

# CONNECTIONS

## *The Quarterly Journal*

Volume VI, Number 1

Spring 2007

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# The Routes of Terrorism and Trafficking from Central Asia to Western Europe

*Brigadier General (Ret.) Russell D. Howard and Colleen M. Traugher*

The difficulty in penetrating Islamist extremist terrorist cells provided the impetus behind the “Routes Project,” which is the focus of this issue of *Connections*. Terrorist cells, particularly those of Al Qaeda and like-minded groups, are difficult to penetrate for a number of reasons. First, Al Qaeda cells are usually well financed, and thus are not susceptible to bribery as a mechanism for gaining access. Second, Al Qaeda training methods prevent those who have not graduated from Al Qaeda camps or other modes of instruction from entering a cell’s inner circle. They do not have the correct *bona fides* and do not know the “secret handshake” that would ensure their trustworthiness. Third, “Al Qaeda is held together by bonds of friendship, kinship, and discipleship,” according to Nick Pratt of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. A person can speak the language, look the part, and know the culture, but if he remains an outsider and is not “known” by other Al Qaeda members, he will not be accepted. Fourth, Al Qaeda’s complicated cellular structure makes it difficult to effectively penetrate the organization. Its cells operate independently, and each cell leader knows only the person above him in the organization. In addition, one cell leader may command several groups, using one alias with one group and another with a different group, so that captured members of different cells will give interrogators different names. Finally, Islamist terrorist cells do not respond to Cold War-era cell penetration tactics. Bribery (mentioned previously) does not work, nor do drugs, alcohol, or sexual entrapment—penetration mainstays of the competition between the Soviet bloc and the West during the Cold War.

The hypothesis of this project is simple: if terrorist cells resist direct penetration, the next best thing is to take an indirect approach by infiltrating groups that associate and interact with terrorist groups. Thus, the researchers involved in the “Routes Project” examined the linkages between and among terrorist groups and criminal cartels that traffic in drugs, weapons, and people. More specifically, identifying the nexus where terrorist groups converge was deemed most important.

The following assumptions helped frame the project’s research:

- Terrorist groups—like traffickers in drugs, weapons, and humans—exploit the “gray areas” where state power is absent or weak, where corruption is rampant, and where the rule of law is nonexistent.
- Terrorist groups and criminal traffickers have different long-term objectives, but they do have a convergence of interests. They all benefit from working in areas characterized by permeable borders, political and economic instability, corruptible officials, and overwhelmed state institutions.
- The most fertile areas to test the project’s hypothesis are those where terrorist groups and drug, weapon, and human trafficking groups converge.

- To date, there is a paucity of pertinent official data on the interrelationships between terrorist and criminal groups, which makes it difficult to establish undeniable and definitive alliances or linkages between and among terrorists and drug, weapon, and human traffickers. However, a simple and common-sense logic suggests that official data collection may provide clearer evidence for such relationships.

The articles included in this issue examine the presence of a “terror-crime nexus” in Central Asia, the South Caucasus, Southeastern Europe, and segments of Western Europe. As a whole, the project specifically focuses on potential points of intersection between terrorism and arms, drug, and human trafficking. First, each piece in the issue outlines the threat that transnational terrorism and international organized crime pose to the states examined. Next, the researchers attempt to determine how, why, and where terrorist and trafficking groups cooperate. Finally, based on the results of the analysis, each article briefly assesses current counterterrorism and counter-trafficking efforts and offers a number of policy recommendations to combat both phenomena in the future.

This project was a year-long effort undertaken by counterterrorism professionals from Azerbaijan, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Romania, and the United States. Indeed, the main strength of this project was the people conducting it, all of whom were subject matter experts and volunteers who spent hours collecting and analyzing data on top of busy work schedules and careers. While much was accomplished in determining levels of interaction between terror and crime within the selected regions, the major weakness of the project was the limited number of countries studied. More countries in the Caucasus, the Balkans, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe need to be examined to enhance the validity of the study’s findings and to provide more comprehensive conclusions for counterterrorism policymakers.

Each author participating in the study examined a particular region or aspect of the potential terror-crime nexus throughout Central Asia, the South Caucasus, South Eastern Europe, and Western Europe. Summaries of their findings are as follows:

*Jahangir Arasli*

In a close analysis of the links between terror and crime in the South Caucasus, Jahangir Arasli investigates the relationship between non-state armed groups and criminal organizations in that region. Focusing on separatist areas, particularly in Azerbaijan and Georgia, he argues that they have essentially become “black holes” of criminality and terrorism. He also points to Iranian control of drugs in the greater Caucasus region—“geo-drugs”—as a potential asymmetrical weapon that could be used against the West. He suggests that the terrorist and criminal activities are entrenched and growing in the South Caucasus, and indicates that the region threatens to replace the Balkans as the preeminent trafficking hub in Eurasia.

*Lucia Vreja*

Focusing on Romania, Dr. Lucia Vreja explores the nexus between terrorism and crime in Southeastern Europe. She details the linkages between terrorist groups and organized crime, which either provide support for each other or benefit from the same regional infrastructure. Further, she identifies the Balkan route as a main path by which traffickers and criminals enter Western Europe. Due to Romania's geographical position along the Balkan route and the relationship of its population to the Middle East, it is at risk for supporting both terrorism and criminal trafficking. As Dr. Vreja suggests, the relationship between terrorism and trafficking is at best blurry.

*Colleen M. Traughber*

Colleen M. Traughber's focused study explores the links between terrorism and arms, drug, and human trafficking in the former Soviet republic of Georgia. Using a forward-looking analytic methodology known as "Preparation of the Investigative Environment" (PIE), she identifies the actual levels of interaction between terrorist and criminal activities. She also acknowledges the indicators of potential collusion between terror and crime in the future. She recognizes the separatist regions as uncontrolled and prospective areas of intersection between terrorist and criminal activity, and points to the general lack of security and atmosphere of weak law enforcement in the Caucasus as a promoter of both terrorism and trafficking.

*Rustam Burnashev*

Central Asia is the focus of Dr. Rustam Burnashev's piece, which looks for evidence of terror-crime interaction in the far reaches of Eurasia. Based on the theory of a regional security complex, he considers the weak security situation in Central Asia, which provides a sanctuary for terrorism and all forms of trafficking. Dr. Burnashev identifies Central Asia as being an origin primarily of drugs. Due to the uncontrolled border with Afghanistan, drugs flow freely into Central Asian countries and then on to the West. In comparison to drug trafficking, arms and human trafficking are found to be minor issues in Central Asia.

*Krunoslav Antoliš*

Dr. Krunoslav Antoliš investigates terrorist routes in Southeastern Europe and the Balkans—particularly the heart of the routes, which flow from Central Asia to Western Europe. Based out of Croatia, he identifies the routes of migrant, narcotic, and weapons smuggling that course through the former Yugoslavia. The smuggling routes not only significantly overlap with one another, but also provide a conduit for terrorists throughout the region. He argues that the key to combating terrorism and trafficking is both detection and monitoring of the networks' members, and he calls for greater action on the part of national governments to combat the dual problems of terrorism and trafficking.

*Tatiana Busuncian*

Tatiana Busuncian analyzes Moldova's role as a stop along the route of the "instability train" in Southeastern Europe, which runs from Central Asia through the Caucasus and on to the Balkans. Human trafficking is particularly entrenched in Moldova, followed closely by drug smuggling and arms trafficking. In Moldova, there are indications of a mutually beneficial relationship between terrorism and trafficking. The separatist region of Transnistria in Moldova functions as a "gray area," or lawless region conducive to terrorism and trafficking. As such, Moldova is a stop along the Balkan route, the most heavily traveled transit of terrorism and criminality into Western Europe and beyond.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the articles in this issue point to the existence of an established nexus between terrorism and organized crime along routes that stretch from Central Asia to Western Europe. Perhaps even more importantly, they suggest that the relationship between terrorism and criminal trafficking in arms, drugs, and humans is entrenched and growing. Given their nature as transnational threats, terrorism and trafficking are increasing as national, regional, and international concerns. Just as the penetration of Islamic extremist terrorist cells is challenging, the penetration of terror-crime conglomerates will prove to be difficult in the future, since the threat is even more mobile and diffuse. However, the possibility of combating terrorism through the penetration of criminal networks—and vice versa—is a promising strategy for the ongoing campaigns against global terrorism and organized crime.

# The Rising Wind: Is the Caucasus Emerging as a Hub for Terrorism, Smuggling, and Trafficking?

*Jahangir Arasli* \*

## Introduction

This paper focuses on the routes of weapon, drug, and human trafficking in the Caucasus. It reviews the current regional security environment and provides an overview of the major violent non-state actors—such as terrorist groups, insurgency movements, and organized crime syndicates—operating across the region. The majority of the paper centers on the geography, patterns, and dynamics of the routes used by these groups in their trafficking activities. Finally, it discusses whether there are links between organized crime and the terrorist operations and analyzes the future evolution of the issue. The goal of the paper is to provide policymakers with information about the nature and challenges related to the trafficking routes in the Caucasus, as well as recommendations on how to find ways to contain and suppress the problem. The methodology employed involves the analysis of a broad variety of open sources, including printed and electronic media, the Internet, academic conferences and seminar proceedings, and interviews. Due to the scarcity of documented cases dealing with this issue, most of the conclusions are based on empirical reasoning. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author, and do not reflect the views or positions of any government structure.

The current era of human history is heavily influenced, and is perhaps even defined, by globalization. This “Triple I” phenomenon—internationalization, interdependence, and interaction—can be described, in the simplest terms, as the “increasing volume and variety of cross-border flows of people, goods, services, capitals, and technologies” across the globe.<sup>1</sup> However, there is also a dark side to this phenomenon. The positive effects of globalization are coupled with negative ones: the growing volume and variety of worldwide cross-border exchanges of dangerous criminals, illegal migrants, explosive ideas, deadly weapons, and lethal diseases. This specific pattern of globalization—a sort of “Globalization v. 2.0”—is accompanied by many side effects, uncertainties, and complexities. It is characterized by the emergence of a number of threats that were regarded as irrelevant and peripheral just fifteen years ago, particularly violent non-state actors. These actors include terrorist, insurgent, and criminal networks, which fester and flourish while the significance of the traditional nation-state diminishes. Today, these non-state actors represent one of the most prominent security challenges at all levels: global, regional, national, and local. Notably, they play a leading role in the field of illegal smuggling and trafficking of weapons, drugs, and humans across increasingly porous and transparent borders and seas, traveling between coun-

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\* Mr. Jahangir Arasli is a member of the PFP Consortium's Combating Terrorism Working Group from Azerbaijan.

<sup>1</sup> See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Globalization>.

tries and even continents. Since the magnitude of such illegal activity is growing year by year, the perpetrators are only rewarded for their transgressions by earning billions of dollars. A significant portion of these criminal funds has been used to support terrorist operations, including their political, recruitment, and logistical activities, thereby sustaining the “economy of terrorism.” While they are separate phenomena, terrorism, insurgency movements, and transnational organized crime sometimes coexist—a global phenomenon that can be observed in the Caucasus in particular.

### **The Caucasus: Unstable Security Environment**

This essay defines the South Caucasus as a region encompassing Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, while the North Caucasus includes states in the Russian Federation. This area has an important geopolitical position as the crossroads between Europe and Asia, the North and South, and the Black and Caspian seas, representing a key square in the “Eurasian chessboard.”<sup>2</sup> Historically, the Caucasus has been a vital link in a transcontinental trade and transit route known as the Great Silk Road. Today, that traditional route is being revived as an important passage in an East-West transportation corridor. At the same time, the region is characterized by fragmentation, volatility, and uncertainty, particularly in the post-Soviet era. It contains a kaleidoscopic variety of cultures, ethnicities, and religions. The three newly independent countries of the South Caucasus still remain in transition to full independence and are not yet well established; they continue to experience a certain degree of political instability and socio-economic difficulty. While Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are members of the Community of Independent States (CIS), within them are three non-recognized, self-styled quasi-states, or para-states,<sup>3</sup> which *de facto* represent the parallel shadow organization known as the “Community of Improvised States.” This “Community” emerged in the aftermath of the numerous ethno-political armed conflicts in the region,<sup>4</sup> many of which still remain unsettled. In addition, some areas of the South Caucasus remain functionally lawless (such as the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia), not under full control of the central governments (like the Javakheti district and the Kodori Gorge in Georgia), or occupy “gray areas” (like the triangle area between Georgia, Russia, and Azerbaijan).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Definition in Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Strategic Imperatives* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya Publishing House, 1998) (in Russian).

<sup>3</sup> These quasi- or para-states include the “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic” in Azerbaijan, the “Republic of Abkhazia,” in Georgia, and the “Republic of South Ossetia” in Georgia. The proclaimed “Chechen Republic of Ichkeria” in the Russian portion of the North Caucasus was defeated and eliminated by the Russian government.

<sup>4</sup> These were the Armenian-Azerbaijan, Georgian-Abkhaz, and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts.

<sup>5</sup> Analogous with the notorious tri-border area between Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil, which is known as a safe haven for terrorists and organized criminals, the Georgia-Russia-Azerbaijan tri-border area is a remote region with a harsh physical environment, homogenous population (primarily Sunni Muslim), and depressed economic situation. Together, these factors have awakened the ethnic and religious identity of the people in the region.



There are also some other potential points of friction in the Caucasus. For example, there are a large number of refugees or internally displaced people dispersed across the region, and both the number of foreign migrants and the diaspora pool are growing. As a part of the notorious “Eurasian Conflict Rim,” which encompasses Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Middle East, the Caucasus provides the geographic link between those turbulent zones and Russia, other former Soviet states, and Western Europe. Finally, since the early 1990s, the Caucasus has emerged as the staging ground for a variety of internally- and externally-based violent non-state actors.

The pool of non-state actors operating in the region is heterogeneous, decentralized, and fragmented. Furthermore, each nation has its own policies on terrorism and different abilities to combat it. States also have various tendencies to exaggerate or distort the realities on the ground in order to achieve political ends or to demonstrate their commitment to the “Global War on Terror.” From the traditional Western-centric point of view, there are very few terrorist groups and activities in the Caucasus. Terrorism, however, is still a real threat.

Over a decade ago, Azerbaijan suffered significantly from Armenian terrorist attacks on its territory during the war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan is currently fighting to suppress radical Islamist cells, which have emerged since the end of 1990s. For its part, Armenia remains in the shadow of a national liberation ideology, which resulted in the wave of terrorist attacks carried out worldwide during the 1970s and 1980s by the Armenian Secret Army of Liberation of Armenia (ASALA).<sup>6</sup> More recently, there was a major terrorist conspir-

### List of the Violent Non-State Actors in the Caucasus

#### Azerbaijan:

- “Nagorno-Karabakh Republic” and its military wing (ethnic Armenians)

#### Armenia:

- Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) cells
- Remnants of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA)

#### Georgia:

- “Republic of Abkhazia” and its military wing
- “Republic of South Ossetia” and its military wing
- The White Legion (*Tetri Legioni*)
- The Forest Brothers
- The Hunter Battalion (*Monadire*)
- Armenian parties of Javakheti (*Virk, Javahk*)
- Chechen cells

#### Russia:

- Chechen insurgency (five fronts, thirty-eight territorial sectors, many independent groups)
  - The Caucasian Front (CF)
  - Dagestani Jamaat Shariat\*
  - Ingush Jamaat Khalifat\*
  - North Ossetian Jamaat Al-Howl\*
  - Kabardin-Balkar Jamaat Yarmook\*
- \* operating as a formal part of the CF

#### Transnational Actors:

- Al Qaeda and affiliated movements

#### Organized Crime:

- Georgian community
- Armenian community
- Chechen community

**Sources:** 1. Author’s own electronic database; 2. Jangir Arasli, *World War Four: Informational Analytical Handbook on Non-State Paramilitary Systems* (Moscow: Astrel Publishing House, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base; available at [www.tb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=258](http://www.tb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=258).

acy surrounding the ASALA, which ended with a murder in the Armenian Parliament in 1999. In fact, the parliament continues to harbor some former ASALA members.<sup>7</sup>

Georgia continues to suffer from low-level conflict in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, fighting against groups that it identifies as “terrorist entities.” Tensions in the ethnically Armenian district of Javakheti and in related ethnic districts have led to the use of terrorist-like tactics and the manifestation of internal political struggles on the local level.

Russia continues to fight (with a visible degree of success) against a Chechen insurgency that has been responsible for a number of major acts of terrorism in the recent years.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Russia faces the spillover of terrorism from Chechnya into neighboring Dagestan and the mushrooming of urban, underground, radical Islamist cells across the North Caucasus.

In addition to the groups operating at the national level in the Caucasus, clandestine “out-of-area” terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK, or Kongra-Gel),<sup>9</sup> and Mujahedeen-e-Khalk (MEK); even the Sri Lanka-based Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are operating in the region, mostly for purposes of fundraising and money laundering. Last but not least, the activity of some ethnically oriented criminal communities from the Caucasian countries (including Armenian, Georgian, and Chechen organized crime groups) extends far beyond the geographic limits of the region, especially with respect to ethnic diasporas that have settled in Russia, Ukraine, and other places in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

All the groups mentioned above only increase the threat to security in the Caucasus. One of the most dangerous challenges in this region remains the illegal smuggling and trafficking of human beings, weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, caviar, money, and other items by non-state actors.<sup>11</sup> These groups, however, do not have exclusive control of smuggling and trafficking activities. Often, corrupt government officials are also involved, working in conjunction with individual non-state and criminal networks.<sup>12</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> Asthig Karapetyan and Gohar Poghosyan, “Vow to Ararat,” *Abovyan City.com* (27 October 2005); available at <http://www.abovyan.com/index.php?option=com-content&tasu=view&id31871temid=2>.

<sup>8</sup> Four Chechen rebel groups have been labeled as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) at different times by the U.S. Department of State. See MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base; available at [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org).

<sup>9</sup> Onnik Krikirian, “Kurdish Nationalism in Armenia,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newslines* (6 January 1999); available at <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/1999/01/5-not/not-060199.asp>.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Leonid Maximenkov and C. Namiesniowski, “Organized Crime in Post-Communist Russia: A Criminal Revolution?” *Commentary* 48 (unclassified) (September 1994); available at [www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/en/publications/commentary/com48.asp](http://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/en/publications/commentary/com48.asp).

<sup>11</sup> This paper will only look at the first three of the items mentioned.

<sup>12</sup> In one recent example, a drug trafficking ring, which was penetrated in August 2006 on the southern Azeri border with Iran, was led by an active duty police officer. See [www.day.az](http://www.day.az), available from [www.day.az/news/society/55879.html](http://www.day.az/news/society/55879.html) (in Russian).

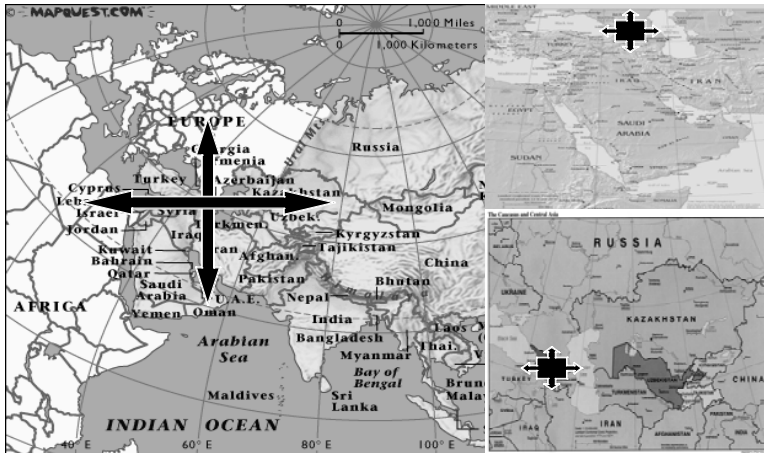


Figure 1: “The Crossroads”

security implications of such activities and collaborations are negative and diverse. Specifically, the threat involves the following:

- Financial resources generated by smuggling and trafficking are being diverted to support terrorist groups’ training, equipment, and operations
- The national security of individual countries is eroding due to the circulation of illicit weapons, growing drug addiction among the younger generation, and the resulting additional strain placed upon the working portion of the population
- Regional security is also eroding due to frictions caused by the cross-border movements of individuals associated with smuggling and trafficking activities.

The Caucasus serves smuggling and trafficking networks in a triple capacity: it is a region of origin, transit, and destination for smugglers and traffickers. The factors that support these activities in the region (as touched upon previously) are three-fold: first, an unstable political and military environment, which generates demand for weapons and their diffusion within war zones; second, an uneasy socio-economic situation, which stimulates the emigration of local populations; and third, a vital geographical position, which results in the use of the region as a transit route for drugs and migration from Asia to Europe. For these reasons, terrorists and criminals today employ trafficking and smuggling tactics, exploiting the well-worn tracks of the Great Silk Road.

### **The Border Environment: Diverse, Porous, and Fragile**

As soon as trafficking activity crosses state borders, it emerges as a center of gravity. The border environment in the Caucasus can be summarized by one word: *complexity*. There are ten inter-state borders among six different countries in the region, each with very different characteristics, from porous borders to tightly controlled ones. There are

also two sea theatres (the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea), which have lengthy, exposed coastlines. In addition, there are three major international airports and three major seaports that serve as vital entry and exit points to the region. The “Iron Curtain” borders that the Soviet Union shared with Turkey and Iran have virtually disappeared. Other borders are brand new, having emerged only after the collapse of the Soviet Union along the administrative lines that divided the former Soviet republics. These newer boundaries still need to be examined and agreed upon by the states concerned. The border regime between some states is characterized by streamlined visa-issuing procedures and simplified crossing for citizens of certain countries. For example, Azeri citizens do not require visas to go to Russia, and Russian citizens do not need visas to go to Azerbaijan. The population of Nakhchevan, a region on the Azeri border with Iran, enjoys certain visa privileges for travel to Iran.<sup>13</sup> Ethnic kinship remains a relevant factor; many ethnic groups, clans, and families straddle the borders of neighboring countries (see Figure 2).

Illegal cross-border movement related to petty crime is common among these populations. Smugglers, hunters, poachers, and pathfinders are all armed for their business. The natural protection offered by the mountainous and forest-covered terrain also supports illegal trafficking activity. Corruption among authorities (such as border guards, customs officials, and law enforcement officials) only contributes to border security breaches. The situation is further complicated by factors like ineffective border control and management due to a lack of both professionalism and proper instruments, as well as relatively weak structures. The following section examines the various inter-state borders that divide the Caucasus.

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### *Azerbaijan-Iran and Azerbaijan-Turkey*

The major portion of border security support infrastructure along Azerbaijan’s borders, including fortifications and technical installations with Iran, suffered from the severe upheavals in the early 1990s and was twice partially destroyed: first in 1990 during a popular uprising against the communist government, and then in 1993 during the Armenian-Azeri war over Karabakh. More than 110 kilometers of today’s Azeri-Iranian border is under the control of the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (for more detail, refer to the case study below). Efforts to restore the damaged infrastructure and build additional capabilities will require time; for instance, the electronic border sur-

**Insight: Azerbaijan’s Border Environment**

**Total land borders:** 2,657 km (with six countries)

**Total sea borders:** 988 km (with four countries)

**Entry-exit points:** one international airport; one seaport/ferry terminal; four major border crossings (with Russia, Georgia, Turkey, and Iran); four secondary border crossings

**Strength of the border guard troops:** no more than 5000 men (The Military Balance, 2005/2006)

**Territory out of control:** up to 16 percent occupied by the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian ethnic separatists (including over 160 km of borders with Iran)

<sup>13</sup> *Novoye Vremya* 140 (1202) (17 August 2006).



Figure 2: Cross-border ethnic kinship

veillance system in the Nakhchevan enclave will be introduced no earlier than 2010.<sup>14</sup> The Azeri-Turkish border, however, being a mere fifteen kilometers wide and having only a single border-crossing point at Sadarak, is firmly controlled.

#### *Azerbaijan-Armenia*

The Azerbaijan-Armenia border is heavily protected by combat troops on both sides. In fact, it represents an extension of the frontline of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and is virtually inaccessible for any movements besides military ones.

#### *Armenia-Turkey and Armenia-Iran*

These two borders, officially regarded as outer borders of the Community of Independent States, are protected by the Russian Federal Border Service troops (under the Operational Group Armenia).<sup>15</sup> The difference between the Armenian-Turkish border and the Armenian-Iranian border, however, is that the Armenian border with Turkey remains officially closed for political reasons, while the border with Iran is extensively exploited since this country has emerged as Armenia's second-largest trade partner and unofficial regional ally (for more detail, refer to the case study below).

#### *Georgia-Turkey*

The level of security at this border has significantly decreased since the collapse of the Soviet Union and Georgia's subsequent independence. The level of border protection is relatively low. The Sarpi border crossing on the Black Sea is characterized by a high

<sup>14</sup> Statement by LTG Elchin Guliev, Head of State Border Protection Service of Azerbaijan, 1 August 2006; available at [www.day.az/news/society/55370.html](http://www.day.az/news/society/55370.html).

<sup>15</sup> Available at <http://scorpic-dmb.narod.ru>.

volume of people and cargo movement, and it is regarded as one of the primary hubs for migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

### *Georgia-Armenia and Georgia-Azerbaijan*

These two borders were drawn along arbitrary administrative lines of the former Soviet republics, and thus still require definition and agreement by the states involved. For instance, the Georgian-Azeri border still needs to be delineated; only 308 kilometers were agreed upon—just 65 percent of the total length as of August 2006.<sup>16</sup> These borders are transparent, which means that they are protected only by infrequent patrolling. There are many unofficial crossings, paths, and tracks that bypass official border-crossing points and are quite accessible to all kinds of actors, benign and not. Another important factor is the presence of Azeri and Armenian trans-border populations, who live in Georgia on the borders with Azerbaijan and Armenia.

### *Russia-Georgia and Russia-Azerbaijan*

This border environment is not as fluid as some of those discussed above. While Russia has normalized relations with Azerbaijan, its relations with Georgia are politically complicated and uneasy. The Georgian-Russian border has still not been delineated, contains many contested areas, and remains a subject of protracted negotiations. It is worth mentioning that two border crossings—the Roki tunnel in South Ossetia and Psou in Abkhazia—are managed by the separatist regions and are out of the control of the Tbilisi-based central government. The situation on the Russian-Azeri border is much better: only five to six percent of the total length remains undefined.<sup>17</sup>

There are a number of points of both active and frozen conflict nearby—including Chechnya, Dagestan, the Pankisi Gorge, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia—which negatively influence the border areas, leaving them exposed to illegal smuggling, trafficking, and even terrorist operations (see Figure 3). In September 2002, a Chechen rebel force of around 200 militants under the command of warlord Ruslan Gelayev broke through the border into the Russian region of Ingushetia from the Georgian side. Gelayev himself was killed in the ensuing skirmish with federal troops, leading his force back to Georgia by an alternative route through Dagestan in December 2004.

