

Organised Crime in the EU through the eyes of EUROPOL

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This is a study of the press releases of Europol from January to September 2016 which place in the public domain the law enforcement activities of Europol in the EU. From the body of press releases the impact of the political realities of the EU upon law enforcement activity is apparent given the resources devoted to terrorism and migrant smuggling especially via the Balkan route with the outcome of this being the subsidiary focus on organised crime both non-EU organised crime especially globalised organised crime and indigenous EU organised crime. Migrant smuggling is not included in this study as this requires an individual study. The reality of organised crime (OC) in the EU revealed by the press releases studied is a complex, heterogeneous one which potently illustrates the dire need at present for a trans-EU law enforcement institution as the threat of OC in the EU is not encapsulated within national boundaries of member nation states of the EU. In the absence of the legal and regulatory framework and this trans-EU law enforcement agency globalised OC is granted a paradise in which to play and the means to drastically change the nature of indigenous EU organised crime the signs of which are already abundantly apparent.

Section 1

Non-EU Globalised OC

The over-arching question for this section of the analysis is: Can globalised non-EU organised crime groups establish operations in EU states without a working relationship with EU organised crime? A specific question then is: Can Nigerian and Chinese globalised OC groups operate in Italy without an affiliation with the Ndrangheta, the Camorra, the Cosa Nostra and the Sacra Corona Unita? The most important question then is: In the event of such affiliations are these groups involved in joint EU wide operations and transnational operations external of the EU?

The following press release presents a glimpse of the possible threats to the EU that flow from illicit enterprise as this operating across multiple EU states. A press release dated March 31, 2016 "Iraqi money laundering syndicate based in Germany dismantled with support Europol and Eurojust" reports that an Iraqi OC group based in Germany was involved in laundering the proceeds of heroin sales from Spain, the Netherlands, Italy and the UK from its operational base in

Germany. The members of this group collected the cash sales of heroin dealers transported this illicit cash to Germany and from Germany undertook the laundering of the illicit cash through various mechanisms. A multifaceted operation involving cash mules within the EU followed by the use of various methods to launder the cash external of the EU outside/external of the world financial structure. The press release spoke of the purchase of goods with the dirty cash in Germany and the goods are then exported to Iraq where they are sold for cash and the cash is repatriated to Germany via parallel financial services networks. The question remains what is the currency of sale in Iraq as is the currency exported to Germany in both cases currency has to be converted to Euro or USD as these are the currencies of the drug trade. But there are other laundering mechanisms utilised not mentioned in the press release. The cash proceeds of sales in the EU are exported to third party states where the cash is routed through various offshore and onshore financial institutions eventually reaching accounts of the traffickers. The Iraqi network was then simplistic in its operation but the gravest reality was its use of a war zone which generates threats to the EU as the laundry and the possibility that this operation as others as these can serve extremist agendas in the EU. The question of the immigration status of the members of this group in Germany is of utmost importance as it afforded this crime group the means to operate its illicit enterprise.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/iraqi-money-laundering-syndicate-based-germany-dismantled-support-europol-and-eurojust>

A press release dated May 4, 2016 titled: “Joint action to tackle West African human trafficking networks” reported on the Pan-European action against Nigerian human trafficking organisations by seeking to discover women engaged in forced labour especially Nigerian women. In the EU Nigerian OC does not specialise in a single illicit trafficking enterprise as they maximise profitability by smuggling various illicit products. The pipeline moving women to the EU will also carry illicit drugs, small arms, children for the sex trade and the pipeline out of the EU to Africa will carry cash, pharmaceuticals, counterfeit goods and currency. All globalised OC groups maintain a two-way flow via their trafficking pipelines to maximise profitability through capacity utilisation. To focus on sex workers who were trafficked is not an effective strategy to engage with Nigerian OC given the fact that Nigerian OC groups don’t specialise in a single illicit activity and human

