The illegal flow of firearms from the United States into Mexico: A state-level trafficking propensity analysis

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Abstract: Recent research has shown the relevance of the gun trafficking phenomenon from the U.S. to understand the spike of violence experienced in Mexico during the last decade. Not all American sub-national states, however, contribute in the same proportion to gun trafficking into its southern neighbor. To understand this variation, this article explores how states with high presence of gun-shows are more likely to engage in this international crime in comparison with others where these exhibitions are not as common. For this purpose, the authors run a multivariate regessions using state-level information from the U.S. The dependent variable used is the percentage of firearms that were traced back to a particular American state considering a recently disclosed sample of guns recovered in Mexico between 2006 and 2011. The independent variable is an approximation of annual gun-shows held per state. Control variables include: the flexibility of the U.S. state’s firearms regulations (expressed by Brady Index) and the distance in kilometers from the U.S. state’s capital to the closest border with Mexico. Empirical test suggests that distance to the U.S.-Mexico border and gun-shows have a significant effect on increasing the propensity of a given American state to traffic proportionally more guns into Mexico.

Keywords: Assault weapon ban; gun-shows; gun-trafficking; brady index; U.S.; Mexico

Introduction

Criminal organizations are believed to operate everywhere. Nevertheless, they are not always violent and in fact, sometimes they are not even perceived by society. In some nations, by contrast, violent crime is extremely visible and challenging.

Although there may be several other reasons to explain this dichotomy, there is one factor that deserves special attention. In some countries, access to guns is easy. In others, due to the restrictiveness of the legal system, organized criminal groups simply do not have access to firearms; hence, they are less capable to exercise intimidation and violence. There are further cases where law is strict but due to trafficking or other factors, reality is different. In any case, gun policy and its enforcement can make a difference. Recent studies have shown how international firearms trafficking crime trends from the U.S. are extremely relevant for understanding the recent spike of violence experienced during the last decade in Mexico (Pérez Esparza and Weigend, 2013; Dube, Dube, and García Ponce, 2013; Pérez Esparza, Johnson and Gill, 2015). Nonetheless, there is still limited information about the specific inner dynamics of this trafficking phenomenon. As states within the U.S. vary in terms of regulations, culture and other factors, one of the remaining issues is to actually understand the state-level determinants that could be facilitating or contributing to the smuggling of firearms into Mexico.
The purpose of this article is to fill this gap and explore the effects of gun-shows (events dedicated to the display and sale of firearms with little or no regulations) on the propensity of each U.S. state to participate in the firearms smuggling networks into Mexico.

To achieve this goal, the authors run a multivariate regression. The dependent variable used is the percentage of firearms that were traced back to a particular American state, considering a sample of guns recovered (seized, or confiscated) in Mexico between 2006 and 2011. The independent variable is an approximation of gun-shows held annually in every one of the fifty states in the U.S. Control variables include: the flexibility of the state’s firearms regulations (expressed by Brady Index) and the distance in kilometers from the U.S. state’s capital to the closest border with Mexico. Overall, results show that -after controlling for distance and gun laws flexibility, states with a larger number of gun-shows present a higher propensity to illegally export firearms into Mexico.

This article is divided into three divisions. Section 1 illustrates the problem of the illegal flow of firearms along the U.S-Mexico border and explores the hypothesis that gun-shows are a potential inner state factor that could be contributing to this illegal flow of firearms. Section 2 presents the econometric model and the construction of the variables. Finally, Section 3 illustrates the results and some policy implications.

Illegal Firearms Trafficking into Mexico

Due to historical reasons, the legal regime to produce, acquire and carry firearms in Mexico has been highly restrictive since the end of the 1917 Revolution, and particularly, after the Federal Law was issued in 1972 (Beaubien, 2009; Mexican Congress, 2014). In fact, contrary to what general public may assume, the Mexican firearms policy is and has been one of the most restrictive in the world. For instance, most legal weapons in Mexico are for the exclusive use of the Mexican security authorities and opposing to what happens in other countries, it is very rare for average citizens to possess or carry guns (Mexican Congress, 2014; Tijuana U.S. Consulate, 2014).