More recently, such insurrections have diminished significantly, although conflict continues to be carried out by decentralized groups of two to three unarmed people in civilian clothes. For instance, on 1 August 2006, two members of a militant Chechen separatist group were detained at the border area of Botlih in Dagestan, caught while trying to sneak into Georgia (or Azerbaijan) for the purpose of medical treatment.<sup>18</sup> The level and intensity of covert cross-border movement, including illegal smuggling

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<sup>16</sup> *Novoye Vremya* 133 (1195) (5–7 August 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Statement of Colonel Ilham Mehtiev, Deputy Head of State Border Protection Service of Azerbaijan, *Echo* 147 (12 August 2006); *Novoye Vremya* 137 (1197) (12–14 August 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Statement by the press officer of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Dagestan, Russian Federation, 3 August 2006; available at [www.day.az/news/society/55605.html](http://www.day.az/news/society/55605.html) (in Russian).

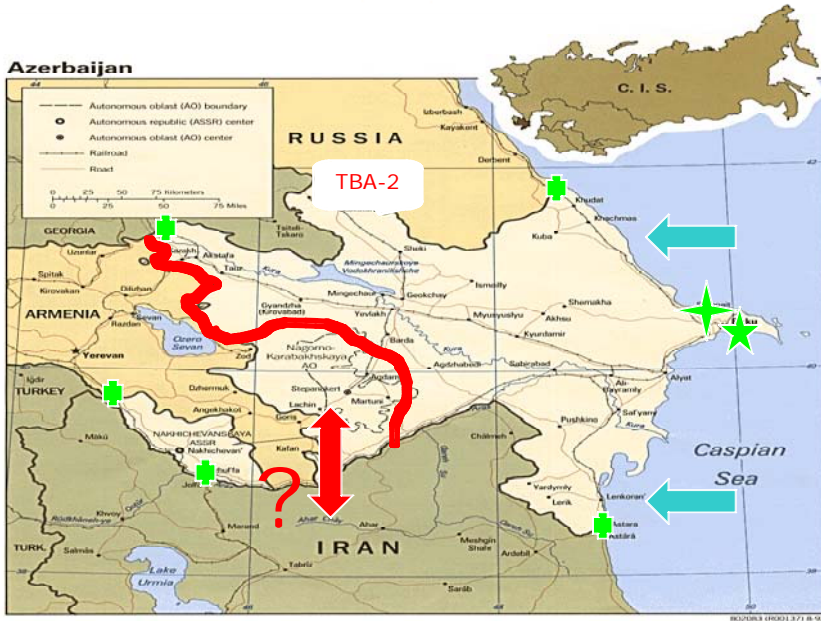


Figure 3: Azerbaijan’s border environment

and trafficking, depends on the season due to the mountainous environment; crossings tend to increase in the summertime.<sup>19</sup>

Because of the reasons mentioned above, the Russian government believes that the strength of its border protection force on its southern border—which consists of twelve *pogranichny otryad* (POGO), or border troop detachments of regiment-size units<sup>20</sup>—is not sufficient to maintain control. For this reason, two new mountain rifle brigades of the regular Russian Army will be sent to support the mission of border protection.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, Azerbaijan is planning to increase the protection of its northern and northwestern borders by deploying an additional seventy border posts and twenty coastal posts.<sup>22</sup>

This overview of the regional border environment should provide insight into why the illegal smuggling and trafficking of weapons, drugs, and human beings became and still remains possible in the Caucasus. The next section analyzes the regional patterns of smuggling and trafficking.

<sup>19</sup> There are more than ten mountain passes on the Russian border with Georgia and Azerbaijan.

<sup>20</sup> “The Armed Forces of the USSR, Russia, and CIS Countries,” available at [www8.brinkster.com/vad777/russia/Others/pv.htm](http://www8.brinkster.com/vad777/russia/Others/pv.htm) (in Russian).

<sup>21</sup> *Izvestia* 145 (11 August 2006) (in Russian).

<sup>22</sup> Statement by LTG Elchin Guliev, *op cit*.

## **Pattern One: Weapons**

The circulation of weapons in the Caucasus, instigated by inter-state and intrastate conflicts in the region, is only to be expected. There are several categories of weapons that are smuggled and trafficked, each with their own characteristics.

### *Inbound Trafficking*

Inbound trafficking of weapons occurs because of outside support for military activities in the separatist regions, which remain the main facilitators, recipients, and users of smuggled weapons. Although separatist groups in the Caucasus tend to claim that their militaries were built from the “war trophies” of previous armies, the reality is a different matter. For example, all the weapons, equipment, ammunition, and spare parts for the military of the Nagorno-Karabakh region come from Armenia, and the military arsenal includes a variety of quite sophisticated weapons, including heavy armored assets. For this reason, the military in the breakaway region today has over than 300 main battle tanks,<sup>23</sup> which is more than some NATO member countries, including Canada, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, and Portugal. This arrangement allows Armenia, which has an alliance with Nagorno-Karabakh, to hide surplus tanks, armor, and artillery that exceed the limits of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty in the “black hole” of Nargorno-Karabakh. This further destabilizes the regional balance of power. Similarly, Abkhazia and South Ossetia also obtain weapons from outside Georgia, ostensibly from private sources in Russia and Ukraine. Notably, while the supply of arms to the separatist regions is mostly overt (since the supplying sides recognize the independence of the regions), according to international law, the transactions remain illegal.

### *Transit Trafficking*

Due to the geographic location of the Caucasus, some elements of the international illegal arms trade definitely transit through the region, often concealed as commercial cargo. For example, Azeri customs discovered six disassembled MIG-21 jet fighters on a Russian cargo plane at the Baku international airport on 19 March 1999.<sup>24</sup> The cargo plane was allegedly en route to Serbia from Kazakhstan.

### *Internal Circulation and Outward Trafficking*

Both the internal circulation and outward trafficking of weapons take place largely in war zones as exchanges between different factions, including terrorist entities. Such transactions mostly involve small arms and light weapons, ammunition, land mines, and explosives that travel along complex routes. For example, three ethnic Georgian paramilitary structures—the White Legion, Forest Brothers, and Hunter Battalion, which are supported by the Georgian government in the context of conflict with Abkhazia—have emerged as almost autonomous and uncontrollable actors. They are

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<sup>23</sup> *The Military Balance 2002-2003* (London: The Institute for Strategic Studies, 2003), 66.

<sup>24</sup> Reuters, “Azerbaijan Detain Russian Plane Bound for Yugoslavia” (23 March 1999); available at [www.aeronautics.ru/azerbaijan1.htm](http://www.aeronautics.ru/azerbaijan1.htm).





Figure 4: Weapons trafficking routes in the Caucasus

particularly engaged in weapons smuggling (among other activities) within their operation areas, which include Mingrelia, the Gali district, and the Kodori Gorge in western Georgia. Similar phenomena take place in Chechnya and Dagestan, where local terrorist and insurgent groups purchase weapons from Russian sources and disperse them to the population for operational or commercial purposes. At the same time, some high-end weapons, like man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS), are smuggled into Chechnya and Dagestan from abroad. In the summer of 2002, Chechen insurgents managed to smuggle several dozen MANPADS across the Georgian-Russian border to Chechnya. The Chechen insurgents subsequently shot down several Russian helicopters, resulting in the loss of a high number of personnel and posing serious implications for operations, which lasted until the end of the year.<sup>25</sup>

The remnants of Cold War-era Soviet arms arsenals in the Caucasus are an additional threat, particularly in two Russian military bases in Georgia: the 12<sup>th</sup> in Batumi, and the 62<sup>nd</sup> in Akhalkalaki, both of which are due to be disbanded in 2008. It is feared that a portion of the weapons and ammunition stored at these bases will fall into the hands of local militants, including ethnic Armenians who are active in Akhalkalaki. Despite being strictly prohibited and punishable by law, the regional tradition of arms possession by the local population complicates matters by stimulating the proliferation of firearms and handguns in the Caucasus. (To view the weapons trafficking routes in the region, see Figure 4.)

<sup>25</sup> Available from [www.gazeta.ru/2002/11/20/ivanovposadi.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/2002/11/20/ivanovposadi.shtml).

## Pattern Two: Drugs

The Caucasus plays two roles with respect to drug trafficking, serving primarily as a transit region and secondarily as a cultivation region. Both of these roles, however, share a common key element: drugs have a high value-to-bulk ratio, and their transport does not require significant logistical support. This makes drug trafficking very attractive; perpetrators tend to make a large profit without significant investment of effort.

### *Strategic Drugs*

Since the Caucasus is situated near Afghanistan, which provides nearly 87 percent of the global heroin supply, the region naturally serves as a transit area for drugs. Its relevance continues to grow in the light of the current situation in Afghanistan, tensions surrounding Iran, and the formation of the “Balkan heroin pipeline.”

Because of the international presence in the Balkans, the regional processes of law enforcement and security sector reform, and the intended integration of the Balkans into the European Union, significant emphasis has been placed on countering drug trafficking in the Balkans, causing some drug trafficking routes to drift toward the Caucasus. Consequentially, the Caucasus is becoming an alternative corridor to Europe, as drugs are trafficked through Russia, Ukraine, and on to Europe. Simultaneously, some drugs are trafficked in the opposite direction, from Europe to the Caucasus. These traffickers deliver more expensive or “elite” drugs, like cocaine or amphetamines. Such “elite” drugs are increasing in popularity among youth in the wealthy strata of Caucasian society.

### *Soft Drugs*

By virtue of the favorable climate in the Caucasus, opium and cannabis are cultivated, produced, and consumed locally. However, there are now indications that these goods, while produced locally, are also exported outside of the Caucasus, primarily to the greater Russian market.

Today, Azeri law enforcement officials recognize that the country is increasingly being used as a transit point for drugs arriving from Afghanistan and destined for Russia, Georgia, and Europe.<sup>26</sup> The countries of origin for drugs are Iran (by land and sea), Kazakhstan (by air and sea), and Turkmenistan (by sea). All in all, there are at least thirty-eight identified drug trafficking routes running through Azerbaijan (inbound, outbound, and transit).<sup>27</sup> Supply shipments are conducted in a decentralized pattern, ei-

**Insight: Azerbaijan’s Official Drugs Statistics**  
(for the first half of 2006)

- Drugs intercepted: **103.98 kg**
- Drug crops destroyed: **150 tons**
- Drug dealers and traffickers apprehended: **1,076**
- Heroin price (per gram): **USD 40-50**
- Cocaine price (per gram): **USD 15-16**
- Cannabis price (per gram): **USD 3**

<sup>26</sup> *Zerkalo* 142 (5 August 2006) (in Russian).

<sup>27</sup> Statement by LTC Taniverdi Aydinov, police officer, Analytical Branch, Main Counter-Narcotics Department, Ministry of Interior of Azerbaijan, in *Echo* (11 August 2006).



Figure 5: Drug trafficking routes in the Caucasus

ther in person by couriers (e.g., within the human body) or in unaccompanied commercial cargo shipments. The items trafficked range from low-grade, label “555” heroin to high-quality, label “999” heroin. There is also an increasing flow of cannabis from Iran, as well as cocaine and marijuana from Russia, which is mostly delivered by messengers, arriving by legal means of transportation, such as automobiles, trains, or ferries. The pool of traffickers is international. Perpetrators detained for drug-related crimes in the first half of 2006 in Azerbaijan (in addition to local citizens) included forty-seven foreign nationals (twenty-three from Georgia, fifteen from Iran, and others from Russia, the Central Asian states, and Afghanistan).<sup>28</sup> Azerbaijan pays a high price for its strategic position, one negative backlash of which is the transit of illicit drugs, many of which filter into the Azeri population. There are 300,000 drug users in the country, among them 15,000 to 18,000 (including teenagers) who are addicted to hard drugs.<sup>29</sup> Over the last year, drug-related crime rates in Azerbaijan rose by more than nine percent. The drug issue has risen to a national-level security threat. (For the main drug trafficking routes in the region, see Figure 5.)

### Pattern Three: People

The illegal movement of people is completely different from the two kinds of trafficking discussed previously. It encompasses two subcategories: migrant smuggling and

<sup>28</sup> Statement by LTG Oruj Zalov, Deputy Minister of Interior of Azerbaijan, 28 July 2006; available at [www.day.az/news/society/55097.html](http://www.day.az/news/society/55097.html).

<sup>29</sup> *Bakinskije Vedomosti* 28 (1486) (12 August 2006).

human trafficking.<sup>30</sup> But, as with drug trafficking, the Caucasus plays two roles—source and transit region—with respect to human smuggling and trafficking. Wars, unstable political situations, economic hardship, and poverty encourage people to seek better places to live; for the people of the Caucasus and surrounding regions, such destinations include Europe, Russia, Turkey, and the Persian Gulf states.<sup>31</sup> People of the Caucasus provide a cheap labor force, whether in prostitution or in agricultural zones. After moving to a new destination, migrants often become victims; they are either underpaid or suffer from forced labor, sexual exploitation, or even the removal of bodily organs.<sup>32</sup> The cost of smuggling or trafficking to the Caucasus is high; it results in the disruption of economies, the degradation of the population, broken families, and the spread of diseases.

All three countries of the South Caucasus are categorized with Tier II status with respect to human trafficking by the U.S. Department of State. This designation signifies that these countries do not fully comply with the minimum standards of the 2003 Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, and have failed to show increasing efforts to combat the problem.<sup>33</sup> Georgia is regarded by some experts to be a major trafficking channel.<sup>34</sup> Yet, while neither Azerbaijan nor Armenia contains major routes for human smuggling and trafficking at present, the situation in Armenia is changing. According to Armenian non-governmental sources, in 2005 at least 5,000 Armenian women were recruited into prostitution in Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Reportedly, many corrupt mid-level officials are involved in human trafficking.<sup>35</sup> Iran, which is emerging as a trafficking hub of growing importance, is another complicating factor. As both a source and transit country, it was downgraded to a Tier

**Insight: Azerbaijan’s Official Human Smuggling and Trafficking Statistics (2005)**

- SOM / THB related crimes: **160**
- SOM / THB perpetrators charged: **153**
- SOM / THB victims identified: **231**
- Countries of origin: China, Vietnam, Russia, Iran, Iraq, Central Asian states, South Asian states, and African states
- Countries of destination: EU (including Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, Sweden, Netherlands), Turkey, the Gulf states (including UAE), India, and Pakistan

<sup>30</sup> Smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings can be distinguished from one another. In the first case, the movement of people takes place by their consent, and in the second case, the movement takes place by force, coercion, or fraud.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of State Report, 2005 (6 June 2006); available at [www.usdoj.gov/ag/annualreports/tr2006/assessment\\_of\\_efforts\\_to\\_combat\\_tip.pdf](http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/annualreports/tr2006/assessment_of_efforts_to_combat_tip.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> *Zerkalo* 147 (12 August 2006) (in Russian).

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2004*; available at [www.state.gov/g/tip/ris/tiprpt/2004/](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/ris/tiprpt/2004/).

<sup>34</sup> Mark Galeotti, “People-trafficking Erodes Security in Former Soviet States,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* (April 2005): 25.

<sup>35</sup> Statements by: John Miller, Senior Advisor of U.S. Department of State, Chief Bureau for Monitoring and Combating Trafficking; and Edik Bagdasaryan, Chairman of the Association of Investigative Journalists of Armenia; available at [www.a1plus.am/ru/?page+issue&id=29666](http://www.a1plus.am/ru/?page+issue&id=29666) (in Russian).

III country in the most recent U.S. Department of State *Trafficking in Persons Report*.<sup>36</sup>

The movement of smuggled or trafficked people is mostly overt. Smugglers and traffickers tend to use legal documents, official border-crossing points, and public means of transportation to transport people. A relatively limited number travel with fake documents or cross borders illegally, but the use of forged travel papers continues to grow. For example, during one month (June 2006), citizens of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Georgia, Syria, India, and China were detained in Azerbaijan while traveling with fake documents or documents belonging to other individuals.<sup>37</sup>

There are a large number of facilitators of human trafficking, who provide safe houses, instructions on disguising people, contact points in the destination country, visa support, tickets, and travel documents (when needed). They cooperate with shadowy travel agencies, various unofficial mediators, corrupt officials in law enforcement agencies responsible for issuing passports, border guards who provide information on border crossings, and even some corrupt foreign embassy employees.<sup>38</sup>

Human trafficking and smuggling groups emerged in the early 1990s in the aftermath of the post-Soviet economic crisis. They consist of a limited number of individuals, usually with only five to ten members in each group. Currently, there are no indications that broad organized trafficking networks exist. Instead, decentralized groups act independently and solely for profit, and show no link to politically motivated actors, including terrorists. In the first half of 2006, a total of eight such groups were apprehended in Azerbaijan by the Ministry of Interior.<sup>39</sup> However, the current situation could change; local groups could merge into larger transnational organizations. At the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006, border troops in the Azeri Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Interior jointly managed to break a human smuggling ring. It consisted of more than forty individuals from Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, and the UAE who were involved in the business of human smuggling from countries of Central Asia and Russia to Dubai and Turkey.<sup>40</sup> A trend toward transnational networks is one of the greatest concerns today with respect to smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings in the Caucasus. The main routes used for human trafficking in the region are shown in Figure 6.

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<sup>36</sup> *Iran Focus* (6 June 2006); available at [www.iranfocus.com](http://www.iranfocus.com).

<sup>37</sup> "Trend" Analytical Group (July 2006) (in Russian).

<sup>38</sup> In April 2006, the media in Azerbaijan reported that some officials in the American Embassy in Baku assisted in trafficking of women to the U.S. for prostitution (this assertion was later denied); available at [www.redtram.ru/go/42549568](http://www.redtram.ru/go/42549568).

<sup>39</sup> Statement by LTG Oruj Zalov, Deputy Minister of Interior of Azerbaijan, 28 July 2006; available at [www.day.az/news/society/55097.html](http://www.day.az/news/society/55097.html).

<sup>40</sup> Statement by LTG Elchin Guliev, Head of State Border Protection Service of Azerbaijan, 10 February 2006; available at [www.day.az/news/society/41211.htm](http://www.day.az/news/society/41211.htm).



Figure 6: Human trafficking routes in the Caucasus

### Quasi-State Black Holes: Case Study on Nagorno-Karabakh

Quasi-states are the remaining destabilizing factor in the Caucasus. These separatist regions emerged in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and are not recognized internationally or legally. While they claim to be “democratic,” these quasi-states are not democratic regimes, and are instead non-transparent, authoritarian separatist enclaves. Driven by motivations to survive, supported by their own military and security forces, the separatist regimes have instituted *de facto* martial law. They have survived by drawing upon a “besieged fortress” mentality, the financial and lobbying capabilities of ethnic diasporas, and the selfish geopolitical ambitions of regional powers. These separatist regions are supported by hidden sources and, presumably, by criminal and illegal activities as well. The conduct of illegal smuggling and trafficking networks is particularly present in these quasi-states. Due to limited space, this article will focus on the example of the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, an area dominated by ethnic Armenians that has proclaimed itself independent from Azerbaijan.

Although located on Azeri territory, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic regards Azerbaijan as an enemy, and instead has cultivated direct links to Armenia and Iran. Both Armenia and Iran have entered into strategic alliances<sup>41</sup> with Nagorno-Karabakh, which are characterized by a mixture of *realpolitik*, geographical proximity, and simi-

<sup>41</sup> Sami Rosen, “Armenia and Israel Throw Down a Gage to Iran and Turkey,” *Axis Information and Analysis* (20 January 2006); available at [www.axisglobe.com/article.asp?article=606](http://www.axisglobe.com/article.asp?article=606). See also *Parameters—U.S. Army War College Quarterly* (Winter 2001–02); available at [www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/parameters01winter/jalali.htm](http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/parameters01winter/jalali.htm).

lar leadership.<sup>42</sup> For its part, Armenia maintains a strong political, military, and security alliance with Nargono-Karabakh, heightening the complexities in this intriguing situation.

The border between Armenia and Iran, otherwise known as the Megri Corridor, is forty-eight kilometers wide and is protected by Russian Federal Border Guard Service troops from the 127<sup>th</sup> Border Detachment.<sup>43</sup> Despite the fact that this is a Russian unit, at least half of its personnel are ethnic Armenians.<sup>44</sup> The official statistics about this unit indicate a very limited level of activity. For instance, at the Karchivan border crossing, the major gateway from Iran to Armenia, only eight border violations were reported in 2004 and fourteen in 2005. In addition, only 0.1 kilograms of drugs were confiscated at this border crossing from 2004 to 2006.<sup>45</sup> Such statistics seem incomplete, if not ridiculous, given the nature, intensity, and magnitude of illegal smuggling and trafficking in the region. Border troops under Russian command and control remain a complicating factor for smugglers and traffickers in this area who are looking for secure routes. Thus, their options are limited to the use of territory that is under control of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

The quasi-state of Nagorno-Karabakh controls over 110 kilometers of what is (officially) the border between Azerbaijan and Iran and which coincides with the Araz (Araks) River. Transportation between Iran and the Nagorno-Karabakh territory involves small boats and several pontoon bridges, which are patrolled by the separatist region's army. Smuggled materials presumably consist mostly of drugs, but may also include weapons or individuals. After the smuggled items are delivered to the separatist region, smugglers may encounter a number of further opportunities. The portion of the Armenian-Azeri border claimed by Nagorno-Karabakh is not protected by border guards, customs officials, or the police; it is instead completely controlled by the armies and security services of both Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. This means that there is not only a lack of formal control, but also an opportunity to bypass the official Iranian-Armenian border (the Megri Corridor) while remaining protected by the Russians. Smuggled materials are easily transferred from Nagorno-Karabakh to southern Armenia along two axes. The major one is Lachin-Kafan, also known as the notorious Lachin Corridor, and the auxiliary route is Goradiz-Megri, otherwise known as Route A-81. In Armenia, these two routes merge into the Megri-Kafan route, which originates in Iran. The route is currently being repaired as part of the gas pipeline construction

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<sup>42</sup> The Presidents of Iran (Mahmood Ahmadi Nejat) and Armenia (Robert Kocharyan) both started their political careers within militant groups and participated in war.

<sup>43</sup> Available at <http://scorpic-dmb.narod.ru/Armenia.htm> (in Russian).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Statement by Col. Vilsur Zyanchurin, Commander of the 127<sup>th</sup> "Megri" Border Detachment, Operational Group "Armenia," Russian Federal Border Guard Troops, reported by the Noyan Topan News Agency, 10 May 2006; available at [www.mediaforum.am](http://www.mediaforum.am).



Figure 7: The Nagorno-Karabakh “black hole”

package financed by the Export Development Bank of Iran.<sup>46</sup> From this vantage point, smuggled goods (or people) can move out of Armenia via the only two available routes: either the Megri-Goris-Yerevan-Tbilisi route (Route E-117) or the Megri-Yerevan-Ashtarak-Kutaisi route (Route A-82). Georgia thus serves as a “distribution center” to the outside world, providing a link to Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, and Western Europe.

In addition, Nagorno-Karabakh has a related terrorist dimension. This region is particularly supported by ethnic Armenians in countries like Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and Iraq. Some of these supporters have ties with terrorist or extremist organizations, including those that have been designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations by the U.S. Department of State, including ASALA.<sup>47</sup> Many members of ASALA fought against Azerbaijan during the war over Karabakh as part of the Armenian and Nagorno-Karabakh militaries. Some evidence suggests a link between extremist Armenian groups and Hezbollah in Lebanon concerning the exchange of tactical and technical terrorist training.<sup>48</sup> Such linkages virtually enshrine a Caucasus-Middle East “terrorist circuit,” which centers on Iran.

<sup>46</sup> Available at [www.souzarmyan.ru/k2monitnews.php?Action=Full&NewsID=5538](http://www.souzarmyan.ru/k2monitnews.php?Action=Full&NewsID=5538). See also *Iran News* (16 November 2005) (in Russian); available at [www.iran.ru/rus/print\\_news.php?news\\_id=35351](http://www.iran.ru/rus/print_news.php?news_id=35351).

<sup>47</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, available at [www.tb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=258](http://www.tb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=258).

<sup>48</sup> Matthew A. Levitt, “Confronting Syrian Support for Terrorist Groups,” *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 5:5 (May 2003); available at [www.meib.org/articles/0305\\_s1.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0305_s1.htm).



Overall, the Nagorno-Karabakh “black hole” represents a serious security threat in the Caucasus (for a map of the trafficking hub, see Figure 7). It strengthens the Iranian-Armenian strategic alliance, providing Iranians with a “back door” to Europe, and has the potential to serve (under certain circumstances) as a regional terrorist base.

## Iran: “Geo-Drugs” as an Asymmetric Weapon

Why is the issue of Iranian drug trafficking through Nagorno-Karabakh so relevant? Iran, though located along the heroin trafficking route from Afghanistan and Pakistan, is not regarded as a significant producer or distributor of narcotics by the West. Furthermore, the Iranian leadership has positioned the country as the region’s most committed participant in the “war on drugs” and has created a robust system to deal with the problem (the country has lost more than 3,500 servicemen since 1979 in anti-drug operations). However, due to global geopolitics, the status quo could soon change. The current standoff between the West and Iran over the Iranian nuclear program is emerging as a determining factor. Iran, anticipating a possible backlash, is preparing an asymmetric response to the worst-case scenario. This response could be conducted in many ways, possibly including the use of drugs as a strategic weapon against the West. Early in the summer of 2006, several senior Iranian officials threatened to flood Europe with narcotics should the U.S. or anyone else undertake hostile actions against Iran—threats which sounded feasible (see sidebar).<sup>49</sup> Surrounded mostly by pro-Western or unfriendly countries, some with a significant U.S. military presence, Iran sees its ability to channel drugs to Europe as an attractive strategic option. To do so, it can use sea routes and the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and its 110 kilometer-wide border with Iran.

### Iranian Threats on the Drugs Issue

**Quote 1:** if “Western states continue their pressures on Iran over its nuclear program, Iran can allow the transit of drugs and narcotics through its waters and other areas”

- Dori Hajafabadi, Former Head of Iran’s intelligence under President Khatami, now Attorney General

**Quote 2:** if “Iran wanted to, it could end its barriers to the drug traffic and thus allow it to flood the West”

- Fada Hossein-Maleki, Chair of Iran’s Drugs Control Agency

## A Terrorism-Trafficking Nexus: Is It Really There?

The answer to whether a nexus between terrorist groups and illegal trafficking organizations actually exists is dependent on which groups are considered terrorists. Three of the four countries in the Caucasus are facing insurgencies on their territories. These countries—Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Russia—often accuse the insurgents of terrorist activities. In the case of Azerbaijan and Russia, these accusations seem to be true. Factions from Nagorno-Karabakh, Chechnya, and most recently Dagestan have at different times conducted terrorist attacks against Azerbaijan and Russia. Similar situations exist

<sup>49</sup> Dariush Mirzai, “Iran’s New Threat Against Europe: Drug Trafficking,” *Asia News* (5 June 2006); available at [www.asianews.it](http://www.asianews.it).

in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. If it is commonly accepted that the separatist regions are responsible for terrorist attacks, then the conclusion is obvious: there is a nexus between terrorism and trafficking. An example of this is the so-called Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, created within Russian territory by ethnic separatists in the early 1990s operating beyond the control of the Russian government. Before being militarily suppressed in 2000, the separatist regime was deeply engaged in criminal activities to finance its existence, including arms and drugs trafficking. Some of this trafficking activity passed through Russian borders. Russian authorities have pinned responsibility for these activities (although somewhat vaguely) on some Islamic countries and organizations. Today, Nagorno-Karabakh is employing the same *modus operandi* and is presumably sustaining itself, at least in part, through illegal trafficking.

