

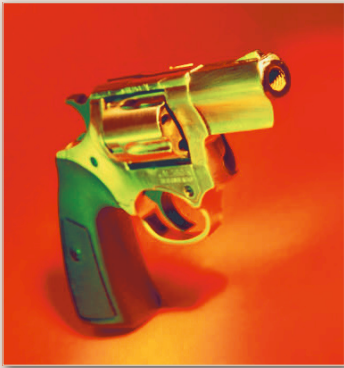
# United States Should Shoot Down U.N. Small Arms Treaty

Brief Analysis No. 735

by H. Sterling Burnett

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*The Obama administration recently appointed a negotiator to work with the United Nations on a treaty to regulate international trade in small arms. The ostensible goal is to staunch the flow of illegal weapons to drug cartels, terrorists and guerillas.*



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This proposal is consistent with the 1997 Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Firearms Trafficking in the Americas (CIFTA) signed by President Clinton, but never ratified by the Senate.

The Obama administration reversed the policy of the Bush administration, which opposed U.S. participation in such a treaty as a matter of principle and policy. The World Bank estimates that there are more than 500 million firearms available worldwide, but many countries do not disclose information on firearms manufacturing, sales or exports. There is no evidence that U.S. participation in the small arms treaty would do anything to decrease the illicit flow of small arms, but it would threaten citizens' constitutional right to own and use firearms. For instance, such a treaty might require federal licensing and registration of any firearms possessed by individuals.

## Mexico's Gun Problems.

Secretary of State Hilary Clinton announced the change in policy on October 14, 2009, citing the rising tide of drug-fueled violence in Mexico as a motivation. Despite having some of the strictest gun control policies in the world, Mexico's murder and violent crime rates are among the highest in the world — several times higher than the United States'.

The Obama administration, however, echoed the claims of Mexico's President Felipe Calderon that more than 90 percent of the guns used in crime in Mexico come from the United States. This is a misleading interpretation of the facts, however. Consider:

- From 2007 to 2008, more than 29,000 firearms (and more than 2,000 grenades) were picked up at crime scenes in Mexico.
- Approximately 38 percent of guns seized (11,000), were submitted to the United States for tracing.
- Of those, approximately 6,000 were successfully traced, and 5,114 (less than 18 percent) were found to come from the United States. [See the figure.]

A later report from the Department of Homeland Security indicated that only 3,480 guns could be traced to the United States.

**Where Do Mexico's Guns Come From?** It is difficult to determine the source of guns entering Mexico. Most of the guns and other weapons — such as grenades, machine guns and rocket launchers — are not submitted to the United States for tracing because Mexico's government knows that they did not come from U.S. gun dealers. In America, trade in machine guns, grenades and other military weapons is tightly controlled. Such weapons are not found at local gun shows or neighborhood gun shops. By contrast, the most popular firearm

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in the world is the Soviet-designed Kalashnikov, a fully automatic weapon, or machine gun, produced in Russia and a number of countries. The World Bank estimates there are 100 million worldwide.

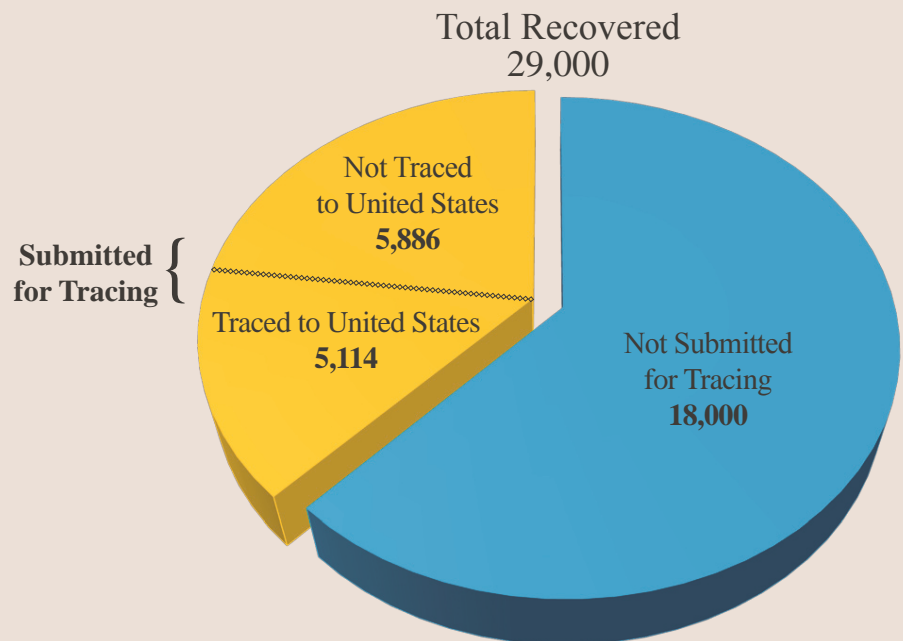
Many countries that manufacture arms do not require serial numbers on guns, thus firearms lacking serial numbers are common worldwide. As a result, the majority of the crime guns found in Mexico are not traceable because they arrived directly or indirectly from countries that do not require manufacturers to mark guns slated for export. Indeed:

- Amnesty International reported that arms provided by China and North Korea to militaries or militias in Asia, Africa and Latin America have been recovered in Mexico.
- Interpol has reported that various Russian mafia groups have been actively trading arms and drugs with Mexican drug cartels.
- A report by the U.S. Library of Congress notes that Mexican cartels established a drug and arms partnership with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC).

Furthermore, arms given to Mexico's police officers and soldiers have ended up in the hands of the cartels as well — in the past six years, more than 150,000 Mexican soldiers have deserted, many taking with them the M-16 assault rifles supplied by the U.S. military.

Machine guns, anti-aircraft weapons and fragmentation grenades are increasingly found in raids on the Mexican cartels, in conflicts in Africa and among terrorists worldwide. But they come from international arms dealers or directly from governments,

### Recovered Mexican Crime Guns Traced to United States



Source: William LaJeunesse, "The Myth of the 90 Percent: Only a Small Fraction of Guns in Mexico Come From U.S.," FoxNews.com, April 2, 2009.

not American gun shops or gun shows. Arms shipments from these sources are unlikely to be covered by a small arms treaty since military sales between nations are controlled (or not) by bilateral agreements.

**Threat to Individual Gun Ownership.** America's Founders recognized that individuals have a natural right to defend themselves against predators of all types, including criminals and tyrannical states. Thus, they enshrined the right to keep and bear arms in the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Gun control measures motivated by a sincere desire to protect people from crime have often made the situation worse. For example, at the turn of the 20th century, Great Britain had few gun control laws and low crime rates. Since then, the British have enacted numerous laws making it hard for

private citizens to own guns or defend themselves. As a result, crime rates have soared. In fact, handgun crime in the United Kingdom increased 40 percent in the two years after the country passed its gun ban in 1997, according to the BBC News.

**Conclusion.** If the United Nations is put in charge of U.S. gun policy, American sovereignty will be reduced with no corresponding decrease in international violence. The biggest killers of people have been governments and their surrogate militias, not individual citizens. Indeed, before every attempted or successful genocide, those in power disarm the group targeted for extinction, aided by laws requiring firearm licensing and registration.

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