

U.S. fuels organized crime in Latin America with illegal weapons

written by Alejandra Garcia
April 27, 2025



Guns illegally shipped from the U.S. into Mexico.

The Trump administration's designation of drug cartels as "terrorists" has opened the door to direct military intervention in Latin America. However, behind this security narrative lies an uncomfortable reality: most of the weapons that fuel

organized crime violence come from the United States.

The US government, led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Donald Trump, issued an Executive Order designating Mexican and regional drug cartels as “terrorists”. With this, the White House and the Pentagon build the framework of justification for self-enabling drone and missile warfare attacks on the sovereign territories of Latin America.

In parallel to this decision, and according to a recent investigation by analysts Paula Giménez and Matías Caciabue published in Nodal News, the illegal arms trade supplies the cartels, strengthening their firepower, which has become a scourge for the region. This reality has become a serious affront to Latin American states and a danger to their citizens.

But where do drug trafficking weapons come from, what are the interests of the political and economic actors involved, and how does this dynamic impact regional security and forced migration?

Gimenez and Caciabue say the weapons come mainly from Arizona, Texas and Florida, where weak legislation and controls allow arms to flow easily to organized crime. In these states, the arms business and the world’s largest drug market converge in a symbiotic relationship: while weapons cross the southern border to strengthen criminal groups, drugs make the reverse journey to feed U.S. demand.

“The money from the lucrative narco-economy continues to feed the illegal circuit of buying and selling weapons. Violence that, obviously, ends up promoting the immigration that has awakened so much xenophobia in U.S. voters, that is encouraged by Trumpism,” the experts affirmed.

U.S.-made weapons fuel violence in several regions. “In the case of Latin America, it is known that a significant number of guns recovered at crime scenes were either

manufactured in the United States, or first imported into the United States and then illegally trafficked,” they stated. For example, 98% of illegal guns in Haiti and the Bahamas come from the United States. In Mexico this figure reached 70% in the last decade. In the 7 Central American countries, 50% of illegal weapons come from the US.

Similarly, according to a recent report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, 73% of the weapons recovered between 2018 and 2023 in the Caribbean region originated in the United States, and in some countries these weapons are responsible for up to 90% of homicides.

The geopolitical response to this crisis is contradictory. Washington criminalizes gangs south of its border, but weapons flow freely from the north, a policy that only benefits the war and private security industries. Without a dramatic change gun violence will continue to increase, organized crime will grow stronger, and Latin American societies will continue to be trapped in a spiral of death.

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano – English](#)