Beside the cases mentioned previously, no clear evidence exists to show that terrorist groups are engaged in weapons, drug, or human trafficking in the Caucasus. There are no modular networks combining terrorist and criminal components as have been established in other countries, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, or the United Wa State Army (UWSA) in Myanmar. Even the PKK, the largest terrorist organization in the Caucasus, mostly engages in illegal money laundering rather than illegal smuggling and trafficking.

The major distinction between the terrorist and criminal organizations is that the latter are purely profit-driven, while the former are primarily motivated by political or ideological goals. Transnational organized criminals are clandestine by nature and try to avoid any exposure. In contrast, terrorists prefer to gain exposure for spectacular attacks, due to the political ends they pursue. Nevertheless, the distinction between criminals and terrorists can blur, and their activities may overlap. Terrorists can provide organized crime services in exchange for money; organized crime thus emerges as a significant “force multiplier” for terrorism. Today, drug traffickers and human smugglers have a tendency to merge in the Caucasus,<sup>50</sup> and they could easily merge with terrorist structures as well. Regardless of the modalities of cooperation between terrorist and criminal groups, the problem of international smuggling and trafficking in the Caucasus has grown to a significant level.

## Conclusion

As outlined above, the subject in question is complex, and the problem of the links between crime and terror in the Caucasus is real. In sum:

- The Caucasus has emerged as an important source, transit, and destination region for illicitly transported arms, drugs, and human beings. As a result, it has security-related relevance beyond the areas of oil and geopolitics.

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<sup>50</sup> Galeotti, “People-trafficking Erodes Security,” 26.

- The continuation of illegal smuggling and trafficking undermines the political, economic, and border integrity of the newly independent states in the Caucasus. Furthermore, illegal smuggling and trafficking in the Caucasus cannot be regarded as a solely domestic problem; instead, it is an international problem.
- Quasi-states and separatist regions remain a focal point with respect to the problem of illegal smuggling and trafficking. These regions function as source, transit, destination, and distribution areas. Violent non-state actors have become the primary causes of the problem.
- The Caucasus could replace the Balkans as the primary trafficking hub in Eurasia.
- Iran could emerge as a major spoiler with respect to illegal smuggling and trafficking in the context of the current standoff with the West over its nuclear program.
- Border control and management remains crucial to fighting illegal smuggling and trafficking in the region. However, establishing full and effective border control in the region will be impossible in the foreseeable future.
- Regional cooperation to combat illegal smuggling and trafficking remains complicated, restrained, or even blocked by inter-state and intrastate conflicts and tensions. For example, the Armenian-Azeri and the Georgian-Russian partnerships remain strained.
- The countries of the Caucasus are making some progress in their efforts to contain illegal smuggling and trafficking. However, major initiatives have been stalled due to limited resources, corruption, and insufficient oversight, and these countries are thus lagging behind international standards and practice.
- To perpetrate any large-scale trafficking through the region, collaboration with and protection from corrupt authorities is necessary. However, there is no concrete evidence of such collaboration at the present time.
- So far, no direct link exists between terrorism and organized crime in the Caucasus. However, such a nexus could emerge in the near future because of the evolving regional, continental, and even global situations.
- Illicit smuggling and trafficking should not be regarded as the primary mode of financial support for terrorist-related activity, at least in the Caucasus. Rather, money laundering, counterfeiting, fundraising, and investments in legal businesses represent more serious concerns; they are opportunities to covertly funnel finances in support of terrorist operations.
- Future illegal trafficking and smuggling routes in the Caucasus will likely be determined by developments relating to two emerging geopolitical conflicts, those between the U.S. and Iran and between Russia and Georgia. In addition, an underground movement of Wahhabi/Salafist terrorism, which is spreading across the North Caucasus, should be regarded as another factor in increasing illegal

trafficking and smuggling. Finally, the renewal of the rivalry between the U.S. and Russia could redefine the issue once again.

This article has discussed a long-term problem of growing significance—one that cannot be immediately eliminated. However, the problem can be managed, contained, or even diminished. In the interim, it will demand significant resources, effort, and time. Below are some policy recommendations for the way ahead. In order to address the issue on multiple levels and with various means, the following measures and steps are necessary. They must be undertaken by out-of-area players, both those who are directly and indirectly affected. Specifically, it is important to:

- Define the overall strategy of countering illegal smuggling and trafficking in the Caucasus
- Launch a regional initiative that aims at enhancing multilateral interaction and cooperation in combating illegal smuggling and trafficking
- Take a robust and unambiguous political stance towards regional “quasi-states” or separatist regions as primary support structures for illegal smuggling and trafficking
- Increasingly involve international structures (such as NATO, Interpol, the specialized EU agencies, etc.) in monitoring and dealing with problems related to illegal smuggling and trafficking
- Establish a bilateral framework for cooperation between states—both regional actors and relevant international players
- Assist in defining, improving, adjusting, and harmonizing the national security strategies, related legislation, and criminal codes of regional players
- Strengthen border control and management, interagency coordination, visa regimes, training of specialized personnel (including border guards, customs officials, the police, and security agents), and technology (specifically, biometrics identification) in the countries of the Caucasus through financial, educational, and technical assistance
- Strengthen export regimes and military stockpile security in order to control and ensure transparency, thereby preventing weapons smuggling
- Increase intelligence sharing to the maximum level possible
- Establish a regional coordination and information center that deals specifically with the issue of illegal smuggling and trafficking
- Encourage an increased role for local NGOs and the media in fighting corruption and human trafficking and raising public awareness of these issues
- Support locally based think tanks in conducting research and other activities related to illegal smuggling.

# Trafficking Routes and Links to Terrorism in South Eastern Europe: The Case of Romania

Lucia Ovidia Vreja\*

## Introduction

In the twenty-first century, it has become clear that terrorism is the greatest threat to global security, and the one that receives the majority of national and international defense efforts and resources. However, organized crime, in all of its manifestations, cannot be overlooked when dealing with terrorism-related issues. Although a lack of hard evidence makes it difficult to establish an undeniable connection between terrorism and organized crime, all official documents concerning “terrorism-related” activities also include organized crime activities. At a minimum, this signifies that terrorism is, at least indirectly, linked with organized crime—the latter being a very important source of financing for the former. Some officials even assert that terrorism cannot be dissociated from the financing secured by organized crime activities, including drug trafficking, illegal migration, or proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>1</sup> Yet the difficult task at hand is to identify an indisputable nexus between terrorist and organized criminal groups—if indeed there is one.<sup>2</sup>

A high level of organized criminal activity undoubtedly characterizes the region of South Eastern Europe. Moreover, a terrorist threat is also present, given the fact that the region has been cited as “chosen as an area of retreat and recovery” for terrorist networks. This status is compounded by the presence of strong Arab communities in almost all of the countries in the region, including “supporters or members of terrorist organizations such as Kongra Gel, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood, Al Qaeda, etc.”<sup>3</sup>

As far as terrorism is concerned, Romanian officials are discussing

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Gheorghe Fulga, former Director of the Romanian External Intelligence Service, “Globalization of Asymmetric Threats Requires Intensifying Cooperation in the Field of Intelligence” (in Romanian), *IMPERI* 2:4 (2005): 203–10; available at <http://www.sie.ro/Amenintari/amenintari1.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Even the SECI Regional Center has a task force whose goal is to identify a possible nexus between terrorism and organized crime groups, specifically dealing with trafficking in drugs, human beings, small arms and light weapons (SALW), and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Thus, they indirectly admit that such criminal activities could be a source of financial resources for terrorist organizations. *SECI Annual Report 2005* (Bucharest: Regional Centre for Combating Transborder Crime, 2006); available at [www.secicenter.org/events/19/Anti-Terrorism-Task-Force-Meeting](http://www.secicenter.org/events/19/Anti-Terrorism-Task-Force-Meeting).

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Gheorghe Fulga, former Director of Romanian External Intelligence Service, “Romania and the New Threats to Security in South Eastern Europe” (in Romanian), *La Lettre Diplomatique* 67 (2004); available at [www.sie.ro/Amenintari/amenintari3.html](http://www.sie.ro/Amenintari/amenintari3.html).

vulnerabilities and risks coming from activities developed by members or sympathizers—residing in Romania—of groupings with terrorist ties or records, or activities developed by citizens of states or regions marked by conflict evolutions; the temporary presence in Romania of some persons suspected of membership in terrorist groupings; activities that feed terrorism, mainly associated with transborder organized criminality, etc.<sup>4</sup>

Drug trafficking, organized immigration crime—such as human trafficking and smuggling<sup>5</sup>—and, to a lesser extent, arms trafficking are the most salient aspects of the phenomenon of organized crime as it relates to terrorism, and all are prominent in South Eastern Europe. Moreover, the routes of drug, arms, and human trafficking overlap due to the “reorientation” of traffickers—in which former traffickers in a certain commodity (for example, arms) become involved in drug or human trafficking. They do this due to the greater demand for such commodities in the market, or because of the larger profits that are available with minimal investment, or “because of the emerging trend of combining several traditional crime areas (cross-commodity smuggling)”<sup>6</sup> in order to increase profit.

Regarding the possible nexus between organized crime and terrorism, some assert that drug trafficking, being extremely profitable, is “also linked to international terrorist organizations that need money to finance their activities.” Furthermore, “by forging advantageous relationships with drug traffickers or becoming actively involved in the drug trade themselves, terrorist groups such as Hezbollah or Al Qaeda use money from drug sales to further their political agendas.”<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, illegal migration facilitated by human smuggling is an important source of money for organized criminal and terrorist networks, as the migrants have the potential to “become sources of political and financial support for the terrorist organizations.”<sup>8</sup> It is even asserted that terrorist networks, along with criminal organizations, are in control of the illegal movement of people across borders, and are working to develop methods to forge documents and control modes of transportation.<sup>9</sup>

Arms trafficking is an equally important part of the link between organized crime and terrorism. This illegal trade not only represents a source of money for terrorist or-

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<sup>4</sup> *Report on the Activity of Romanian Intelligence Service in 2004* (in Romanian); available at [www.sri.ro/pdfuri/2-2-2006-Rap\\_2004.pdf](http://www.sri.ro/pdfuri/2-2-2006-Rap_2004.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> According to the Serious Organised Crime Agency in the U.K., organized immigration crime covers both the organized facilitation of immigrants (“people smuggling”) and the trafficking of people for criminal exploitation, (“human trafficking”). See *SOCA Annual Plan–2006/2007* (London: Serious Organised Crime Agency, 2006); available at [www.soca.gov.uk](http://www.soca.gov.uk).

<sup>6</sup> *2005 EU Organised Crime Report* (Brussels: Council of the European Union, 17 November 2005), document no. 13788/05.

<sup>7</sup> The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, *Drugs and Terror: Just the Facts. The Links Between the Drug Trade, Drug Traffickers and Terrorists*; available at [www.drugstory.net/pdfs/DandT\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.drugstory.net/pdfs/DandT_Fact_Sheet.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Fulga, “Romania and the New Threats to Security in South Eastern Europe.”

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

ganizations, but also a trade-off item, as terrorists need arms to achieve their objectives.

Although some experts believe that “alliances between criminal groups and terrorist groups are unusual,”<sup>10</sup> others argue that we are witnessing “the birth of a new hybrid of organized crime—terrorist organizations whose “tactics increasingly overlap” and progressively rely on revenues obtained through trafficking in drugs, humans, and arms.<sup>11</sup> South Eastern Europe is a region where such a “hybrid” could become manifest, both because of its troubled history and its current problems, mainly evident in the economic and political arenas, as well as the high level of corruption in state institutions and agencies such as the police, customs, and the judiciary.

In the context of this analysis, one should mention that the “Balkan routes” remain some of the main paths that are used by traffickers and smugglers to enter Western European countries. Romania is primarily a transit country for drugs, migrants, and arms smuggling, and is also an origin country for human trafficking, especially for sexual exploitation. The so-called “northern Balkan route” includes Bucharest, a nexus point for trafficking of all kinds.

## Drug Trafficking

Within Romanian territory, drug trafficking is an activity usually operated by networks of Turkish, Syrian, Iranian, Moldovan, and other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) citizens with connections to people in Romania and other Western countries along the trafficking route (including Austria, Germany, and Hungary).<sup>12</sup>

Drug trafficking—mainly in heroin from Afghanistan—is still considered one of the prime criminal activities in the region, and the Balkan routes continue to be the primary way of introducing drugs into the European Union (EU).<sup>13</sup> Romania represents the main section of the northern Balkan route of drug trafficking to Western Europe. This route starts in Turkey and ends in Western Europe, and relies on several modes of transportation.<sup>14</sup> In practice, the Turkish mafia controls the northern Balkan route, and the Albanian mafia controls the southern Balkan route; the two criminal groups share a profitable collaboration. For example, ethnic Albanian organized crime groups are “the direct distributors of an estimated 40 percent of heroin in Western European mar-

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<sup>10</sup> Pat O’Malley and Steven Hutchinson, “Actual and Potential Links Between Terrorism and Criminality,” Canadian Centre for Intelligence and Security Studies, *Trends in Terrorism – ITAC* (2006); available at [www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/en/itac/itacdocs/2006-5.asp](http://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/en/itac/itacdocs/2006-5.asp).

<sup>11</sup> United Nations, “UN Warns about Nexus Between Drugs, Crime and Terrorism” (30 September 2004), SOC/CP/311; available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/soccp311.doc.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> *Report on the Activity of the Romanian Intelligence Service in 2004*, op cit.

<sup>13</sup> Europol, *Drugs 2006*; available at [www.europol.eu.int/publications/SeriousCrimeOverviews/2005/drugs2005.pdf](http://www.europol.eu.int/publications/SeriousCrimeOverviews/2005/drugs2005.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, Michel Koutouzis, and Alain Labrousse, *Ministerial Conference on the Drug Routes from Central Asia to Europe*, Paris, 21–22 May 2003.

kets,”<sup>15</sup> while the rest of the heroin is brought into the Western markets by Turkish criminal groups. Kosovo Albanians are increasingly present in the Hungarian market as coordinators of shipments of synthetic drugs and heroin purchased mainly from Turkish wholesale traders, using Hungary “to establish heroin storage facilities, just as they do in Bulgaria and Romania.”<sup>16</sup>

The most common variant of this route starts in Turkey, crosses Bulgaria, enters Romania at the Ruse-Giurgiu customs control point, goes through Bucharest, continues to the west through the sub-Carpathian area, and enters Hungary at Arad. It then crosses through Budapest, enters Slovakia at Rajka, and after crossing the Slovakian territory, enters the Czech Republic in the southwest, and continues to Germany and to other Western European countries. Once in Hungary, drugs that are passing along this route can be transported directly to Austria. Another variant of the northern Balkan route includes a maritime sector. It begins in Turkey—typically in Istanbul or Samsun, a Turkish harbor on the Black Sea—and enters Romania at the harbor at Constanta. From here, drugs are transported by car to Bucharest and continue to the west along the same routes described above.

Another route used by Kurdish traffickers extends from Turkey to Athens, then north to Bulgaria at the Kapitan Andreevo customs checkpoint and on to Sofia, finally reaching Bucharest. From Bucharest, the drugs are transported to Budapest and then on to the Czech Republic and Germany.<sup>17</sup> Occasionally, a variant of the second Balkan route is used. This variant starts in Bucharest, crosses eastern Romania, and enters the Republic of Moldova or Ukraine. From here, the route splits into two different paths to the final destination of Germany: one stretches through Poland to Germany, while the other travels through Slovakia and Czech Republic. At times, drugs can also be transported from Romania to Serbia—which is a main segment of the southern Balkan route—and from Belgrade to Budapest, overlapping with the northern Balkan route.

Drugs also enter into Romania through its international airports, mainly by hashish-trafficking networks based in Africa (Nigeria and Uganda) or cocaine-trafficking networks based in South America (Colombia and Venezuela). Once in Romania, primarily in Bucharest, the traffickers use one of the variants of the northern Balkan route discussed above on their way to Western Europe (see Figure 1).

## Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking

Due to Romania’s location at the crossroads of Northern, Eastern, and Western Europe, as well as its 2007 integration into the EU and its prospective 2010 inclusion into the Schengen space, the country occupies a key position along the Balkan route of

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<sup>15</sup> Glenn E. Curtis (Project Manager), *Nations Hospitable to Organized Crime and Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, October 2003), 33; available at [www.loc.gov/frd/pdf-files/Nats\\_Hospitable.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/frd/pdf-files/Nats_Hospitable.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> *2004 European Union Organized Crime Report* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, December 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Radu Tudor, “Terrorism in Romania (I)—Drugs Mafia Finances Terrorist Organization in Romania,” *Ziua* (in Romanian) (11 February 2002).



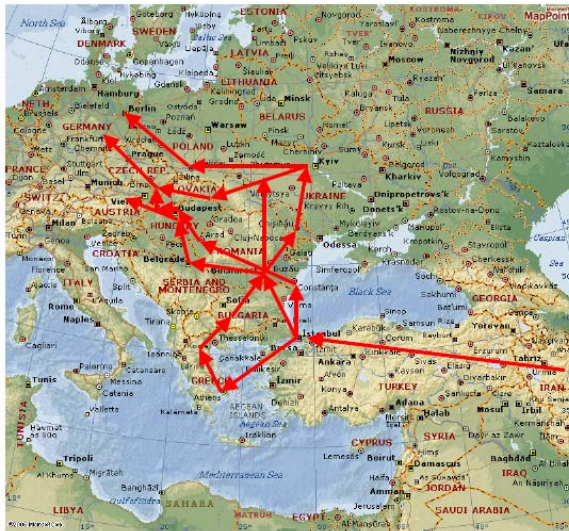


Figure 1: Drug trafficking routes from Turkey to Western Europe

illegal migration. Illegal migration and trafficking in human beings represent extremely serious risk factors for South Eastern Europe, as these activities tend to be even more profitable than drug trafficking. The illegal migration routes crossing through Romania usually originate in Asia (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq), Turkey, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Human trafficking often involves Romanian and Moldovan citizens as guides, transporters, and organizers.<sup>18</sup>

According to border police reports, Romania has six main regions with high migration activity. These regions include four entry points and two exit points, on the Hungarian and Serbian borders. The Serbian exit point is also used, in certain cases, as an entry point. The international airports are also used both as entry and exit points. (See Figure 2 below for an illustration of the main routes through Romania.)

The Romanian regions with high migration activity are:<sup>19</sup>

- *Eastern Romania, on the border with the Republic of Moldova.* This border is mainly crossed by African and Asian migrants, especially those from Somalia, India, Iraq, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. They use Russian, Ukrainian, and Moldovan guides, and once entering Romania, they either apply for political asylum or try to exit the country at the Hungarian or Serbian borders. Officials assert that, since 2000 (once Romania’s measures for

<sup>18</sup> Report on the Activity of the Romanian Intelligence Service in 2004, op cit.

<sup>19</sup> Marian Chiriac and Monica Robotin, *The Strangers Next to Us–2006* (in Romanian) (Bucharest: Centre for Ethno-Cultural Diversity, 2006).



Figure 2: Illegal migration routes in South Eastern Europe

European integration were expedited), the illegal entrance to Romania by this route has significantly decreased.

- *Southern Romania, at the border with Bulgaria.* Iraqi, Afghan, Pakistani, and Kurdish nationals are especially likely to enter Romania using this route. Since 2000, officials have observed an increase of the number of people trying and succeeding to enter the country via this route.
- *Northern Romania, at the border with Ukraine.* African and Asian citizens are the primary entrants via this route.
- *International airports.* Most often, citizens from Turkey (ethnic Kurds), China, Iran, and Iraq use forged Schengen visas and passports to obtain entry via Romania’s international airports.
- *Western Romania, at the border with Hungary.* This region is most often used as an exit point. Illegal migrants, especially Africans or Asians, use this route to reach Western Europe.
- *Southwestern Romania, at the border with Serbia.* This area is primarily used for forced human trafficking, especially of girls from former Soviet republics and from Romania intended for sexual slavery.

Covert illegal migration is also a frequent occurrence in Romania.<sup>20</sup> For example, Turkish citizens, after legally entering the country using valid Turkish passports, then use forged Greek, Swedish, and Bulgarian passports or Italian residence permits in order to exit the country on the western frontier. Another frequent pattern is that Moldovan citizens, once they have entered the country legally, try to exit the country with the assistance of Romanian citizens, using forged Romanian, Belgian, Lithuanian, Polish, Slovak, or Bulgarian passports or Italian, German, Greek, or Spanish residence permits. Citizens of Singapore also try to enter Romania by using stolen Japanese and Singaporean passports, and Serb nationals try to enter Romania using forged Slovenian passports.

At the same time, asylum seekers in Romania have often been discovered trying to illegally cross the borders with Serbia and Hungary—especially asylum seekers from Somalia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Liberia, and India. According to official data, the primary states whose citizens have illegally approached Romanian borders (at both entrance and exit points) are: India, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Liberia, and Nigeria.<sup>21</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has a database of the most common countries of origin for human trafficking worldwide, which ranks five southeastern European countries at the top of the list: Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, Belarus, and Bulgaria. The four primary points where IOM has offered assistance to victims of trafficking are the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Albania.<sup>22</sup> According to the U.S. Department of State, more than 100,000 persons are trafficked from the former Soviet Union and 75,000 from Eastern Europe each year.<sup>23</sup> It is estimated that Balkan criminal networks are responsible for the trafficking of 200,000 to 700,000 persons worldwide, mainly for forced prostitution.<sup>24</sup>

Romania is a country of origin for human trafficking, primarily due to the large number of poor people there. Because of its geographic position, it is also a transit country for trafficking victims from Moldova, Ukraine, and Asian countries to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, FYROM, Kosovo, Albania, and Western Europe.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *The Analysis of the Human Trafficking Phenomenon Made by Romanian Border Police* (in Romanian) (Bucharest: General Inspectorate of Border Police, 20 June 2006); available at [www.politiadefrontiera.ro](http://www.politiadefrontiera.ro).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> IOM, *World Migration 2005*, Section 3, International Migration Data and Statistics (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2006), 418; available at [www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/published\\_docs/books/wmr\\_sec03.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/published_docs/books/wmr_sec03.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> *State of World Population 2006 – A Passage to Hope: Women and International Migration* (New York: United Nations Population Fund, 2006), 45.

<sup>24</sup> *A Secure Europe in a Better World – European Security Strategy* (Brussels: European Union, 12 December 2003); available at <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> *Trafficking in Persons Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. State Department, June 2002); available at [www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2002](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2002).

Until 2002, the Balkans, especially Serbia and Montenegro as well as Albania, represented the main destination points to which women and girls from Romania and Moldova were trafficked. From here, they were then transferred to other Balkan countries or to Western Europe (most often Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, or France). Since 2003, however, the main destinations of Romanian, Moldovan, and even Ukrainian victims have shifted to include Spain, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Greece, or Cyprus.<sup>26</sup>

Moldovan, Ukrainian, Russian, or even Asian victims are trafficked through Romania using the eastern route; Romanian officials have reported a decrease in the traffic at the eastern border.<sup>27</sup> According to recent findings, several alternative trafficking routes have emerged in South Eastern Europe in addition to the traditional ones, making it difficult for officials to detect new transit points.<sup>28</sup>

Romania remains the primary transit center for victims of trafficking, with several main routes starting from or passing through Romania. One route goes directly to Serbia and from there to other Balkan countries. The other route goes through southern Romania and then through Bulgaria and FYROM towards Greece and Turkey.<sup>29</sup> To reach Western Europe, the most commonly used routes seem to be Romania-Hungary-Austria-Germany or, alternatively, Romania-Hungary-Czech Republic-Western Europe (see Figure 3 below). At times, Slovakia, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia may also be transit countries.<sup>30</sup> In the other direction, according to the IOM, Turkey has become one of the “largest markets” for women trafficked from Moldova, Ukraine, and other former Soviet states, “with crime syndicates there pocketing up to \$3.6 billion in 2005.”<sup>31</sup>

Logically, human trafficking routes often overlap with illegal migration routes. The main regional trafficking routes include:<sup>32</sup>

- Ukraine-Moldova-Romania-Serbia-other Balkan countries
- Ukraine-Moldova-Romania-Bulgaria-Turkey-Greece
- Ukraine-Moldova-Romania-Hungary-other EU countries.

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<sup>26</sup> *Trafficking in Persons Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. State Department, June 2003, June 2004, and June 2005); available at [www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/).

<sup>27</sup> *The Analysis of the Human Trafficking Phenomenon Made by Romanian Border Police*, op cit.

<sup>28</sup> Ladan Rahmani, “Invisible Routes. Changing Patterns and Trends in Trafficking Routes in the Balkans,” *Migration* (June 2005): 22–24; available at [www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/published\\_docs/periodicals\\_and\\_newsletters/june\\_2005.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/published_docs/periodicals_and_newsletters/june_2005.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>30</sup> *Trafficking in Women from Romania into Germany—Comprehensive Report March 2005* (Turin: United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, March 2005).

<sup>31</sup> *State of World Population 2006—A Passage to Hope*, 45.

<sup>32</sup> *Operation Mirage Evaluation Report* (Bucharest: SECI Center, 21 January 2003); available at [www.secicenter.org/p172/Evaluation\\_Report\\_2003](http://www.secicenter.org/p172/Evaluation_Report_2003).

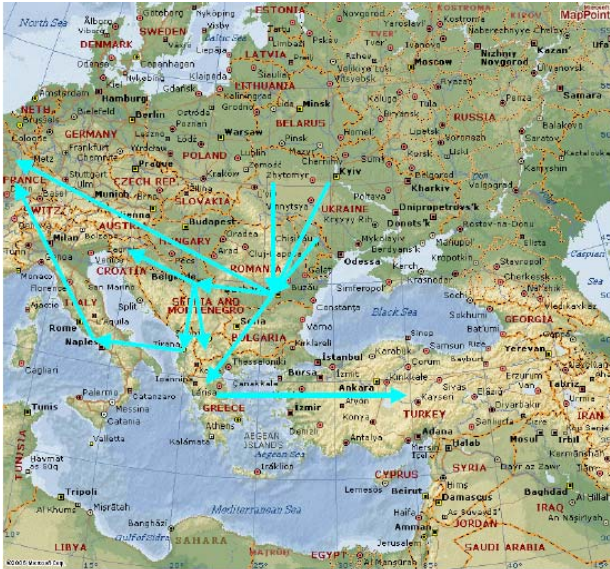


Figure 3: Human beings trafficking routes in South Eastern Europe

Trafficking in human beings understandably overlaps with “both regular and irregular migration”—where it involves violence, confinement, coercion, deception, and exploitation—and also intersects with smuggling. Currently, the distinction between these forms of organized migration crimes is somewhat “fuzzy.”<sup>33</sup>

### Arms Trafficking

In Romania, the risks generated through the traffic in arms, weapons of mass destruction, and dangerous substances have considerably decreased within the past few years. Criminal groups from Russia, Moldova, the former Yugoslavia, Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Syria, and Lebanon are involved in the smuggling and illegal traffic of small arms and ammunition.<sup>34</sup> Such activities mainly occur at Romania’s borders with the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine,<sup>35</sup> and likely at the border with Bulgaria as well.

Nevertheless, Romania is the focus of criminal entities from states in Asia, the Middle East, and Central and North Africa that are trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and other dangerous substances.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Romania might still be a transit country for arms exports to countries under embargo or to EU countries.

