

PART IV:

Firearms Imported into the United States

Overview

ATF administers the import provisions of the GCA and NFA, and the permanent import provisions of the [AECA](#) for items that are enumerated on the [U.S. Munitions Import List \(USMIL\)](#) (including firearms, ammunition, firearm parts, and firearm blanks, castings and forgings). Permanent imports of firearms, ammunition, and other covered items must comply with all three statutes.

Temporary imports of firearms, ammunition and other related items are regulated by either the DOS or the DOC through the issuance of permits. Items included on the USML are regulated by DOS; items included on the CCL are regulated by DOC. DOS-issued temporary import permits are valid for a period of four years; DOC-issued permits are valid for one year. Items imported by means of temporary import permits from DOS or DOC are not considered to have entered commerce in the U.S.; rather these items are passing through the U.S. from one foreign country to another.

Imported NFA Weapons

Whether a temporary or permanent import, items subject to the NFA must also be registered in the NFRTR by submission of an ATF Form 2, Notice of Firearms Manufactured or Imported within 15 days of the release from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody or before any other disposition.

Firearm Import Licenses, Permits, Fees, and Other Requirements

Individuals Not Engaged in the Business of Importing Firearms

An individual living in the U.S. who purchases a firearm from a foreign country must use an FFL to conduct the import.

An individual returning from temporary residency outside the U.S., however, may personally import a firearm purchased while residing abroad by completing Part I of [ATF Form 6, Application and Permit for Importation of Firearms, Ammunition and Implements of War](#). Firearms imported by individuals on an ATF Form 6 Part I must be “[sporting](#)” and comply with all provisions of the GCA and NFA. Individuals who are not engaged in the business of importing firearms, ammunition, or related regulated items are not required to register under the AECA.

FFLs Engaged in the Business of Importing Firearms

An individual or legal entity wishing to engage in the business of importing firearms or ammunition for sale must be registered under the AECA and possess a Type 08 – *Importer of Firearms Other than Destructive Devices* or Type 11 – *Importer of Destructive Devices* FFL. For all other regulated items,

only an AECA license is required. The AECA license costs \$250 and is renewed annually. FFLs are required to submit an ATF Form 6 to import firearms. If approved, the ATF Form 6 serves as official permission to import up to the quantity and type of firearm requested.

Firearms are imported through a Customs Port of Entry. CBP officials are responsible for reviewing all relevant documentation and verifying approvals before releasing the shipment into the U.S. Following the release, an importer is required to file an ATF Form 6A, Release and Receipt of Imported Firearms indicating what they have imported. The type(s) and quantity of items reported on the Form 6A are deducted from the approved ATF Form 6. Additional shipments, up to the quantity designated on the approved Form 6, may continue to be imported. The importer is required to retain a copy of the ATF Form 6A with their records. Additionally, the importer is required to submit a copy of the ATF Form 6A to ATF within 15 days of release from CBP.

FFL importers are required to apply certain markings⁴³ to the imported firearms within 15 days for GCA firearms and 2 days for NFA weapons, of the release from CBP custody, or prior to any other disposition. These markings aid in law enforcement trace requests and in the recordkeeping of other FFLs who might later acquire the firearm.

In addition to an U.S.-issued import permit, some countries of origin require additional documentation, such as an end use agreement, or authentication of the import permit before allowing a shipment of regulated items to the U.S. An International Import Certificate (IIC) is used to meet these requirements. Like DOS review of export requests, an IIC assures the foreign country's government that the firearms will be used for U.S. commercial purposes and not diverted for resale to another foreign country.

Firearms and ammunition imported into the U.S. commercial market must comply with all provisions of the GCA. These items must qualify as sporting purposes under the GCA. NFA weapons and non-sporting ammunition may only be imported for use by the U.S. federal, state, or local governments.