trafficking as visualised and conceptualised by Europol doesn't mesh with Nigerian OC reality. Sex workers placed on the streets and/or in brothels under the control of Nigerian OC are at the retail end of the illicit enterprise differentiated from the other illicit pursuits. The point of entry for law enforcement must be the point where the illicit pursuits are in the transition stage along the pipeline where the primary focus is delivery of the illicit products to wholesale/retail markets. In this state women differentiated to the retail sex markets at the end of the transition are mules/swallowers interdiction at this point opens the organisation to dismantling. The fact that Nigerian OC groups are premier drug smugglers utilising mules and swallowers the world over and their operational presence in the EU indicate that they are present in EU drug markets in alliance with hegemonic EU OC groups. This trafficking reality must be a priority for EU law enforcement for sex workers under the control of Nigerian OC groups is the indicator for their operational presence in other EU illicit markets. The Europol press release shows the North Atlantic myths of human trafficking where trafficking and smuggling are differentiated as binary opposites when in the industry they are not. A woman seeking to enter the EU illegally pays the OC group to be moved to the EU but the OC group will collect the payment or part thereof and then choose from a menu of options to treat with the client. They can demand more money and the client now has to work for them to pay the debt, demand more money from the family of the client and even if paid kidnap the client and enter into a business relationship with a client who is paying to enter the EU illicitly in order to be a sex worker because of the lesson of women in Africa who were and are sex workers in the EU and their family and themselves have been lifted out of poverty. For whatever reason the relationship between the prospective sex worker and the OC group collapsed and the client was kidnapped. In reality there is no binary opposite: smuggled/trafficked. Sex workers who have entered the EU illicitly are taught and know that when arrested it's strategic to plead that they are victims of trafficking and law enforcement has the task of proving otherwise if they intend to. An issue of human rights and suffering is then politicised and politicised policing fails to see the forest that is posing grave multiple threats to public safety. Or is it an attempt to deprecate the enemy? This is illustrated in the press release where "voodoo" is supposedly used to keep control of victims by Nigerian OC groups. "Voodoo" is the product of the Haitian experience it's a creation of one branch of the African Diaspora in the

West a Nigerian belief system used as social control is then not voodoo and the Europol should be aware of this or are they in no need to understand West African OC groups?

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/joint-action-tackle-west-african-human-trafficking-networks-1>

A press release dated March 10, 2016 titled: "Europol supports dismantling of Chinese criminal network involved in trafficking in human beings" reported that a Chinese OC group based in Germany was involved in trafficking women from China to the EU for forced sexual work. As was the case with the Nigerian OC groups the Europol discourse misses conveying the reality of Chinese OC in the EU. All Chinese women involved in sex work fall within this reality: they paid the OC crime group to be illicitly smuggled into the EU they were then willing clients of an illicit enterprise at great cost to their family in China, those who failed to pay the full cost of the service but still accepted the service of the OC group sold themselves into slavery this term and condition of service is well known in Chinese villages especially in Fujian province, women paid to be smuggled into the EU for the express purpose of sex work whilst others actually paid for and expected that the OC group will place them in jobs that were at least acceptable to them. The power relation is not in favour of the client primarily because they are at the mercy of an OC group willingly participating in a criminal enterprise. This OC group also wields power in China especially over the family of the client in China. When you enter the EU illicitly you are then trapped because to be interdicted and detained pending expulsion you have lost the money invested to reach the EU and your family in China has to honour that debt and any hint of informing your family pays that price. You are in the EU to earn nothing else. Such is the order of the Snake Heads and Chinese OC groups. The Snake Heads utilise licit businesses in the countries of operation to launder illicit wealth and illicit migrant labour as they are moved through the string of businesses owned by the OC group and their affiliates. The Snake Heads continue to maintain their networks and operations within Chinese communities in the EU as in these communities silence is maintained, the Snake Heads wield power in the social order of the community and the illicit migrants disappear amongst the masses unlike in areas outside as they are a visible minority. Chinese OG groups that move humans are also involved in moving other illicit products especially those

sourced in the Peoples' Republic of China such as synthetic drugs, the inputs to the production of synthetic drugs and counterfeit goods. In the flow via the pipeline back to China any commodity and data that has a market in China is collected and exported such as animal parts including those of endangered species, data illicitly garnered such as credit card and debit card data and industrial technology. The focus on liberating those who insist that they are victims of human trafficking in the sex trade cannot in any way dismantle these OC groups as is the case with Nigerian OC groups. This focus leaves the command and control structure intact and given the demand to enter the EU illicitly as is the case of Nigeria the pipeline survives and evolves. The present stage shows the willingness to form alliances with non-Chinese crime groups to expand the illicit product mix and to expand their market impact and presence outside of the limits imposed by confining their activities to the Chinese communities of the EU. Another case of the ineffectiveness and the threats to public security that evolve under the hegemony of politicised policing.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/europol-supports-dismantling-chinese-criminal-network-involved-trafficking-human-beings>