<sup>33</sup> *State of World Population 2006—A Passage to Hope*, 44.

<sup>34</sup> *Report on the Activity of the Romanian Intelligence Service in 2004*, op cit.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

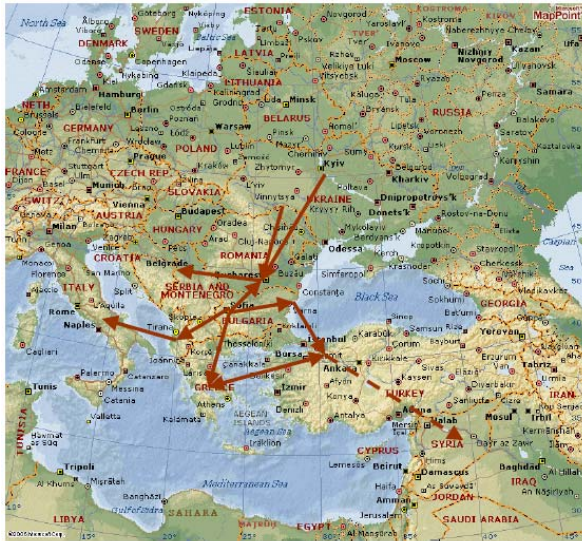


Figure 4: Arms trafficking routes in South Eastern Europe

The Balkan region is instrumental “concerning firearms trafficked into the EU.” Although the numbers of arms trafficking cases reported in Romania are not significant enough to indicate high-level activity in this field, crime groups in Bulgaria are being monitored as “heavily involved in illicit firearms trafficking” destined for markets in Greece, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Great Britain, and Turkey.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, the main route for trafficking firearms to Western Europe is either from Turkey to Serbia or from Bulgaria to the FYROM and Albania, and then onward to other destinations.<sup>38</sup>

Although the region was characterized by a high level of illegal arms trafficking until 2000, particularly because of the wars in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s, recent reports indicate a significant decrease in this kind of criminal activity. This decrease is either due to a lower demand for arms or to the reorientation of criminal groups toward more profit-generating businesses, such as trafficking in drugs or human beings. The Bucharest-based Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime reported the existence of several illegal weapons depots on the territories of neighboring SECI member countries. These weapons were discovered in an operation that led to the arrest of seventeen people and the seizure of a significant amount of weapons, ammunition, and even anti-tank missile launchers and detonation devices planted in mobile phones.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> 2005 EU Organised Crime Report.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> SECI Annual Report 2005 (Bucharest: Regional Centre for Combating Transborder Crime, 2006); available at [www.secicenter.org/p222/Activity\\_Report\\_on\\_2005](http://www.secicenter.org/p222/Activity_Report_on_2005).

## The Nexus Between Trafficking and Terrorism

South Eastern Europe is a region with an undeniable link between transborder trafficking in drugs, arms, and human beings. Over time, evidence has shown that, in South Eastern Europe, trafficking of illegal immigrants “seems to be organized by the same groups who were previously engaged in the smuggling of weapons and drugs,” or that “often they [traffickers] combine two businesses—trafficking of illegal immigrants and smuggling of drugs.”<sup>40</sup> Despite proven connections between weapons, drugs, and human trafficking, claims for a similar link between these forms of trafficking and terrorism are controversial. However, such a link can be determined by reading between the lines and connecting the dots between the various forms of criminal activity that plague the region.

Drug trafficking is very often related to human smuggling and trafficking as a method of increasing efficiency and profit.<sup>41</sup> Usually, the leaders of different networks develop haphazard partnerships regarding the recruitment and organization of their agents, as well as the use of existing routes and transport across borders. Similarly, networks dealing in illegal immigration—a form of crime that has gained new ground in the last few years—often take advantage of preexisting drug trafficking routes or networks, moving both “commodities” in parallel or even together.<sup>42</sup> For example, in a joint five-year police operation called “Harem,” eighty people were arrested in five European countries (Italy, Germany, Ukraine, Serbia, and Croatia) for drug, arms, and human trafficking violations.<sup>43</sup> Albanians were arrested in the western coastal cities of Durrz, Vlore, and Kavaja, as well as in the capital of Tirana. They were found to have links with the Italian organized crime group known as *Ndrangheta*, which operates in the southern region of Calabria. According to the police, *Ndrangheta* allowed the forced prostitution of girls from Eastern Europe in exchange for arms and drugs imported from Albania.<sup>44</sup>

Ethnic Albanian criminal groups, while preserving their hierarchical and homogeneous structure, are increasingly cooperating with other organized crime groups in Eastern Europe. Their joint efforts include drug trafficking and human trafficking, mainly for sexual exploitation, as well as various kinds of property crimes.<sup>45</sup> Such partnerships have also allegedly been established between organized crime networks and

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<sup>40</sup> Marko Hajdinjak, *Smuggling in Southeast Europe—The Yugoslav Wars and the Development of Regional Criminal Networks in the Balkans* (Sofia: Center for the Study of Democracy, 2002), 50.

<sup>41</sup> *Interpol and Drug Trafficking*, Fact Sheet COM/FS/2006-03/DCO-01; available at [www.interpol.int/Public/icpo/FactSheets/DCO01.pdf](http://www.interpol.int/Public/icpo/FactSheets/DCO01.pdf). See also Europol, *Drugs 2006*, op cit.

<sup>42</sup> Europol, *Organised Illegal Immigration into the European Union* (2005); available at [www.europol.eu.int/publications/SeriousCrimeOverviews/2005/overview\\_illegal\\_immigration.pdf](http://www.europol.eu.int/publications/SeriousCrimeOverviews/2005/overview_illegal_immigration.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Xinhua General News Service, 14 December 2005, cited in *Organized Crime News*; available at [www.iasoc.net/news.htm](http://www.iasoc.net/news.htm).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> *2005 EU Organised Crime Report*.

terrorist organizations; these two groups provide each other support, or rely on the same infrastructure to reach their goals. Moreover, nearly every terrorist group is raising some money from organized crime activities, especially (but not limited to) the drug trade and other economic crime, such as money laundering. Organized crime activities are a very convenient and profitable source of financing for terrorist organizations “because of the major cash benefits derived from relatively minimal time and investment.”<sup>46</sup>

According to official state institutions, organized crime—especially drug trafficking—represents the most important source of financial support for terrorist groups, providing up to an estimated 30 to 40 percent of their funds.<sup>47</sup> This assertion is logical, given the fact that international terrorism is no longer exclusively state-sponsored, and terrorist organizations have been forced “to become much more self-sufficient” regarding their financial resources.<sup>48</sup>

Ethnic Albanian organized criminals constitute one of the largest criminal groups in Europe, closely cooperating with international criminal organizations and perhaps also linked with terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda. Reports from the U.S. government indicate that “Osama bin Laden was channeling, in 2001, profits from the sale of narcotics arriving in Western Europe via the Balkan route to local governments and political parties, with the goal of gaining influence in Albania or Macedonia or both.” Furthermore, in 2002, “Al Qaeda had acted as a middleman in the movement of heroin from warehouses in Afghanistan via Chechen mafia conduits and into the Balkan narcotics pipeline, taking a percentage of the drug profits for this service.”<sup>49</sup>

Although terrorist networks in South Eastern Europe are difficult to uncover, and the dependence between these groupings and organized crime networks is hard to prove, the evidence that exists must not be ignored. More and more data indicates that Al Qaeda has a presence in the western Balkans and that Albania, Bosnia, and Kosovo may be becoming “European hotbeds of Iranian-backed Islamic terrorism, and Al Qaeda in particular.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Interpol and Drug Trafficking*, Fact Sheet COM/FS/2006-03/DCO-01.

<sup>47</sup> Romanian Intelligence Service, *Combating the Financing of Terrorist Organizations* (in Romanian) (Bucharest: Romanian Intelligence Service); available at [www.sri.ro/pdfuri/1-6-2003-combaterea\\_finantarii\\_organizatiilor\\_teroriste.pdf](http://www.sri.ro/pdfuri/1-6-2003-combaterea_finantarii_organizatiilor_teroriste.pdf).

<sup>48</sup> David E. Kaplan, “Paying for Terror: How jihadist groups are using organized-crime tactics—and profits—to finance attacks on targets around the globe,” *U.S. News & World Report* (5 December 2005); available at [www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/051205/5terror.htm](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/051205/5terror.htm).

<sup>49</sup> Rex A. Hudson (Project Manager), *A Global Overview of Narcotics-funded Terrorist and Other Extremist Groups* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, May 2002); available at [www.loc.gov/tr/frd/pdf-files/NarcsFundedTerrs\\_Extrems.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/tr/frd/pdf-files/NarcsFundedTerrs_Extrems.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> Brian Michael Jenkins, “Countering Al Qaeda,” in *Defeating Terrorism: Shaping the New Security Environment*, eds. Russell D. Howard and Reid L. Sawyer (Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 133. See also: “Europe May Face a New Wave of Domestic Terrorism,” Richard Bennett Media-AFI Research (7 April 2002); available at <http://www.milnet.com/afi/AFI-Research-0415.htm>.



New evidence about the terrorist presence in the Balkans shows that the region “could serve as a haven for Al Qaeda linked terrorist groups.” In June 2005, Abdelmajid Bouchar, a 22-year-old Moroccan suspected of being involved in the March 2004 train bombings in Madrid, was caught at the Belgrade railway station in a train that arrived from the northern town of Subotica, located on the border with Hungary.<sup>51</sup> Even some “skeptical” experts, who currently do not consider the Balkans or South Eastern Europe to be “a key region harboring or funding terrorists,” do note “that the region may play a secondary role in terrorist plans, as a transit point for terrorists, as well as for rest and recuperation.”<sup>52</sup>

Authorities in South Eastern European countries, with the exception of the western Balkans, assert that there is no terrorist threat in the region. Bulgarian officials, for example, have stated that “there are no problems concerning Islam or terrorism in Bulgaria,”<sup>53</sup> despite the fact that some outside authorities believe that Bulgaria may be a terrorist transit point for operatives en route to Western Europe. Similarly, Hungarian representatives assert that there is no Al Qaeda presence in Hungary, the country is not a direct target for terrorist organizations or “groups connected to them,” and “Muslims living in Hungary are scarce in number and are basically not inclined to extremism, with no ties to terrorist organizations.” Yet, these same officials also admit that “members of extremist groups or organizations described as terrorist may infiltrate into the country and may form groups rendering logistic aid” due to legal and illegal migration.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, external sources have issued conflicting reports. For example, according to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), about a dozen Arabs with Bulgarian citizenship have been identified as members of the most active terrorist groups in Iraq,<sup>55</sup> which has been denied by Bulgarian intelligence. EU officials also admit that in Hungary, certain Middle Eastern groups also take part in the distribution of heroin.<sup>56</sup> This is the case in Romania as well, where Turkish, Syrian, and Iranian citizens are known to be involved in drug trafficking.

Until recently, Romanian authorities adopted the same position as their counterparts in Bulgaria and Turkey, asserting that there have been no threats of a possible terrorist attack against a national target in Romania. According to the former director of the Romanian Intelligence Service, there is no clear evidence indicating the presence of

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<sup>51</sup> “Concerns of Al-Qaeda Link in Balkans Renewed. Madrid Attack Suspect Arrested in ‘Springboard for Europe-bound Terrorism,’” *Associated Press*, 29 August 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Steven Woehrel, *Islamic Terrorism and the Balkans* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 26 July 2005); available at [www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL33012.pdf](http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL33012.pdf).

<sup>53</sup> “Jihad in Bulgaria,” *Jihad Watch* (13 January 2004); available at [www.jihadwatch.org/archives/000625.php](http://www.jihadwatch.org/archives/000625.php).

<sup>54</sup> *National Security Office–Yearbook 2005* (Budapest); available at [www.nbh.hu/english/evk2005-eng/05-0041.htm](http://www.nbh.hu/english/evk2005-eng/05-0041.htm).

<sup>55</sup> “Arabs of Bulgarian Citizenship on Iraq’s Terrorist Lists” (2 December 2004); available at [www.jihadwatch.org/archives/004141.php](http://www.jihadwatch.org/archives/004141.php).

<sup>56</sup> *2004 European Union Organized Crime Report*.

Al Qaeda or Islamic Jihad members in Romania. Yet other sources have gathered information on Muslim citizens living in Romania who might conduct financial activities supporting both Al Qaeda and Islamic Jihad, as well as on the significant involvement of Romania-based cadres of non-Islamic terrorist organizations—such as the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) or the Grey Wolves—in drug trafficking along routes that reach Germany and the Netherlands.<sup>57</sup>

The trafficking of illegal migrants is also a very important and highly profitable form of organized crime in the region, and is an area where the link between organized crime and terrorism is more evident. For example, EU member states are increasingly concerned about the significant numbers of illegal immigrants reaching Western Europe from the Balkan region, the Russian Federation, China, Iraq, the sub-Saharan African countries, India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. These illegal migrants are using the Balkans, Russia, and other parts of Eastern Europe as transit points to enter the EU.<sup>58</sup>

The Balkans, according to local officials and experts, is not a “safe haven” for terrorist bases, is “at least a major transit route for the terrorists as well as organized criminals, including human and drug traffickers, the two often going hand-in-hand.”<sup>59</sup> Porous borders in the region, “such as the one between Romania and Serbia, are wide open to gangs that smuggle people, heroin and goods,” allowing the establishment of “hidden alliances” between terrorist groups and “organized crime gangs that control heavily used smuggling routes in the Balkans,” thus “making it easier for terrorists to infiltrate Western Europe.”<sup>60</sup> Moreover, some experts even believe that “in some cases the money earned by human traffickers is used to support terrorist activities in Europe.”<sup>61</sup>

Aside from the use of illegal migrant smuggling as a source of financing terrorist organizations and activities—which is debatable—it is now common sense to assert that routes of human smuggling are used by potential terrorists themselves to reach Western Europe through the South Eastern European countries. Though some analysts argue that there is insufficient evidence to indicate a symbiotic relationship between organized crime networks and terrorist groups, it is hard to believe that terrorist organizations would not make use of such a profitable, low-cost business. Even if there were no formally established relationship, terrorist and organized crime networks could still easily find a way to achieve mutually beneficial cooperation. Terrorists could be smuggled to a particular destination by organized crime networks in exchange for a certain sum of money, since criminal gangs do not care about the political, social, or

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<sup>57</sup> Radu Tudor, “Romanian Anti-terrorist Brigade Extends the Cooperation in the Fight against Terrorism,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* (January 2002).

<sup>58</sup> Europol, *Organised Illegal Immigration into the European Union*.

<sup>59</sup> “Concerns of Al-Qaeda Link in Balkans Renewed,” *Associated Press*, op cit.

<sup>60</sup> Gregory Katz, “Terrorists said to be getting aid in the Balkans: Crime gangs that control the smuggling routes are making their infiltration easier,” *Houston Chronicle* (27 December 2005).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

ethnic orientation of the migrants they traffic. The primary motivation of criminal gangs is economic profit; this makes their networks available to terrorists who can pay for their services.

Once in a South Eastern European country, terrorists posing as migrants can either attempt to apply for political asylum or, most often, illegally travel further west. In Romania, for example, a large number of asylum seekers come from Muslim countries<sup>62</sup> such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iran, or Syria, where terrorist organizations are very active. Moreover, among the tens of thousands of persons transiting through Romania from countries such as Iraq, Pakistan, or Afghanistan, there are some who have relations with terrorist networks, including Al Qaeda. Even more important, some of these persons manage to obtain Romanian citizenship.<sup>63</sup>

In this context, it is worth considering the allegation that the northwestern Iraqi province of Anbar has become the new headquarters of Al Qaeda, from where people and resources can be directed to mount new attacks in Western Europe. Furthermore, the former chief of the Iraqi wing of Al Qaeda, the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, established a “working relationship” with “Middle Eastern criminal smuggling rings linked to European and African Mafias” in order to facilitate the movement of operatives, logistical plans, and funds out of Iraq and into new fronts.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, according to Europol, organized crime groups involved in illegal migration “can also be found within the ethnic communities” already present in the destination state, a finding that may also apply in case of Romania.<sup>65</sup>

Even since the communist era Romania has been home to a sizeable community of Arabs with connections to high-level officials and involvement in large and profitable businesses, usually in the fields of real estate, tourism (hotels or travel agencies), transport, and import-export. According to official data, 13,774 companies have 35,624 Arab associates residing in Romania. Unsurprisingly, most Arab businesses and businesspersons in this country are from Iraq (5,227 companies, with 11,010 people); Syria (3,051 companies, with 10,041 people); Lebanon (2,328 companies, with 7,163 people); Jordan (1,456 companies, with 3,920 people); and Egypt (1,006 companies, with 1,992 people).<sup>66</sup> However, these numbers are almost certainly higher, given the fact that many Arabs already have Romanian citizenship. In addition, several Arabs were involved in media scandals and even penal trials related to trafficking in alcohol

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<sup>62</sup> For example, according to the Romanian National Office for Refugees, from 1991 to 31 July 2005, the figures of asylum seekers in Romania are as follows: 3089 Iraqi, 1522 Afghani, 980 Pakistani, 799 Iranians, and 189 Syrians. See Chiriac and Robotin, *The Strangers Next to Us—2006*, 27.

<sup>63</sup> Radu Timofte, former Director of Romanian Intelligence Service, cited by Mediafax News Agency, 29 March 2004.

<sup>64</sup> “Zarqawi Dilutes Iraq Network, Leads New Al Qaeda Offensive in Europe and Middle East,” *Debka-Net-Weekly* (23 July 2005); available at [www.debka.com/article.php?aid=1059](http://www.debka.com/article.php?aid=1059).

<sup>65</sup> Europol, *Organized Illegal Immigration into the European Union*.

<sup>66</sup> Andi Laslau, “Arabs in Romania, A Complete Radiography” (in Romanian), *Evenimentul Zilei* (Bucharest) (27 April 2005).

and cigarettes or other economic crimes. Some of them are even suspected of financing or having links to terrorist organizations in their countries of origin. Although they might not be directly involved in smuggling activities, some of these suspects could easily be involved in smuggling or trafficking-related activities. They can provide material support in the form of forged documents, financing, accommodation, and transportation given the fact that they run hotels, travel agencies, or transport companies. For example, it is known that there are organized groups that focus exclusively on document forgery. Usually, secondary documents for trafficking or smuggling victims are “also procured and forged with the help of persons in the transit or destination countries,” perpetrated by travel agencies or transport companies.<sup>67</sup>

Several Islamic organizations are also present in Romania, some of them reported or suspected of having links with extremist terrorist organizations, including Al Qaeda. For example, in October 2005, Israeli authorities arrested two Arab Israelis who had formerly been students in Romania. They were recruited by Hamas while studying in Romania and received terrorist training in Turkey.<sup>68</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood in Romania also has a significant logistical base that consists of buildings—allegedly used as Islamic community centers, prayer houses, and mosques—present in most important Romanian university towns, all of them very well equipped with communication and information networks, printing presses, and copying machines.<sup>69</sup> Sponsorship for these buildings is mainly provided by the Islamic and Cultural League in Romania, which coordinates the activity of branches of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas in Central and Eastern Europe. Although these groups are not involved, at least visibly, in economic activities in Romania, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reports that, in the United States, the financial operations of Hamas include drug trafficking. These reports also indicate financial links between Hamas and Al Qaeda, despite a lack of any formal affiliation.<sup>70</sup>

Romania is also hosting terrorist groups involved in economic activities, including Hezbollah, whose funding is derived from both legal and illegal commercial activities. Allegedly, the country is used as a refuge and recovery location for Hezbollah members who have taken part in terrorist actions abroad.<sup>71</sup> The Party of Islamic Liberation (*Hizb-ut-Tahrir*), which has a presence in Romania’s principal university centers, is

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<sup>67</sup> *Trafficking in Women from Romania into Germany—Comprehensive Report March 2005* (Turin: United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, March 2005).

<sup>68</sup> Andi Topala and Andrei R. Dobrogea, “Two Former Arab Students in Romania have Supported the Terrorist Organization Hamas for 10 Years” (in Romanian), *Gardianul* (Bucharest) (25 October 2005).

<sup>69</sup> Radu Tudor, “Terrorism in Romania (II)—Terrorist Organizations Muslim Brothers and Hamas Have Tens of Members in our Country” (in Romanian), *Ziua* (12 February 2002).

<sup>70</sup> Michael Rubin, “Popular Notions Laid Bare,” review of Mathew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), *New York Sun* (23 May 2006); available at [www.meforum.org/article/936](http://www.meforum.org/article/936).

<sup>71</sup> Radu Tudor, “Terrorism in Romania (III)—Hezbollah—Commercial and Propaganda Activities in Romanian University Centers” (in Romanian), *Ziua* (13 February 2002).

rumored to have members involved in legal and illegal commercial activities that finance the organization.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, reports indicate that members of the Hezbollah militia are “engaged in [the] heroin and hashish trade, cigarette smuggling, counterfeiting, extortion, [and] fraud.”<sup>73</sup>

There is also a significant Turkish community, which either resides in or transits through Romania, and some of its members are involved in organized crime activities. In Romania, almost every case of drug trafficking involves at least one Turkish citizen. The money obtained from the drug trade is also used to finance the activities of some terrorist organizations. For example, an important portion of international drug trafficking networks are under the control of the non-Islamic terrorist organization PKK, and its profits are directed toward support for the organization’s logistical bases or for arms purchase.<sup>74</sup> For the Romanian branch of the PKK, drugs and human trafficking are among the main sources of financing; covert institutions, such as inter-ethnic leagues, cultural associations, and companies (mainly trade and transport companies) also provide income.<sup>75</sup>

Turkish citizens also coordinate important illegal smuggling networks, making use of Romanians or foreigners as guides. They usually recruit co-nationals, or use Africans and Asians who want to go to Western Europe. They have created a strong operational and support base in border regions, composed of couriers, taxi drivers, hosts, and guides, most of whom are driven by economic necessity.<sup>76</sup> Often, the people smuggled from Turkey, especially Kurds, use Romanian territory as a place of refuge; they are usually suspected of participating in either trafficking activities or terrorism-related activities in Turkey.<sup>77</sup> Equally important is the fact that Turkey is a well-known host of Islamist terrorist training camps.

From 2000 to 2001 alone, Romania expelled seventy people suspected of having links to terrorist organizations, most of them members or supporters of the PKK or the Grey Wolves.<sup>78</sup> Even members of Islamist terrorist organizations or suspected supporters of Al Qaeda have been expelled from Romania. On 1 July 2006, Yemeni citizen Mohtar Hashedi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, a group that is known to support terrorist efforts, was expelled from Romania. He was allegedly in charge of recruiting new members and organizing the activity of the organization in Constanta

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Kaplan, “Paying for Terror.”

<sup>74</sup> Radu Tudor, “Terrorism in Romania (I)—Drugs Mafia Finances Terrorist Organization in Romania.”

<sup>75</sup> Radu Tudor, “Terrorism in Romania (IV)—PKK has in Romania over 1500 Members and Sympathizers” (in Romanian), *Ziua* (14 February 2002).

<sup>76</sup> Radu Tudor, “Terrorism in Romania (I).”

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Radu Tudor, “Terrorism in Romania (VII)—The List of Terrorists Expelled from Romania” (in Romanian), *Ziua* (16 February 2002).

county.<sup>79</sup> The branch of the Muslim Brotherhood active in Romania is considered to support Al Qaeda. Seven Arab citizens were arrested on 4 February 2005, and four more on 27 February 2006, all of them members of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>80</sup>

In this context, the distinction between terrorism and organized crime is blurry. Organized crime activities, such as drug and human trafficking, can easily be used to support terrorism. Moreover, there appears to be an overlap between smuggling routes used by terrorist groups and organized crime syndicates.<sup>81</sup> More and more evidence suggests that “terrorists worldwide are transforming their operating cells into criminal gangs,” as “terrorist gangs in Europe ... traffic in drugs and illegal aliens.”<sup>82</sup>

Although some analysts argue that a nexus between organized crime and terrorism is unlikely, because “organized criminal groups tend to be nationalistic, territorial, and reluctant to risk the attention from authorities that accompanies cooperation with terrorist groups,”<sup>83</sup> the reality shows something different. Currently, organized criminal groups are no longer nationalistic or territorial; rather, they are inclined to seek any cooperation that will extend and ease their “business” and help them to find new markets. Both trafficking networks and terrorist organizations now have more flexible (rather than hierarchical and rigid) structures. Instead, these organizations employ more network-like structures with a very specialized division of tasks. Furthermore, since organized crime and terrorist networks are both in need of similar things, they may be able to use the same infrastructure. In fact, “both crime syndicates and terrorist groups thrive in the same subterranean world of black markets and laundered money, relying on shifting networks and secret cells to accomplish their objectives.”<sup>84</sup>

Terrorist groups exploit the “gray areas” where states are weak and corrupt and the rule of law is nonexistent.<sup>85</sup> Given the weakness of the central governments of several states in the region, South Eastern Europe could be an area where terrorist networks and criminal networks overlap.<sup>86</sup> Terrorist and criminal organizations, though they have different long-term objectives, are both characterized by a convergence of interests: they need weak states, permeable borders, political and economic instability, corruptible officials, and inefficient state institutions in order to operate effectively. This convergence of interests is powerful enough to create an arrangement of convenience, if not an outright alliance, leading to a joint use of resources, methods, and infrastructure. Even though the lack of pertinent official data makes it difficult to establish unde-

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<sup>79</sup> Carmen Mocanu, “Romanian Intelligence Service Catches Terrorists Regularly” (in Romanian), *Ziua* (3 July 2006).

<sup>80</sup> Mirabela Amarandei, “Arabs Suspected of Terrorism, Arrested in Iasi” (in Romanian), *Romania Libera* (1 March 2006).

<sup>81</sup> Kaplan, “Paying for Terror.”

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> O’Malley and Hutchinson, “Actual and Potential Links Between Terrorism and Criminality.”

<sup>84</sup> Kaplan, “Paying for Terror.”

<sup>85</sup> Douglas Farah, “Draining Terror’s Financial Swamps,” *The Middle East Forum* (11 October 2004); available at [www.meforum.org/article/648](http://www.meforum.org/article/648).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

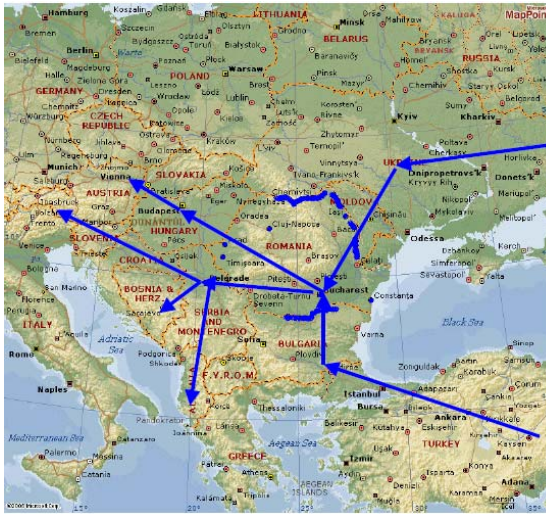


Figure 5: Possible terrorist routes in South Eastern Europe; vulnerable borders; and Muslim presence in Romania <sup>89</sup>

niable and definitive alliances or links between terrorists and criminals, simple, common-sense logic leads to this conclusion.