Despite these regulations, statistical evidence suggests that the prevalence (availability or presence) and usage of illegal firearms in Mexico increased recently. There are three useful indicators that support this argument. A first one is the growing number of gun confiscations reported by the Federal Government in Mexico. Although imperfect (seizures can be attributed to a higher military presence), Figure 1 shows how firearm seizures increased significantly during the last decade following a downward trend observed since 1998.

![Figure 1. Firearms confiscated by the Mexican government](source: VI Informe de Gobierno 2012 (Sixth Federal Government Report 2012))

An increase on the number of illegal firearms in Mexico is also reflected on the results from the victimization surveys carried out from 2002 to 2010 by the ICESI, and from 2011 to 2013 by the INEGI. Overall, results show a higher gun-use in crime. Back in 2002, out of the total crimes where some type of weapon was used, 43 percent of them were reported to be firearms: mainly old and low caliber pistols (ICESI, 2002). During the following years, this percentage increased. By 2011 this fig-
The usage reached 78 percent (INEGI, 2012). The evolution of these percentages suggests that the usage of firearms has clearly increased in Mexico as illustrated on Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Percentage of all-crimes where a weapon was used and this was a firearm

Evidence suggesting an increase of illegal firearms prevalence in Mexico is also shown in the particular case of homicides. During 2006, only 30 percent of homicides were carried out with a firearm. By 2011 this percentage had increased to 57 percent of all homicides (SNSP, 2006; SNSP, 2011) as shown in Figure 3. In other words, gun usage (stable for decades) almost doubled in only five years, having a direct impact in both morbidity and mortality among Mexicans.

**Figure 3.** Percentage of homicides carried out with a firearm in Mexico

With a highly limited system controlled by the Mexican Army, and no private licenses to produce or carry guns for civilians allowed: where are these firearms coming from?

A very popular argument in Washington is that illegal gun prevalence increase in Mexico can be explained due to corrupt or inefficient police and military personnel illegally selling or passively transferring guns to criminals. Evidence, however, suggests that although incidents have occurred in some regions, these are rare cases (Angel, 2015).

A second alternative is that guns are being produced in clandestine factories as the one found in Jalisco in November 2014. Nonetheless, due to the high costs of the machinery, the complexity to acquire raw materials, and the lack of technical skills required, these cases are still uncommon (Luna, 2014). Illegal importation from other countries, hence, seems to be the most feasible possibility.

Some analysts have suggested that Colombia and Central America could be relevant sources of this international trafficking. From a market point of view, nevertheless, this idea has several rational complications. For instance, this would require gun seizures to be more common in the southern states than in the northern ones, a fact that is not occurring according to data. In addition, available guns in Central America and Colombia are normally three decades old, risky to use, high-cost, not
that prevalent, associated with criminals, and expensive to move due to the lack of modern infrastructure. At the end, there is no data suggesting that guns are moving to Mexico in big numbers from any of these countries (Pérez Esparza, Johnson and Gill, 2015).

By contrast, evidence suggesting that firearms are being trafficked from the U.S. is clearly more abundant and economically more rational. For instance, the U.S. and Mexico share one of the longest and busiest borders in the world. Theoretically, this border is also special given its asymmetry in gun regulations among neighbors; a fact that generates the perfect conditions for the rise of gray markets which occur when goods are legal in one place and illegal in another (Weigend and Villarreal, 2015). Tangibly, the U.S. is also the world’s biggest gun producer, exporter and importer of new guns. This means cheaper and better guns than those existing elsewhere: a powerful reason by itself.

In addition to these incentives, recent research has also starting to analyze how changes in the U.S. gun market during the last decade could have increased gun trafficking propensity to Mexico. One of the most relevant is the fact that gun production increased in 2004 when the U.S. Congress allowed the production and imports of military style guns that were prohibited since 1994 by leaving the U.S. Federal Assault Weapons Ban (AWB) to expired in 2004 (Cook, Cukier and Krauze, 2009; Pérez Esparza and Weigend, 2013; Dube, Dube and García Ponce, 2013; Pérez Esparza, Johnson and Gill, 2015).

