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CHALLENGES AND THREATS OF ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OF FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION IN THE AMERICAS: PROMINENT FINDINGS OF A PILOT TEST WITH EXPERTS



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Challenges and Threats of Illicit Trafficking of Firearms and Ammunition in the Americas: Prominent Findings of a Pilot Test with Experts

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and Pier Angelli De Luca³

ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of a pilot test conducted with a group of experts on existing challenges and emerging and future threats that the region faces regarding illicit trade in firearms and ammunition. The pilot test was carried out within the framework of designing a methodology for the Hemispheric Study on Illicit Trafficking of Firearms and Ammunition, mandated by paragraph 66 of Resolution 2945 (XLIX-O/19) on Advancing Hemispheric Security: A Multidimensional Approach, passed on the 49th Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS). This mandate falls under the responsibility of the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, specifically the Department against Transnational Organized Crime and the Department of Public Security. The pilot test was conducted by the latter.

The findings from the pilot test reveal a possible road to follow. Out of the 95 challenges identified, 39 were classified as “high priority.” Among these, challenges requiring low resource investment and capable of being implemented in the short to medium term—while producing effective and tangible results—were identified. On the other hand, preventing and mitigating the identified threats will require, mainly, efforts in the public sphere, including coordination among state institutions and branches of government, intersectoral coordination (especially with manufacturing, importing/exporting, intermediary, transport, and technology companies), and international cooperation with multilateral organizations and between countries. The lack of secure and protected information generation, analysis, and exchange was identified in at least four of the seven dimensions into which the threats were grouped. This finding is also positive for states, as anticipating such information related threats could be achieved in the short and medium term, and in some cases without the need for significant budget modifications.

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CONTEXT

Since the mid-1980s, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has collected data on homicides worldwide, including in the Americas. The data gathered through the United Nations Surveys of Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (UN-CTS) serve as a source for the Global Study on Homicide. In three of the four studies published, 2015, 2019 and 2023, the Americas have been identified as the region with the highest homicide rates in the world. In the most recent Study, that is, 2023, the Americas reported 15 homicides per 100,000 people, compared to a global rate of 5.8 per 100,000¹. In 2017, in absolute terms, homicides committed with firearms in the Americas accounted for approximately one-quarter of all homicides worldwide². Currently, 67% of homicides in the region are committed with a firearm, and 50% are linked to organized crime and gangs³.

At the same time, illicit proliferation of firearms in the region is, largely, a result of illegal activities of organized groups. According to the 2020 United Nations Global Study on Firearms Trafficking, Central and South America, alongside with Asia, represent 80% of the destinations for illicit arms trafficking. Additionally, the region is heavily impacted by intraregional trafficking flows.

Thus, the dynamics of violence in the region cannot be understood without considering the illicit trade of firearms and ammunition as a central element. These violence dynamics, particularly firearm-related homicides, can be measured in terms of intentional homicide rates, but their impact extends beyond the devastating loss of human lives. Firearm-related violence has a multidimensional impact that affects public health, the economy (through productivity losses and increased security costs), governance (by restricting civil and political freedoms), and it even has a relevant impact on other illicit activities (that rely on weapons and firepower for expansion).

Given this reality and the need to address it, Member States of the Organization of American States (OAS) decided to take action at the regional level. One such action was the approval of Resolution 2945 (XLIX-O/19) on Advancing Hemispheric Security: A Multidimensional Approach, during the 49th Regular Session of the General Assembly in Medellín, Colombia, carried out between the 26th and 28th of June in 2019. Through that Resolution, particularly of its paragraph 66, Member States mandated the development of a Hemispheric Study on Arms and Ammunition Trafficking. This mandate fell under the responsibility of the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, specifically of the Department against Transnational Organized Crime and the Department of Public Security.

⁴ Global Study on Homicide. UNODC. 2023. <https://doi.org/10.18356/47f56b96-en>

⁵ Global Study on Homicide. UNODC. 2019. <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789210025713>

⁶ Global Study on Homicide. UNODC. 2023. <https://doi.org/10.18356/47f56b96-en>

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INTRODUCTION

The Hemispheric Study seeks to innovate how illicit arms trade and its impacts are understood and measured, as well as to complement and generate synergies with existing initiatives led by other international organizations.