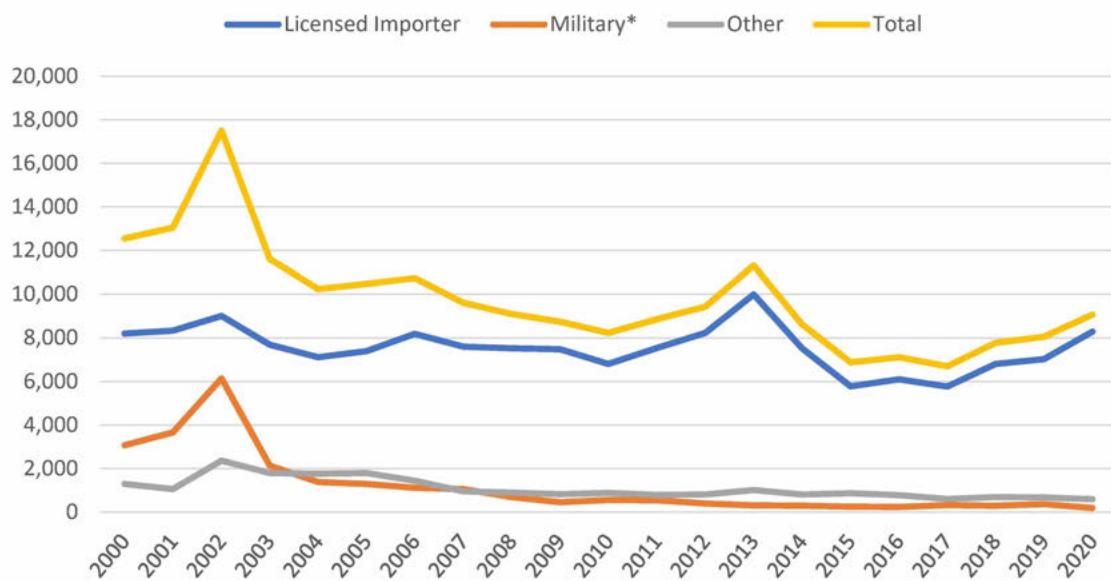
Import Permits Issued

As reflected in Figure I-01, the annual total number of import permits issued by ATF declined by 34% between 2000 (12,550) and 2010 (8,234). The total number of import permits issued by ATF varied from year to year between 2011 and 2020 with a high in 2013 (11,312) and a low in 2017 (6,692). This variability was largely driven by increases and decreases in import permits issued to Type 08 FFLs. As Figure I-02 shows, Type 08 FFLs were issued 87% of ATF import permits between 2011 and 2020.

The number of import permits issued to military importers⁴⁴ declined by 94% between 2000 (3,072) and 2020 (185) and the number of import permits issued to other importers declined by 54% between 2000 (1,283) and 2020 (590). Other importers include persons importing their personal firearms, not for commercial purposes, such as U.S. citizens returning from residence abroad, military personnel returning from assignment abroad, and foreign nationals coming to the U.S. for lawful hunting or sport shooting events.