According to this idea, once the AWB expired in 2004, the imports and manufacturing of firearms for civilian use increased the gun prevalence in the U.S. As a consequence, this could have also facilitated the traffic of more (and more powerful) firearms to Mexico. The fact that the Mexican Army was required to confront highly-armed organized criminals in the city of Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulips (border with Laredo Texas), by the first time in 2005, only some months after the AWB expired in 2004- is a key data that should be included in this argument (Davidson II, 2005). Information suggesting that first attacks by criminals against police forces and Mayors in Mexico started also in 2004 is an additional argument that further justifies this argument.

Besides possible coincidences, there is empirical data from the U.S. government that brings some estimation about the role of the U.S. when it comes to explain gun prevalence in Mexico. Using available samples of illegal firearms confiscated in Mexico and analyzed by two U.S. agencies— the Governments Accountability Office (GAO) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) have concluded that between 70 and 90 percent of these guns were illegally trafficked from the U.S. (GAO 2009, ATF, 2013). Further information on the relation between U.S. firearms and violence in Mexico is illustrated on appendix 1.

Altogether, this naturally places this country as the largest supplier to Mexico. In terms of quantity, alternative sources have also estimated that, only in the 2010-2012 periods, between 106,000 and 427,000 firearms were annually smuggled into Mexico from the U.S. (McDougal, Shirk, Muggah and Patterson, 2013). However, this data rank seems conservative when contrasting it with other estimations suggesting that 2,000 firearms would be illegally entering Mexico on a daily basis during 2008 (The Brookings Institute, 2008).

Additional studies from the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars have also reported that within the U.S., Texas appears to the most important supplier of weapons into Mexico with approximately 50 percent of the total flow of weapons (Goodman and Marizco, 2010). This coincides with the results presented by Mayors Against Illegal Guns, which shows Texas, California, Arizona and Florida as the main source states of illegal weapons into Mexico (Mayors Against Illegal Guns, 2010).

More recently, the report #No+Armas #No+guns provided a dataset with a sample of 2,921 firearms seized in Mexico between 2006 and 2011 and traced back to the U.S. Its results also coincide with the reports from the Woodrow Wilson Center and Mayor against Illegal Guns. Additionally, one of the major advantages of this document is that it presents for the first time the total number of firearms traced to each particular state in the U.S. (INSYDE, 2014).
In this regard, evidence illustrates that Border States have a higher propensity to smuggle illegal firearms into Mexico. This seems to be obvious, however, at the same time it raises many other questions. However, there is a significant difference between the percentage of firearms traced back to Arizona and Texas with those coming from California and particularly New Mexico, which actually ranks 8th. Additionally, there are states like Minnesota, Florida, Illinois and Washington State that are miles away from the border with Mexico and still actively participate in the illegal supply. This suggests that other factors besides geographical location could be contributing to the illegal flow of firearms into Mexico. Knowledge in this field is far from understanding the determinants that make some states in the U.S. more vulnerable to participate in the smuggling networks than others.

Therefore, it is important to discuss important elements within this trafficking phenomenon. Straw purchasers, for example, are believed to be the most common way to illegally send firearms to Mexico (Brady Campaign, 2009). These are individuals with the legal capacity to purchase a firearm in the United States and do so under the order of a broker – an individual that profits from selling firearms to gangs or other groups and is usually not permitted to buy firearms in the U.S. Straw Purchasers attend Federally License Dealers (FFL or gun shops) and, depending on the state they are making the transaction, purchase multiple weapons to later provide them to the broker. Another important method of obtaining firearms to later cross them across the border is by stealing them, however, according to several interviews, this is a less common method.

This study will not focus on FFL dealers or stolen firearms as methods for straw purchasers and brokers to obtain their weapons. Instead, it will focus on a third method that is getting more attention from the literature as an important route for illegal trafficking. As an important note, these methods are not necessarily inclusive as stolen firearms can be sold at gun shows and FFL dealers may also participate in these events.

Established FFL dealers (or gun-shops) and stealing are not the only source from which ‘straw purchasers’ and brokers can obtain firearms. Gun shows are also relevant in places where these individuals and even the broker directly can purchase their weapons. Gun Shows are exhibitions or gatherings where guns, gun parts, ammunition, gun accessories, and literature are displayed, bought, sold, traded and discussed in informal markets (Wintemute, 2009).