Illicit trade is understood as any kind of movement, whether physical, administrative, or otherwise, of firearms, ammunition, and other controlled materials from the legal to the illegal sphere, in violation of national or international regulations, to an unauthorized end-user or for an illicit final use. Illicit trade may involve appropriation or physical diversion that lead to a potential change of effective control or ownership to agents, groups or entities that lack authorization from the national competent authorities.

The methodological approach of the Hemispheric Study is structured around five modules. Each module has its own object or focus of study, research techniques or methods, sources of information, and data collection instruments.

Among these five Modules, Module 4 is focused on understanding the current challenges and future emerging threats that the region faces in terms of firearms and ammunition trafficking. To achieve this, the methodological approach of Module 4 relies on the Delphi Method.

A prioritization approach is applied to identify present challenges. First, because it is not possible to address all existing challenges simultaneously. A mechanism is needed to identify what is truly urgent and important, distinguishing them from challenges that are not. Second, and related to the above, it is necessary to focus and channel efforts and resources (which tend to be finite and scarce) toward the challenges that require immediate and priority attention due to their relevance and impact.

Beyond understanding the current state and characteristics of illicit arms and ammunition trafficking, as well as identifying state capacities to prevent, control, and address it, it is also essential to anticipate possible emerging or future scenarios based on high-quality information, experience, and specialized knowledge. This forward-looking approach will allow states to be better prepared and anticipate potential threats looming on the horizon. Moreover, the ability of states to prepare in advance and in a targeted manner is closely linked to a practical, proactive, and agency-driven approach.

The findings presented in this article are the result of a pilot test conducted with a group of experts to assess the feasibility and usefulness of the Delphi Method for prioritizing challenges and identifying threats.

Following this introduction, the article is divided into the following sections: the third section explains what the Delphi Method is and how it was used. The fourth section focuses on describing how the pilot test was conducted. The fifth section presents the main findings. Finally, the sixth section proposes some possible next steps based on this exercise. Annex A includes the questionnaire used, and Annex B lists the names of the participating experts and the institutions they belong to.

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DELPHI METHOD

The Delphi Method is a widely used qualitative technique in social research. It is based on conducting multiple rounds of structured consultations directed at a panel of experts. After each consultation round, the aggregated results of the previous round are presented to each participant, allowing them to adjust their responses in subsequent rounds based on the panel's feedback. As a result of this process, the aim is to reach a consensus among the group of experts on the consulted topics.

The pilot test of the Delphi Method for Module 4 of the Hemispheric Study sought to fulfill two purposes: first, to determine whether the method was reliable and capable of generating valid and robust information; and second, to collect feedback on the instrument itself. In other words, the experts not only provided insights into the challenges and threats related to illicit arms and ammunition trafficking but also offered comments on the instrument. In this way, the pilot test also allowed for the collection of suggestions on how to improve the questionnaire's design, its content (including which dimensions and items should be included or removed), and the formulation of challenges and threats, among other aspects.

The instrument defines challenges and threats as follows:

Table 1. Definitions

CHALLENGE	An existing, present, or current situation or experience that is inadequate, undesirable, or unsatisfactory and must be addressed or overcome.
THREAT	An imminent danger arising from an external fact, situation, event, or process originating from the environment which, although it has not yet occurred, would be harmful, negative, or adverse if it materialized. The concept of a threat also includes emerging trends that, if generalized or widespread, could have a detrimental or harmful impact.

In summary, for the purposes of this study, a challenge is interpreted as an *existing* situation, while a threat refers to an *emerging* or *future* situation.

Both challenges and threats are organized into 13 and 7 dimensions, respectively. Each of the 13 challenges is broken down into items that describe specific obstacles. The number of items per dimension varies between a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 10. For example, dimension four, on Domestic Trade, consists of the following six items:

Table 2. Items of the Dimension of Domestic Trade

4.1 Lack of clarity and reliability regarding which are the authorized businesses for the sale of firearms and ammunition.

4.2 Lack of records, incomplete or outdated records related to the domestic trade of firearms and ammunition.

4.3 Loose requirements and controls for the purchase of firearms and ammunition by potential buyers.

4.4 Resistance from companies or lack of incentives to verify compliance with requirements and controls by potential customers for the sale of firearms and ammunition.

4.5 Insufficient capacity of the national authority to verify the conditions of commercial licenses, including compliance with security guidelines for the safe storage of firearms and ammunition, and to sanction companies that do not comply with established regulations.