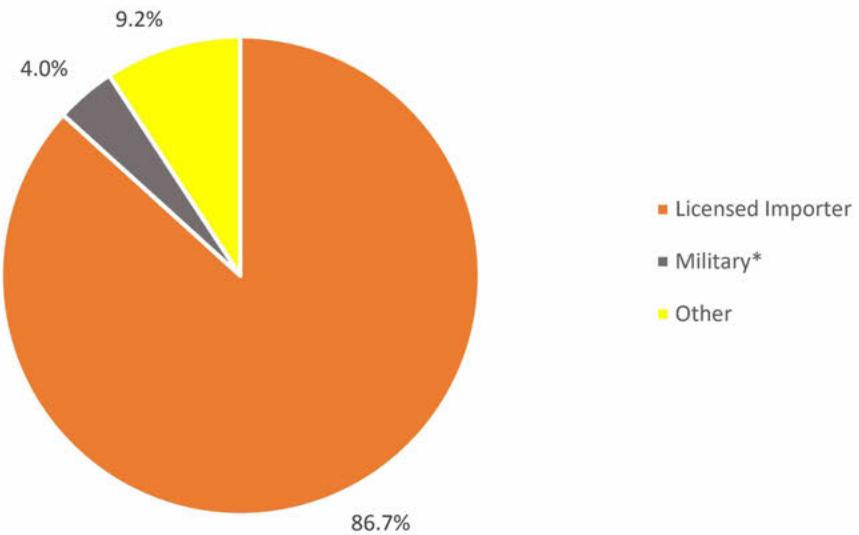
The ATF Form 6 is permission to import, but does not necessarily mean an import occurred in the year it was issued. Import permits are issued for a two-year period, and there is no limitation to the amount or type of GCA or NFA weapons an importer may request to import on each permit. Import permits are generally submitted in anticipation of expected sales. Consequently, an applicant may import some, all, or none of the items requested in any given year.

Figure I-01: Total Firearm Import Permits Issued by Type of Importer, 2000 – 2020



See Table I-01 in Appendix I – Imports for a listing of the import permits by type of importer on an annual basis between 2000 and 2020.

Figure I-02: Total Firearm Import Permits Issued by Type of Importer, 2010-2020



See Table I-02 in Appendix I – Imports for a listing of the import permits by type of importer on an annual basis between 2010 and 2020.

Firearms Imports

Data in Figure I-03 and Table I-03a reflect a 357% increase in the total number of firearm imports between 2000 (1,401,298) and 2020 (6,398,149). Much of this increase can be attributed to handgun imports which had the steepest increase of 440% between 2000 (747,129) and 2020 (4,032,019). Rifle imports grew by 172% between 2000 (321,457) and 2020 (875,155) with notable peaks in 2012 (1,243,858) and 2013 (1,509,452). Shotgun imports grew by 53% between 2000 (332,712) and 2010 (509,914) and then remained relatively stable until 2018. However, between 2019 (743,493) and 2020 (1,490,975) shotgun imports more than doubled.

Handguns, as a percentage share of total imports, also grew during this time. Handguns represented slightly more than 53% of total firearm imports in 2000 (747,129 of 1,401,298) and increased to nearly 63% of total firearm imports in 2020 (4,032,019 of 6,398,149). In contrast, rifles' share of total imports decreased from almost 23% in 2000 (321,457 of 1,401,298) to slightly less than 14% of total imports in 2020 (875,155 of 6,398,149) and shotgun imports remained relatively flat during this same time.

