

U.S. Rep. Gallagher: Introduces bill to combat illicit arms trafficking

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rep. Mike Gallagher yesterday introduced [H.R. 5849](#), the Illicit Arms Trafficking Security Enforcement Act, which would establish a Border Enforcement Security Team (BEST) within the Department of Homeland Security to focus solely on the reduction of arms trafficking. Of the current 57 BESTs, none are solely dedicated to arms trafficking.

*“American-made weapons trafficked across our southern border have helped fuel the rise of Mexican drug cartels,” **said Rep. Gallagher.** “As cartel-related violence continues to escalate, it’s clear we need resources dedicated to preventing dangerous weapons from getting to these thugs in the first place.”*

The team would be comprised of personnel from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, and other appropriate law enforcement officials.

The purposes of the team would be to:

- Reduce arms smuggling of weapons, weapon parts, munitions, explosives, and related items.
- Apprehend arms smugglers.
- Ensure coordination with ATF for data tracking of seized firearms through eTrace.
- Deconflict arms trafficking investigations between DHS and DOJ.

Background:

According to [InSight Crime](#), 2019 was the “most murderous year in a century” in Mexico due much to the rise in gang and cartel violence as Mexican security forces

continue to [lose gun battles](#) against cartel operatives that are increasingly better armed. The [GAO reported](#) in 2016 that 70% of the firearms seized from cartel operatives by Mexican security forces come from the United States. This bill is apart of a broader package of immigration bills that Rep. Gallagher introduced to [sanction](#) cartels and [strengthen](#) our immigration courts.