4.6 Absence of registration and control over the transfer of firearms between civilians.

Table 3. Summary of Challenges and Threats Dimensions

	Challenges	Threats
DIMENSIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legislation and Regulation 2. Manufacture 3. State-owned Stockpile Management 4. Domestic Trade 5. International Trade 6. Border Control 7. Interinstitutional and Intersectoral Coordination 8. Private Security Companies 9. Information Systems 10. Tracing 11. Criminal Investigation and Prosecution 12. International Cooperation 13. Context, dynamics, and evolution of firearms trafficking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manufacture 2. State-owned Stockpile Management 3. Domestic Trade 4. International Trade 5. Border Control 6. Information Systems 7. Criminal Investigation and Prosecution

While all the challenges outlined are important, the methodology aims to identify those considered high priority. Therefore, in the challenges section, the instruction is to classify the items in each dimension to identify those deemed high priority. The classification is carried out using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means low priority and 5 means high priority. For example, the first dimension on Legislation and Regulation includes 10 items. Out of these 10 items, the expert must select up to three items as “high priority.” The remaining items are ranked using values from 1 to 4, with the possibility of assigning the same score multiple times. This process is repeated for each of the 13 dimensions.

Table 4 shows the number of items per dimension that each expert must rank using the 1 to 5 scale.

Table 4. Challenges and Number of Items Broken Down for Each Challenge

Challenge	Number of items to rank by experts
1. Legislations and Regulation	10
2. Manufacture	6
3. State-owned Stockpile Management	9
4. Domestic Trade	6
5. International Trade	10
6. Border Control	6
7. Interinstitutional and Intersectoral Coordination	6
8. Private Security Companies	7
9. Information Systems	6
10. Tracing	6
11. Criminal Investigation and Prosecution	9
12. International Cooperation	6
13. Context, Dynamics, and Evolution of illicit trafficking	8
Total	95

Regarding threats, the Delphi Method sought to use the first round to gather potential options through the informed opinions of experts. Considering this initial list, the formulation of threats would then be validated, adjusted, or completed.

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PILOT TEST

The first round of expert consultation was conducted digitally between October and November 2023. To that end, the online survey platform SurveyMonkey was used. The survey was designed by the Organization of American States (OAS) Department of Public Security (DPS) in collaboration with an external team of consultants. The DPS/OAS also identified the group of experts who participated in the pilot test, selecting them based on their work, experience, and knowledge related to firearms and ammunition trafficking in multilateral organizations, civil society organizations, and the academic and research sectors. It is important to note that some of the experts who participated in the pilot test of Module 4 also took part in technical consultations for other modules of the Hemispheric Study. The group of experts received the survey link individually via their respective email accounts in October 2023.

The first round of the survey was closed in November 2023, with a total of 21 respondents. Following the Delphi methodology, a second round was prepared with some adjustments to the questionnaire based on the feedback received and the results of the initial round. The second round of the survey was shared with the same group of experts in December 2023. Unlike the first round, the response rate in the second round was significantly lower. Due to this low response rate, the DPS, in collaboration with an external consulting firm, decided to implement the questionnaire through individual or group sessions, requesting interviews with each expert or with experts from the same institution/organization.

Although this represented a slight modification to the Delphi Method, conducting virtual interviews did not compromise the methodology, as the consulting firm acted as a survey administrator and did not share individual viewpoints or responses that could bias the answers.

Given that one of the comments from the first round was that the questionnaire was too long—taking approximately 60 minutes, for the individual or group interviews, participants were asked to identify up to three “high-priority” items in 8 of the 13 dimensions where survey fatigue was observed during the first round⁷. In other words, during the interviews, experts did not rank the dimensions using the 1-to-5 scale but instead selected up to three items among the challenges that had been classified as “high priority” in the first round.

The interviews were conducted between March and May 2024. The original questionnaire was used for the interviews, but instead of being presented in SurveyMonkey, the consulting firm used a PowerPoint presentation to facilitate the selection of up to three challenges. For the threats section, the survey administrator presented the threats identified during the first survey round so that the experts could decide: 1) whether they agreed with the identified threats, 2) whether additional threats needed to be included, or, 3) whether any threats should be removed.

⁷ These points will be explained in greater detail in the results section.