Figure I-03: Total Handgun, Rifle, and Shotgun Imports, 2000 – 2020

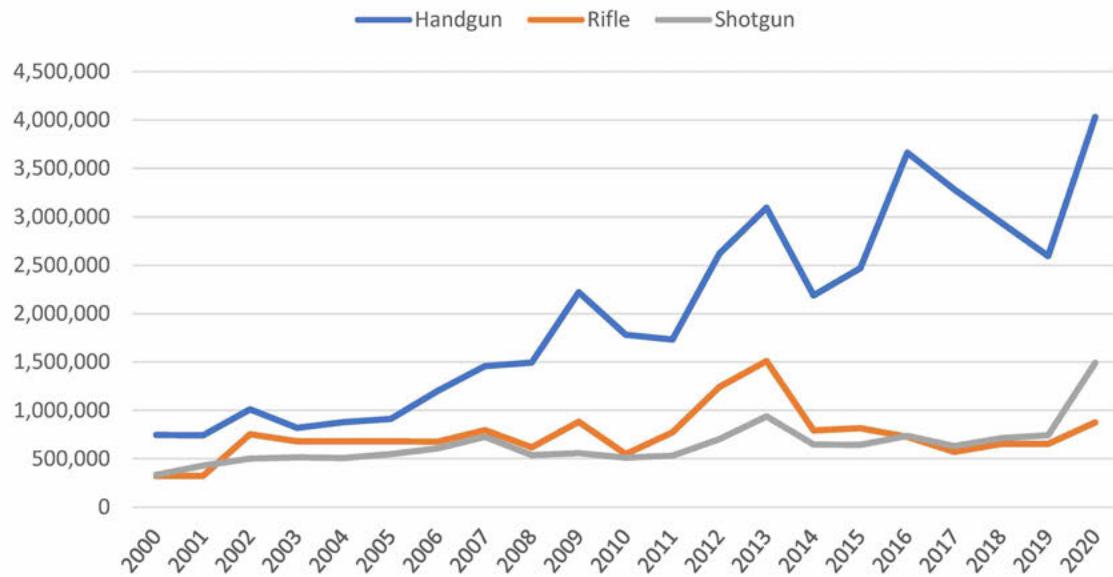


Table I-03a: Total Handgun, Rifle, and Shotgun Imports – 2000, 2010, 2020

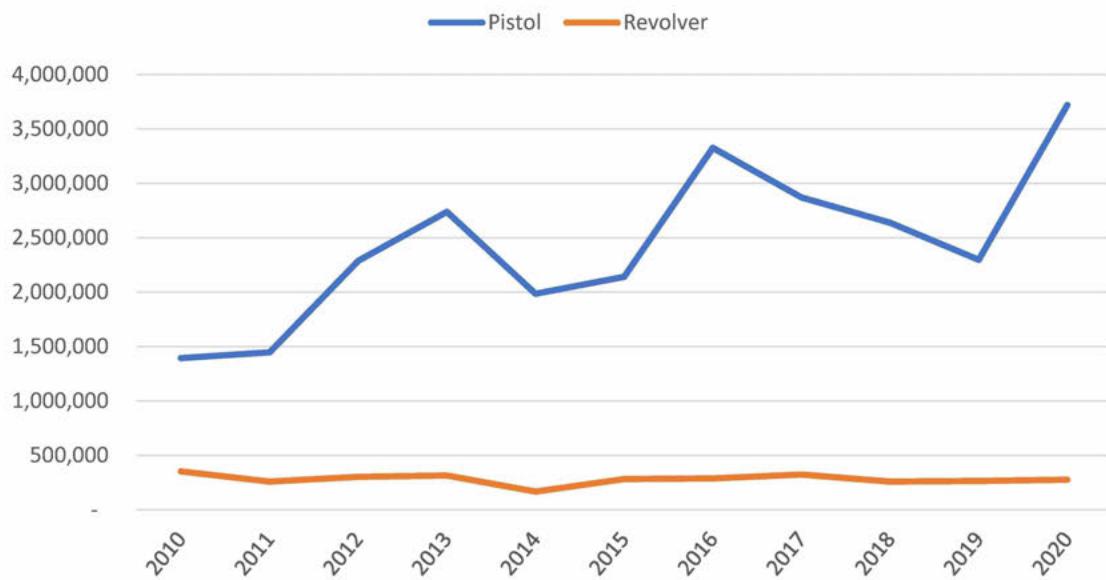
Year	# of Handguns	% Annual Total	# of Rifles	% Annual Total	# of Shotguns	% Annual Total	Total	% Annual Total
2000	747,129	53.3%	321,457	22.9%	332,712	23.7%	1,401,298	100.0%
2010	1,782,585	62.8%	548,117	19.3%	509,914	18.0%	2,840,616	100.0%
2020	4,032,019	63.0%	875,155	13.7%	1,490,975	23.3%	6,398,149	100.0%

See Table I-03 in Appendix I – Imports for a full listing of the handguns, rifles, shotguns, and total imports on an annual basis between 2000 and 2020.

