



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on July 30, 2013

## CFR Steps Up Attack on the Second Amendment Using Discredited Statistics

When Julia Sweig, the Nelson and David Rockefeller senior fellow for Latin American studies at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), [released her memorandum](#) on how to reduce gun violence in the United States and Latin America, it revealed not only the CFR's blatant disregard for Americans' Second Amendment rights but also Sweig's proclivity to use outdated and widely discredited statistics to make her case for more restrictions on those rights. She also used flawed logic and outright falsehoods:



The flow of high-powered weaponry from the United States to Latin America and the Caribbean exacerbates soaring rates of gun-related violence in the region and undermines U.S. influence in the Western Hemisphere.

This is Exhibit A: that "high-powered weaponry" flows in unrestricted torrents directly from gun owners and gun shops and gun shows into the hands of criminals across the border. Here is her proof:

Over 70 percent of the ninety-nine thousand weapons recovered by Mexican law enforcement since 2007 were traced to U.S. manufacturers and importers.

She sounded very much like California Senator Dianne Feinstein, who said [in a Senate hearing](#): "It is unacceptable to have 90 percent of the guns that are picked up in Mexico and used to shoot judges, police officers and mayors ... come from the United States." Or like William Hoover of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATFE) when he testified that "there is more than enough evidence to indicate that over 90 percent of the firearms that have either been recovered in, or interdicted in transport to, Mexico, originated from various sources within the United States."

But as William La Jeunesse and Maxim Lott from Fox News reported, "There's just one problem with the 90 percent 'statistic', and it's a big one: it's just not true." As they explained, in 2007 and 2008, some 29,000 weapons of various types and varieties were recovered at crime scenes by Mexican authorities. Of those, only 11,000 of them had serial numbers on them that would allow them even to be traced by the BATFE. And of those 11,000, just 5,114 were successfully traced back to sources in the United States. That's 17.6 percent, not 70 percent or 90 percent. Put another way, more than 82 percent of the weapons found at crime scenes in Mexico could not be traced to the United States.

So, where do they come from? The authors tick off the sources:

- The black market. Mexico is a virtual arms bazaar, with fragmentation grenades from South Korea, AK-47s from China, and shoulder-fired rocket launchers from Spain, Israel and former Soviet bloc manufacturers;
- Russian crime organizations. Interpol says Russian Mafia groups ... are actively trafficking drugs and arms in Mexico;



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- South America. During the late 1990s the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) established a clandestine arms smuggling ... partnership with the Tijuana cartel (in Mexico)...
- Asia. According to a 2006 Amnesty International report, China has provided arms to countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Chinese assault weapons and Korean explosives have been recovered in Mexico;
- The Mexican Army. More than 150,000 soldiers [have] deserted in the last six years.... Many of them took their weapons with them, including the standard issue M-16 assault rifle made in Belgium;
- Guatemala. On March 27th, 2009 ... police seized 500 grenades and a load of AK-47s on the border [of Guatemala].

One question asked by the authors at Fox was never addressed by Sweig: Why would the Mexican drug cartels even bother buying weapons through the United States “when they can buy boatloads of fully automatic M-16s and assault rifles from China, Israel or South Africa?”

Because it doesn't fit her or the CFR's narrative: “Lax U.S. gun laws enable straw purchasers ... to legally procure thousands of AK-47 and AR-15 variants every year and traffic them across the border to sell them illegally to criminal factions.”

This is Exhibit B: her and the CFR's “solutions” to the fictitious “problem”:

- “Expand nationwide the [current] state-level multiple-sale reporting requirement for assault weapons.”

What she is referring to is the present federal rule that requires gun dealers in California, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico to report to the BATFE the sales of two semi-automatic (not fully-automatic “assault” rifles, which Sweig apparently knows aren't commonly available for sale in the United States) to the same person within a five-day period.

This is her solution to stop arms from going to Mexican criminals, though she also claims that the rule for those aforementioned states has had the unfortunate result (she says) of shifting such sales to other states not covered by the rule, and so she wants the rule extended to all states. Yet it's daily apparent that if a law is a nuisance to criminals' activities, they commonly figure out a way to skirt the law.

In the case of guns, [according to the U.S. Department of Justice](#) (DOJ), just 14 percent of the 203,300 prisoners serving time in a state or federal prison in 1997 obtained their weapons from a gun shop, pawnshop, flea market, or gun show. An updated study by the DOJ in 2004 showed that the number dropped to 11 percent. Put another way, nearly 90 percent of offenders obtained their weapons outside normal purchasing channels to which her “solution” would apply.

- “Incorporate strategies to reduce existing stocks of illegal firearms in the US.”

What Sweig wants here is more gun buy-back programs: “Sharing best practices regarding gun buy-back programs in border regions on the U.S.-Mexican border ... will build mutual confidence between the two largest Hemispheric powers.” Whether such “sharing” will enhance the “mutual confidence” between powers is open to question, but it certainly won't do anything to reduce the number of guns in the hands of criminals. What it will do is allow the owners of rusted, broken, and otherwise worthless guns to [off-load their relics](#) onto local taxpayers through government-sponsored buy-back programs. What they are good for, according to law professor Michael Scott at the University of Wisconsin, is that they “make for good photo images” and not much else.



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- “Continue to support federal, state and local initiatives to improve regulation of the U.S. civilian firearms market.”

Here, Sweig uses fancy words to hide the simple fact that what she and the CFR want is more people control through more gun laws. “Support” means “pressure”; “initiatives” means “mandates”; and “regulation” means “confiscation.” She explains:

The White House should back state and local legislation, based on reforms [read: more onerous restrictions on peoples’ right to own firearms] in Maryland and Connecticut, which ban the sale of assault rifles and high-capacity magazines, broaden existing background check requirements for firearms purchases, and modernizes [read: makes more invasive] gun-owner registries by requiring, among others, that buyers submit their fingerprints when applying for a gun license.

The main trouble with that is that there is precious little evidence that fingerprinting reduces crime. [According to PolitiFact.com](#), the statement in a Maryland ad stating that fingerprinting is “a requirement that’s reduced gun crimes in the five states where it’s the law” was rated “mostly false.”

But Sweig marches full steam ahead anyway:

Passage of [such] state and local measures ... will reduce the number of weapons in circulation and available for smuggling and [will] generate momentum for a broader federal approach over the long run.

Finally, Sweig gets to the heart of the matter. It doesn’t matter that drug dealers in Latin America get most of their heavy artillery from outside the United States; it doesn’t matter that putting increasingly onerous regulations on all gun stores similar to those imposed on border states will have little if any effect on gun violence; it doesn’t matter that gun buy-back programs don’t work; it doesn’t matter that fingerprinting won’t reduce crime. What she and the CFR really want, after all, is the elimination of all guns in the hands of American citizenry through the implementation of a “broader federal approach.”

But titling her article “We Want to Take Away Firearms From Every American” wouldn’t be as appealing to her readers as “A Strategy to Reduce Gun Trafficking and Violence in the Americas,” so she and the CFR opted to go with that instead.

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