The first round of the survey was completed by a total of 21 respondents, representing a response rate of 69% and a completion rate of 95%. Among the respondents, 66.67% identified as male, while 33% identified as female⁸. Notably, 80% of the respondents reported having 10 or more years of experience working on arms and ammunition trafficking issues.

In the second round, a total of 17 responses were received, with three submitted online and 14 collected through individual or group interviews. In three organizations, groups of two people or more were interviewed simultaneously, meaning the responses were agreed upon collectively among the organization's members. In these interviews with two or more participants, only one response per group was recorded, representing the organization rather than individual responses. Among the respondents in the second round, 23% identified as female, while 77% identified as male.

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RESULTS

5.1 CHALLENGES

After tallying and summing the responses provided by experts during the interview round, the three challenges considered high priority were identified and ranked for each of the 13 dimensions. Thus, out of the 95 items that the expert group initially classified, the following table presents the 39 challenges deemed highly prioritized, organized by dimension.

⁸ It is important to note that the sociodemographic information in the survey allowed respondents to select genders beyond the female/male binary.

Table 5. Results of the Pilot Test on Challenges

Dimension	Challenge: High Priority 1	Challenge: High Priority 2	Challenge: High priority 3
1. Legislation and Regulation	National legislation has gaps, loopholes, or gray areas regarding the criminalization of behaviors linked to the diversion of firearms and ammunition.	National legislation has gaps, loopholes, or gray areas regarding the possession, carrying, and use of firearms.	National legislation has gaps, loopholes, or gray areas concerning preventing people convicted of domestic violence crimes and/or gender based violence from firearm possession.
2. Manufacture	Unauthorized manufacture of firearms and ammunition (by licensed or unlicensed manufacturers).	Industry resistance or lack of incentives to adopt measures or incorporate technologies that would facilitate firearms and ammunition tracing.	Manufacturing of firearms, parts, and components using new technologies that hinder control and identification (e.g., 3D printing).
3. State-owned stockpile management	Excessive delays in the disposal of excess, obsolete, recovered, seized, and/or confiscated firearms and ammunition.	Insufficient/inadequate infrastructure, surveillance systems, and equipment to maintain the safety and security of storage areas, depots, or warehouses.	Insufficient/inadequate systems and equipment for inventory control.
4. Domestic Trade	Loose requirements and controls for the purchase of arms and ammunition by potential buyers.	Lack of records, incomplete, or outdated records of domestic firearms and ammunition trade.	Insufficient capacity of the national authority to verify commercial license conditions, including compliance with safety guidelines for safe storage of firearms and ammunition, and to sanction non-compliant businesses / Absence of registration and control over firearms transfers between civilians.
5. International Trade	Risk analyses are rarely or never conducted.	Insufficient capacity of the competent national authority to verify compliance with legal obligations by authorized operators.	Lack of or insufficient/inadequate control, monitoring, and protection measures for transferred firearms and ammunition.
6. Border Control	Inadequate infrastructure, surveillance systems, and equipment to control and inspect land, maritime, river, or air shipments.	Insufficient/inadequate measures and processes to control/inspect land, maritime, river, or air shipments.	Insufficient or improperly trained personnel to control/inspect land, maritime, river, or air shipments.
7. Interinstitutional and Intersectoral Coordination	Insufficient/inadequate coordination between state agencies responsible for controlling illicit firearms and ammunition trafficking and manufacturers, exporters, and importers of arms and ammunition	Absence or insufficiency of effective communication mechanisms between authorities issuing import/export/transit licenses, customs authorities, law enforcement, and justice institutions.	Insufficient/inadequate coordination between state agencies responsible for criminal investigations related to illicit firearms trafficking, including financial institutions.
8. Private Security Companies	Insufficient/inadequate state controls to oversee the operations and functioning of private security companies that use firearms.	Absence of or inadequate process for authorizing private security companies that use firearms.	Theft, leaks, losses, or disappearances of arms and ammunition from private security companies, or lack of knowledge by state authorities regarding these incidents.
9. Information Systems	Isolated manual or electronic systems that do not allow the integration of data regarding the full life cycle of firearms and ammunition.	Lack of standardized variables and indicators to measure/estimate the incidence, characteristics, and trends of illicit firearms and ammunition trafficking. Insufficient/inadequate recording and analysis of data on seized/confiscated, lost, stolen, and recovered arms and ammunition.	Insufficient or inadequate data and information exchange between different state agencies responsible for preventing and controlling illicit trade of firearms and ammunition.

