

## **The Guns of Mexico: Why the Lies?**

**By Tom Tancredo**  
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The Mexican Ambassador to the United States, Arturo Sarukhan, appeared on a CBS news program and repeated a lie we have heard for many months about the violence in Mexico. The Ambassador says Americans are to blame for the violence wrecked on his country by the Mexican drug cartels because "most of the guns confiscated by Mexican police can be traced back to the United States." That is not true, but the way that claim has been accepted by American politicians and the mainstream media raises suspicions about a hidden agenda.

We can almost forgive the Mexican Ambassador for being confused when the United States agency responsible for enforcing our gun laws, the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, has made so many contradictory statements on the matter. ATFE assistant director William Hoover told Congress last year that 90% of the weapons seized in Mexico crime scenes can be traced to gun sales in the US.

The problem is, that 90% number isn't true. Yet, that hasn't kept it from being picked up used by members of Congress, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and of course, Mexican officials like Ambassador Sarukhan who are eager to blame the US for Mexico's problems.

The 90% number reported by Mr. Hoover came from a small group of weapons turned over to the U.S. for tracing, but they were by no means all of the weapons seized by Mexican authorities. A spokesman for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Matt Allen, has now "clarified" the number and admitted that only 17% of the weapons found at crime scenes in Mexico have been traced to the U.S. Ironically, while Mexican officials have freely used the 90% number from the ATFE, they have not themselves made such a charge based on their own numbers. The truth is, they know better.

We can easily understand Mexico's reasons for preferring the 90% number to the more accurate 17%. Mexico does not want to openly discuss the many other sources of advanced weapons being used by the drug cartels. Thousands of advanced weapons and tons of military equipment are stolen from its own military and state police. Weapons are smuggled across its southern borders from Guatemala and by boats landing on its 8,000 miles of coastline, weapons that often originate in Venezuela, Colombia, and Nicaragua, or from purchases in Eastern Europe. But it is easier for a Mexican politician to blame the U.S. than to explain its own failure to police its borders, its ports of entry and its military installations.

Did the Mexican Ambassador mention that over 100,000 soldiers have deserted the Mexican Army in the past seven years and that many of them took their weapons with them and joined the cartels?

Certainly, no one will deny that thousands of guns have been smuggled from the US into Mexico, but not the rocket propelled grenades and 50 caliber machine guns that the cartels have in abundance. You can't buy that stuff at gun shops in Texas or Arizona. But for the sake of argument, what if it was true that 30% of the weapons used by the cartels originated in the US? Could it be that Mexico has invited this traffic by its policy of not inspecting the vehicles entering Mexico from the US? Mexico only changed that policy two weeks ago and announced that it will beef up its border inspections. And could it be that Mexico's decades-long opposition to the US border fence and increased Border Patrol vigilance has something to do with the success of the cartels' gun smuggling operations?

But what accounts for the Obama administration's eagerness to let Mexico blame the U.S. for its spiraling violence? Two explanations are possible. It may be that blaming American gun laws is for many Americans an easy answer to what seems like an insoluble problem. If we can end Mexico's chaos by making changes on this side of the border, that's far easier than expecting Mexico to make difficult and painful changes of its own--- like hiring honest cops and paying them a decent wage.

The other explanation is more troublesome. Maybe the Obama administration has no clue how to help Mexico but sees an opportunity to help itself. It is obvious that Obama's team at the Justice Department and the State Department are exploiting the violence in Mexico to justify more restrictions on gun ownership by Americans. The Obama team's hostility to the Second Amendment has been clear for months. This may be yet another example of Rahm Emanuel's maxim: "Never let a good crisis go to waste."

Mexico needs to face its own demons, beginning with the corruption within its law enforcement agencies and at its ports of entry. The U.S. can help in many ways, such as enhancing our own border security. But adding more restrictions to the ownership of guns by law-abiding Americans will not help Mexico.

If we are lucky, this theme of blaming American gun owners and gun shops is only a temporary distraction. If it is more than that, if the Obama administration really believes this is the answer to Mexico's problems, then we are lost in a swamp.