Pistol Import Dominance

Pistols represented the dominant type of firearm imported into the U.S. between 2010 and 2020. As Table I-04 in Appendix I – Imports reflects, pistols represent the largest number of firearms imported in every year during this period. In 2020, pistols accounted for almost 58% (3,719,379), shotguns represented slightly more than 23% (1,490,975), rifles represented nearly 14% (875,155), revolvers accounted for only a little more than 4% (277,089), and blank-firing handguns represented less than 1% (35,551) of the 6,398,149 total firearms imported into the U.S. Figure I-04 compares the number of imported pistols and number of imported revolvers between 2010 and 2020. The dominance of pistols as the most imported type of handgun grew between 2010 and 2020. As reflected in Table I-04a in Appendix I – Imports, pistols represented about 80% of total handgun imports (1,394,178 of 1,747,635) in 2010 and, by 2020, pistols accounted for 93% of total handgun imports (3,719,379 of 3,996,468).

Figure I-04: Total Pistol and Revolver Imports, 2010 – 2020

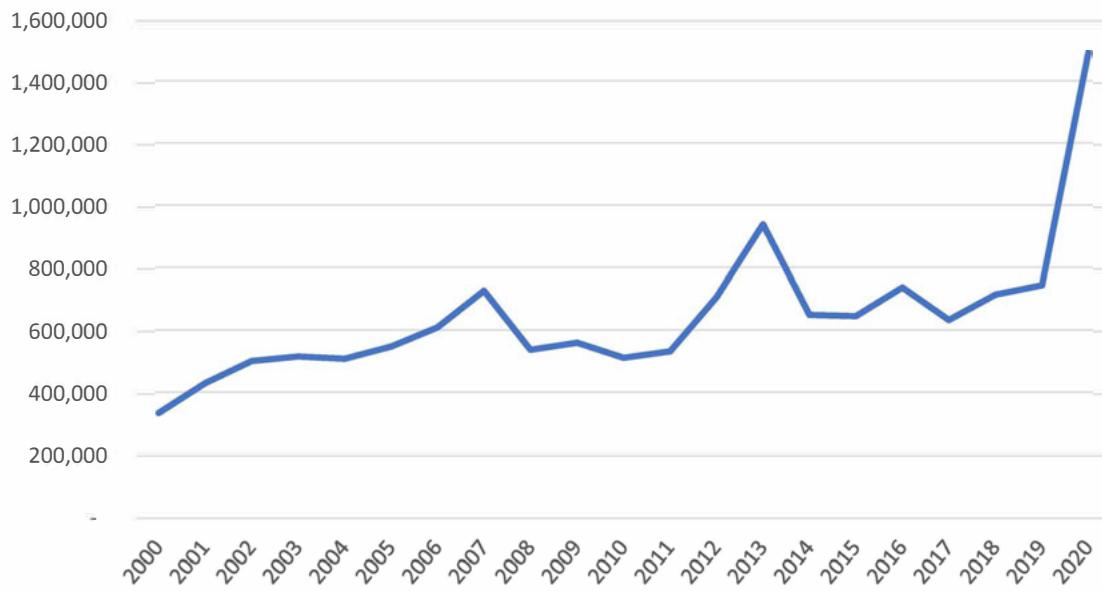


See Table I-04 and Table I-04a in Appendix I – Imports for a full listing of firearm imports by weapon type and handgun imports by weapon type between 2010 and 2020 respectively.

Shotgun Imports

As reflected in Figure I-05, the total number of shotguns imported into the U.S. grew steadily over the past 20 years with a sharp spike in 2020. Moreover, as Table I-05 reflects in Appendix I - Imports, the spike in imported shotguns between 2019 and 2020 was driven by notable annual increases in the importation of autoloading shotguns, pump shotguns, over-and-under shotguns, and all other shotguns. Between 2010 and 2020, autoloading shotgun imports increased by almost 310% (from 127,775 to 523,495), pump shotgun imports increased by 239% (from 157,313 to 532,892), over-and-under shotgun imports increased by 90% (from 74,706 to 142,232), and all other shotgun imports increased by nearly 307% (from 68,258 to 277,522). However, imports of combination shotguns dropped by almost 82% between 2010 (81,862) and 2020 (14,834) with a low in 2017 (1,692).