All things considered, South Eastern Europe is at the very least used as a transit region for terrorists targeting Western Europe (see Figure 5). Austria is a new base for “Islamic extremists and terrorist re-organization,” as the Austrian authorities have recently identified thirteen Islamist organizations “suspected of having links with the Salafist Jihad” already installed in Austria.<sup>87</sup>

As the chief of the Serbian border police has emphasized, the region “is the crossroads of the trade in illegal immigrants, weapons, and drugs, and no one can say terrorists cannot pass.”<sup>88</sup> This warning should lead researchers to adopt a more concerned and attentive attitude when dealing with the nexus between organized crime and terrorism in the region.

<sup>87</sup> Liese Prokop, Austrian Minister of Internal Affairs, cited in Mirela Barba, “Austria—A Base of Re-organization for Terrorists,” *Curentul* (Bucharest) (29 July 2005).

<sup>88</sup> Cited in Gregory Katz, “Terrorists said to be getting aid in the Balkans.”

<sup>89</sup> The vulnerable sections of Romania’s borders are indicated by dotted lines. Sizeable Muslim communities are indicated by darker round dots.





# Terror-Crime Nexus? Terrorism and Arms, Drug, and Human Trafficking in Georgia

Colleen M. Traugher \*

## Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War and the subsequent proliferation of failed or failing states, particularly in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, transnational actors have increasingly taken advantage of gaps in law enforcement and security. Operating across borders (or transnationally), actors with illicit intentions—such as terrorist groups and organized criminal syndicates—effectively set the stage for the local, regional, and international problems that all states face today. As terrorists and criminals have gained stature, reports of collusion between these operationally separate groups in “gray areas” of the world have only increased, particularly in weak states. Accordingly, Georgia has not escaped unscathed from this new form of terror-crime collaboration. While links between terrorism and arms, drug, and even human trafficking are suspected, the existence of a nexus between terrorism and trafficking in Georgia is unclear and worthy of study.<sup>1</sup>

In many parts of the world—including Georgia—arms, drug, and human trafficking are linked to terrorism.<sup>2</sup> Potentially, terrorists could use trafficking routes to transport operatives and trafficking profits used to finance their activities. While terrorists often depend on drug trafficking for income, their reliance on profits from human trafficking does not appear to be as substantial.<sup>3</sup> In places where human trafficking represents a significant portion of organized criminal activity, such as parts of the former Soviet Union, a link with terrorism is suspected.<sup>4</sup> In Georgia, terrorism and all varieties of

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Glenn E. Curtis, *Involvement of Russian Organized Crime Syndicates, Criminal Elements in the Russian Military, and Regional Terrorist Groups in Narcotics Trafficking in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Chechnya* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Louise Shelley, “Statement to the House Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on International Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Human Rights,” 25 June 2003; available at [www.american.edu/tracc/resources/publications/shelle18.pdf](http://www.american.edu/tracc/resources/publications/shelle18.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

trafficking have only grown since Georgia gained independence, making the country (and region) critical to international security.<sup>5</sup> The potential for collusion between terrorist and criminal groups only adds to an already unstable situation.

This study will examine the presence of a terror-crime “nexus” in Georgia, specifically focusing on potential points of intersection between terrorism and arms, drug, and human trafficking. First, this essay will outline the threat that transnational terrorism and international organized crime pose to Georgia. Next, through analysis based on the Preparation of the Investigative Environment (PIE) methodology, this paper will attempt to determine how and why terrorist and trafficking groups cooperate in Georgia. Finally, based on the results of the PIE analysis, this study will briefly assess current counterterrorism and counter-trafficking efforts in Georgia, and will offer a number of policy recommendations to counter both phenomena in the future.

## Background

### *Post-Cold War Problems: Transnational Terrorism and Organized Crime*

Since the end of the Cold War, political, economic, and social changes within the countries of the former Soviet Union have instigated a new set of problems, including illegal migration, terrorism, organized crime, and corruption, to name only a few.<sup>6</sup> Both terrorist and criminal groups have taken advantage of the lack of law enforcement and regional security within the former Soviet Union, effectively transforming into transnational actors with nefarious intentions. As transnational actors, terrorists and criminals cross borders and openly transgress national laws, effectively operating outside of the reach of the state.

In the Caucasus, transnational terrorism has acquired an Islamist emphasis, as religious extremism has filtered in from the Middle East. Transnational terrorism in the Caucasus has been promoted by regional conflicts. Specifically, the war in Chechnya has evolved from a localized, ethnic conflict (the First Chechen War, 1994–96) to a focal point for foreign fighters who emphasize Islamic extremism (the Second Chechen War, 1999–present). Foreign fighters associated with the conflicts in separatist regions have carried out terrorist incidents in Russia, Georgia, and elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> The Pankisi Gorge, a haven for foreign fighters in the past, now principally serves as one of many transit channels on the northern Georgian-Russian border.<sup>8</sup>

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, arms, drug, and human trafficking have also developed into highly lucrative criminal activities within the former Soviet republics,

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Yalowitz and Svante E. Cornell, “The Critical but Perilous Caucasus,” *Orbis* 48:1 (2004): 105–16.

<sup>6</sup> Georgi Glonti, “Trafficking in Human Beings in Georgia and the CIS,” *Demokratizatsiya* 9:3 (2001): 382–98.

<sup>7</sup> Yalowitz and Cornell, “The Critical but Perilous Caucasus,” 107.

<sup>8</sup> Kakha Khizanishvili, Director, Police Academy, Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Personal Communication, 13 July 2006.

including Georgia.<sup>9</sup> The trafficking of arms both to and from Georgia has risen since the end of the Cold War, and serves to fuel regional conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Chechnya.<sup>10</sup> Drug trafficking is perhaps the most profitable of these criminal enterprises, with a reported USD 1 billion worth of drugs flowing through Georgia annually.<sup>11</sup> In contrast to arms and drug trafficking, the covert nature of human trafficking makes it difficult to estimate the number of people trafficked each year. In the Caucasus, the number of human trafficking cases for sexual exploitation alone is estimated to be from 10,000 to 15,000 people annually.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, there are no reliable statistics for the number of cases involving human smuggling. Although analysts and investigators disagree on the total number of people smuggled and trafficked per year, they concur that the problem is both significant and growing.

### *Question and Hypothesis*

While a link or “nexus” between terrorism and arms, drug, and human trafficking is suspected, the nature of the nexus is at best ambiguous in Georgia. In general, Georgia remains at risk for both terrorism and trafficking. In order to determine if a nexus exists between terrorism and human trafficking in Georgia, this study asked the following questions:

- Are terrorists using the same routes as arms, drug, and human traffickers?
- Are terrorists using arms, drug, and human trafficking to finance their activities?
- Given the existence of a terror-crime “nexus,” what are effective ways of countering terrorism and arms, drug, and human trafficking?

Based on indications from past studies, which suggest that a terror-crime nexus has emerged in Georgia, this study suggests the following hypotheses:<sup>13</sup>

- Terrorists are using the same routes as arms, drug, and human traffickers
- Terrorists are using arms, drug, and human trafficking to finance their activities
- Given the existence of a terror-crime “nexus,” it may be easier to counter terrorism by penetrating groups that traffic in arms, drug, and humans.

The first two questions will be answered based on the use of Preparation of the Investigative Environment (PIE), an innovative methodology that looks at links between

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<sup>9</sup> Glonti, “Trafficking in Human Beings in Georgia and the CIS.”

<sup>10</sup> Alexandre Kukhianidze, Alexandre Kupatadze, and Roman Gotsiridze, *Smuggling Through Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region of Georgia* (Tbilisi, Georgia: American University’s Transnational Crime and Corruption Center [TraCCC], 2004), 32–34.

<sup>11</sup> *Moscow Interfax* report from Tbilisi, 22 April 2002 (FBIS Document CEP2002042000161), as quoted in: LaVerle Berry, et al., *Nations Hospitable to Organized Crime and Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 2003), 58.

<sup>12</sup> Glonti, “Trafficking in Human Beings in Georgia and the CIS,” 382.

<sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive example, see Louise I. Shelley, et al., *Methods and Motives: Exploring Links between Transnational Organized Crime and International Terrorism* (Rockville, MD: National Criminal Justice Reference Service [NCJRS], 2005), 64–68.

terrorism and crime that are appropriate for analysis and investigation. The third question will be answered based on qualitative policy analysis of current Georgian counterterrorism and counter-trafficking initiatives.

*Methodology: Preparation of the Investigative Environment (PIE)*

The analysis of potential terror-crime interaction in this study is based on a methodology known as Preparation of the Investigative Environment (PIE), which was derived from Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace (IPB). Following IPB, analysts and investigators determine what is known and unknown about an adversary in order to determine the adversary's next move.<sup>14</sup> Like IPB, PIE allows analysts and investigators to approach terrorist and criminal groups both tactically and strategically. Using PIE, analysts and investigators identify areas of potential terror-crime collaboration and interaction, thereby generating intelligence on potential future terrorist activity.<sup>15</sup>

The PIE method of analysis is a three-step process, which culminates in the identification of watch points and indicators. First, analysts and investigators map the areas where terrorist and crime groups are operating, develop typologies of the behavior patterns of the groups, and detail the organization of specific crime and terror groups.<sup>16</sup> Second, they then identify "watch points," or broad categories of potential terror-crime interaction.<sup>17</sup> Third, and finally, they collect and analyze information that indicates interaction between terrorist and criminal activity.<sup>18</sup> These indicators of terror-crime collusion form the watch points. If indicators are clear and present, this points to the existence of terror-crime interaction.

The PIE methodology relies on a continuum of interaction between terrorist and criminal groups. Terms such as "nexus" or "hybrid," commonly used to describe terror-crime interaction throughout academic literature, remain too imprecise for a study of this nature. Thus, PIE analysts have created a terror-crime interaction spectrum, which details stages in the relationship between terrorist and criminal activities, including activity appropriation, nexus, symbiotic relationship, hybrid, and transformation.<sup>19</sup> *Activity appropriation* is a relationship in which terrorist and criminal groups adopt similar methods without working together. Terrorist and criminal groups form a *nexus* when they begin to rely on the support and expertise of the other group. A more cooperative relationship, one of mutual benefit or dependence, is referred to as a *symbiotic relationship*. A relationship that involves the sharing of methods and motives is known as a *hybrid*. Finally, *transformation* occurs when terrorist groups abandon political motives entirely in order to pursue criminal objectives. Similarly, criminal groups can transform themselves completely from crime-based organizations into terrorist groups, although this is a rare occurrence.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>17</sup> Idem.

<sup>18</sup> Idem.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 35–39.

## Sources

The research for this study came from a variety of sources, including academic literature; interviews with Georgian government officials, policy makers, and policy analysts; and official reports from both the U.S. government and international organizations. Much of the primary research was gathered during the summer of 2006, while I was based in Tbilisi, Georgia at the Transnational Crime and Corruption Center–Caucasus Office (TraCCC–CO). Because of the covert nature of the phenomena being studied, information on terrorism and arms, drug, and human trafficking was often difficult to access and incomplete. I made every effort to identify multiple sources for each incident of terrorism and human trafficking. The analysis in this study is mine and not attributable, unless otherwise noted, nor does it represent the point of view of any academic or governmental institution.

## Analysis

### *The Threat*

Georgia is primarily a transit state for both groups and activities associated with terrorism and organized crime. Located at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia, Georgia lies along a modern-day Silk Road—now a trading route for transnational terrorists and organized criminals, including arms, drug, and human traffickers. In addition to transit, Georgia is also, to a limited degree, an origin state for terrorists and, to a greater degree, an origin state for victims of human trafficking and all kinds of traffickers themselves. As analysts and investigators have noted (see below), the problems with terrorism and arms, drug, and human trafficking are only increasing in threat and scope.

Transnational terrorists, primarily those originating from the Middle East, are using Georgia as a transit location. Recently (2002–04), foreign fighters associated with the conflict in Chechnya used the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia as refuge.<sup>20</sup> As a result, Georgia became a major transit state for foreign fighters with Islamic affiliations, who were transiting Georgia from the Middle East to Chechnya.<sup>21</sup> According to the Office for the Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the U.S. Department of State, Georgia is also a transit country for arms, money, and supplies that are employed in planning terrorist attacks elsewhere and used by terrorists themselves.<sup>22</sup>

As the Council on Foreign Relations has reported, the foreign fighters transiting Georgia tend to be destined for the conflict in Chechnya, and often have proven links

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<sup>20</sup> Center for Defense Information (CDI), Terrorism Project, “Georgia: Fighting Terrorism in Another Failed State,” 22 March 2002; available at [www.cdi.org/terrorism/georgia.cfm](http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/georgia.cfm).

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism*, Chapter 5A – Country Reports (27 April 2005); available at [www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/45388.htm](http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/45388.htm).

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism*, Chapter 5 – Country Reports: Europe and Eurasia Overview (28 April 2006); available at [www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2005/64342.htm](http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2005/64342.htm).

to Al Qaeda. For example, the late Chechen warlord Ibn al-Khattab, a Jordanian by birth, was an associate of Osama bin Laden during the 1979–89 Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup> In addition, Zacarias Moussaoui, the alleged “twentieth hijacker” in the 9/11 terrorist attacks, also operated as a recruiter for Al Qaeda-linked rebels in Chechnya.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Chechen foreign fighters also reportedly joined forces with Al Qaeda and the Taliban in opposing the Northern Alliance (and ultimately the U.S.-led coalition force) in Afghanistan in 2001.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to transnational terrorists, Georgia has a number of armed non-state actors that have been implicated in terrorist attacks, albeit predominately on a local level. These non-state groups include the Abkhaz military, the South Ossetian military, the White Legion, the Forest Brothers, the Hunter Battalion, and armed factions of ethnic Armenians.<sup>26</sup> Primarily associated with the separatist conflicts in Georgia, these armed groups have caused a number of disturbances within Georgia proper in recent years. Additionally, the military of Nagorno-Karabakh operates in the region (but not in Georgia). In Armenia, regional groups include cells of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA).

Georgia is a destination, transit, and origin state for illicit arms. The separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are likely destinations for light arms; Georgian authorities have uncovered a number of cases involving the trafficking of machine guns, grenade launchers, grenades, pistols, and cartridges to these locations.<sup>27</sup> Similar weapons also transit through Georgia, destined for the conflicts in the North Caucasus, particularly Chechnya. In addition, Georgia is an origin state for radiological and nuclear sources abandoned after the fall of the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup>

Drug trafficking is an entrenched problem in Georgia because of its location on the transit route through the Caucasus.<sup>29</sup> The criminal groups involved in narcotics trafficking in the region originate from Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Chechnya, and Azerbaijan, as well as from other former Soviet republics and Turkey.<sup>30</sup> In the past, the Pankisi Gorge, a lawless region on the Georgian-Russian border, has also operated as a transit location to transfer drugs from Central Asia to Russia, effectively supporting the

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<sup>23</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, “Chechnya-based Terrorists (Russia, separatist)” (updated 11 July 2006); available at [www.cfr.org/publication/9181/#1](http://www.cfr.org/publication/9181/#1).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> These groups are best described as “non-state armed groups.” They operate outside of the state and are more adequately described as guerilla groups rather than terrorist organizations. See Table: “Selected Non-State Armed Groups,” *The Military Balance* 104:1 (2004): 363–64.

<sup>27</sup> Kukhianidze, Kupatadze, and Gotsiridze, *Smuggling Through Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region of Georgia*, 33.

<sup>28</sup> Alexandre Kukhianidze, Director, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center–Caucasus Office (TraCCC–CO), Personal Communication, 27 July 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Berry, et al., *Nations Hospitable to Organized Crime and Terrorism*, 58.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 58.

conflict in Chechnya.<sup>31</sup> Because drug trafficking is such a profitable business, it has persisted despite the best efforts of Georgian and Russian authorities.

According to the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons at the U.S. Department of State, Georgia is a “Tier II” country, which means that it does not fully comply with the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act’s (VTVPA) minimum standards, but is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with those standards.<sup>32</sup> Georgia is both a source and transit country for victims of human trafficking. Humans are trafficked through Georgia from places like Ukraine, Russia, and other former Soviet republics to various locations, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey, Greece, Western Europe, and the United States.<sup>33</sup>

In the aftermath of multiple conflicts during the 1990s, the South Caucasus became a center for trafficking in women and illegal migration.<sup>34</sup> The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has identified Georgia as having a “high” incidence of origin,<sup>35</sup> a “medium” incidence of transit,<sup>36</sup> and a “very low” incidence as a country of destination.<sup>37</sup> The majority of victims are women and children, who are typically trafficked for sexual exploitation. However, there have been a number of incidents of the trafficking of men and older boys for forced labor.<sup>38</sup>

### *The Indicators*

*Open Activities in the Legitimate Economy.* Terrorists—and, to a greater degree, criminals—can and do operate openly within the Georgian economy and society. For example, non-state armed groups in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia have either official or unofficial links to the *de facto* regimes and organizations in these separatist regions. Furthermore, Okan, a coal mining company in Abkhazia, has been implicated in the transit of workers from Turkey into Abkhazia.<sup>39</sup> Activities associated with human trafficking are prevalent in the open economy.

Flagrant incidents of human trafficking are a significant problem in Trabzon, the Turkish Black Sea port, which is located on the border with Georgia.<sup>40</sup> This is one of the main routes of human trafficking from Georgia. Here, notably, women are even

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report* (June 2005); available at [www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46606.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46606.htm).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Yalowitz and Cornell, “The Critical but Perilous Caucasus,” 105.

<sup>35</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Trafficking in Persons Report*, “Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns” (April 2006), 18.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Trafficking in Persons Report*, “Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns,” Appendices, 106.

<sup>39</sup> Ministry of State Security of the Government of Abkhazia in Exile, 2003, cited in Kukhianidze, Kupatadze, and Gotsiridze, *Smuggling Through Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region of Georgia*, 36.

<sup>40</sup> Alexandre Kukhianidze, Personal Communication, 27 July 2006.

trafficked by other women. These women are extremely poor, typically from rural villages, and are often illiterate, and thus are desperately in search of employment.<sup>41</sup> They often use employment agencies, which are really fronts for human trafficking operations.

*Shared Illicit Nodes.* Both terrorists and criminals have established regular transnational routes of transit through Georgia and the South Caucasus. The Transnational Crime and Corruption Center–Caucasus Office<sup>42</sup> and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Georgia<sup>43</sup> have documented the routes of illegal activities through Georgia. Terrorists tend to travel through Georgia from the south (originating from the Middle East) and the east (beginning in Afghanistan). Since terrorist destinations are typically areas north of Georgia and in Russia, such as Chechnya and Dagestan, Georgia is used mainly as a transit country. As recently as early 2006, the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs uncovered a case in which a Saudi national attempted to transit Georgia, relying on the Chechen network in Tbilisi and throughout Georgia to aid his illicit migration.<sup>44</sup>

*Drug Trafficking.* Drugs travel from Afghanistan through Dagestan and Georgia, both of which are primarily transit zones (instead of destinations).<sup>45</sup> Drug traffickers also transit through the Pankisi Gorge, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia in order to reach Russia,<sup>46</sup> and drugs are trafficked to Georgia from Azerbaijan.<sup>47</sup> A major exit point for drug traffickers is through Sarpi, Georgia to Turkey.<sup>48</sup> Under Aslan Abashidze, the former *de facto* leader of the self-proclaimed “Autonomous Republic of Adjara,” Batumi was a major transit port for drugs.<sup>49</sup> Abashidze was also involved in trafficking drugs from Turkey to Russia.<sup>50</sup> Drug trafficking remains a problem in this region; in 2004, a large quantity of heroin was found on the Georgian-Turkish border in a double-bottomed truck.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Kukhianidze, Kupatadze, and Gotsiridze, *Smuggling Through Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region of Georgia*, 11.

<sup>43</sup> Bogdan Udriste, Advisor, OSCE Mission to Georgia, Personal Communication, 28 September 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Giorgi Gabunia, Head of Counterterrorism Center, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, Personal Communication, 18 July 2006.

<sup>45</sup> Kakha Khizanishvili, Director, Police Academy, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Personal Communication, 13 July 2006.

<sup>46</sup> Giorgi Gabunia, Personal Communication, 18 July 2006.

<sup>47</sup> Giorgi Glonti, Director, Department of External Affairs, Georgian University of Social Sciences, Personal Communication, 25 July 2006.

<sup>48</sup> Sven Holdar, Deputy Head of Human Dimension Office, Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, Personal Communication, 7 July 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Kakha Khizanishvili, Personal Communication, 13 July 2006.

<sup>51</sup> Giorgi Glonti, Personal Communication, 25 July 2006.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Giorgi Gabunia, Personal Communication, 18 July 2006.



Outside of heroin and marijuana trafficking, Subutex smuggling accounts for 60 percent of the drug market in Georgia.<sup>52</sup> A synthetic drug intended to be used to treat opium addiction, Subutex actually comes to Georgia from Western Europe, typically originating in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands.<sup>53</sup> Criminals use second-hand cars to transport the drug. Subutex can generate a huge profit in Georgia: while it is sold for 1 Euro in Belgium, a dose sells for 100 Euros in Georgia. In one case, 1,000 tablets were found in a car, which would have generated USD 100,000 in profit.<sup>54</sup> The smuggling of Subutex is a relatively new phenomenon, which has the potential to have a huge impact on Georgia if it is left unchecked.

*Weapons.* After the end of the Cold War, the Georgian Ministry of the Environment discovered more than 270 sources of radiological materials.<sup>55</sup> These sources include research reactors and radiological waste, among other things. Additional radiological materials were abandoned in forests by Russian troops as they withdrew. The trafficking route for radiological or nuclear materials through Georgia flows from Central Asia through the Caucasus to the Middle East.<sup>56</sup> A common route is from Russia through South Ossetia to Batumi or Armenia. There have been at least two cases in which traffickers of radiological materials attempted to sell materials in Batumi. In one case, the traffickers were detained on the Georgian-Armenian border; in the other, they were detained as they attempted to smuggle the materials out of Armenia.<sup>57</sup>

*Human Trafficking.* Victims of human trafficking typically come from two regions: the eastern South Caucasus (specifically, Armenia and Azerbaijan) or the former Soviet Union (particularly Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine).<sup>58</sup> They transit Georgia, ultimately destined for Turkey or the Middle East.<sup>59</sup> The Ministry of State Security of the Government of Abkhazia in Exile has uncovered a number of cases of human smuggling from Turkey to Abkhazia. In one case, twelve people from Turkey were detained at the Rukhi Bridge on the border between Abkhazia and Georgia.<sup>60</sup> In this case, the coal mining company Okan had allegedly offered them employment in Abkhazia for USD 700 to 1,000 per month.<sup>61</sup>

The Georgian Coast Guard discovered another incident involving human smuggling from Turkey to Abkhazia. In this case, at least four people were smuggled to Abkhazia

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<sup>52</sup> Alexandre Kukhianidze, Director, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center–Caucasus Office (TraCCC–CO), Personal Communication, 27 July 2006.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Georgi Glonti, Personal Communication, 25 July 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ministry of State Security of the Government of Abkhazia in Exile, 2003, cited in Kukhianidze, Kupatadze, and Gotsiridze, *Smuggling Through Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region of Georgia*, 36.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 36.

to work in a coal mine, ostensibly with high salaries.<sup>62</sup> When the miners instead found themselves working under slave-like conditions, they attempted to escape by boat, and were intercepted by the Georgian Coast Guard.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the Georgian Department of Intelligence has implicated Turkish ships in the trafficking of groups of five or six women from Russia to Abkhazia and on to Turkey.<sup>64</sup>

*Use of Violence.* Recent terrorist attacks in Georgia include a car bomb explosion outside of the police station in Gori, Georgia (5 February 2005)<sup>65</sup> and an unsuccessful grenade attack against U.S. President George W. Bush in Tbilisi's Freedom Square (20 May 2005).<sup>66</sup> In another incident, on 22 January 2006, high-voltage electricity lines were destroyed.<sup>67</sup> In 1999, there was an explosion in Zugdidi (Abkhazia).<sup>68</sup> In the Caucasus region, a Georgia-related terrorist attack occurred when Chechen terrorists took over a school in Beslan, Russia (located in North Ossetia), creating a hostage crisis. While the terrorists were mostly Chechens, the group included two people of Arab origin.<sup>69</sup> The group reportedly came to Beslan from South Ossetia—a separatist region in Georgia—through the Roki Tunnel.<sup>70</sup>

In the past, news reports have indicated the practice of slavery or forcible servitude in Abkhazia. For example, *Region Inform*, the Russian information agency, reported that officials at a Russian border checkpoint apprehended a man who was trying to illegally cross into Russia.<sup>71</sup> Originally from Murmansk, Oleg Kalinov claimed that he had been forced to work as a slave in Abkhazia since 1993. Moreover, reports of slavery were confirmed in the summer of 2006, after troops from the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs forcibly retook the Kodori Gorge, a region on the periphery of

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<sup>62</sup> Department of the Border Guard of Georgia, 2003, cited in *ibid.*, 36.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>64</sup> Department of Intelligence of Georgia, 2003, cited in *ibid.*, 36.

<sup>65</sup> "World Briefing—Europe: Georgia: Car Bomb Kills 3 Policemen," *New York Times* (2 February 2005); available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D03E7DB133BF931A35751C0A9639C8B63>.

<sup>66</sup> Elaine Quijano, "Secret Service Told Grenade Landed near Bush: U.S. Officials Investigating Alleged Incident in Georgia," *CNN.com* (10 May 2005); available at [www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/europe/05/10/bush.georgia/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/europe/05/10/bush.georgia/index.html).

<sup>67</sup> Kakha Khizanishvili, Director, Police Academy, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Personal Communication, 13 July 2006.

<sup>68</sup> Giorgi Gabunia, Head of Counterterrorism Center, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, Personal Communication, 18 July 2006.

<sup>69</sup> Energy Security Analysis, Inc. (ESAI), Weekly Intelligence Briefing, "Russia's Counterterrorism Strategy after Beslan—Regional Implications," 30 September 2004; available at [www.esai.com/pdf/Wb092004.pdf](http://www.esai.com/pdf/Wb092004.pdf).

<sup>70</sup> Vladimir Socor, "JCC, 'Peacekeeping' Formats in South Ossetia Shown to be Untenable," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 2:199 (26 October 2005); available at [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=407&issue\\_id=3506&article\\_id=2370394](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=407&issue_id=3506&article_id=2370394).

<sup>71</sup> Cited in Kukhianidze, Kupatadze, and Gotsiridze, *Smuggling Through Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region of Georgia*, 36.

