of retail gun shops** in most U.S. states, including Texas and Arizona.

U.S. guns are key to the **power of the cartels** that traffic narcotics into the United States — they use them to control trafficking routes and to intimidate communities and officials.

Mexico's government reports a 40% drop in homicides in the first 15 months of the Sheinbaum administration. But forced disappearances — usually involving a firearm — have risen sharply.

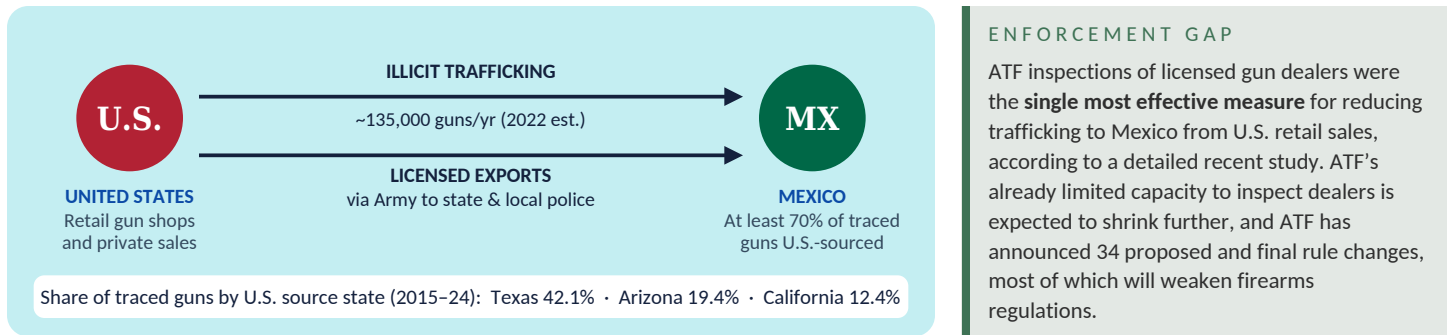
MEXICO'S RESPONSE

Mexico has banned ghost guns and trafficking of gun parts, and has increased the number of firearms it seizes and its operations against armed groups. Mexico's 2021 suit against seven gun manufacturers was dismissed by the Supreme Court in June 2025 under the PLCAA; its 2022 suit against five Arizona gun dealers is in discovery.

How U.S. Weapons Reach Mexico

ILLICIT TRAFFICKING + LICENSED EXPORTS

At least **70%** of firearms recovered in Mexico and traced from 2019–2024 were U.S.-sourced, and Mexico accounts for **74%** of all international crime guns that were traced to a purchase in the United States.



THE ARIZONA-SINALOA PIPELINE. 8,823 guns were seized in Mexico in 2015–2024 within a year of their purchase in the United States — a key indicator of deliberate trafficking. Of these, five out of every six firearms (**83.6%**) were bought in Texas or Arizona (90% in 2024). Arizona's share grew from 17% in 2015–16 to **62%** in 2024; 14 of the 15 U.S. zip codes with the most such guns in 2023–24 are in Arizona. Maricopa County in Arizona supplies more than half of these guns (53.9% in 2024). Many are bound for Sinaloa, where the army seized more than twice as many firearms as in any other state in 2025 — amid a cartel war that has killed nearly 2,000 people since mid-2024.

INDICTMENTS SHOW HOW IT WORKS. An October 2025 Arizona state indictment (113 counts) documented 334 guns bought in 2024–25 by 20 people from 23 Phoenix-area dealers for trafficking to Mexico — 184 of them Century Arms rifles. A January 2026 federal indictment charged nine people who bought .50 caliber rifles and assault rifles in cash; one of its .50 caliber rifles was recovered in Sinaloa in March 2025.

LICENSED EXPORTS. Most imported U.S. guns go to state and local police or the military; Mexico prohibits assault rifles for civilian use. In 2023 the U.S. exported **12,515 military rifles** to Mexico and **6,686 machine guns**; in early 2025, another 459 machine guns (more than any other country) and 2,715 military rifles. The Mexican military has sold U.S.-exported weapons to police in states with records of violence and corruption; end-user certificates for 147,000+ police-bound firearms (2008–2019) named the army. After oversight moved from State to Commerce, it approved **\$16 billion** in firearms exports worldwide in 16 months, 30% above State's rate.

Legislative Solutions

H.R. 6736 · S. 3508

The ARMAS Act

- Creates controls for firearms exports in the Americas
- Mandates an interagency strategy against gun trafficking
- Returns oversight of gun exports from Commerce to State

H.R. 923 · S. 367

Stop Arming Cartels Act

- Bans the sale of .50 caliber rifles in the U.S.
- If trafficked Barretts escape seizure at the same rate as other firearms, then **1,768 Barrett rifles a year** are trafficked from the U.S. into Mexico — **about half of all Barrett's civilian .50 caliber sales**

H.R. 3115 · S. 1531

Assault Weapons Ban

- Bans the sale of assault weapons, high-capacity magazines, and .50 caliber rifles in the United States
- California limits these sales: 3.5% of guns traced to it were under 3 years old at recovery in Mexico, vs. 41% for Arizona (2015–24)

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS THAT CAN BE TAKEN NOW

Deploy ATF to inspect gun dealers rather than removing its enforcement authorities. **Control end use** of legally exported U.S. firearms to exclude police and military forces credibly documented to collude with criminal groups or violate human rights.

SOURCES

- Stop US Arms to Mexico, Corridors of Violence, Feb. 2026 (ATF data obtained via public information requests): stopusarmstomexico.org/iron-river
- ATF, National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment, Vol. II, 2023; GAO-21-322; Violence Policy Center and WOLA, Gun Running Nation, 2015; data: stopusarmstomexico.org/data
- Campbell and MacDougal, "Mexican drug cartels use hundreds of thousands of guns bought from licensed US gun shops," The Conversation, May 23, 2025.
- Associated Press analysis of Customs and Border Protection data on migrants released in the U.S., 2026: apnews.com/projects/border-crossing-immigration-data-mexico-us