Although the main goal is economic in both cases (participants are expected to buy and sell guns), the main difference between FFL dealers or ‘gun-shops’ and ‘gun-shows’ is that, contrary to what occurs in the case of shops where transactions are held in a particular place that has received a license to sell guns all over the year, ‘gun-shows’ are informal events, open to the public, that can occur during two-three days only. Given the way they occur, they are not restricted to a particular place or address. By contrast, they have been and could be organized basically anywhere, including hotels, malls, stadiums, armories, flea markets and even in the streets. Due to this logic, ‘gun-shows’ are naturally more problematic in terms of regulation and it is reasonable to state that its existence creates perverse incentives between the actors in the system.

One of them is the complicate relationship between ‘gun-shops’ and ‘gun-shows’ themselves. Under the Gun Control Act of 1968 (GCA), firearm dealers or FFLs were prohibited from doing business at gun-shows basically on the argument that they were only permitted to do business at the address listed on their license. Nonetheless, recent reforms have allowed FFL dealers to participate outside their premises by becoming actors on informal gun-shows. Some critics have suggested that bringing this competition to the ‘gun-shows’, adds special pressure to all the actors to reduce prices and sell as much as possible. One of these particular situations is clear in the case of FFLs that, given the pressure to compete, might not be running background checks to their customers, even though they are obliged to. Evidence suggests this is not a myth. In fact, official investigations from the ATF have identified numerous crimes committed by FFLs during gun-shows where background checks were not run.

Another example of the regulatory challenges occurs once citizens participate as sellers in the ‘gun-shows’. Some reports, for instance, have recorded that citizens (that are nominated as ‘private collec-
tors’) have purchased firearms on regular and established FFLs with the aim of later attending gun-shows and re-sell the firearms they just purchased (Interviews from the authors, 2013 and 2014).

Besides all the ethical implications involved, for most local laws these private individuals are not required to run background checks to their customers during these ‘gun-shows’. Naturally, this scenario is ideal for both straw purchasers and brokers who try to get a hold of a weapon without going through a background check. This process in which straw purchasers and brokers avoid what is expected by law is referred as the gun-show loophole.

Evidence suggests that thousands of guns can have been acquired using this loophole. Information provided by the Brady Campaign has suggested that unlicensed sellers at gun-shows make 40 percent of all illegal gun sales transactions in the U.S. where no background checks are implemented (Brady Campaign, 2009). Although this loophole has been recognized as one of the roots that contribute the most to illegal smuggling both inside and outside the U.S. (Violence Policy Center, 2001), no change in the policy has been implemented at a federal level. In fact, the most recent attempt to regulate this loophole was called the “Universal Background Checks Bill” which was presented during 2013 by Senators Manchin (D-WV) and Toomey (R-PA). However, after an intense debate and a remarkable pressure from private interest groups concerned with keeping the status quo of the business, the Senate did not approve this legislative project by four votes.

In any case, perhaps the most relevant challenge is the incapability of the system to avoid guns previously associated with crimes to be part of the legal markets. Some reports have suggested that, due to its informality, criminals could have been selling firearms previously used to commit offenses taking the advantage of anonymity and the absence of background checks in gun-shows. This ‘gun-laundering’ process could be just the tip of the iceberg. Some estimates suggest that half-million guns are stolen every year (Cook and Ledwing, 1997). It is very reasonable to state that a notable proportion of them could be an income source of gangs and other organized criminals that could be reselling them at any of the gun-shows across the U.S.

From a general perspective, evidence supports the argument that ‘gun-shows’ and their links could be contributing to the illegal smuggling of firearms into Mexico. Particular cases among the U.S. states hold this idea. Illinois, for example, ranks among the top-ten states with the highest number of gun-shows per year. According to the sample analyzed it is also the top-four with higher propensity to illicitly export guns to Mexico. Gun-shows would explain why this state is an important supplier of illegal firearms into Mexico despite having strict regulations in gun-shops and being far from the southerner border.

The Model and the Variables

Why some American states have a higher propensity to participate in gun trafficking into Mexico than others? In order to estimate the possible effects of gun-shows on the trafficking dynamics from the American sub national states into Mexico, a multivariable regression was run using information from the 50 states of the U.S., excluding the District of Colombia (D.C).

The main limitation was the availability of information per state. While the dependent variable reflects the total number of firearms traced back to a particular state from a sample of 2,921 observations between 2006 and 2011, there is no information about the total number of gun-shows per state during this period. Therefore, proxy variables were used as indicators of the independent variable.