Abkhazia, and officials discovered the presence of Georgian slaves among the Abkhazian inhabitants.<sup>72</sup>

*Use of Corruption.* Particularly in the past, when the Pankisi Gorge was a problematic region, high-ranking Georgian state authorities were involved in illicit activities.<sup>73</sup> The involvement tended to occur at the departmental chief level and higher. Specifically, in 2000, there were fighters of both Chechen and Arab origin in the Pankisi Gorge.<sup>74</sup> Chechen field commanders apparently gave money to the Georgian government and tried to gain sympathy among the locals in order to be able to remain there.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, there was evidence of drug trafficking in the Pankisi Gorge.<sup>76</sup> This is an example of direct collusion between terrorist and criminal groups. Some terrorist threat still continues to emanate from the Pankisi Gorge; it will take time for the problem to be resolved.<sup>77</sup> Now, however, South Ossetia has taken over as the country's main hub for drug trafficking, with both Georgia and Chechen criminal groups involved.<sup>78</sup>

In the recent past, both criminal and terrorist groups have arguably had more opportunity for collusion in Georgia proper through the patronage of government officials. During the tenure of Aslan Abashidze, the Adjara regime was notorious for its links to Chechen terrorist groups and Russian organized crime groups. Furthermore, in Georgia, law enforcement and border guards throughout the country were commonly known to be corrupt—even in the aftermath of the Rose Revolution<sup>79</sup>—allowing for freedom of movement and action for terrorists and criminals alike. There is evidence to suggest that criminals continue to be protected by government officials because of corruption.<sup>80</sup>

Much of the former Georgian system encouraged corruption related to all kinds of trafficking. The old Georgian passport is extremely easy to forge; the photo can be changed, and the passport could be used multiple times. In one case, a passport was used at least fifteen different times by different people.<sup>81</sup> It is relatively easy to buy

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<sup>72</sup> Zaza Jgharkava, "Possible Case of Slavery Discovered in Svaneti," *Georgia Today*, Issue 318 (10 August 2006); available from [www.georgiatoday.ge/article\\_details.php?id=1615](http://www.georgiatoday.ge/article_details.php?id=1615).

<sup>73</sup> Giorgi Glonti, Director, Department of External Affairs, Georgian University of Social Sciences, Personal Communication, 25 July 2006.

<sup>74</sup> Giorgi Gabunia, Head of Counterterrorism Center, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, Personal Communication, 18 July 2006.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Marc Hulst, Counter-Trafficking Program Officer, International Organization for Migration, Personal Communication, 11 July 2006.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Kakha Khizanishvili, Director, Police Academy, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Personal Communication, 13 July 2006.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Sven Holdar, Deputy Head of Human Dimension Office, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Personal Communication, 7 July 2006.

<sup>81</sup> Giorgi Glonti, Director, Department of External Affairs, Georgian University of Social Sciences, Personal Communication, 25 July 2006.

falsified documents in Georgia; for as little as USD 400, traffickers can obtain such documents.<sup>82</sup> The laxity of the Georgian travel document regime only encourages further trafficking activities. As recently as 2001, firms and agencies within Georgia facilitated visa brokerage.<sup>83</sup> These firms also assisted in the smuggling of people, but not trafficking for prostitution purposes.

*Financial Transactions and Money Laundering.* Chechen terrorist groups maintain known financial links to global Wahhabi extremists.<sup>84</sup> These foreign fighters transit Georgia in order to reach Chechen freedom fighters based in the Pankisi Gorge. Chechen-led groups have used the Pankisi Gorge, within the territory of Georgia, for training camps, taking advantage of the lawlessness there. Chechens use the mountainous northern border to transport supplies, information, and particularly money.<sup>85</sup> Some of this money is carried across the northern border by foreign fighters to support the conflict in Chechnya.

There have been a number of kidnappings in which victims, mostly foreigners of some financial means, were taken or trafficked to the Pankisi Gorge region.<sup>86</sup> The victims were often involved in the banking business, and thus were relatively wealthy individuals. In these instances, the traffickers benefited directly from the lawlessness in the Pankisi Gorge, just as do the terrorist groups that operate there, far from the reach of state power. The kidnappings were not organized by the Chechens, but by criminal groups that negotiated with the Chechens.<sup>87</sup> Now, the Georgian government has (for the most part) regained control of the Pankisi Gorge. The separatist regions, however, remain uncontrolled, and incidents of kidnappings have been prevalent there.<sup>88</sup>

*Organizational Structures.* Since Georgia gained independence, over one million people have left the country.<sup>89</sup> Many have fled by using smuggling networks, which charge anywhere from USD 5,000 to 10,000 for safe passage to the West. (Given the significant amount charged by the traffickers, many Georgians cannot afford to pay the full amount up front. In some cases the victim remains indebted to the trafficker until the debt can be repaid.)<sup>90</sup> In 2004, thirteen women from Uzbekistan were found in an apartment in Tbilisi en route to Dubai; the traffickers included both Armenians and

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<sup>82</sup> Sven Holdar, Personal Communication, 7 July 2006.

<sup>83</sup> Marc Hulst, Counter-Trafficking Program Officer, International Organization for Migration, Personal Communication, 11 July 2006.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Kakha Khizanishvili, Director, Police Academy, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Personal Communication, 13 July 2006.

<sup>85</sup> Giorgi Gabunia, Head of Counterterrorism Center, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, Personal Communication, 18 July 2006.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Sven Holdar, Deputy Head of Human Dimension Office, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Personal Communication, 7 July 2006.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

Georgians.<sup>91</sup> This is an example of the more decentralized, loosely knit network that is typical of transnational organized crime. Although there are not many examples of such an organizational structure within Georgia, where human trafficking tends to happen on an ad hoc basis, similar networks may be at play in both arms and drug trafficking.

*Culture.* The Chechens and Kists in Georgia share common cultural roots and speak the same language. Prior to Georgian military operations in the Pankisi Gorge, terrorists and foreign fighters from Chechnya were based there. Today, mainly Chechen refugees remain, although foreign fighters freely transit the region.<sup>92</sup> In addition, terrorist groups in Chechnya have used Chechen women (ages 17 to 20) as suicide bombers.<sup>93</sup> Chechens have also been involved in the illegal smuggling of human beings to the region. In this case, terrorism is directly connected to human trafficking.

In addition to the Kists in the Pankisi Gorge, ethnic and religious minorities throughout Georgia assist in the transit of individuals through the country. For example, over 300,000 Muslims live in Georgia. There is a large Muslim community close to Tbilisi that functions as potential support group for traffickers. Chechens of Muslim origin within Tbilisi proper have in the past sheltered and continue to harbor foreign fighters as they transit the country, destined for Chechnya.<sup>94</sup> In total, only 2.5 million ethnic Georgians live in Georgia, out of a total population of 4.6 million.

*Popular Support.* According to the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs, the separatist region of South Ossetia has had links to terrorists and terrorist activity. Allegedly, South Ossetia contained training camps for foreign fighters.<sup>95</sup> In addition, chemical weapons, radiological weapons, and nuclear devices were transported through South Ossetia intended for use by terrorist or criminal groups. The transport was supported by the official South Ossetian armed militias, which defend the separatist region.

As separatist enclaves, South Ossetia and Abkhazia are logical transit zones in Georgia because of absence of law enforcement by the central government. Reportedly, unregulated people are entering South Ossetia through the Roki Tunnel.<sup>96</sup> From South Ossetia, these people easily transit through to Georgia. Abkhazia is also a transit zone, but is less conducive to the passage of migrants. While the Sochi border separating Russia and Abkhazia is uncontrolled, it is not as easy to cross the Abkhazian borders due to the terrain.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Khatuna Madurashvili, Program Director, Refugee Council of Georgia, United Nations Association, Personal Communication, 18 July 2006.

<sup>93</sup> Alexandre Kukhianidze, Director, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center–Caucasus Office (TraCCC–CO), 27 July 2006.

<sup>94</sup> Giorgi Gabunia, Head of Counterterrorism Center, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, Personal Communication, 18 July 2006.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Marc Hulst, Counter-Trafficking Program Officer, International Organization for Migration, Personal Communication, 11 July 2006.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

## Terror-Crime Nexus?

Applying the PIE methodology has revealed a number of points about the collusion of terrorist and criminal elements in Georgia, and thus is able to apply these points to the hypotheses put forth at the beginning of this paper. First, both terrorists and human traffickers in Georgia are benefiting from a general lack of law enforcement and loose border control—problems that are endemic to Georgia and its neighbors in the Caucasus. As a result, both terrorists and criminals use similar, if not the same, passages of transport. As such, the first conclusion of this study is: *Terrorists are using the same routes as arms, drug, and human traffickers.* In the sense that terrorists and human traffickers are benefiting from the same environment, terrorists and human traffickers are “linked.”

This study has shown that “narcoterrorism” and arms-supported terrorism is present in Georgia. Notably, this study has revealed that *direct* collusion between terrorists and human traffickers, although implied in the limited literature as noted previously, is not evident within Georgia. Thus, the second conclusion of this study is: *Terrorists are using arms and drugs trafficking—but not human trafficking—to finance their activities.* Thus, terrorists and drug traffickers have formed a “nexus” or even, in some cases, a “hybrid” organization, while terrorists and arms traffickers have formed a “symbiotic relationship.” In contrast, terrorists and human traffickers in Georgia most adequately resemble “activity appropriation” along the continuum of terror-crime interaction, and have not yet progressed to the status of “nexus.” Indicators of collusion between terrorists and human traffickers are generally less apparent across Georgia.

The previous two conclusions have direct implications for counterterrorism and counter-trafficking policy in Georgia. Accordingly, the third conclusion is: *Because of the “nexus” and “symbiotic relationship” between terrorism and drug and arms trafficking (respectively), terrorism can be countered by penetrating drug and arms traffickers. However, since a terror-crime “nexus” does not exist between terrorism and human trafficking, terrorism and human trafficking should be countered separately.* Unlike countering “narcoterrorism” and arms-financed terrorism—both of which are possible to combat by infiltrating traffickers in order to more effectively counter affiliated terrorist groups—there is little to no value in countering terrorism by infiltrating groups involved in human trafficking.

## Policy Analysis and Recommendations

### *Policy Analysis*

Although Georgia has taken steps to counter terrorism and arms, drug, and human trafficking, the country (and the South Caucasus in general) continues to have a problem with both phenomena. While these phenomena are not always directly linked, they do benefit from the same atmosphere of lawlessness and the lack of a secure environment. Georgia has arguably employed separate policies to counter terrorism and trafficking, yet the government of Georgia has been relatively unsuccessful in countering both

phenomena simultaneously. The individual policies have been ineffective to varying degrees.

In 2005, the Counterterrorism Center was created within the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs. With this new center, the ministry effectively has augmented its ability to gather and analyze data. The center is dependent upon the cooperation of the Special Services, foreign intelligence, border guards, financial monitoring services, and allies. Border security, an enduring problem in Georgia, has particularly improved in the recent past as a result of increased cooperation among multiple departments, driven by the Counterterrorism Center. In fact, within the last year, ten people were detained on the Georgian border because they did not have the proper documents.<sup>98</sup>

In 2005, over ninety Georgian officials participated in Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.<sup>99</sup> In addition, Georgian troops have participated in the U.S. Department of Defense-sponsored Georgian Train and Equip Program (GTEP) and Georgian Sustainment and Stability Operations Program (GSSOP), which are intended to enhance Georgia's counterterrorism capabilities and help it address the security challenge posed by the Pankisi Gorge. Despite the best work of GTEP and GSSOP, the Pankisi Gorge (and the northern border in general) still remains a transit location for foreign fighters bound for Chechnya. As a result, Georgian troops continue to work to rid the Pankisi Gorge of terrorists.<sup>100</sup> The Gorge remains a location of arms and drug trafficking, as well as a transit zone for money and supplies.

The problems with arms, drug, and particularly human trafficking have gained recognition within Georgia in recent years. To combat human trafficking, the Georgian government has focused on prosecution, protection, and prevention.<sup>101</sup> In contrast, Georgia has been unable to mitigate the growth of drug trafficking, particularly in the Pankisi Gorge, a region that involves international players. Like drug trafficking, arms trafficking remains a transnational problem, requiring a like response.

### *Policy Recommendations*

The Georgian government should recognize that terrorism and arms, drug, and human trafficking are linked to varying degrees, but that they flourish under the same conditions—namely, an absence of central state control. While terrorists and drug and arms traffickers tend to work hand-in-hand, terrorists and human traffickers both benefit from porous borders and a lack of law enforcement. While terrorist and trafficking groups are not colluding to form a “nexus,” they do appropriate similar activities.

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<sup>98</sup> Giorgi Gabunia, Head of Counterterrorism Center, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, Personal Communication, 18 July 2006.

<sup>99</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator of Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism* (April 2006), 100; available at [www.state.gov/documents/organization/65462.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/65462.pdf).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report* (June 2005); available at [www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46606.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46606.htm).

*Counterterrorism Policy Recommendations.* The following recommendations are intended to provide a framework for Georgia's response to the presence of terrorist groups operating in or transiting through Georgian territory:

- It is necessary for Georgia to deepen and enhance the coordination of regional and international counter-terrorism efforts. Transnational terrorism does not have borders. Greater integration of Georgia within international organizations such as NATO is crucial.
- The Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs should continue to utilize the counter-terrorism department, while focusing on greater inter-agency coordination.
- Georgian troops should continue to train and modernize. Georgia should be prepared to support stability operations in case regional conflicts should expand into Georgian territory.
- Georgian border guards need to work more closely with officials from their neighboring states: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Turkey.

*Counter-Trafficking Policy Recommendations.* The following recommendations are focused on ways that Georgia can address the presence of arms, drugs, and human trafficking networks within Georgian territory and the region more broadly:

- Law enforcement officials in Georgia need to work with their counterparts in neighboring states that also host trafficking routes, particularly Turkey. They also should work closely with international partners.
- The Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs should create a special department (modeled after the counterterrorism department) so that inter-agency action within the law enforcement community is possible.
- Georgian law enforcement officials should recognize the collusion between terrorists and traffickers and use this information to infiltrate appropriate groups, particularly arms and drug traffickers.
- Georgia needs to pursue and enact bilateral policies with neighboring countries. As they are transnational issues, arms, drug, and human trafficking can only be countered with transnational action.

## **Conclusion**

This study illuminated the links (or lack thereof) between terrorism and trafficking in Georgia. It revealed that terrorism is linked to the trafficking of arms—and particularly of drugs—in this country. While this study did not find evidence of links between terrorist organizations and human trafficking groups in Georgia, it did point to common indicators of terrorism and human trafficking within Georgia. By creating a more secure environment and more thoroughly instituting the rule of law, the Georgian government could make great strides in countering both terrorism and trafficking across the board.



Since the Rose Revolution in November 2003, a new, proactive regime has come into power in Tbilisi. The stagnation of the previous decade appears to be a thing of the past; President Mikheil Saakashvili is willing and able to implement new policies, which aim to change much of the status quo within Georgia. Change, however, does not happen overnight. Terrorism, crime, and corruption still persist in Georgia, even in the aftermath of the Rose Revolution. As the new regime introduces new policies, it must aim for long-term solutions.



# Terrorist Routes in Central Asia: Trafficking Drugs, Humans, and Weapons

Rustam Burnashev \*

## Introduction

The hypothesis around which this essay is structured is informed by the following questions:

- Are terrorists using the same routes as drug, human, and weapon traffickers?
- Are terrorists using drug, human, and weapon trafficking to support their activities?

The analytical basis for this article is a theory of a regional security complex. It may be viewed as a matrix for regional studies. It links the situation within regional states—including those in Central Asia that are addressed in this study—to relations among other states and international actors. It specifically looks at the interaction of regional states with neighboring states and world powers.<sup>1</sup>

It is very important to take into consideration two important factors. The first is that the states of Central Asia are weak states. The second is that Central Asia is an *unstructured security region*<sup>2</sup> and a *mini-complex*.<sup>3</sup> As such, it serves as an *insulator*<sup>4</sup> between the regional security complexes of East Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, as well as the security complex Russia is attempting to build around itself.

The situation in Central Asia can be best understood by dividing the countries of the region into two groups: “powerful” states and “weak” states. The categorization of weak and powerful states is determined by the degree of social and political unity between civil society and government institutions; the degree to which the state corre-

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the regional security complex theory, see Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed. (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991); Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998); and Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> An *unstructured security region* is a region “where local states are so weak that their power does not project much, if at all, beyond their own boundaries, and so generate insufficient security interdependence to form the essential structures of a regional security complex.” See Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 492.

<sup>3</sup> A *mini-complex* is a “formation with the characteristics of a security complex, but small in scale and usually composed at least in part of substate actors.” See Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 490.

<sup>4</sup> An *insulator* is a “state or mini-complex standing *between* regional security complexes and defining a location where larger regional security dynamics stand back to back.” See Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 490.

sponds to a national identity; and the degree of cohesive statehood and stability (in terms of internal order) in the country.<sup>5</sup>

The type of state that is dominant in the region is the most significant factor that has influenced the routes of drug, human, and weapon trafficking researched for this paper. As mentioned previously, the states of Central Asia are weak.<sup>6</sup> Generally speaking, states in the region are characterized by a low level of social and political cohesion, although it varies from state to state. Only a narrow social base of support for existing political regimes (particularly among the middle class) exists in these states. The vast majority of the population in the region is apathetic about politics. People tend to have weak ethnic identities, forcing them to develop alternate forms of identification. Despite a well-developed system of state repression (particularly in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan), Central Asian countries commonly experience withdrawals from full-fledged expression of statehood—specifically, the central, national bodies have a tendency to serve as forums in which sub-state actors compete among themselves to ensure their own security or to exert influence over the country. The weaknesses associated with Central Asian states tend to keep states in the region relatively exposed to penetration by external forces. In addition, these forms of weakness allow sub-state actors to play a greater role in the determination of regional security and create power vacuums in which routes that can be used for trafficking drugs, humans, and weapons can flourish.

As mentioned above, Central Asia is both an “unstructured security region” and a “mini-complex” that serves as an “insulator” between other regional security complexes. Unsurprisingly, Central Asia also serves as transit zone for drug, human, and weapon trafficking. Afghanistan is a key to understanding the conditions that foster the manifestations of international terrorism that can currently be seen in the Central Asian region, as the security dynamics in Afghanistan and Central Asia are closely related. Therefore, some of the countries in the Central Asian “mini-complex” are particularly influenced by the security dynamics within Afghanistan. Moreover, most ties between Afghanistan and Central Asia are influenced by the inherent weakness of Central Asian countries and the fragmentation of Afghanistan. The links are created by sub-state and transnational actors, such as criminal syndicates involved with drug trafficking; ethnic and sub-ethnic groups; guerrilla and gang-related groups; and religious movements.

The research on which this essay is based relied on an analysis of open-source materials in the countries of Central Asia, including the media, official documents, academic research, and analytical papers.

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<sup>5</sup> See Buzan, *People, States, and Fear*, 96–107.

<sup>6</sup> Rustam Burnashev and Irina Chernykh, “Conditions for Securitization of International Terrorism in Central Asia,” *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 4:1 (Spring 2005): 131–42.

## Drug Trafficking

### *Drug Production in Central Asia*

Illegal drug production occurs in all Central Asian countries. Drug producers in the region mainly grow hashish and marijuana from wild Indian hemp. The primary cultivation areas include the Chu Valley, which is located in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and encompasses approximately 170,000 hectares; and the Issyk-Kul district of Kyrgyzstan, which encompasses approximately 6,000 hectares. In addition, a vast quantity of “light” drugs are produced in Central Asia. Most output occurs in Kazakhstan, and Russia is the main consumer of these drugs.

In general, Thebaic poppies are illegally cultivated on small plots of land. This drug crop has a chaotic, irregular production cycle, and the product is intended primarily for domestic consumption within the region. Only a small amount of opium is produced due to the complex production process and the increasing volume of opium and heroin available from Afghanistan. In addition, some narcotics are hand-produced (ephedra, which is made using wild hemp, is an example).

It is necessary to note that the industrial production of semi-synthetic drugs is increasing in Central Asia, especially in Kazakhstan. Shymkent, Kazakhstan, for example, is home to a factory for producing morphine, codeine, and other opiates.

### *Drug Importation and Transit*

Central Asia’s geographical proximity to Afghanistan is the most important factor affecting regional drug trafficking. Approximately 30 percent of the drugs produced in Afghanistan—an annual average of 120 tons or more, primarily heroin—are transported through Central Asia. In addition, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the civil war in Tajikistan, and the struggle against the illicit drug trade in Iran have created conditions resulting in increased drug trafficking through Central Asia. In general, drug transit occurs over the borders between Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

Factors that affect drug smuggling in the region and promote drug transit in Central Asian countries include the long common border between Afghanistan and the countries of Central Asia and the increase in demand for narcotics in Central Asia and Russia. Drug trafficking routes in the region tend to connect settlements and pass along common transportation corridors.<sup>7</sup> These routes will be outlined below.

### *Tajikistan*

Presently, drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Tajikistan proceeds through areas bordering the following settlements: Shuroabad, Moskovskiy, Panj, and Shaartuz. These areas have relatively flat topography and well-developed transportation corridors. Drug transit occurring in limited volumes is still carried out through the Gorniy-Badakshan

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<sup>7</sup> See Leonid Bondarets, “Empire of Drugs,” in *Illicit Markets of Central Asia (Nelegal’nyy rynek Tsentral’noy Azii)* (Almaty: ARG, OSCE, EC), 8-40 (in Russian).

Autonomous *Viloyati* (Ishkashim, Khorugh, and Kalaihum).<sup>8</sup> The main settlements through which drug transit in Tajikistan flows are Kulob, Qurghontepa, Dushanbe, and Khujand.

Narcotics from Khujand transit through Bekabad to Uzbekistan, and across the Batken district to Kyrgyzstan. Since 1998, evidence suggests that the drugs transiting through Murgab are destined for China. In fact, the Dushanbe airport is very actively used for drug transit.

### *Kyrgyzstan*

Narcotics from Tajikistan mainly come into Kyrgyzstan from four directions:

- Across the Khorugh-Osh border
- Through the area spanning the canyons of Pamir and the Zaalayskiy mountain range to the Alayskaya valley of the Osh region
- Across the Jirgatal mountain trails and other neighboring areas of Tajikistan through Batken and Kadamzhaisk
- Via the Khujan main roads to the Batken region and Ferghana valley of Uzbekistan and on to Osh.

### *Uzbekistan*

Narcotics from Afghanistan transit into Uzbekistan through Termez. Drug smuggling from Tajikistan is carried out through:

- The settlements of the Surkhondaryo region
- The neighborhoods of the Namangan area
- The Almalyk, Bekabad, Buka, and Yangiabad neighborhoods of the Tashkent region
- The Bakhmal and Zaamin neighborhoods of the Jizzakh district
- The Khavast neighborhood of the Sirdaryo region.

Drugs smuggled from Kyrgyzstan enter Central Asia through Andizhan and the Namangan district. Through the Ferghana province, drug transit occurs from the Batken and Osh districts of Kyrgyzstan. According to official representatives of Turkmenistan, most drugs are transited to Uzbekistan from the Lebap region.

### *Turkmenistan*

Narcotics mostly come into Turkmenistan from Afghanistan and, to a lesser degree, from the Khorazm district of Uzbekistan. The transit of narcotics from Afghanistan to Turkmenistan tends to follow these routes:

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<sup>8</sup> This route has become inactive because of the activity of the “Pamir Antinarcotics Volunteers Association,” which was established by the “Osh Knot” Project and Aga Khan Foundation.

- Through the checkpoints at Gushgy and the Takhta Bazar of the Mary district
- Through the checkpoint at Imamnazar in the Lebab district.

Narcotics transit through the port at Turkmenbashi and subsequently go to Astrakhan and Azerbaijan. Narcotics also transit through Turkmenistan to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, with the Ashgabat airport being one of the most important points of transit.

### *Kazakhstan*

Narcotics smuggled into Kazakhstan primarily come from the bordering country of Kyrgyzstan. This border is, for all practical purposes, completely open, and the entire perimeter is thus a prime location for trafficking. Cannabis tends to come from Karakol in Kyrgyzstan and transit through to Almaty. This route makes use of mountain passes and the Chu River as well as the border between Bishkek and Almaty. Opiates tend to enter from the Lebab region of Turkmenistan through Karakalpakstan and on to western Kazakhstan. The main drug trafficking routes pass through southern, central, and western Kazakhstan. From there, they enter Russia, ultimately destined for Europe. In most cases, the routes follow basic lines of transportation and communication. Synthetic narcotics tend to flow in the opposite direction; they come from Western Europe to Kazakhstan, and then transit through to China.

Analysis of the main routes of narcotics trafficking has revealed the primary Central Asian markets for drugs, which are characterized by large settlements of people and locations in border areas. The most important such markets are Dushanbe and Khudjand in Tajikistan; Osh and Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan; Tashkent in Uzbekistan; and Almaty in Kazakhstan.

## **Human Trafficking**

The fundamental factors influencing human trafficking in Central Asia are low living standards and unemployment, especially in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. In addition, the unstable economic and political situations and various ethnic problems within Central Asian countries impact the migration process, both within the region and from the outside. The main migration stream from Central Asia is directed toward Russia and Kazakhstan. Migrants from China, particularly, are destined for Kazakhstan.

There is some evidence that citizens of Central Asian countries are departing the region for South Asia and the Middle East. After passing through radicalized religious centers and training camps, some of them become members of terrorist groups. Refugees from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have particularly added to the manpower of terrorist organizations.

Central Asian states are also transit zones for migrants from China, Afghanistan, Turkey, Pakistan, and other South Asian countries. Migrants usually do not have the appropriate legal status, and many pass through the region illegally.

## **Weapons Trafficking**

Automatic rifles are the main weapons that are present in the Central Asian illegal arms market. Most of the illegal arms available in Central Asian states are either diverted from the military; transported illegally from abroad; stolen from plants producing ammunition and weapons; or individually owned (and sometimes homemade) weapons used for hunting.

The civil wars in Tajikistan and Afghanistan have only increased the dissemination of illegal arms in Central Asia. Criminal groups are the main arms buyers, while military structures with access to unaccounted arms and ammunitions are the primary sellers. In addition, people connected to the production and maintenance of arms and ammunition are a considerable source of illegal arms dissemination.

## **Conclusion**

The idea that terrorists are using the same routes as arms, drug, and human traffickers is complicated. Currently, there are no indisputable data indicating that terrorists and terrorist groups are transiting across Central Asia. However, if this activity does exist, terrorist groups may be using trafficking routes to penetrate Central Asian countries.

Terrorists and criminals are benefiting from transparent borders in the region, which are the result of a general lack of law enforcement and regional security. The relationship between terrorism and human trafficking in Central Asia is evident, and has been verified through data in this volume.

Most likely, terrorist groups use arms and drug trafficking primarily to finance their activities. Financially, terrorists and drug, human, and weapon traffickers are benefiting from the unregulated “shadow” economy and high levels of corruption in Central Asian countries.



# Smuggling in South Eastern Europe

Krunoslav Antoliš \*

## Summary

The smuggling of migrants, narcotics, and weapons are currently some of the most important issues in the sphere of international crime. At the same time, they are essential to the issue of fighting terrorism. By analyzing the overall situation and the factors that encourage global terrorism, this paper argues that, apart from the risk posed by so-called rogue states, unstable states should also be a focus in efforts to combat terrorism. The term *unstable states* is used here to refer to states facing many unsettled internal issues, and which are likely to become a bridge or an interface for terrorists in their worldwide operations. Typical issues in unstable states (also known as “transitional states”) include high rates of organized crime, corruption, human trafficking, and trade in drugs and weapons; at the same time, such states are characterized by inefficient legal and governance structures, and weak central state power in general. According to this definition, a few countries in South Eastern Europe could be regarded as unstable states.