In May and June Europol reported the dismantling of two sophisticated money laundering operations linked to Russian organised crime one in Portugal and the other in Spain. The operation in Portugal (May 4, 2016: "Police dismantle Russian money laundering ring operating in the football sector") involved choosing a football club that had fallen on hard financial times with the strategy of eventually purchasing the club chosen and using its operations including match fixing as a laundry to wash illicit funds moved to the EU via cash mules. What is noteworthy of this Russian OC operation is their use of offshore companies and tax havens to mask the operation of the laundry/football club especially the identity of the beneficial owners. The ability of Russian OC to operate within the terrain of globalised markets and the services vital to globalised neo liberal markets is a potent lesson of the very thin line that separates licit and illicit in this globalised neo liberal order. In the case of Spain (June 28, 2016 Russian money laundering criminal network dismantled) the Russian operation is estimated to have laundered 62 million Euro through property investment. A sophisticated operation utilised offshore shell companies offering various services to clients in Spain and elsewhere to mask a range of illicit enterprises including property

investment which were laundries for dirty Russian OC money. Through the services offered to clients via offshore companies and other enterprises Russian raiders were facilitated to acquire companies by any means necessary. These two instances illustrate the threat posed by Russian OC in the EU but money laundering is a small part of the range of illicit enterprises they are involved in. Money laundering is a service to the illicit enterprises that generate the dirty money therefore the illicit wealth generating enterprises must be the prime targets that point to the dirty money trail. The sophisticated nature of Russian OC money laundering in the EU illustrates the operational terrain afforded to organised crime by an EU that is not constructed to handle the threats generated by the EU. The salient question remains as to the identity of EU OC groups that Russian OC groups are affiliated to as this relationship will reveal the operational realities and complexities of organised crime in the EU.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/police-dismantle-russian-money-laundering-ring-operating-football-sector>

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/russian-money-laundering-criminal-network-dismantled>

A press release dated April 7, 2016 “Europol supports Austrian federal criminal police in dismantling Chechen organised crime network” reports that a Chechen organised crime group in Austria involved in extortion, arms smuggling and illegal gambling among other pursuits was disrupted and three Chechen nationals, two Croatian citizens, a Serbian citizen and an Austrian citizen of Bosnian descent were arrested. Europol indicated that this case afforded for the first time operational knowledge of the alliance of Chechen OC groups and their operational relationship with operatives from the Balkans and Austria. Chechen OC is a comparatively recent arrival on the landscape of EU OC as such it must accept and work with the power relations of the EU members where they operate in their quest to create and expand outwards from their beachhead. The operational reality of Chechen OC in Austria will not necessarily apply to the relations of established transnational OC groups in the EU who enjoy an operational presence in the EU of much greater duration and are much more resourced than the Chechens especially in the range of illicit products in demand in the EU that they command the supply off. The Chechens are then cobbling

together alliances that serve their strategic intent and their alliance with Balkan nationals and Balkan origin individuals is noteworthy given the pipelines that flow through the Balkans on the way to the EU. The reputation of Chechen OC for tenacity, ruthlessness, the use of violence and their international connections works in their favour in attaining their strategic intent which will enter an entirely different dimension with affiliation to Mexican transnational trafficking organisations (TTOs) with an operational presence in the EU. This will dramatically expand the illicit product mix marketed by Chechen OC raising their earning potential and profitability. In this scenario Chechen OC will now enjoy a new power relation with Balkan groups. Such is the dynamic of OC in the globalised context.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/europol-supports-austrian-federal-criminal-police-office-dismantling-chechen-organised-crime>