Equation 1: Firearms smuggled into Mexico from a particular state = β0 + β1gunshows + β2distance + β3gunregulations + β57π

As presented in table 1, the independent variable used in this research is the number of gun-shows per state. Nevertheless, official evidence from these events simply does not exist, and data is extremely difficult to obtain given its informality. However, this research used a database compiled in a report from the University of California Davis, which presents all gun-shows per state held during 2007. This presents limitations as the data only corresponds to a particular year and assumptions were made that this proportion of gun shows reflects an approximation of gun shows held per year between
2006 and 2011. Additionally, there were certain states that did not present any scheduled gun-shows on this data set. This does not necessarily mean that there were no events on these states, but just that there were not scheduled on the website where the data originated from. In any case, for the purpose of this document, they are assumed to be zero.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Variables used on our model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variable</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The percentage of firearms illegally smuggled into Mexico that are traced back to the state (independent variable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presence of gun-shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of gun regulations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first control variable was the distance in kilometers to the border. For this purpose, authors estimated the distance from the U.S. state capital to the nearest entry-border with Mexico. Since California, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas are Border States, the distance was considered as zero. The idea behind this was to test if closer states would show a higher propensity in the percentage of firearms seized in Mexico than those located further.

The second control variable illustrates the level of gun regulations in a particular state. In order to measure this, information from the Brady Campaign Index (2007 to 2011) were used. The advantage of using this average is that it reflects an accurate approximation of the level of strictness in terms of gun laws in the U.S. states between 2006 and 2011. According to this index, California is one of the strictest states in terms of gun regulations. This could partially explain why firearms are smuggled relatively less from California in comparison to Arizona and Texas which are also Border, but considered to have lax regulations.

Overall, by using the dataset illustrated on this section, it was possible to run a correlation analysis and a simple multivariable regression. The first was carried out in order to detect possible multicollinearity among the independent variables and the second was carried out in order to detect the possible effects of the independent variables on the percentage of firearms traced back to the particular states. The results are illustrated in the following section.

**Results and Policy Implications**

This section analyzes the results of the exercises explained on the previous section. According to the correlation analysis, the percentages of firearms from the sample that are traced back to a particular state are positively and significantly associated with the number of gun-shows. On the other hand, they are negatively related to the distance from the border and firearm regulations illustrated by the Brady Campaign Index. This result is expected as states with higher grades on the index are anticipated to present lower numbers of traced firearms trafficked into Mexico. In the case of gun dealers per 100,000 inhabitants, the results present a negative correlation but were relatively small to assume that they are in fact statistically associated.

Additionally, a correlation matrix between the independent variables was run in order to determine if there were any cases of multicollinearity. In order to further the analysis, an econometric regression
was run. The percentage of traced guns to a particular state was the dependent variable while gun-shows were our main independent variable. Our controlled variables were the distance to the closest Mexican border and the Brady Index average score. In order to run this regression, econometric software was used.

Table 2. The Correlation matrix results among the variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of traced firearms to the State</th>
<th>Gun Shows</th>
<th>Distance to border</th>
<th>Gun Regulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of traced firearms to the State</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Shows</td>
<td>0.5863</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>-0.4086</td>
<td>-0.3381</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Regulations</td>
<td>-0.1008</td>
<td>-0.0066</td>
<td>0.2489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Results from the regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of traced firearms to the State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Significant confidence Level at 90%</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Shows</td>
<td>Coefficient 0.090 T-statistics 4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>Coefficient -0.002 T-statistics -1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Regulations</td>
<td>Coefficient -0.003 T-statistics 0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-Square</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gun-shows illustrate a positive significant effect on the propensity to smuggle firearms into Mexico. For every additional gun-show on a particular state, the propensity to smuggle firearms increased by close to 0.1 percent. However, given the limitation embedded on the gun show data per state, results must be interpreted with caution.

