

Mexican police chief wants citizens to have access to guns

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Shootings and attacks in Mexico's Pacific coast resort of Acapulco in early June left two police officers, three suspected drug cartel gunmen and two other men dead, police reported, according to various media reports.

That confrontation led Ramon Almonte, the Guerrero state police chief, to say the next day that he will ask the federal congress to make it easier for common citizens to get permits for weapons to defend themselves.

Almonte's brother was killed on Jan. 1 in a rural town in Guerrero by unidentified gunmen. The state has been plagued by such executions.

"When you fight someone and at least you have a 'piece,' the person who is attacking you might think twice," Almonte said. "We cannot go on the way we are."

At present, Mexico's constitution allows citizens to have one or two low-caliber guns in their homes, but they must get a permit from the Defense Department and the process is complicated. Almonte did not give specifics on how he would make it easier.

"Having a weapon should be a right, because the bad guys are few and we, the good guys, are many, so we can't allow ourselves to be held hostage by the few," Almonte said.

The confrontations that prompted the police chief's remarks began when gunmen traveling in a convoy of eight vehicles opened fire on an Acapulco municipal police patrol car, killing two officers.

Federal officers responding to the reports of gunfire later located the convoy, and, in the ensuing gunfight, three suspects were killed.

Police in Guerrero state, where Acapulco is located, said in statement that the three dead assailants were reported found with "assault rifles," military-style uniforms and bulletproof vests.