A press release dated September 14, 2016 “Croatian National Police supported by Europol arrested a high value Albanian speaking target involved in international drugs trafficking” reports that a Croatian national who is the leader of an Albanian speaking OC group involved in drug trafficking was arrested after marijuana, heroin and chemicals to cut/step on drugs for sale were found in houses in Croatia under the control of the arrested individual. The quantity of heroin seized in Croatia indicate that the group was engaged in retailing heroin in the EU with the marijuana seized being another illicit product in an attempt to maximise profitability. It is apparent that the Croatian national arrested is of Albanian origin and the OC crime group he headed was part of the Balkan trafficking pipeline that moves Afghan heroin into the EU. Marijuana is also a viable drug marketed by these groups as it has a market distinct and separate from heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine and there are viable production points in the Balkans thereby allowing OC groups to have a multi-market product mix thereby maximising market exposure and profit. What is noteworthy in this case is the maintenance of ethnic identity and leadership of OC crime groups even though the nationalities of such persons have changed. This indicates the strategy of OC groups to adopt the nationality of the area of operation they are posted to in order to facilitate the OC enterprise which is a reality of the operational landscape of OC in the EU. The press release states that the investigation encompassed Germany, Austria, Slovenia and Croatia attesting to the field of

operations of a single OC group operating in the EU with its leader arrested in Croatia. The relevance of the group to EU drug markets is the Balkan pipeline thereby providing the impetus to be operationally present in the EU seen in the entry of Albanian OC in the EU. One can insist that the EU is the impetus to the creation and expansion of the pipeline and the genesis and development of Balkan OC groups. The failure to respond adequately to this reality by the EU creates a sustainable OC paradise. An OC group that is in no way at the apex of EU OC comprising of an ethnicity and nationality that are comparatively recent arrivals on the landscape of OC in the EU. The apex of OC in the EU presents an entirely different reality with much more potent threats emanating from this reality. In all the instances presented so far the strategy of harvesting low hanging fruit by national law enforcement of the EU illustrates the inability of national law enforcement in the EU to engage with 21st century OC in the EU. In this present case where are the agencies to engage with the Balkan pipeline?

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/croatian-national-police-supported-europol-arrested-high-value-albanian-speaking-target-invo>

A press release dated March 9, 2016 “Serbian criminal network dismantled in Spain and the Czech Republic” a Serbian OC group noted for violence migrated to Spain to establish grow ops to produce marijuana which they then distributed. This group was also operating in the Czech Republic where its leader was based. Why marijuana cultivation which is a high risk enterprise given the volume of product that has to be produced and sold to earn profits for an OC group in which 25 persons were arrested in the police operation which points to the high personnel costs of the OC group which is the result of the labour intensive illicit business they were involved with. Grow ops rearing marijuana present strategic problems and high overhead costs. Grow ops can easily be spotted by law enforcement, utility companies and interested neighbours which require expenditure to mask the operation. The return on investment is directly the product of the quality of and the range of marijuana and its by products produced. The greatest return is the result of growing high potency hybrid varieties under organic conditions and turning these varieties into hashish, marijuana oil etc. A growing operation that also retails is even more vulnerable to assault both by law enforcement and from the drug world. So why then does an OC group with a willingness to commit violent acts become involved in this

literally pedestrian business to the extent of retailing marijuana? A propensity to violence in Serbia can result in pariah status in the OC world of the EU much less when you continue with the predisposition in the EU. OC groups in the EU will view such a group as a threat to the stability of the market because violence begets the interest of law enforcement which is bad for business. The law enforcement agencies and OC have then in this case common interests and OC will give up this group to law enforcement. Law enforcement revels in the accolade of dismantling of an OC Serbian crime group and EU OC use law enforcement to cleanse a threat to the sustainability of illicit enterprises. This is commonplace in the GAME and the Mexican TTOs are masters of this strategy. Squeezed out or denied entry to EU drug markets this group had no choice but to settle for the riskiest and low profit return on investment of marijuana grow ops and retailing. Or were they in Spain using the cover of the grow ops to mask other more profitable illicit enterprises as cocaine moved via their marijuana pipeline. We will never know as law enforcement got their accolade which is the sole aim of politicised policing not generating knowledge on the complexity of organised crime in its driving rationality to maximise profits.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/serbian-criminal-network-dismantled-spain-and-czech-republic>

The content of Europol's press releases doesn't address the overarching question of this section of the article but it and questions that arise from it are of strategic importance to the task of understanding OC in the EU in the 21st century. The following section deals with Europol's press releases for the month of September 2016 on indigenous EU OC.

