

## Why GAO Did This Study

Some Caribbean nations, such as Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, have high rates of violence, including homicide. In 2021, Caribbean countries accounted for six of the world's 10 highest national murder rates, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The United Nations and other organizations monitoring firearms trafficking have reported that a high percentage of the firearms used in these crimes have been trafficked from the U.S.

GAO was asked to report on U.S. efforts to counter firearms trafficking to Caribbean nations. This report examines (1) what data and reporting show about the trafficking and use of firearms in Caribbean countries; (2) U.S. agencies' efforts to disrupt firearms trafficking in these countries; and (3) agency efforts to track results of key efforts to combat firearms trafficking from the U.S. to the Caribbean.

GAO reviewed federal firearms recovery and trace data, and other related U.S. agency data, analysis, and program information for fiscal years 2018 through 2022, the most recent available at the time of our review. GAO interviewed U.S. and Caribbean officials through in-person site visits in the Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago, and through video conferences with Barbados, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica. GAO selected these countries based on geographic diversity, the percentage of recovered firearms that were of U.S. origin, and U.S. agency efforts in country to combat firearms trafficking.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that State update the CBSI's Results Framework to establish firearms trafficking specific indicators. State concurred.

View [GAO-25-107007](#). For more information, contact Chelsa Kenney at (202) 512-2964 or [kenneyc@gao.gov](mailto:kenneyc@gao.gov).

# CARIBBEAN FIREARMS

## Agencies Have Anti-Trafficking Efforts in Place, but State Could Better Assess Activities

## What GAO Found

The majority of recovered firearms in the Caribbean were traced to the U.S. and trafficked through various means. The Department of Justice's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) traces the origin of firearms recovered in Caribbean countries at the request of Caribbean law enforcement agencies or ATF officials in the Caribbean. While the political will and capacity of each country impacts the number of recovered firearms each country submits for tracing, ATF processed 7,399 traces of firearms recovered in crimes in the Caribbean from 2018 through 2022 (see figure). GAO analysis of these data showed that 73 percent of these firearms, most of which were handguns, were sourced from the U.S. While Caribbean countries do not manufacture firearms, U.S. and foreign officials said that criminals in Caribbean countries can traffic firearms by air and sea using various concealment techniques and can obtain firearms through illegal markets.

**Origin of Caribbean Firearms Recovered and Traced by ATF, 2018-2022**

Firearms origin	Total	Percentage
U.S. origin	5,399	73%
Non-U.S. origin	1,728	23%
Undetermined origin	272	4%

**Total firearms recovered and submitted for tracing = 7,399**

Source: GAO analysis of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) data. | [GAO-25-107007](#)

To help disrupt and combat firearms trafficking, the Departments of State, Justice, Homeland Security (DHS), and Commerce have various capacity-building, investigative, and border security efforts in place. For instance, State, working through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI)—a U.S. security partnership with 13 Caribbean countries—helps fund various trainings and capacity building programs, such as the Crime Gun Intelligence Unit. This unit collects and analyzes intelligence on guns and promotes intelligence sharing with regional international law enforcement partners. DHS's Homeland Security Investigations, a law enforcement agency, established Transnational Criminal Investigative Units throughout the Caribbean and conducts various interagency operations to uncover criminal networks responsible for trafficking firearms. DHS's Customs and Border Protection interdicts illicit firearms at U.S. ports of entry enroute to the Caribbean. From fiscal years 2018 through 2023, it conducted hundreds of domestic interdictions, seizing 535 firearms and 3,167 firearm components at U.S. ports destined for Caribbean countries.

U.S. agencies track results of their key efforts to combat firearms trafficking to the Caribbean through various means. However, State does not track results for combatting firearms for the CBSI. Specifically, State's CBSI's Results Framework includes intermediate results and indicators for each program objective but does not have specific indicators for its goal of reducing illicit firearms trafficking. Developing such indicators would better enable State to measure progress of its combating firearms trafficking efforts.