

Italy's contribution to the Mexican powder keg

Most small arms and light weapons imported into Mexico come from the United States, but most of the rest are manufactured in Italy.

In the last twelve years, Italy has been the **second largest exporter of non-military guns**, rifles and ammunition in Mexico, far ahead of other important exporters such as the Czech Republic, Spain, France, Austria, Belgium, South Korea, and Israel. On average, Italian companies have sold and shipped ten thousand pistols and revolvers and 1,100 rifles to the Mexican market every year for the past twelve years. Many Italian 'civilian weapons' have been also sold to Colombia and Guatemala, probably feeding the grey and black market.

In the same period of 2007-2018, Mexico has been the **second largest Latin American customer of military weapons produced in Italy**, after Brazil. Apart from major weapons systems produced by Leonardo, Beretta group dominates Italian military exports to Mexico: in the same twelve-year period, it sold at least 50 million euros worth of weapons (data is in round figures because Italian government reports on military exports are tricky to interpret).

What did the Beretta group sell to Mexican armed forces?

- More than 17,150 SCP 70/90 automatic assault rifles (5.56x45 NATO caliber), and 23,000 spare parts for these rifles, in particular ammunition magazines of 30 rounds, since the rifle can fire 670 rounds per minute at a distance of up to 300 meters;
- More than 19,000 ARX 160 assault rifles (5.56x45 NATO caliber) and 16,000 spare parts;
- 650 GLX 160 grenade launchers, adaptable to both the 70/90 rifle and the ARX 160;
- 303 Sako TRG 22 sniper rifles;
- 3,030 guns (40 caliber);
- 505 rifles (22LR caliber);
- 505 guns (22LR caliber);
- 13,130 guns (9x19 mm caliber);
- 2,020 guns (9 caliber short or .380 auto);
- 1,010 Stoeger rifles (12 caliber).

The Beretta arms catalog includes many brands (Beretta, Benelli, Stoeger, Sako). Moreover, Beretta management can arrange arms exports without leaving any statistical trace in Italy, while circumventing the strict Italian laws on arms trade control. To do this, Beretta can conduct intra-group transfers between its Italian plants (Gardone Val Trompia and Urbino) and plants in Turkey (Stoeger Silah Sanayi of Istanbul) and Finland (Sako of Riihimäki).¹

Beretta can also export arms to Mexico through Beretta USA (based in Gallatin, TN, near Nashville). So Beretta USA also participates in the river of arms flowing from the United States to Mexico. Beretta weapons produced in the United States have very few physical differences from those produced in Italy, as for example the lack of proofing marks stamped onto barrels by the National Testing Bank, which is mandatory for all weapons produced in Italy (as in almost all European countries).

This sheet describes firearms exports, but Italy also exports considerable ammunition. An Italian company, Fiocchi Munizioni, exported 270 metric tons to Mexico in twelve years, valued at € 1.5 million. Fiocchi Munizioni also owns a US subsidiary plant, Fiocchi of America (based in Ozark, Missouri).



Where in Mexico Do Italian Weapons Go?

Police in every one of Mexico's 32 states have purchased Beretta weapons during the 2006-2018 period. According to the Mexican Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA, the army), more than 113,000 Beretta firearms (85,941 handguns and 27,292 long guns) were sold to Mexican police between 2007 and 2017. Sako sniper rifles have gone to police in Chihuahua, as well as to police in at least 21 other states in Mexico. In addition, the Mexican army – the only authorized vendor of weapons to individuals in Mexico – sells Beretta 12 gauge shotguns to members of the public.

End users of Beretta weapons include police with documented human rights abuses and collusion with organized criminal groups. For example, municipal police who attacked and forcibly disappeared 43 student teachers from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero in 2014 were armed with 74 Beretta SCP 70/90 assault rifles, according to the judicial record. Weapons sales receipts disclosed by the SEDENA, indicate that more than 6,500 Beretta firearms were sold to police in Guerrero between 2007 and 2014, despite documentation of widespread abuses and collusion with crime by police in that state.

One out of every five weapons sold to Guerrero police between 2010 and 2016 was stolen or went missing, with most ending up in the hands of organized criminal groups.² More than 5,400 Beretta weapons were lost or stolen from police throughout Mexico from 2000 through 2015, according to Mexican military records.³ Police in the state of Nuevo León, which borders Texas, have purchased at least 8,772 Beretta firearms since 2006. State police in Nuevo León have a “crisis of corruption and crime,” according to its recently appointed director, Aldo Fasci, including trafficking by police of illegal weapons in the state’s prison.⁴ State police in Veracruz that were responsible for at least 15 death squad murders⁵ purchased more than 6,500 Beretta weapons since 2009, according to the SEDENA sales receipts.

European Arms Export Standards for End Use

Italian Law 185/1990 covers only military arms and ammunition transfers, and denies export licenses when “adequate guarantees on the final destination of the armament materials are lacking.” The European Common Position ECP/2008⁶ lists eight criteria for permitting export licenses of military materials, *inter alia* the respect for human rights and international humanitarian laws in the country of final destination. So licenses would be denied when “there is a clear risk that the military technology or equipment to be exported might be used for internal repression” and especially

My name is Antonio Tizapa, and I am the father of Jorge Antonio Tizapa Legideño. Weapons from the Beretta company were used in the disappearance of my son and his 42 classmates, in addition to killing three more students, on September 26 and 27, 2014. Police and organized crime used the weapons, and today we still do not know who killed the students or where they are.

From the information here, it seems as if we were at war. Mexico has acquired exorbitant quantities of weaponry and munitions, and the people at large have no idea of the magnitude of these weapons purchases, which also end up with organized crime.

During the “night of Iguala,” [as the night the students were disappeared has come to be known], there were German, Italian and U.S. weapons. It isn’t possible that the gun manufacturers go on without recognizing the damage they have done to our children and our people.

I think that if you were in my place, in the place of the mothers and fathers of these 43 young men and knew that these weapons were used in the disappearance of one of your family member, you would be doing the same thing that I am doing.

Let us hope that the manufacturers do not continue to sell weapons to Mexico, because they are disappearing us. Stop arms sales to Mexico.



Antonio Tizapa

in “countries where serious human rights violations have been established by the competent bodies of the United Nations, by the European Union or by the Council of Europe.” Other criteria concern internal tensions or armed conflicts, international stability, and “the likelihood of the military technology or equipment being used other than for the legitimate national security and defense of the recipient.”

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1 Under Italian administrative law, corporations must publish an annual public financial report and, in the case of industrial groups, a ‘consolidated’ balance sheet as well. Beretta Holding provides balance sheet data about ‘intra-group activities.’

2 Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights and Stop U.S. Arms to Mexico, *Gross Human Rights Abuses: The Legal and Illegal Gun Trade to Mexico*, 2018, at: <https://stopusarmstomexico.org/gross-human-rights-abuses-the-legal-and-illegal-gun-trade-to-mexico/>.

3 Secretariat for National Defense (SEDENA), response to public records request, January 8, 2016, Folio 0000700212715.

4 Jesús Padilla, “Crimen y corrupción en seguridad,” *Reporte Indigo*, January 7, 2019, at: <https://www.reporteindigo.com/reportes/crimen-y-corrupcion-en-seguridad-exhibe-aldo-fasci-solicita-apoyo-gobernador/>.

5 Associated Press, “Mexican police allegedly used near death-squad tactics,” 28 de febrero de 2018, en: <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/wires/news/world/mexican-police-allegedly-death-squad-tactics-article-1.3846863>.

6 Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of 8 December 2008 defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment, downloadable at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32008E0944>. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:2008:335:TOC>