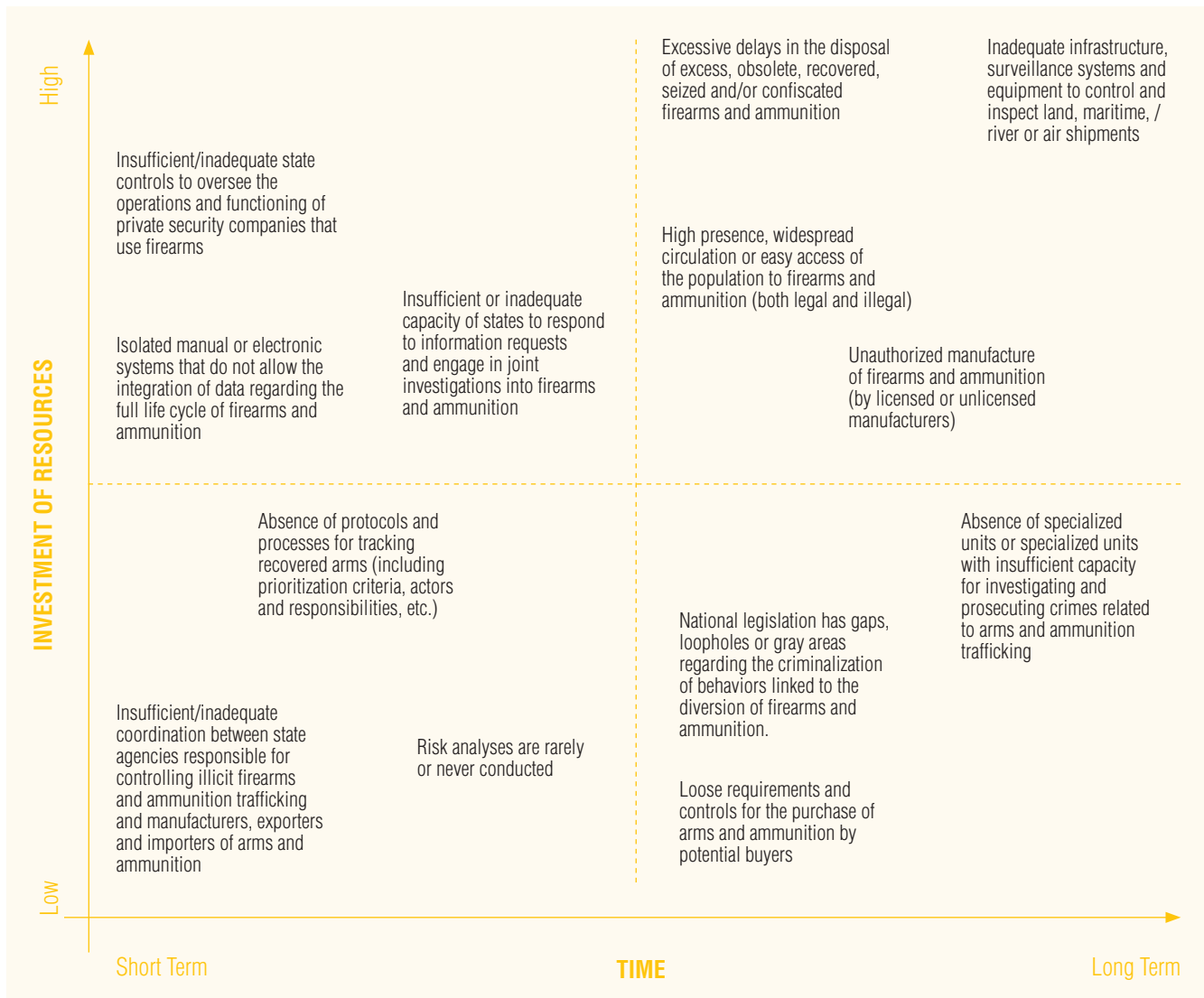
Dimensión	Desafío: Prioridad Alta 1	Desafío: Prioridad Alta 2	Desafío: Prioridad Alta 3
10. Tracing	Absence of protocols and processes for tracing recovered arms (including prioritization criteria, actors, and responsibilities, etc.).	Insufficient personnel to process tracing requests of firearms and ammunition at both national and international levels.	Limited training of personnel to use national and international systems to manage firearms and ammunition tracing requests.
11. Criminal Investigation and Prosecution	Absence of specialized units or specialized units with insufficient capacity for investigating and prosecuting crimes related to arms and ammunition trafficking.	Low number of investigations into thefts, leaks, losses, and disappearances of arms and ammunition (regardless of the stage in the life cycle where the incident occurs).	Few or insufficient investigations into the illicit origin of arms and ammunition used to commit crimes. Few investigations into arms and ammunition importers, exporters, and/or intermediaries who do not comply with laws, rules, and/or established procedures.
12. International Cooperation	Insufficient or inadequate capacity of states to respond to information requests and engage in joint investigations on firearms and ammunition.	Insufficient or inadequate exchange of information/intelligence between countries on routes, modalities, actors, and trends in illicit firearms and ammunition trafficking.	Lack of, or insufficient, international mechanisms, processes, or systems to facilitate and expedite the tracing of firearms and ammunition between countries.
13. Context, Dynamics, and Evolution of Illicit Trafficking	High presence, widespread circulation, or easy access of the population to firearms and ammunition (both legal and illegal).	High presence of gangs, organized criminal groups, or paramilitary groups with access to firearms and ammunition.	Interconnection between illicit firearms and ammunition trafficking, drug trafficking, other illicit markets, and organized crime.