A systematic effort to discover the routes used by smugglers of all kinds is needed if states are to concentrate their limited resources on solving these problems. Yet, it will only be possible to make forward progress in this respect by coordinating the efforts of executive, legislative, and judicial authorities in these countries, with the support of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and security experts of multinational corporations that currently deal with the transportation of people and goods.<sup>1</sup> Professional support for this effort will require the implementation of the most recent scientific achievements and technologically advanced methods in uncovering smugglers and their cargos.<sup>2</sup> The main goal of cooperative anti-trafficking and security efforts is the early detection and monitoring of all participants in a smuggling network. This achievement will create the conditions to deal with the network and its key strongholds—both physically and virtually—and to eliminate its vital infrastructure.

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<sup>1</sup> K. Antoliš, “Prerequisites for Systematic Fighting of Terrorism,” presentation at the conference “National Security and Traffic Perspectives for the Republic of Croatia,” Croatian Parliament, Zagreb (27–28 February 2006).

<sup>2</sup> K. Antoliš, “Strategic Prerequisites for Partnership in Combating Terrorism,” presentation at the conference “Establishing Referent Laboratory for Nuclear-Biological-Chemical Protection and System for Bio-monitoring in the Republic of Croatia,” at the Institute Ruder Bošković, Zagreb (6 June 2006).

## Smuggling Migrants

The region of South Eastern Europe—particularly the states that gained independence or were established after the Warsaw Pact dissolved, as well as those that were set up after the dissolution of Yugoslavia—has been confronted with the unfamiliar challenges of the market economy. As a result of major irregularities in the course of the privatization of public property in these states, a new kind of capitalist emerged, one who now owned the former state property but did not have the knowledge needed to manage it in the context of a market economy. The poor management of newly privatized industries caused the decline of living standards for residents of South Eastern Europe. The war that resulted in the dissolution of Yugoslavia also created a significant wave of migration within the region, which caused a number of unwanted consequences, among them human trafficking, which has become a particularly critical issue. In order to understand the complexity of this situation, which has arisen remarkably rapidly, it is important to note the results of privatization in South Eastern Europe, including a high corruption rate, a low level of social sensitivity, a low standard of living in general, and a high unemployment rate—all of which are causes of regional migration<sup>3</sup> in countries such as the Ukraine,<sup>4</sup> Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>5</sup>

It should be stressed that, within the past five years, approximately 58,000 illegal aliens have been captured in Croatia, and their number is constantly increasing. However, official data of the Croatian Ministry of the Interior (MUP) indicates that only thirty-nine victims of human trafficking were identified in the same period (eight in 2002, eight in 2003, nineteen in 2004, and six in 2005). Recently, more significant efforts in preventing human trafficking have been made in Croatia.<sup>6</sup> In the past six months, charges have been brought against twenty-two persons<sup>7</sup> by the Office for Prevention of Corruption and Organized Crime (USKOK) in Croatia, on counts of trafficking over 150 persons from Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Macedonia along a route stretching from Bosnia through Zagreb, Istria, Slovenia, and Italy to Western Europe. Since it is located close to European Union (EU) member states, Croatia is a

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<sup>3</sup> National Intelligence Council, “Current World Illicit Trafficking,” available at [www.dni.gov/nic/PDF\\_GIF\\_global/current\\_illicit\\_trafficing.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/nic/PDF_GIF_global/current_illicit_trafficing.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> The sex trafficking of Ukrainian women is a serious problem that has only recently been addressed; for more detail, see <http://www.statistics.free-counter.co.uk/?count=vjesnik&cmd=countryinfo&action=ua>.

<sup>5</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina are highly vulnerable to money-laundering activity, given the presence of a primarily cash-based and unregulated economy, weak law enforcement system, and endemic instances of corruption. Available at [www.statistics.free-counter.co.uk/?count=vjesnik&cmd=countryinfo&action=ba](http://www.statistics.free-counter.co.uk/?count=vjesnik&cmd=countryinfo&action=ba).

<sup>6</sup> At first, the Croatian government did not consider trafficking to be a major issue. See [www.vjesnik.hr/html/2004/06/17/Clanak.asp?r=tem&c=4](http://www.vjesnik.hr/html/2004/06/17/Clanak.asp?r=tem&c=4).

<sup>7</sup> Criminal proceedings were conducted against twenty-three defendants on charges of organized trafficking of foreign citizens abroad; see [www.vjesnik.com/html/2002/07/08/Clanak.asp?r=crn&c=3](http://www.vjesnik.com/html/2002/07/08/Clanak.asp?r=crn&c=3).

magnet country for the victims of trafficking—mostly women who believe they are being transported to Western European countries for legitimate employment, only to be forced into prostitution instead.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the presence of human trafficking in the country, a large number of unsettled court proceedings have challenged Croatia's efficiency in fighting human trafficking. A large number of investigations have resulted in only a small number of criminals being sentenced for the crime of human trafficking, making Croatia's rate of success in prosecuting human trafficking extremely poor. This lack of enforcement encourages further trafficking along transit routes that go through Croatia.

Recent success by the Croatian police shows that human trafficking is regularly occurring through Croatia en route to Western Europe. For example, in June 2006, Croatian police found twenty-four Albanian and three Chinese citizens in a house in Sesvete, near Zagreb. Fifteen of them had crossed the border illegally, and magistrate court proceedings will be conducted against them. Of those found, twelve had already been arrested on 14 June as part of a group of twenty-one persons who had illegally crossed the border. At that time, the twelve had been ordered by the court to leave Croatia by 28 June. It turned out that the Chinese citizens were using false Korean documents to transit the country.

All transit channels for illegal migrants through the territory of Croatia have some commonalities, although they differ with regard to the locations and areas where illegal migrants enter or leave Croatia. The most widely used transit areas with respect to this criminal activity in Croatia are in Zagreb, Karlovac, Istria, Primosko-Goranska, Vukovarsko-Srijemska, Splitsko-Dalmatinska, and Dubrovačko-Neretvanska.

### *Channels of Illegal Transport of Foreigners through Croatian Territory*

*Serbia-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia-Slovenia-Italy.* This channel is used for smuggling illegal migrants from Kosovo, where they are picked up by regular bus lines that transport them from Priština to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Upon entering Bosnia, they continue on their way to Herzegovina and then to Croatia, ultimately heading for Split, Rijeka, Istria, the region of Unsko-Sanski Canton, and even to Zagreb. The second diverging path along this route is also used by Albanians, who start in Glina, Kosovo. From there, migrants are driven to Sarajevo, where they are accommodated temporarily. Then, they are taken by passenger cars to the region of Mostar and to the Croatian border (in the direction of Makarska), which they usually cross on foot. They travel to Rijeka, where they are given temporary accommodations, and then they are transported illegally to Slovenia to continue their way to the Italian border, which they also cross illegally.

*Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia-Italy.* Illegal migrants from the territories of Serbia and Montenegro enter Croatian territory near the border crossing of Bajakovo, continuing on their way to Zagreb. Then they move to the area of Žumberak, crossing the Slovenian border on foot.

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<sup>8</sup> Ines Jemrić, *Violence Against Women*; available at [www.zinfo.hr/engleski/pages/research/Nasiljenadzenama/engnasilje.htm](http://www.zinfo.hr/engleski/pages/research/Nasiljenadzenama/engnasilje.htm).



Figure 1: The most frequent points of illegal migration to Croatia

*Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia-Slovenia-EU Member States.* This channel is used by migrants from Africa and Asia, who fly into the country via the Sarajevo airport. It is also used by illegal migrants from the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Illegal migrants from Sarajevo are transported to EU member states from three directions:

- *Northern:* This route leads across the Sava River to Croatia, and then to Western European states (primarily Germany and the Netherlands), taking the following routes:
  1. Sarajevo-Gunja-Zagreb-Istria-Slovenia
  2. Sarajevo-Brčko-Gunja-Zagreb-Slovenia
  3. Sarajevo-Orašje-Županja-Zagreb-Ljubljana.
- *Western:* This route leads through Unsko-Sanski Canton to Croatia, and then toward Western European states (primarily Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands), taking a route from Sarajevo-Bihać/Velika Kladuša-Zagreb-Slovenia-Italy. Illegal migrants are transported by passenger cars or trucks to the area of Unsko-Sanski Canton, crossing the state border at Bihać or Velika Kladuša on foot. Then they continue their travels either towards Zagreb and Žumberak, crossing Slovenia’s border on foot, or towards Rijeka and Slovenia’s border.
- *Southern:* This route leads through the area of Herzegovina, continuing to either Montenegro or Croatia. Some of the illegal migrants are taken to Italy by speed-boats, while others continue their way to the Slovenian border, taking the following routes:



Figure 2: Illegal migrants from three directions

1. Sarajevo-Metković-Gradac-Zagreb-Slovenia
2. Sarajevo-Mostar-Split-Zagreb-Slovenia
3. Sarajevo-Mostar-Split-Rijeka-Slovenia
4. Sarajevo-Imotski-Zagreb-Pula-Poreč-Slovenia
5. Sarajevo-Neum-Dubrovnik-Italy.

*Macedonia-Serbia-Croatia-Western European States.* This channel is primarily used for transporting Albanians in small groups of five to ten people. They cross the borders between Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro via the territory of the Vukovarsko-Srijemska region. Their destination is Slovenia, and afterwards a number of Western European countries.

*Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia-Slovenia-Italy.* Illegal migrants originating from countries in Africa and Asia as well as Turkey (primarily Istanbul) come to Sarajevo and Tuzla by plane, and later continue their travels toward Croatia and Slovenia.

*Turkey-Serbia-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia-Slovenia-Italy.* Illegal migrants that are transported along this route enter Croatia at the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. This border is approximately 60 kilometers long; the main local border crossings are Maljevac and Ličko Petrovo Selo, which are located in the municipalities of Cetingrad and Rakovica, respectively. These migrants then cross the Žumberak area

and other points near the border crossing at Jurovski Brod, Zakanje. They are then transported to Slovenia's border, or first to Rijeka and then to the Slovenian border.

*China-Serbia-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia-Slovenia-Italy.* This channel is used for transporting migrants from China. In the early 1990s, most Chinese took the Russia-Belgrade-Croatia route, while in the past few years the dominant route has come from Belgrade, since many of the Chinese living in that area have had to leave after being denied the renewal of their visas. The illegal transportation of Chinese migrants through Croatian territory is performed in the following two ways:

- They enter Croatia illegally in order to leave for third countries. Illegal migrants come to Belgrade by plane and are then taken to Bosnia and Herzegovina by truck, entering Croatia by boat or on foot.
- They enter Croatia legally after obtaining an entry and exit visa appropriate for a business trip. These visas are issued on the basis of a letter of guarantee or invitation sent by companies registered in Croatia. After a short stay in Croatia, the migrants are illegally transported to Slovenia and Italy, often using Chinese passports of people who have already been granted residence in Italy.

*Pakistan-Turkey-Serbia-Montenegro-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia-Slovenia-Italy.* From the Karachi airport, Pakistani migrants fly to Istanbul. From there, they fly to Priština, and are then illegally transported to Montenegro via Peć and the hill of Čakor. (This channel is also used for transporting Albanians and residents of Serbia and Montenegro.) They continue their way towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, crossing the border near Mateljka and continuing on to the area of Bosanski Šamac. They enter Croatia near the Bosanski Šamac border crossing. Migrants are handed over at Sikirevci and Šamac. Afterwards, they are taken by passenger cars to the area of Čabar, entering Slovenia illegally on foot, and then traveling to Italy.

*Pakistan-Turkey-Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia-Italy.* Illegal immigrants fly from Pakistan via Istanbul to Priština, crossing the Serbian border illegally. They enter Croatia on foot near the Bajakovo border crossing. From there, they are taken by car to Zagreb and then to Čabar, illegally entering Slovenia.

*Senegal-Croatia-Ljubljana-Italy.* Illegal migrants from Senegal fly in to the airport either in Zagreb or in Split, using forged visas. Their transit to the Italian border is organized by illegal transport across the Slovenian border.

## **Smuggling Narcotics**

The Republic of Croatia's geographic position has substantially contributed to the intensification of narcotics smuggling through its territory. Within this context, various criminal groups who organize the transport of narcotics have been identified, along with particular smuggling routes.

Depending on the type of narcotics and their place of origin, several smuggling methods have been established:

- Heroin is mainly smuggled by land routes (either by roads or by "wild" paths)

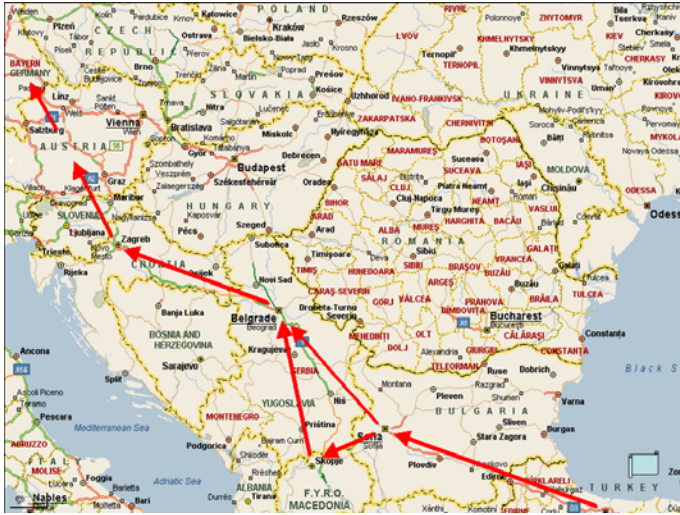


Figure 3: Western Balkan route via Belgrade (Turkey-Bulgaria-Macedonia-Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia-Western Europe)



Figure 4: Western Balkan route via Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Latin American cocaine is smuggled primarily by boat; it is also smuggled in smaller amounts by land and air.

A great deal of heroin destined for the Croatian and EU markets is smuggled through the so-called Balkan routes. The two main heroin smuggling routes from Turkey to Western Europe are the western and northern Balkan routes, which transit through Croatia. There is also a third route that bypasses Croatia.

### *The Western Balkan Route*

This route is most often used by Turkish or Albanian transport companies in order to smuggle heroin. Some locations in Macedonia serve as starting points for smuggling. Narcotics are transported via Serbia and Montenegro, across the borders of eastern Croatia, and on to Croatian territory. Regular bus lines travel from Tetovo and Gostivar (Macedonia) via Niš, Belgrade (Serbia), Slavonski Brod, Zagreb, and Rijeka to Pula. Narcotics are smuggled in special tanks on the buses; each tank can contain more than 40 kilograms of heroin. Similar smuggling methods may be used by other transport companies, who transport passengers from Turkey to Germany via Croatia. In these cases, Croatia is merely a transit country, while Germany and other EU member states are the destination. After heroin is supplied in Turkey (generally in Istanbul), it is smuggled to Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro, and is illegally brought to Croatia across the border at Bajakovo,<sup>9</sup> Tovarnik, and Ilok. The importation of Turkish textiles is often used as a cover for smuggling narcotics.

Turkish and Albanian crime groups<sup>10</sup> transport heroin and small amounts of cocaine from Istanbul via Bulgaria and Macedonia to Kosovo (specifically, the town of Peć), Montenegro (in the area of Sandžak and Rožaj), Serbia (Novi Pazar), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo), Croatia, and on to EU member states in Western Europe.

*Turkey-Bulgaria-Macedonia-Kosovo-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia (Lika, Primorsko-Goranska county, Istria, Dalmatia)- Slovenia-Italy-Switzerland.* This route is used to smuggle narcotics from Bosnia and Herzegovina to southern Croatia. The narcotics are smuggled to the Croatian coast, particularly the southern part, primarily in cooperation with organized crime groups from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Narcotics are marketed in the region of Banja Luka and transported across the Strmica border crossing, where they are then trafficked to Croatia.

The starting points for smuggling routes in Bosnia and Herzegovina include the wider region of Sarajevo and Banja Luka and Belgrade in Serbia. Drugs are mainly exported from five regions of Turkey along the routes described previously.

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<sup>9</sup> Reportedly, 5.5 kilograms of heroin were seized at the Bajakovo border crossing; see [www.vecernji-list.hr/newsroom/blackchronicle/576325/index.do](http://www.vecernji-list.hr/newsroom/blackchronicle/576325/index.do).

<sup>10</sup> Assembly of Turkish-American Associations, "PKK and Terrorism: Drug Trafficking and Terrorist Organizations" (August 1998); available at [www.ataa.org/ataa/ref/pkk/mfa/pkk-drugs.html](http://www.ataa.org/ataa/ref/pkk/mfa/pkk-drugs.html).





Figure 5: Narcotics smuggling routes from or through Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia

### *Northern Balkan Route*

The northern Balkan route bypasses the Republic of Croatia, yet narcotics reach Croatia by one of the diverging branches of the route through Hungary, which is used by members of Albanian crime groups in Croatia.<sup>11</sup>

### *Other Ways of Smuggling Narcotics through Croatia*

Cocaine is smuggled to Croatia mainly from countries in Latin America. It is transported by container ships that reach Croatian ports, or by small boats that may suitably enter marinas.

Some cocaine is smuggled along a western Balkan route, for which Istanbul is the point of departure. Smaller amounts of cocaine are smuggled in envelopes and transported by post delivery or by air. Synthetic drugs, such as Ecstasy, arrive in Croatia from a number of EU member states, including The Netherlands and Belgium, after transiting through states in Central Europe.

<sup>11</sup> Hungary is vulnerable to money laundering related to organized crime and drug trafficking. For more details, see [www.statistics.free-counter.co.uk/?count=vjesnik&cmd=countryinfo&action=hu](http://www.statistics.free-counter.co.uk/?count=vjesnik&cmd=countryinfo&action=hu).

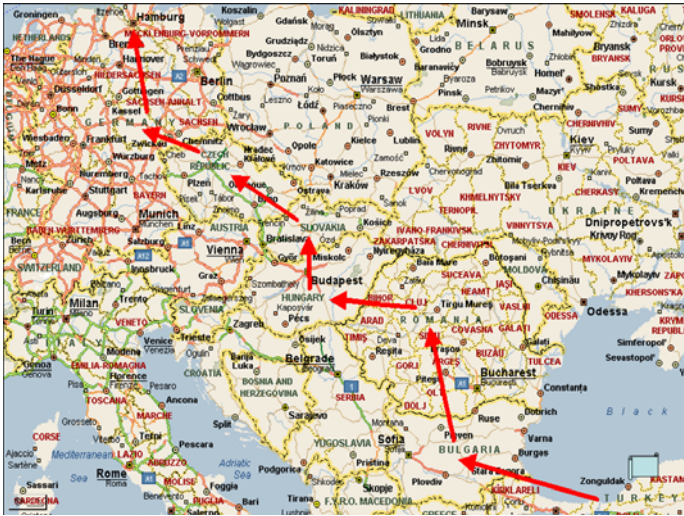


Figure 6: Northern Balkan route, bypassing the states on the territory of former Yugoslavia (Turkey-Bulgaria-Romania-Hungary-Slovakia-Czech Republic-Western Europe)

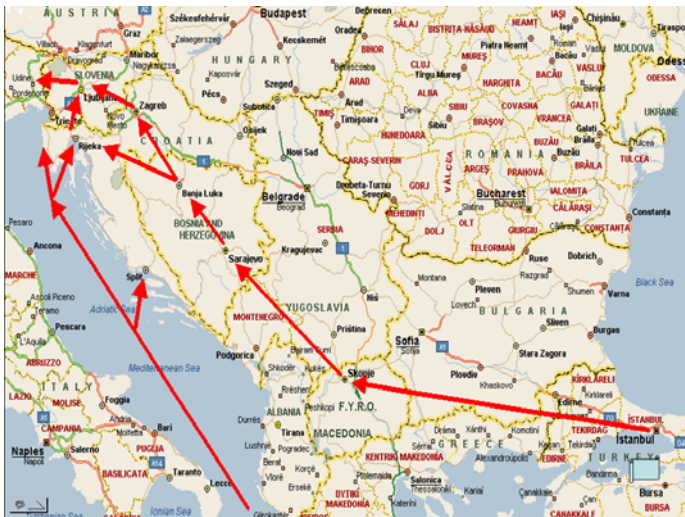


Figure 7: Cocaine smuggling routes—sea routes and one diverging road of the western Balkan route

## Smuggling Weapons

Weapons are smuggled mainly in cooperation with criminal groups from Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Croatia.<sup>12</sup> Due to the war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and the resulting surplus of weapons, Croatia has become (to some extent) the starting point for these criminal activities. Weapons and explosives are smuggled through Slovenia to Italian organized crime groups. There are also some indications that a portion of the weapons transported from Bosnia and Herzegovina through the Croatian port of Ploče are smuggled to Asian countries through the Middle East.

Croatian authorities have undertaken a number of successful actions against arms smugglers. For example, acting on a tip from U.S. intelligence, Croatian police in the port of Rijeka raided the cargo carrier *Boka Star*, which was supposedly loaded with activated charcoal. Instead, it was loaded with 208 metric tons of chemical ingredients—exactly the kind needed to produce the solid rocket fuel used in Iraqi Scud missiles. This connection was critical, U.S. government sources suggest, because the *Boka Star* was part of a well-monitored fleet that regularly sailed between Tivat, a Yugoslav naval base, and Syria, where a significant amount of cargo was trucked to Iraq. Evidence uncovered on board indicated that the *Boka Star* and its bogus cargo had been inaccurately issued documents several times by Yugoslav naval and customs officials.<sup>13</sup>

Some actions taken against illegal manufacturers of weapons in Croatia support the hypothesis that Croatia is not only a transit state for arms smuggling, but also a location of illegal manufacture.<sup>14</sup> Croatian authorities—particularly the Office for Prevention of Corruption and Organized Crime, in cooperation with MUP and the Counter-intelligence Agency (POA)—are expending great efforts to prevent such activities, not only within Croatian borders, but also in cooperation with other regional countries, including Slovenia. The most recent success was achieved in early June 2006, when twelve people were brought to the county court in Zagreb to be examined by the investigating judge on weapons charges. At the same time, criminal charges were brought against nineteen people by the Slovenian police, who had seized twenty-eight pieces of arms, ammunition, and explosives that were meant to be illegally sold both within the country and abroad.<sup>15</sup>

According to some open sources, another route for smuggling arms from Slovenia transits through the area surrounding Milan (Italy), takes a turn toward southern Italy,

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<sup>12</sup> Alenko Zornija, “Weapons Smugglers under Protection of BH Politicians?” *Vjesnik* (3 December 2001); available at [www.hsp1861.hr/vijesti1/011203az.htm](http://www.hsp1861.hr/vijesti1/011203az.htm).

<sup>13</sup> David Marash, “Saddam’s Serb Supplier: How our Last Enemy Has Been Arming our Next One,” *Washington Monthly* (March 2003); available at [www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1316/is\\_2\\_35/ai\\_98829848](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1316/is_2_35/ai_98829848).

<sup>14</sup> “Illegal Weapons Manufacture Discovered in Zagorje;” available at <http://vijesti.hrt.hr/vijesti/ShowArticles.aspx?ArticleId=11070>.

<sup>15</sup> “Weapons Smugglers are Held in 24-hour Custody;” available at [www.net.hr/vijesti/page/2006/06/08/0320006.html](http://www.net.hr/vijesti/page/2006/06/08/0320006.html).



Figure 8: Weapon smuggling routes (BiH and Croatia-Slovenia-Italy-EU or South America)

and reaches its final destination in South America. The aforementioned open sources were only confirmed by successful actions against arms smuggling in South America.<sup>16</sup>

These facts indicate the need to fight against illegal arms manufacturers and smugglers in Croatia. Additional cases, listed below, illustrate this need:

- In March 2006, police discovered at V.Š. (33) thirty weapons, including guns, machine guns, and hunting arms.
- In November 2005, Slovenian police, in cooperation with the MUP, caught Bojan Repnik (a Slovenian national) and Tomislav Dobričević (a Croatian) near Rogaška Slatina, finding a total of thirty-seven kilograms of plastic explosives. Among the seized materials were seven kilograms of GOMA and two kilograms of EKO explosives like those used in the Madrid terrorist attacks of 11 March 2004.
- Zagreb and Rijeka were the main areas for police operations in June 2005 that resulted in the capture of a group of suspects who possessed nearly 300 kilograms of explosives, mines, automatic arms, and ammunition. The police also seized two kilograms of heroin in the raid.
- In August 2005, in the village of Mogorić, which is near the town of Gospić, several men with an arsenal of ammunition and a variety of explosives (including 9.5

<sup>16</sup> Marin Dešković and Dragan Grdić, “A Group of Weapons Smugglers Captured,” *Vjesnik* (8 June 2006); available at [www.vjesnik.hr/pdf/2006%5C06%5C08%5C48A48.pdf](http://www.vjesnik.hr/pdf/2006%5C06%5C08%5C48A48.pdf).

kilograms of explosives, half a kilogram of plastic explosives, and 300 grams of industrial explosives) were arrested.

- In the summer of 2005, in a coordinated operation by USKOK, MUP, and POA, thirteen people were arrested and an arsenal of firearms and explosives was seized, including twenty hand grenades, a chemical bomb, eleven rocket launchers, a few machine and sub-machine guns, a silencer, and various types of ammunition.

## Conclusion: What is the Current Situation?

Available data suggest that current annual global revenues from illicit criminal activities are USD 100 to 300 billion from drug trafficking; USD 10 to 12 billion from the illegal dumping of toxic and other hazardous waste; and USD 7 billion from human smuggling. Available estimates suggest that corruption costs approximately USD 500 billion—or about one percent of global GNP—in the form of slower growth, reduced foreign investment, and lower profits.<sup>17</sup>

Of greatest concern, however, is the fact that the routes used to traffic people, drugs, and weapons can readily provide a suitable logistical infrastructure to terrorist groups and serve as a staging ground for future terrorist actions. These routes survive because they are not actively countered, due to inefficient administrations and corruption in the unstable states where they flourish. Accordingly, the states along these smuggling routes should receive particular attention. National governments should provide them with assistance in establishing strong law enforcement and governance mechanisms within their states.

Through an analytic review of the smuggling issue, primarily through Croatia and the larger region of South Eastern Europe, researchers should create information prerequisites for further investigation into this important issue. Therefore, it is necessary to describe, in a similar manner, the situation in the region on the basis of collected and integrated data and information; to set parameters to deal with smuggling; and to establish an integrated virtual system of regional supervision. Only by setting the right parameters and standards for virtual integration (which is extremely important) can smugglers of arms, drugs, and people in the region be efficiently countered. It is also necessary to build a system of analytic judgment. Finally, the system must be accessible to multinational forces that stand ready to respond rapidly and efficiently.<sup>18</sup> As has been noted many times before, smuggling channels and their logistical operations can be used by terrorists to organize and carry out terrorist acts; therefore, smuggling—in all its forms—should be a top priority of international law enforcement agencies and of national governments everywhere, but particularly in the regions where these networks proliferate.

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<sup>17</sup> Available at <http://infowar.net/cia/publications/globaltrends2015>.

<sup>18</sup> K. Antoliš, “Human Resources in Combating Terrorism,” *Modern Traffic* (Zagreb) 26:5 (September-October 2006): 285–384.