Section 2

Indigenous EU OC

The questions that arise for this section are: what is the landscape of the groups within EU OC, are EU OC groups constituted and operate along ethnic lines, are EU OC groups operating under alliances and affiliations made with other EU OC crime groups, what groups within EU OC are affiliated to globalised organised crime especially the Mexican TTOs and what EU OC groups are in themselves globalised players?

A press release dated August 14, 2016 “Europol and Spanish Guardia Civil thwart crime group that stole nearly half a million Euro worth of luxury cars” reported that a Lithuanian group stole luxury vehicles in Spain created new identities for the stolen vehicles and drove them to Lithuania, Germany and Poland for sale. Six Lithuanian nationals were arrested. The question arises since the stolen vehicles sold in the destination countries were not interdicted if this was a trafficking operation with the cars loaded with illicit drugs and then sold when emptied? A common method to maximise profits in a borderless expanse of states.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/europol-and-spanish-guardia-civil-thwart-crime-group-stole-nearly-half-million-euro-worth-lu>

A press release dated September 15, 2016 “International action against trafficking of stolen luxury cars” reported that 28 suspects were arrested for stealing luxury cars in the EU primarily Italy and trafficking them to northern Europe and via Spain to North Africa for sale. The OC group comprised mainly Italians and Moroccans and there were affiliates in other EU states seen in the arrest of suspects in Belgium, Spain and Italy. This Italian operation involving the trafficking of vehicles to North Africa facilitated by an alliance with Moroccan OC illustrates the operational mind set of Italian OC where multinational alliances are created and honoured to facilitate the sustainability of the enterprise in the EU and out of the EU. This group had the means to exploit a trafficking pipeline to Morocco enabling the OC group to load the cars with other valuable merchandise and to utilise the return pipeline from Morocco to smuggle cocaine, hashish and other products not necessarily destined for Spain but also Italy from Libya, Tunisia and Morocco.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/international-action-against-trafficking-stolen-luxury-cars>

A press release dated September 5, 2016 “52 members of a criminal organisation arrested for marijuana distribution and arms trafficking” reported on an instance of Lithuanian OC involved with marijuana growth and distribution and firearms trafficking. This Lithuanian OC group was based in Spain where they grew and produced marihuana which they smuggled hidden in shipments of fruits and vegetables from Spain to the EU. They were also involved in Spain with acquiring

de-activated firearms, activating them and trafficking them for sale on EU illicit arms markets. This is another operation against Lithuanian OC in the EU which indicates the versatility of Lithuanian OC at the low to medium end of the market and the operational importance of Spain to OC groups in the EU. What is noteworthy in the press release is the arrest of suspects of Spanish and Lithuanian nationalities in this operation. The expanse of the operations combining marijuana production and trafficking with firearms reactivation and trafficking a multi nationality operation was necessary especially to blend in with the environment of Spain. As per usual details of the trafficking and wholesale and retail operations of the OC group were not revealed.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/52-members-criminal-organisation-arrested-marihuana-distribution-and-arms-trafficking>

Two press releases for the period report on Polish OC operating in Spain. The press release dated July 26, 2016 “Spain and Europol dismantle crime network involved in firearms trafficking” reports that a Polish national suspected of arms trafficking was arrested in Spain and was head of the crime group. The Polish national arrested is suspected of supplying arms to the illicit arms market of the EU and to an African country via Polish companies under his control. The Polish arms supplier was linked to illicit arms markets in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Latvia, the UK and the US but he lived in Ibiza, Spain. Members of the crime group were also arrested and the group was involved in organised property crime, extortion, money laundering, fraud, bribery and the disclosure of official secrets. A multi-faceted operational crime group that was truly involved with trans EU OC with arms trafficking as its core illicit activity with a level of sophistication that placed it in a league that excluded those who run artisan operations to reactivate decommissioned firearms. To remove one trader does not end the trade as supply exists and demand spirals which generates the feeding frenzy to match them both to maximise profits. But why Spain? Is Spain a most attractive operational space for EU OC intent on smuggling into, within the EU and out of the EU to the world?