The results of the pilot test can, in turn, be classified into a two-by-two matrix that considers the variables of resource investment and time (short, middle, long term) required for Member States to address the identified high priority challenges. For example, the expert group identified the following as the priority challenge for dimension six on Border Control: *Inadequate infrastructure, surveillance systems, and equipment to control and inspect land, maritime, river, or air shipments*. Improving, establishing, or developing this infrastructure appears to require a significant investment of resources and time, so this challenge could be placed in the upper-right quadrant.

On the other hand, for dimension seven on Interinstitutional and Intersectoral Coordination, the experts determined that *Insufficient/inadequate coordination between state agencies responsible for controlling illicit arms and ammunition trafficking and manufacturers, exporters, and importers of arms and ammunition* is the highest priority challenge. While coordination between state agencies and firearms manufacturers, exporters, and importers is not a simple task, it can be achieved with a lower investment of resources and time. Therefore, this challenge could be placed in the lower-left quadrant.

Figure 1 illustrates the classification of the 13 high-priority challenges selected by the expert group considering investment and time needed to address them.

Figure 1. Investment of Resources and Time to Address High-Priority Challenges 1



The two-by-two matrix allows for organizing and visualizing challenges based on feasibility, investment, and timeline. The challenges located in the lower-left quadrant require low resource investment and can be implemented in the short term, meaning they are the most feasible and can yield concrete results relatively quickly. Similarly, the matrix highlights which challenges require a greater investment of time and medium- to long-term planning. With this information, the matrix could facilitate the design of a national and regional roadmap on which challenges to address, how, when, and with which stakeholders.

5.2 THREATS

The identified threats can be classified based on the sector in which they should be addressed and the actors that need to be involved in designing solutions. For instance, a threat may need to be tackled by the public sector but with support from the private sector and international or regional organizations. This classification clarifies who should participate in designing solutions, as well as what actions states can take in terms of internal coordination – interinstitutional and intersectoral (e.g. with the private sector) and in terms of international cooperation (with other countries and/or regional and international organizations). Table 6 presents five areas of competence and some of the actors that may be have incidence over these areas.

Table 6. Competence Sectors and Potential Actors to answer to the threats

Areas of Competence	Actors
Public	Security forces
	Customs
	National firearms authority
	Legislative branch
	Judicial branch
Private	Companies
Civil Society	Non-governmental organizations
	Foundations
Academic	Research centers
	Study centers
	Universities/Faculties
International	Multilateral organizations
	Countries