Distance from the border also diminishes the propensity of a state to smuggle illegal firearms into Mexico. For every 1,000 kilometers away from the border, the percentage of the total firearms smuggled into Mexico is reduced by 2 percent. This could primarily be attributed to the proximity and the lower costs of transportation (opportunity and accessibility play a role). According to results from the regression model, after controlling for the presence of gun shows and distance to the border, gun regulations presented no significant effect on this particular model. This must also be taken with caution given the limited observations on the model and should not be interpreted to mean that gun laws do not affect illegal trafficking or other forms of gun violence.

Nonetheless and despite the limitations embedded in the model, some conclusions can be drawn from these results. However, further research with stronger data is still necessary.

Conclusion

Until recently, there was no empirical evidence about where the firearms being trafficked into Mexico were coming from. The overall belief is that their origin was from the four Border States. Even though statistical evidence illustrates that the majority of firearms flowing into Mexico were indeed purchased on the border region, there is also evidence that shows how other factors have contributed to the disproportional flow of firearms among other states further.

Aside from the geographic proximity with Mexico, the presence of gun-shows appears to be an important factor contributing to the illegal flow of firearms from the U.S. into Mexico. This finding is key and should have several policy implications for both countries and on the international agenda in the near future.
First of all, Mexico must place a serious concern on the illegal smuggling of firearms as the presence of weapons and its usage on violent crimes have increased dramatically in recent years. It should, as well, pay particular attention to the cutting-edge research linking the AWB with the recent spike of violence after 2004.

Given the threat that American guns illegally imported to Mexico represent to the national and public security, Mexican authorities should be more proactive and might learn when and where gun-shows near the border will take place. Consequently, they must enhance its intelligence capabilities and its tactical ones. Tangibly, this means the deployment of more intelligent and high-tech inspections near the most vulnerable crossing points alongside the border. Although this will not solve the problem of firearms smuggling (the American market is immense and crime dispersion to other entry-points could always occur), a new way to approach the problem would at least deter some brokers and would increase the cost of firearm trafficking associated with higher transportation or storage costs.

Moreover, Mexico must seek to improve the practical capabilities within international agreements in order to prevent more illegal smuggling. For instance, there are many opportunity areas of this in the actual international regulations. The current Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) does not address this element of gun-shows and Mexican diplomacy should be able to present its case to re-think its immediate inclusion at the international forums. It should, as well, look for international support to learn how some countries are actually successful in tackling illegal networks alongside their borders.

On the other hand, the results drawn from this model could be added to the ones presented at the U.S. Congress in 2013 as evidence to implement higher control on guns-shows in the U.S. Notoriously, one particular regulation that may be debated is the Universal Background Check at gun-shows. As this is one of the preferred methods for illegal brokers to purchase firearms, more restrictions could be translated into less trafficking and fewer violent crimes both in Mexico and in the U.S. A sensible route would comprise more individual states to continue adopting their own local policies (as California did some years ago or Washington State more recently). A political and technical effort is urgently required to assess the available evidence on this regard and react accordingly.

Finally, there are some bilateral actions that could contribute to the reduction of illegal smuggling of guns. The 10 local border-governments (from both Mexico and the U.S.) must work closely to identify strategies that could reduce the illegal flow of firearms in the region using international instruments already available (The U.S.-Mexico Conference of bordering states). Awareness campaigns about the illegal nature of transporting illegal firearms into Mexico and the possible consequences of doing so could be a first important step. At the end, this would prevent misunderstanding situations like the one that occurred in Tijuana in 2014 where a U.S. Marine was being charged for crossing illegal firearms across the San Isidro Bridge after he allegedly took a wrong turn (Abcarian, 2014). In any case, reshaping the anti-organized crime Merida Initiative instrument between the U.S. and Mexico under this new paradigm is the perfect first step for the very close future.

References


Interviews from the authors (2013 and 2014). Interview with ATF representative on September 2013; Interview with border agent on October 2013; Interview with representatives from the Brady Campaign on January 2014; Interview with representatives from the Violence Policy Center on March 2014.


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Appendix 1
Correlation analysis between net firearms in the U.S. and firearm prevalence in Mexico

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Net number of firearms in the United States 1997-2011</th>
<th>Gun Confiscation reported by the Mexican Federal Government 1997-2011</th>
<th>Percentage of homicides carried out with a firearm in Mexico 1997-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors analysis of V Informe de Gobierno 2011 (Fifth Federal Government Report 2011), SNSP and U.S. Department of Justice