

Drugs and Brazilian-made Firearms Go Hand-in-Hand in the U.S.

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December 21, 2010

Every day from 1989 to 2001, an average of two Brazilian-made revolvers, pistols or rifles were seized in narcotics trafficking, illegal possession or other drug-related crimes in the United States. In support of this statistic are the 9,426 firearms apprehended over the same 13-year period and traced to such crimes, ranked second by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), according to the ATF weapons-tracking database.

As reported yesterday, the total number of Brazilian firearms traced in the 13-year period in question came to 77,356 units. Of these, 35,837 – or 47 percent – can be linked to unspecified “gun-related” crimes. The 7,100 firearms apprehended on the basis of illegal possession follows drug-trafficking as the third most common criminal violation involving guns. In fourth place is homicide, of which there were 4,464 gun-related cases over the same years. The figure for armed robbery during this period is 1,946 cases. Again, all of these crimes were committed using firearms of Brazilian manufacture.

Among the less common but nonetheless shocking crimes on the ATF list committed using Brazilian firearms are the 141 involving terrorist threat, four linked to violations of wildlife conservation laws, 21 for disorderly conduct and at least one for cruelty towards animals.

Of the total number of guns sold in the U.S., only 60% are through licensed dealers. The remaining 40% are purchased at the so-called informal market -- at gun shows, through internet sales and private transaction. This market for firearms has flooded the country with guns that are free from any sort of official control. This is the most serious shortcoming of the current U.S. regulation, according to Tom Diaz, a gun-policy specialist at the Violence Policy Center, an NGO.

From 2007 to May of this year, the Anti-Firearms and Explosives Department (Drae) of the civil police force traced 83 firearms of U.S. manufacture in the State of Rio de Janeiro. Although official statistics on crimes committed with these weapons are lacking, a survey conducted by EXTRA found that the crimes most frequently involving these firearms are illegal possession (15 instances) and gun seizures (13 instances).

U.S.-Made Firearms found in the Alemão Slum

Of 563 weapons seized by security forces in the Complexo do Alemão slum, 140 have been traced by Drae and registered in its database. Among those traced according to country of manufacture, Brazilian-made weapons prevailed with 31 registered, followed 19 of U.S. origin. When classified according to gun type, there are 10 rifles, seven pistols, one shotgun and a

revolver. Confiscation of U.S.-made guns alone represented a loss to the traffickers of approximately \$308,000.

The Ministry of Justice released yesterday the findings of an investigation revealing that there are 7,600,000 illegal firearms in Brazil, and that most do not enter the country through its borders. Eighty percent of all seized firearms are handguns. Finally, of the 288,000 firearms collected over the past ten years, only 30% had been acquired legally.

Police officer killed with Brazilian-Made Pistol

Patrick McDonald died of gunshot wounds

Severino arrested for illegal possession of a firearm

It was September 23, 2008 when Philadelphia Police Officer Patrick McDonald pulled over a vehicle that had gone through a red light. When the driver was asked to step out, the sole passenger fled, with Officer McDonald in pursuit. After a three-block chase on foot, the suspect, Daniel Giddings, fired at the officer several times with a .45 caliber Taurus pistol of Brazilian manufacture. Officer McDonald lay dead as Giddings himself was killed in a shoot-out with other officers.

“If gun laws in this country weren’t so lax,” lamented Pat McDonald, the slain officer’s mother, “my son might still be alive. Anybody can buy a gun here.”

Severino Lira, 53, was arrested in September of 2009 on charges of illegal possession of a firearm when found bearing a Smith & Wesson revolver during an altercation with a neighbor in Belfort Roxo, a Rio de Janeiro suburb.

“I went to her [the neighbor’s] house,” says Severino, “with water for her cistern, but was about to take a shower so I had on a towel. The boyfriend didn’t like this and called the police, who got there as I was showing her a revolver that belonged to my father.

Tomorrow’s report: firearms tracing in the U.S. and Brazil Most Common Cases in Rio are Trafficking and Resisting Arrest

The other crimes in Rio de Janeiro that commonly occur using U.S.-made weapons are resisting arrest (12 instances), drug trafficking (eight instances) and attempted murder (five instances), to name a few. In many criminal cases, more than one infraction is confirmed involving firearms imported from the U.S. In such instances, however, the more serious infraction will be the one on record for purposes of this survey.

In carrying out this survey, EXTRA looked at 61 cases involving firearms seizures by police. Other cases could not be confirmed for lack of verifiable data-gathering procedures in place at certain police precincts.

The 83 firearms between 2007 and 2010 that were traced to a U.S. manufacturer may seem a small number when compared to the total 1,552 apprehended in the State of Rio de Janeiro over

the same period. But “few precincts report their firearms apprehensions to Drae,” says Inspector Andreia Gouveia of Drae’s statistics division.

The greater numbers of such weapons recorded by ATF likewise understate the total apprehended in the U.S. This deficiency can be explained by the fact that not all local police departments rely on the agency for tracing the weapons they confiscate.

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- Don’t miss the interview with weapons expert Tom Diaz and Severino Lira, arrested for illegal possession.

GUNS SEIZED IN THE COMPLEXO DO ALEMÃO (Data Compiled by Drae)

GUN TYPE

Pistol 49
Rifle 49
Machine Gun or Sub-Machine Gun 16
Shotgun 11
Revolver 10
Carbine 3
Grenade launcher 1
Unidentified 1

MANUFACTURER/COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Taurus	Brazil	21
Imbel	Brazil	6
Boito	Brazil	2
FM	Brazil	1
Rossi	Brazil	1
Ruger USA	USA	8
Colt	USA	6
Remington	USA	2
Browning	USA	1
Norinco	USA	1
Springfield	USA	1
Not determined		90

COUNTRY OF MANUFACTURE

Brazil	31
USA	19
Austria	6
Germany	3
Italy	3
Russia	3
Argentina	2
Israel	2
Belgium	1
Not Determined	70

According to the Department of Public Safety (*Secretaria de Segurança*), 563 firearms have been apprehended in the Complexo do Alemão, of which 140 have been registered by Drae. **TOTAL: 140 FIREARMS registered by Drae**

Source: Anti-Firearms and Explosives Department (Drae)

Brazilian-made Guns in Crimes Committed in the U.S. between 1989 and 2001

Possession with Illegal Intent > 35,837

Illegal Drugs Use > 7,477

Illegal Possession > 7,100

Homicide > 4,464

Attempted Murder or Bodily Harm Using Physical Force > 3,851

Criminal Negligence Presenting a Danger to the Life of Others > 3,347

Concealing a Firearm in Public without a Permit > 3,279

Sale or Illegal Possession of Drugs > 1,949

Robbery > 1,946

Possession of Stolen Goods > 1,571

Threat of or Attempted Bodily Harm or Murder while Carrying a Firearm > 1,482

Trespassing with Criminal Intent > 916