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/spain-and-europol-dismantle-crime-network-involved-firearms-trafficking>

A press release dated August 12, 2016 “Europol, Spain and Poland dismantle Polish crime group involved in drugs smuggling” reported that a Polish OC group “PRUSKZOW” that was broken up by Polish law enforcement in the 1990’s was involved in drug smuggling in the EU from its operational base in Malaga, Spain. In the 2016 assault on this Polish OC group in Spain in 2016 23 individuals were arrested (12 Polish, 7 Spanish, 2 Ukrainians, 1 Lithuanian and 1 German) and over 1 tonne of hashish seized. Hashish smuggled from Malaga was interdicted in Denmark, France and Poland and the group was purchasing marijuana from a Spanish criminal group. The questions unanswered are the source of their hashish and if they were actually involved in importing the hashish into Spain? Again the nature of the commodity and its comparative value of EU drug markets impact the operational structure of the crime group. Why no involvement with cocaine smuggling as the group is already trafficking an illicit product to the EU? Personal choice, exclusion or policing blindness? An OC group comprising a multiplicity of nationalities led by a Polish organised crime group that re-creates itself in Spain through trafficking a product with an extensive EU demand but the value of it on the streets impacts the wealth generation mechanism of the OC group negatively compared to heroin, cocaine and meth/ice. Personal choice or exclusion? Again why Spain, what makes Spain the operational space desired by traffickers?

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/europol-spain-and-poland-dismantle-polish-crime-group-involved-drugs-smuggling>

A press release dated August 24, 2016 “Over 3 tonnes of hashish seized in international police operation” reports that the Polish leader of the trafficking operation was not only one of the dominant hashish smugglers of the EU but was also a member of PRUSKZOW. This individual was responsible for shipping hashish from Morocco to several EU states and then managing the distribution of the hashish in EU markets. His was an integrated trafficking, wholesale and retail enterprise which while exposing the OC group to an increased risk of detection was necessary in order to maximise profit and boost wealth generation from the sale of hashish. As a result, he and the group he led ended up on the radar of law enforcement in Spain, Poland, Germany and Italy and he was arrested in Marbella, Spain along with 12 other members of the OC group and 3.3 tonnes of hashish seized by the Italian authorities. A question arises from the press release

which is: if you are trafficking product from Morocco to Spain why is your trafficking vessel intercepted in Italian waters and seized by Italian authorities? This vessel was seized with 3.3 tonnes of hashish and two Polish crew members were arrested. Again Spain was the base of operation.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/over-3-tonnes-hashish-seized-international-police-operation>

Three press releases dealing with the arrests of members of EU OC groups in ATM skimming, payment card cloning and the raiding of accounts held by the victims point to the transnational dimension of this crime. A press release dated April 14, 2016 “International skimming network dismantled in Italy” reports that a crime group comprised mainly of Romanians involved in ATM skimming, document forgery and money laundering was dismantled with the arrest in Italy of 16 of its members. This group targeted ATMs in Italy, Denmark and the UK using sophisticated devices to capture the information necessary to create a clone of the customer’s legal card which was used to raid the said account via ATMs in Indonesia and Belize.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/international-atm-skimming-network-dismantled-italy>

A press release dated May 24, 2016 “International criminal group behind ATM attacks dismantled” reports that a group dominated by French-Italian nationals involved in ATM skimming and money laundering was dismantled with the arrest of nine individuals in France. This group attacked ATMs in France, manufactured payment card clones and looted accounts from Asia and the US.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/international-criminal-group-behind-atm-skimming-attacks-dismantled>

A press release dated September 7, 2016 “International criminal network behind large-scale payment fraud dismantled” reports that a group dominated by Romanian nationals involved in ATM scamming and phishing, money laundering and prostitution was dismantled with the arrest of 7 individuals in Italy and Romania. The group operated in Milan and Monza, Italy choosing to loot accounts with cloned cards in Milan.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/international-criminal-network-behind-large-scale-payment-fraud-dismantled>

Until such time financial institutions invest in the process of creating and installing ATMs in their retail networks that are resistant to scamming assaults will continue not only in the EU but the world over. What must be understood is the division of labour within the OC crime group as those who assault the machines are separated from those who loot the accounts and the cash mules who transport the cash. Looted cash is used to purchase high end merchandise especially in duty free zones and the mules transport this merchandise to markets where they are sold for a profit on investment. The tourist zones of the world are then used as looting and purchase points as is the case in the Caribbean. The availability of stolen payment card data for a price has now spawned a feeding frenzy where independents have now entered this illicit market and increased the risk of operational insecurity. Then there are the independents who carry out all the tasks themselves and as a result are easily picked up by law enforcement thereby posing a threat to the operations of the OC crime groups. These independents are then regularly culled by hegemonic OC groups the necessity of which is seen in the reality that they have now turned looting and purchase zones into scamming, looting and purchase zones and many of these zones are not sustainable for this range of activity.