Table 7. Competence Sectors to answer the threats by dimension

Public	Public-International	Public-Private-International
<p>Stockpile Management Insufficient or inadequate security. Outdated inventories. Obsolete ammunition. Lack of adherence to best practices and compliance with international standards. Stockpiles located in areas affected by extreme natural events (e.g., floods).</p> <p>Domestic Trade Weak or inconsistent legislation. Absence of standardized procedures for issuing possession and carry licenses. Diversion of firearms by police, armed forces, and private security companies in the region.n.</p> <p>Information Systems Constant demands for the creation of new systems without proper knowledge and use of existing systems.</p> <p>Criminal Investigation and Prosecution Lack of prioritization of firearms and ammunition trafficking by authorities. Due to resource constraints, preference for prosecuting possession rather than trafficking, leading to underutilization of forensic capabilities. Lack of standardized practices among institutions. Absence of circumstantial information on how the weapon was used. Few convictions for arms trafficking</p>	<p>Domestic Trade Non-complementary legislation among countries in the region.</p> <p>Border Control Limited or insufficient detection capabilities. Collusion between criminal actors and state actors (corruption). Lack of information exchange. Incomplete and/or delayed exchanged information. Porous borders. Absence of risk analysis and assessments linking illicit economies.</p>	<p>Manufacture Insufficient or inadequate marking. 3D printing and international manufacturing. 80% receivers/Conversion Kits.</p> <p>International Trade Lack of data and sophisticated analyses beyond descriptive statistics. Absence or scarcity of risk assessments. Lack of mitigation measures. Regulatory loopholes concerning intermediaries and brokers. Insufficient information and exchanges regarding end users.</p> <p>Border Control Trafficking of parts. Use of postal and courier services.</p> <p>Information Systems Lack of interoperability between systems. Systems not connected across different regions of the country and/or between countries. Insufficiently assigned and trained personnel to operate the systems. System hacking and potential ransomware attacks. Cyber vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Criminal Investigation and Prosecution Lack of information exchange between countries and competent authorities.</p>

As shown in Table 7, the threats identified by the expert group need to be addressed at the public level by state actors. For some threats, public actors must receive support from multilateral organizations, and collaborate with other countries, as well as with private actors, such as gun industry, transportation, technology, and security companies. In at least four dimensions – border control; information systems; criminal investigation; and international trade – the reported threats are linked to information-related issues, particularly the lack of generation, exchange, and analysis of information in a secure and protected way.

Similar to the challenges, this presents good news for states, as addressing these information-related threats may involve taking actions or adopting measures in the short and medium term, sometimes without requiring significant budget modifications. However, responding to other threats, such as the management of arsenals located in areas affected by extreme natural events, may require a greater investment of resources and a longer implementation timeline.

6

FOLLOWING STEPS

The findings of the pilot test, both regarding challenges and threats, contribute to the research on illicit arms trade in the Americas and reveal potential future courses of action. Below are some possible next steps based on the pilot test findings, though this list is neither exhaustive nor definitive:

1) Review and validate the selection of challenges and threats. Of the 95 items that the expert group needed to rank, the pilot test identified 39 as “high priority.” Given the cognitive and time demands involved in this selection, the next step includes reviewing the consensus items and further refining the instrument to prevent future discussions from causing expert fatigue or decision paralysis. Additionally, some of the identified threats could actually be classified as challenges. In this regard, it is important to explore other types of data collection instruments that encourage experts to consider *emerging* and *future* issues.

2) Understand the source or the causes of the challenges and threats (what factors explain them). The two-by-two matrix is an initial step in understanding the type of resources and timeline that states should consider addressing the identified and prioritized challenges and threats. However, to effectively tackle these challenges and threats, it is necessary to gather information on the contributing factors, meaning their causes. For example, in the dimension of international cooperation, the main challenge is the *insufficient or inadequate capacity of states to respond to information requests and engage in joint investigations on firearms and ammunition*. Addressing this insufficient or inadequate capacity requires understanding whether it stems from low budget allocations, lack of personnel, lack of trained/specialized personnel, and/or lack of established mechanisms.

3) Propose possible solutions/responses to the challenges and prevention and mitigation measures for the threats. Once the primary causes behind the identified and prioritized challenges and threats are understood, discussions at the national and regional levels could be promoted to develop potential solutions and measures to address them.

4) Develop roadmaps for action. Based on the previous three steps, national and regional roadmaps could be created to guide action through the implementation of consensus-based measures, with assigned responsibilities, defined objectives, goals, and indicators, and established deadlines. The roadmaps could be comprehensive, covering a variety of dimensions. Additionally, they could take a more focused approach by emphasizing specific dimensions.