Figure I-05: Total Shotgun Imports, 2000 – 2020

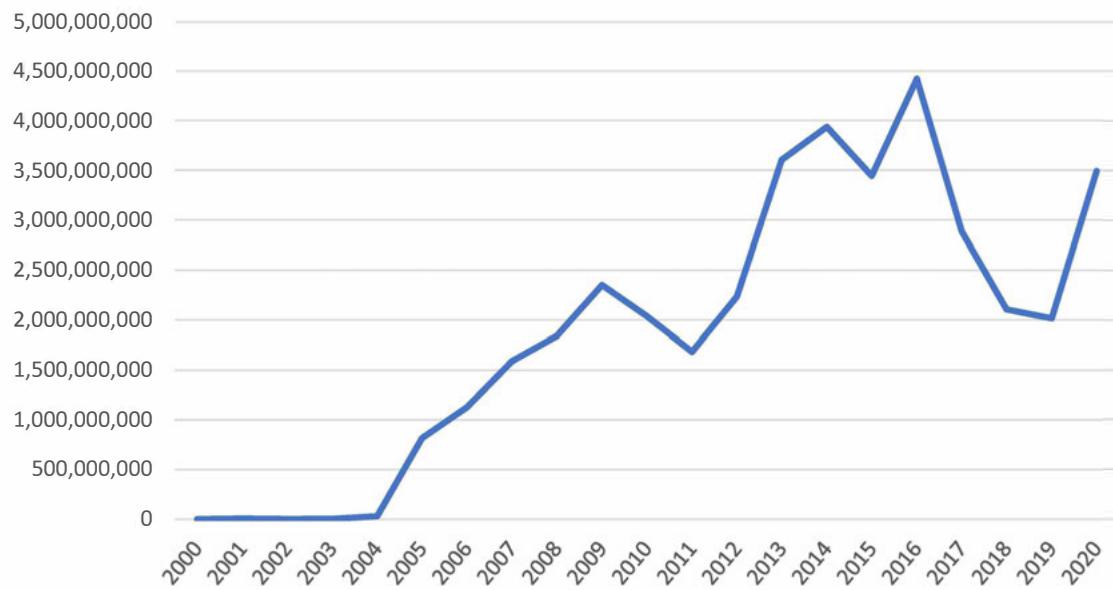


See Table I-05 in Appendix I – Imports for a full listing of shotgun imports by shotgun type between 2010 and 2020.

Ammunition, Frames/Receivers,⁴⁵ and Machinegun Imports

Ammunition⁴⁶, which includes all ammunition components, is imported into the U.S. in very large volumes. As shown in Figure I-06 and Table I-06 – in Appendix I-Imports, between 2000 and 2020 the annual quantity of ammunition imported into the U.S. grew dramatically. The most substantial increase occurred between 2000 (1,989,463) and 2010 (2,037,516,193), an increase of 102,315%. Between 2010 and 2016, ammunition imports increased by another 117%, peaking at more than 4.4 billion. Imports steadily declined in 2017, 2018, and 2019, but began climbing again in 2020, with imports of approximately 3.5 billion. As compared to 2000, 2020 imports increased 175,365%; since 2010, however, the increase in ammunition imports was far less exponential at 71%.

Figure I-06: Total Ammunition Imports, 2000 – 2020



See Table I-06 in Appendix I – Imports for a full listing of ammunition, frames/receivers, and machinegun imports between 2000 and 2020.