A press release dated July 21, 2016 “7 detained in operation against British-Spanish cocaine traffickers” reports 7 members of a crime group operating in Spain and the UK involved in drug trafficking from Spain to the UK. According to the report the group in its quest to traffic a shipment of cocaine from Spain to the UK decided to smuggle shipments of marijuana and hashish from Spain to the UK with the proceeds of this sale used to purchase the load of cocaine. The police operation was unleashed whilst they were in the process of moving the hashish and marijuana to the UK. This release qualified for the study as it illustrates the propagation of myths of the cocaine trade in the EU by law enforcement. An OC group that is seeking to raise funds by smuggling hashish and marijuana from Spain to the UK for sale in the UK is not an apex player in the EU drug trade. Clearly the group is underfunded, not self-funded and has no funding from an external source which indicates that they may very well be small operators and /or employees of apex OC groups in Spain seeking to enter the cocaine trade. The

group is then very vulnerable and may well have been given up to cull the herd of aspiring traffickers who can pose various problems to apex players especially violence that escalates and sweeps the trade. First they have to buy huge amounts of hashish/marijuana in Spain then traffic successfully and sell it in the UK. Then move the funds back to Spain to purchase their dream load of cocaine. They are not part of the apex players hence they must deal with a cocaine supplier willing to sell them product at the wholesale level. The price per kilo at this level depends on supply and purity where those at the right price carry a purity level that impacts the profit maximisation capacity of the buyer. Which means a kilo at the right price is stepped on or it is below industry standard purity of 90%+ going as low as the 50-60% purity range. The problem is a group as this accessing industry standard product when they are not affiliates of the apex OC groups. When you seek to purchase and you are not connected then you have to buy what is available and the result of this is product sold at the retail level that is expensive junk whilst the product sold by the apex players can match the price of the expensive junk but deliver bang for the Euro ahh good shit man! All kilos interdicted by law enforcement are not equal and the much politicised public statements about the value of drugs that will not hit the streets of the EU is just politicised policing. The salient question is the purity of the drugs seized as this determines its earning potential on the streets. It is noteworthy that in the law enforcement raid on this group no cocaine was seized as they were a marijuana hustle hoping to move into the big times.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/7-detained-operation-against-british-spanish-cocaine-traffickers>

Two press release indicate the involvement of Bulgarian and Romanian OC in organised prostitution in the EU. A press release dated April 8, 2016 “Criminal group behind forced prostitution dismantled” reports that 12 Bulgarian nationals all members of the OC group that recruited women in Bulgaria and moved them to Italy for use as sex workers were arrested. This group exhibited a penchant for violence seen in the way they attempted to control their illicit business interests in Bulgaria and Italy and to engage in warfare with other ethnic dominated groups for control of prostitution in the area they operated in. The fact that one of the leaders of this OC group has a history of violence with one murder conviction and being on the wanted list of a number of EU police agencies indicate the

operational strategy of this OC group and the threats posed to EU states where they were in operation.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/criminal-group-behind-forced-prostitution-dismantled>

The next press release is dated August 26, 2016 “Criminal gang behind prostitution network dismantled by Romania and the United Kingdom” reports that this Romanian OC group trafficked young women to the UK to be used as sex workers in over 10 cities. In Romania 8 persons were arrested. The claim made in both press releases that the OC groups were dismantled is never defined as those untouched by the operation will simply continue and expand by recruiting into the group new members and promoting up the ranks those junior employees for as long as the demand exists to travel to the UK with the intention to be a sex worker and the johns are there driven by desire the OC groups will thrive.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/criminal-gang-behind-prostitution-network-dismantled-romania-and-united-kingdom>

Finally, a press release dated March 1, 2016 “Europe-wide action targets money mule schemes” reports that for the first time in the EU from February 22-26, 2016 a coordinated assault on money muling was held in the following member states: Belgium, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, the UK, Romania, Spain and Portugal with 81 individuals arrested. What is noteworthy is more than 90% of the reported money mule transactions involved cybercrime which meant again that the money mules serving the dominant OC crime groups in the EU were left untouched. This is so because those who move the cash of dominant EU OC to laundering points are all vouched for affiliates of the arm of the OC tasked with laundering the proceeds of the criminal enterprise hence closely monitored as they are an elite group encapsulated within the cellular structure of the OC group. In addition, the variety of laundering methods utilised minimise the number of occasions funds are actually moved in cash. OC is faced with the reality with which it has to grapple with that the actual cash at some point must be delivered to a laundering point where its journey through the licit financial system commences. Once delivered the licit financial system becomes the target of law enforcement and the political dictum “too big to jail” is hegemonic hence the focus on the money mules of cyber criminals who lack the means as that of OC.

This is another case of intervention that is too late in an operating environment that is inadequate to the task at hand.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/europe-wide-action-targets-money-mule-schemes>

The Lessons

From just the press releases of Europol for September 2016 it is obvious that organised crime in the EU is dynamic, multifaceted, multi operational, ethnically focused in specific instances but multi ethnic in others. The instances presented in the study impact the picture afforded of the landscape of organised crime in the EU because low hanging fruit dominate the releases. But even in the case of the low hanging fruit it is apparent that organised crime in the EU is fully adapted to the landscape of the single market and is exploiting the strengths and weaknesses of the EU to its benefit. In this present operating terrain organised crime will evolve rapidly forming operational coalitions across multiple organised crime groups regardless of ethnicity, operational zones and the nature of the range of their illicit activities that will span multiple member states and affiliate states as Norway. This process is already on its way driven by the strategic agenda of globalised organised crime both of non EU and EU origin. The failure of EU politicians to fully appreciate the threat environment and to act rapidly to create EU wide institutions charged with policing the threats generated by the single market that straddle nation states poses a grave threat to the EU project and the public safety of its member and affiliate states. Continuing failure to act will result in the rapid evolution of organised crime to the point where the illicit order poses a concerted challenge to the order of the state. The abiding lesson then is that organised crime in the EU continues to show its embrace of the principles of the single market and the ability to strategize and change behaviour to suit the reality of the single market towards realising their strategic goal of establishing the order of the illicit economy over spaces of besieged states. And in realising this agenda the politicians of the EU are the most potent asset in the arsenal of organised crime. What must never be forgotten is the reality that organised crime cannot thrive and pose threats to the social order without the complicity of agents of the licit order especially the agencies of the state and the globalised financial order. Organised crime invests a significant portion of its resources to corrupt and co-opt

agents of the state and the globalised financial order and the greater their success in this ongoing venture the bolder they become in their power relation with the social order. Where in significant spaces under the control of the state they establish their own social order including spaces that are considered elitist and adept at generating wealth. Yes, the discourses of state agencies and politicians relentlessly seek to mask this reality that the apex of organised crime is now mainstream. The estimates of the proceeds of OC in the EU are then woefully underestimated because of this dance of the licit and illicit and all the studies derived from these underestimates cannot shed light on the reality that the contribution of OC to EU GDP is underestimated and as a result the impact on state expenditure through attempts to mitigate the threats generated by OC. As the contribution of OC to EU GDP rises its threats to the social order intensify and evolve rapidly and all of this is facilitated by the failure of the state to understand the reality on the ground and deal with it. This then is the essential power relation and it demands the manufacture of a new knowledge, a new discourse and the constituting of new power relations as the old is in tatters and this is feeding the desire for extremist right wing/neo nazi stability.

The options open to persons desirous of understanding the realities of organised crime are then severely limited and stark: settle for the discourse of the state agencies with all its apparent weaknesses, omissions and ignorance or seek to enter the world of organised crime to experience the worldview and discourse of OC and thereafter create a critical appraisal of both discourses that reveals the reality on the ground. One can count on your fingers those who have chosen the path of entering the world of OC and the majority are not in academia. This is another potent illustration of the failure of the present hegemonic discourse of the EU and the crisis of knowledge/discourse that the states of the EU are presently in. A crisis where official discourse now describes racist right wing extremism as “populism” all in an attempt to co-opt it for the purpose of attracting votes regardless of the impact on the social order and the sustainability of the EU project.