As reflected in Table I-06 in Appendix I – Import, the number of firearm frame and receiver imports increased by 130% between 2010 (182,265) and 2015 (418,933). Frame and receiver imports then dropped by 78% in 2016 (90,667). Frame and receiver imports remained relatively stable over the next four years with only 81,588 frames and receivers imported in 2020. Machinegun imports were relatively volatile between 2010 and 2020 with a high in 2012 (5,441) and a low in 2019 (887). This low was followed by a 288% increase in 2020 (3,445).

Firearm Imports by Country of Origin

Tables I-07 through I-09 present the top ten countries that originated handgun, rifle, and shotgun imports into the U.S. between 2010 and 2020. The top ten countries for each type of firearm originated more than 96% of handgun imports, 87% of rifle imports, and 99% of shotgun imports during this period. Austria was the largest source of handguns imported into the U.S. during this 10-year period. Canada was the largest source of rifles imported and Turkey was the largest source of shotguns imported into the U.S.

Among pistol, rifle, and shotgun importation, Brazil is the only country in the top five of each firearm type from 2010-2020. The origin countries for total 2020 imports are ranked and presented in Table I-10 in Appendix I - Imports.⁴⁷

Table I-07: Top Ten Origin Countries for Handgun Imports, 2010 – 2020

Country	# of Handguns	% Total
Austria	9,953,808	32.7%
Brazil	6,051,110	19.9%
Croatia	3,973,984	13.1%
Germany	3,635,572	12.0%
Italy	1,807,645	5.9%
Czech Republic	1,110,705	3.7%
Turkey	1,093,740	3.6%
Philippines	985,843	3.2%
Argentina	595,150	2.0%
Belgium	203,401	0.7%
Total	29,410,958	96.7%

Table I-08: Top Ten Origin Countries for Rifle Imports, 2010 – 2020

Country	# of Rifles	% Total
Canada	2,773,137	30.3%
Brazil	1,443,750	15.8%
Japan	832,346	9.1%
Russia	654,905	7.1%
Germany	573,663	6.3%
Finland	437,659	4.8%
Belgium	336,107	3.7%
Spain	327,177	3.6%
Czech Republic	293,891	3.2%
Italy	274,973	3.0%
Total	7,947,608	86.7%

Table I-09: Top 10 Origin Countries for Shotgun Imports, 2010 – 2020

Country	# of Shotguns	% Total
Turkey	3,581,958	43.2%
Italy	1,906,097	23.0%
China	1,541,940	18.6%
Brazil	857,918	10.3%
Russia	183,815	2.2%
United Kingdom	52,745	0.6%
Philippines	48,635	0.6%
Germany	24,972	0.3%
Portugal	19,482	0.2%
Spain	18,445	0.2%
Total	8,236,007	99.3%

Ammunition and Ammunition Component Imports by Country of Origin

Table I-11 presents the top ten countries that originated ammunition and ammunition component imports into the U.S. between 2010 and 2020. Russia was the largest source of imported ammunition and ammunition components into the U.S. during this 10-year period with more than 7 billion (23%).

Table I-11: Top Ten Origin Countries for Ammunition and Ammunition Component Imports, 2010 – 2020

Country	Quantity of Ammunition and Ammunition Components	% Total
Russia	7,300,689,599	22.9%
Italy	3,878,245,743	12.2%
Mexico	3,690,036,082	11.6%
South Korea	3,383,303,325	10.6%
Czech Republic	2,191,314,041	6.9%
Brazil	1,935,975,596	6.1%
Serbia	1,398,536,063	4.4%
Germany	1,149,675,768	3.6%
France	741,456,910	2.3%
Israel	697,579,705	2.2%
Total	26,366,812,832	82.8%

Summary

The total number of import permits issued by ATF generally declined between 2000 and 2020. However, the total number of annual firearms imported into the U.S., increased by almost 360% during this 20-year period. This dramatic increase was driven by the total number of handguns imported into the U.S., which grew by 440% between 2000 and 2020 and represented 63% of all firearms imported in 2020.

Ammunition imports considerably increased during this time, growing by 175,365% between 2000 and 2020.