# Terrorist Routes in South Eastern Europe

*Tatiana Busuncian* \*

For most transitioning post-Cold War states in Eastern Europe, the period following the shift away from communism and socialism was marked by severe economic recession, increasing debt, hyperinflation, social upheaval, and armed conflict. As a result of these factors, individual nation-states produced large numbers of refugees and migrants who attempted to reach Western Europe. Many of these migrants came from countries with the most unfavorable economies—Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and Moldova and other former Soviet Republics—or conflict-torn regions. During the 1990s, it was quite difficult to control atypical migration, human trafficking, drug smuggling, and the weapons trade due to unfenced and uncontrolled borders and the breakdown of political and legal systems as a result of recent civil wars and epochal political and economic changes. Today, each country in South Eastern Europe plays some role as an origin, transit, or destination country for trafficked people, weapons, and drugs to Western European countries.

Among the South Eastern European states, the Republic of Moldova exemplifies the experience of this critical region. Demonstrating the irreversible consequences of the migration process, this country's "gray economy" has benefited from the fact that parts of the country—including its long borders with neighboring countries—have remained relatively untouched by the state's central authority. For example, the border with Ukraine extends for 1222 kilometers, 453 kilometers of which lie between Transnistria and Ukraine. The Moldova-Ukraine border contains seventy-six border crossings, twenty-six of which are in Transnistria, out of the reach of the government's central control. Similarly, Moldova's border with Romania covers 862 kilometers and has nine crossings. Cities such as Tiraspol and Odessa (in the direction of Europe) and the countries of Turkey (on many routes to southern European destinations), Poland, and Russia (destinations for trafficking routes from the Middle East) are seen as being key junctures along regional trafficking routes.<sup>1</sup>

According to non-governmental sources, it appears that traffickers are seeking to diversify the countries of destination for their "products," and that a new channel now leads to Central Europe and the Arab world. From 1991 to 2005, the number of individuals transiting through the Republic of Moldova on their way to Central European countries was greater than the total number of people residing in Moldova. These conditions were allowed to arise through the lack of an adequate legal framework in the Republic of Moldova.

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<sup>1</sup> NATO Parliamentary Assembly, "Mission Reports – Visit to Moldova by the Subcommittee on Democratic Governance [Civil Dimension of Security]," 1–4 March 2004; available at [www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?shortcut=484](http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?shortcut=484).

In order to take concrete steps against the spread of this phenomenon, the majority of the southeastern European states have joined with the general international force involved in the “global war on terrorism.” The Republic of Moldova has declared its support as well, and has begun collaborating with all parties interested in fighting terrorism. Moldova’s participation in the anti-terrorist coalition is explained by its location in South Eastern Europe, which situates it within the so-called instability train that stretches from southwestern Asia, through the Caucasus, and on to the Balkans. This region has a significant presence of terrorist and extremist groups.

Though illegal migration is a problem, various sources disagree as to its severity. The microfinance organization Alliance of Moldova conducted an independent public opinion poll in 2004 that investigated illegal migration in the country. The results indicated that 265,000 to 285,000 Moldovans had left the country that year looking for jobs or for other financial reasons.<sup>2</sup>

According to statistical data, as of the end of 2006, 426,000 adults had left Moldova to work abroad through various legal channels since 2003. Official data regarding legal and illegal migration in 2003 and 2004 indicate that the annual stream of migrants was much smaller, only increasing from 5,000 to 9,000 during that period. Meanwhile, media sources have stated that there are over one million Moldovans working abroad.<sup>3</sup>

The increasing illegal migration of Moldovans to Western countries has become an international problem. Interviews with state officials, migration experts, and returned migrants indicate that the main destination countries for Moldovan migrants, in decreasing order of importance, are Russia, Italy, Ukraine, Romania, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Turkey, and Israel.

According to expert opinion, the “Western channel” used by illegal migrants crosses Moldova, and has two main routes:

- Ukraine-Moldova-Romania-Hungary, and then to Western countries
- Russia-Moldova-Romania-Hungary, and then to Western countries.

Generally speaking, the absence of a coherent policy and of adequate control mechanisms aimed at the phenomenon of trans-border migration has generated multiple negative consequences within Moldova, including:

- The presence of foreign communities within Moldova that are ethnically, linguistically, religiously, and culturally distinct from Moldovans. These communities may face major difficulties in adapting to the country and in establishing good relationships with local citizens. These differences can also constitute potential sources of conflict among immigrant groups.

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<sup>2</sup> B. Ghencea and I. Gudumac, *Labour Migration and Remittances in the Republic of Moldova* (Kishinev, Moldova: Microfinance Alliance; and Chisinau: Soros in the Republic of Moldova, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Informative note for the National Migration Department of the Republic of Moldova on “Trafficking in Human Beings,” 2003–04.



- The involvement of different organized crime structures in the trafficking of human beings, drugs, and weapons. This involvement also increases the possibility that migrants, many of whom are in extremely vulnerable situations, can be easily recruited by different organized crime structures to aid in the trade in drugs, weapons, ammunition, and stolen vehicles.
- The tendency of a significant number of foreigners to earn their living through some form of illegal activity, often in complicity with local criminals.
- The appearance of more commercial companies serving as fronts for illegal activities.
- The possibility that some migrants—along with local citizens or even members of various extremist terrorist organizations—may become affiliated with extremist Islamic groups and ideas.
- The increase of state expenditures, including expenses related to the repatriation of migrants to their countries of origin, detention costs for illegal immigrants, and other forms of support for asylum seekers or refugees.

The following routes were identified as those that are most frequently used for criminal movement:

- *Botosani District*: routes extending from Odessa–Kiev–Berza; Moscow–Kiev–Manoleasa; or Moscow–Kiev–Cernauti–Herta–Racovat
- *Iasi District*: routes extending from Moscow–Kiev–Chisinau–Iasi–Bucharest; or Moscow–Kiev–Chisinau–Oradea
- *Vaslui District*: routes extending from Moscow–Kiev–Chisinau–Rasesti–Stanilesti (Albita)–Bucharest
- *Galati District*: routes extending from Reni (where the Prut River flows into the Danube)–Chiscani–Bucharest
- *Braila District*: routes extending from Reni–Gura Prut–Stancuta–Bucharest.

Additionally, in the western part of Moldova, which borders Romania, there appears to be a high volume of illegal border crossings by African and Asian migrants. Some of these migrants are said to be working for criminal syndicates from former Soviet states, including Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova, as well as with local contacts. Many of these migrants entered the country through the eastern or southern borders and, along with some local citizens, have a determined goal of reaching Western Europe. The main routes used by these migrants are:

- *Satu-Mare District Inspectorate of the Frontier Police*: this route extends from Istanbul to Sofia to Bucharest or Moscow, then on to the eastern frontier of Romania and Bucharest, shifting to Satu-Mare through two directions: Bucharest–Cluj Napoca–Zalau–Baia Mare–Satu Mare, or Bucharest–Timișoara–Oradea–Satu Mare

- *Bihor District Inspectorate of the Frontier Police*: this route extends from Bucharest–Arad–Oradea–Carei
- *Arad District Inspectorate of Frontier Police*: this route extends from Iasi–Bucharest–Arad or from Giurgiu–Bucharest–Arad. This route also follows the railway route Bucharest–Curtici–Lokoshaza–Budapest.

The third area in the region where trafficking of human beings has reached a high volume is the southern portion of Romania, bordering Bulgaria. This area is used for the illegal entrance of African, Asian, or Kurdish individuals that transit the country in order to get to Western Europe. This area is also used for the illegal exit of persons from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In addition, it is used by some Romanian citizens to reach Greece or Turkey. The following routes are used in this region:

- *Giurgiu District Inspectorate of the Frontier Police*: routes from Edirne–Varna–Giurgiu–Bucharest or from Edirne–Varna–Tolbuhin–Russe–Giurgiu–Bucharest
- *Constanta District Inspectorate of the Frontier Police*: routes from Istanbul–Duran Kuluk–Vama Veche–Bucharest to Arad, Oradea, or Timisoara. Along this route, falsified Bulgarian passports are used to facilitate the entrance of Kurdish migrants into Hungary
- *Dolj District Inspectorate of the Frontier Police*: routes from Timisoara–Bechet–Bulgaria–Greece. Here, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Serbian citizens illegally transport migrants across the Romanian border using shipping or mercantile activities as a front. These traffickers use tracks that bypass the official border control points of the frontier.

The next segment of the region where trafficking is a concern includes Romania's border with southeastern Ukraine and the Romanian coastline, where persons from former Soviet territory, Africa, and Asia illegally enter and exit the country using the following routes:

- *Tulcea District Inspectorate of the Frontier Police*: this route extends from Moscow–Kiev–Odessa–Ismail–Bucharest to the western and southwestern frontiers of Romania and on to Western Europe
- *Constanta District Inspectorate of the Frontier Police*: Romanian, African, or Asian individuals, who have previously tried and managed to illegally enter or exit the country by hiding in cargo ships in the Romanian seaport, use this area.

Illegal crossing of the country's border, coordinated by well-organized international criminal groups, can also be detected in the southwestern region of Romania, bordering the former Yugoslavia. The groups from this area aim to transit foreign or Romanian migrants from the former Yugoslavia to Greece or Italy. At the same time, they also manage to traffic human beings, especially young girls from former Soviet regions. The criminal groups are composed of Romanian citizens, Serbians, and others from former Soviet countries, including Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova. The routes

they use go through the Mehedinti District Inspectorate of the Frontier Police, running from Drobeta Turnu Severin (which is the starting point for the Romania-Greece route), continuing to the border control points of the frontier at the Iron Gates, on to the Serbian cities of Negotin and Presova, and through Macedonia to Gevgelija (located near the Macedonian border), with Athens as the termination point.

The members of these groups are Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian, Moldovan, Serbian, Macedonian, and Greek citizens that illegally remove young girls from Moldova and transport them via the Danube River by ship to the former Yugoslavia, where they are forced into prostitution. The following routes are used for these activities:

- Iasi-Bucharest-Craiova-Drobeta Turnu Severin-Orsova-Moldova Veche, or Chisinau-Galati-Bucharest-Drobeta Turnu Severin-Orsova-Vinita
- *Timis District Inspectorate of Frontier Police*: routes from Timisoara-Jimbolia; Timisoara-Moravita-Vatin; Timisoara-Sannicolau Mare-Cenad; or Timisoara-Beba Veche.<sup>4</sup>

Northern Romania, bordering Ukraine, is especially significant for the analysis of this illegal phenomenon, due to the frequency of human trafficking in this region and the high number of African and Asian individuals living within Ukrainian territory. Migrants cross this border through legal means, using false documents, or with the support of guides from neighboring states, who often play an integral role in these international human trafficking routes. The general conclusion is that the illegal migration phenomenon, in all of its manifestations, is significant from all points of view. Moldova and Romania are among the most important transit areas for illegal migration in South Eastern Europe.

To regulate the flow of foreign citizens in Moldova—both those using the country as a transit point and those remaining without any means of support—the country’s National Bureau for Migration (NBM) is working to improve the verification of visas requested by foreigners and the tracking of foreign citizens in Moldova. The majority of foreign citizens attempting to illegally exit Moldova reportedly enter the country with authentic documents and visas, which are later destroyed, making it difficult to identify, verify, and deport these migrants.

The evolution of Moldova’s asylum policy can be better understood by examining the policies of neighboring countries. In Romania, 90 percent of those who petition for refugee status have entered the country illegally via the main established routes: Russia-Ukraine-Moldova and Iran/Iraq-Turkey-Bulgaria.

The dramatic terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 provided a true wake-up call to the international community. The loss of human life and the spectacular material damages caused by the attacks increased worldwide awareness of international terrorism. Immediately, joint actions and efforts were undertaken to counteract this global danger. In fighting global terrorism, one essential issue must not be overlooked: the

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<sup>4</sup> “Migration, Employment and Poverty Reduction,” Official Report presented to the Moldovan Government by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, April 2005.

strong correlation between terrorism and organized crime. The existence of well-established networks, the substantial profits to be earned from illegal activities, and an existing infrastructure for recruiting and training new members, moving equipment, and funds without being detected are all attractive reasons for terrorist groups' participation in organized crime.

South Eastern Europe is a zone of particular interest in this intersection between terrorism and organized crime. It has a high level of criminal activity, which contributes to the further extension and flourishing of terrorism. In 1990, when most South Eastern European countries began the transition to independence, organized criminal groups—typically descendants of the former Soviet “thieves in law”—functioned but were, especially in Moldova, dismantled. Later, new types of criminal organizations appeared. These groups were often under the control of people who had no criminal record, and are usually involved in activities connected to trafficking of human beings, drugs, and weapons, such as:

- Recruiting young women for sexual exploitation. This includes the trafficking of women to Turkey, Greece, Kosovo, and other countries through Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, etc. Today, Moldova cooperates with other countries in efforts to counter this activity.
- Trafficking laborers to Western countries through South Eastern Europe. In these cases, the criminal groups operate through tourist agencies, which prepare the documents for migrants to enter the countries as tourists. Clients are instructed on how to behave so they will not arouse the suspicion of consulate staff or border guards. It is difficult to discover migrants who will give evidence or serve as witnesses against such companies.
- Facilitating the illegal migration of Southeast Asian, Middle Eastern, and African migrants.<sup>5</sup>

These illegal activities are possibly providing terrorist organizations with opportunities to use established channels for their own purposes. Information collected by the Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova from 1991 to the present confirms this. From 1992 to 1996, officials identified cases where the members of the Sri Lankan terrorist organization, the Tamil Tigers of Liberation Eelam, were transiting the country in small groups on their way to Western countries.<sup>6</sup>

Organized crime takes many forms and involves a wide variety of criminal activities, yet there is one illicit market that is considered to be a major threat in virtually all European countries: drug trafficking. While it is true that terrorists and drug traffickers have different long-term objectives (political goals for terrorists and economic ones for drug traffickers), they often share some short-term goals. Nearly every terrorist group raises some money from the drug trade. According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Ad-

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<sup>5</sup> Extracted from the report presented at the PIP Counter-Terrorism Working Group (CTWG) meeting in Moldova by Mr. Ion Ambroci, 26-27 June 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

ministration, “narcoterrorism” refers to terrorist acts carried out by groups that are either directly or indirectly involved in cultivating, manufacturing, transporting, or distributing illicit drugs.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the term refers to groups that use drug trafficking to fund terrorist activities. According to institutions that deal with this issue, it is certain that organized crime, and especially drug trafficking, represents the most important source of financing for terrorist groups, providing 30–40 percent of their funds. In fact, it is widely accepted that the main threat to international security is no longer state-sponsored terrorism, but terrorist acts carried out by “unregimented networks”—groups or individuals increasingly motivated by money obtained through organized criminal activity, mainly the traffic in illegal drugs.

The relationship between terrorist organizations and drug-trafficking groups is a “mutually beneficial one that allows exchanges of drugs for weapons, use of the same smuggling routes, [and the] use of similar methods to conceal profits and fund-raising.”<sup>8</sup> Even transitional countries are used as trafficking routes for illegal drugs; once they are established, these networks tend to become increasingly well-organized and hard to detect. South Eastern Europe is a very complex region that has experienced conflict and political instability since the beginning of 1990s, which created the necessary conditions for the establishment of criminal networks and the development of criminal activities, including drug trafficking. The western Balkans (including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and, to a certain degree, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) are still considered to be “the gateway of organized crime to Europe,” which raises the specter of the potential for terrorist activities in, or emanating from, the area. It is obvious that the greatest peril connected with terrorism in the region, directly or indirectly, is organized crime. It represents not only a funding source for terrorism, but also a basis for recruitment of new people and material support.

The strategic position of the region, between Western Europe and the Middle East, adds a new dimension to the link with terrorism. For instance, according to the Centre for Peace in the Balkans, it has been confirmed that terrorism in the Balkans has been primarily financed through drug trafficking. Heroin is the most profitable commodity on the Western market; a kilogram of heroin, worth USD 1000 in Thailand, has a wholesale value of USD 110,000 in Canada, with a retail street value of USD 800,000.<sup>9</sup> Thus, South Eastern Europe is a bridge between the Middle Eastern and Central Asian drug producers and the Western European drug consumer market. Via

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<sup>7</sup> Asa Hutchinson, Congressional Testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism and Government Information about Narco-Terror: The World Connection between Drugs and Terror, 13 March 2002; available at [www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/cngrtest/ct031302.html](http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/cngrtest/ct031302.html).

<sup>8</sup> Rex A. Hudson (Project Manager), “A Global Overview of Narcotics-funded Terrorist and Other Extremist Groups” (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, May 2002); available at [www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/NarcsFundedTerrs\\_Extremis.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/NarcsFundedTerrs_Extremis.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> “Balkan-Albania-Kosovo-Heroin-Jihad, Research Analysis” (Toronto: The Center for Peace in the Balkans, May 2000); available at [www.balkanpeace.org/our/our3.shtml](http://www.balkanpeace.org/our/our3.shtml).

the Balkan route, heroin travels through Turkey, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania to Western European markets.<sup>10</sup> Antonio Maria Costa, executive director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), recently remarked that “the revenue generated by organized crime offers terrorist groups a steady flow of funding, making the effort to eliminate drug trafficking and to reduce drug abuse critical strategies in the global fight against terrorism.” As it has become increasingly difficult to “distinguish clearly between terrorist groups and organized crime units, since their tactics overlap,” we are now witnessing “the birth of a new hybrid of organized crime-terrorist organizations,” which requires cutting off the connection between crime, drugs, and terrorism.<sup>11</sup>

The Republic of Moldova, which has been labeled as Europe’s poorest country, is now a link in the chain referred to as the “Balkan way” of drug transit. The drug smuggling channels in Moldova are also sometimes used by members of terrorist organizations to raise money for their other activities. According to the calculations made by the Moldovan Ministry of Health and recent data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there are an estimated 60,000 to 65,000 drug consumers in the country; hashish accounts for 150 million *lei* and opium for 850 to 900 million *lei* of profit per year.<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that, for each registered person in this country, an estimated ten people are left unregistered, indicating that the real totals may be even higher. Heroin, hashish, and cocaine from Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania cross Moldova on their way to Western Europe. In the opposite direction, they travel through Moldova on their way to Central Asia.

Statistics from customs control agencies in neighboring countries—like Bulgaria, for instance—reflect a much higher level of drug transit from Moldova. Bulgarian customs confiscated more than 42 kilograms of heroin from a Turkish bus service that regularly connects Turkey to Moldova. The criminal organizations controlling the networks between Turkey and Moldova originate in the countries of the former Soviet Union, and their operators are mainly Russians, Ukrainians, and nationals of Caucasian countries. However, as has been observed in the neighboring Ukraine, Kurdish networks are also active in Moldova.<sup>13</sup>

Ukraine is another southeastern European country experiencing drug trafficking issues, especially increased drug trafficking from Afghanistan. A significant growth in Ukrainian drug use over the last few years has increased the demand for drugs and has created a robust infrastructure within the informal drug trade. Additionally, an insufficient level of cooperation among law enforcement agencies at the regional level has

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations, “UN Warns about Nexus between Drugs, Crime and Terrorism,” UN Press Release SOC/CP/311 (1 October 2004); available at [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/soccp311.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/soccp311.doc.htm).

<sup>12</sup> The Official Report, “Analysis on Narcotics Situation in the Republic of Moldova,” 1 February 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Centre for Geopolitical Drug Studies, “Moldova—A Bridge for Trafficking,” *Geopolitical Drug Newsletter* 7 (April 2002); available at [www.geodrugs.net](http://www.geodrugs.net).

significantly reduced the efficiency of anti-drug activities. Despite a prohibition on the cultivation of narcotic plants (poppy straw and hemp), over 5,000 cases of illegal cultivation by private households have been discovered in Ukraine.<sup>14</sup> Information from the Security Service of Ukraine indicates that during the last several years there has been an increase in illegal operations that traffic in synthetic drugs, including amphetamines, and in the domestic production of these substances, with the involvement of highly educated chemical industry specialists. Before entering Ukraine, drugs pass through a number of countries and areas, including Russia, the Caucasus, Turkey, Romania, Moldova, and Poland. Criminal groups use Ukraine's seaports and rivers as part of the "Balkan route" for drug smuggling. Shipments are usually destined for Western Europe, and arrive by road, rail, or sea, which are perceived as less risky modes of transport than air or mail shipment. According to the State Customs Service, the main channels of drug trafficking through Ukraine are as follows: Turkey-southern border of Ukraine-western border of Ukraine-Western Europe; Latin America-northern European sea ports-Baltic states-Ukraine-Western Europe; and Central African countries-the Middle East-southern border of Ukraine-western border of Ukraine-Western Europe.

In the case of Moldova, the relationship between terrorism and organized crime can be observed within the framework of the Transnistrian problem. The Moldovan region of Transnistria is flooded with criminal groups and illegal arms dealers, with transnational criminal and terrorist organizations skillfully using these separate sectors to their advantage. The most dangerous organized criminal operations are creating their own military units and illegally producing and selling arms and explosives. In fact, these organizations create not only paramilitary units, but also whole armies, especially in regions with separatist governments. In the early 1990s, separatist regimes equipped their own armies by seizing the armaments and military equipment of former Soviet troops. There is some evidence that, during this time, official structures of some countries transferred weapons and ammunitions to certain separatist regimes under private agreements.

Organized criminal groups sell conventional arms, including guns and rifles, which can be easily procured from ammunition dumps used by the 14th Russian Army, which was dislocated in the separatist region of Transnistria. The Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova received information about Middle Eastern (Palestinian) interests in the armaments present in this region. The activity of the EU commission monitoring the Transnistrian portion of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border had already shown that trafficking of human beings and drugs is occurring here. According to the head of the External Intelligence Service of Romania, Gheorghe Fulga, the Transnistria region is in the field of vision of the fundamentalist groups Hezbollah, Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, and the Muslim Brotherhood, which aim to purchase ammuni-

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<sup>14</sup> Country Factsheets Eurasian Narcotics: Ukraine 2004," available at [www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/research/narcotics\\_crime/FactSheet/2004/Ukraine.pdf](http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/research/narcotics_crime/FactSheet/2004/Ukraine.pdf).

tion and to involve particular firms in bringing insurgents to the West and the Caucasus.<sup>15</sup>

In Moldova, the existence of a shadow economy, coupled with severe poverty, has exacerbated the level of criminality in post-Soviet society. The desperate economic situation has created new opportunities for the “communist mafia” to take control over much of the economic and political life of this small nation. The Ministry of Interior, with its small force of 12,000 poorly equipped officers, cannot keep pace with the broad range of criminal activities that are overwhelming Moldova. The money that fuels the shadow economy comes from illegal trade in tobacco, petroleum, and alcohol as well as from an underground armaments trade that reaches all the way from Chechnya to Libya.

The attraction of Moldova for criminal elements in the former Soviet Union is illustrated by a recent case in which a Georgian citizen, who came to Moldova in 1997, organized a criminal group that traded in both armaments and drugs. When the Georgian was arrested, it was revealed not only that he had a varied store of weapons and drugs, but that he also boasted an impressive collection of false identity cards for Georgia and Ukraine.

An investigation of these illegal activities led to the disclosure that the Moldovan weapons trade extended to anti-aircraft missiles left behind by Soviet forces. While these missiles could have been used against airplanes, investigators learned that missile components had been used in eight attempts to destroy buildings, corporate headquarters, or houses of businessmen who resisted blackmail and other pressures to contribute to criminal “banks.” The latest two of these explosions occurred on 6 July and 13 August 2006 in Transnistria, demonstrating once again the lack of government control in the region and the presence of such armaments on Transnistrian territory. Explosives of this caliber routinely come from Transnistria and the warehouses of the operative troops of the Russian Army. A large depot of armaments that belonged to the former 14th Russian Army in Colbasna is now under the control of separatist paramilitary forces, which sell them to criminal groups around the world.<sup>16</sup>

According to an investigation by British journalists, any person—whether a political terrorist or religious fanatic—who possesses a necessary sum of money can easily acquire weapons in Transnistria that can pose a contamination threat to millions of people. The British journalists came very close to purchasing Soviet radioactive devices in Transnistria for USD 167,000 per item. The journalists refrained from finaliz-

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<sup>15</sup> Tatiana Busuncian, “Terrorism and Organized Crime” report presented within the “NATO Defense against Terrorism Course,” M5-66, the NATO School, Oberammergau, Germany, November 2004 and February 2005.

<sup>16</sup> See Zaur Borov and Stephen Bowers, “Illegal Weapons Traffic in Eastern Europe,” Nelson Institute Research Report (Harrisonburg, VA: Nelson Institute for International and Public Affairs, James Madison University, 2002).



ing the transaction only because the negotiation got so far that following through with the deal would have been an illegal act.<sup>17</sup>

Researchers and their sources have tried to identify the main routes used for smuggling weapons. By rail, the weapons travel from Rabinita to Slobodna, Ukraine, then south to the Ilichovsk or Odessa harbors. The cargo then travels by sea, where it can go in any direction. Another permutation of this route is Tiraspol to Razdelinaia, Ukraine, then on to Ilichovsk and Odessa. A second transport route is the auto route. Avoiding customs checkpoints, military trucks transporting weapons have been noticed in the swampy areas of Moldova's border with Ukraine, in the region of Gradenitsy. The weapons traffic does not avoid the right side of the Nistru River, either. Well-informed sources say that, at one point, the phenomenon had amplified due to the rampant corruption that existed in the Republic of Moldova. From 1999 to 2000, according to this information, two assembly lines from a cartridge manufacturing factory were taken out through Cahul customs. The merchandise was declared as machinery for corn husking. During the same period, a plane belonging to a Ukrainian company, loaded with over 5,000 pistols, was detained in the Chisinau airport. Until a "consensus" was reached, the plane was held for almost a year at the airport, and nothing is known about the fate of the load. Consequently, the network of weapons traffickers has huge ramifications on the right side of the Nistru. The few cases initiated by the prosecutor's office dealing with weapons trafficking have long since gathered dust somewhere in the prosecutor's files.<sup>18</sup>

Another case illustrating the illegal traffic of weapons from the Transnistrian region concerns events that occurred in Chechnya and Abkhazia, a separatist region in Georgia, in the fall of 2001. The Russian television channel ORT showed a cache of weapons seized by the Russian military during operations against a Chechen guerrilla squad. Among the captured weapons there were "Vasilio" model mortars. Such mortars have only been produced at the Ribnita Metallurgical Plant in recent years. Moreover, the design and testing of these weapons was performed by Russian military experts. It is also known that the leader of the Abkhazian secessionists expressed his gratitude for equipment and munitions used to fight against the Georgian Army in a letter addressed to the Tiraspol separatist authorities and the Transnistrian commandos. Other sources say that Tiraspol has sold seven "Grad" installations and an imposing number of automatic rifles to Abkhazian separatists. A "Grad" rocket launcher installation costs at least USD 5,000, while a Kalashnikov assault rifle costs from USD 150 to 300.<sup>19</sup>

Another known example is the connection with the "Electroaparatnyi" plant in Tiraspol, which mainly produces household articles. In 2004, this plant imported sophisticated equipment based on diamond technology from the Russian Federation at a cost of USD 2 million. Experts say it was impossible for the plant to use this kind of equip-

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<sup>17</sup> See Brian Johnson Thomas and Mark Franchetti, "Radioactive Rockets 'For Sale' in Break-away Soviet Republic," *Times* (London) (8 May 2005); available at [www.timesonline.co.uk](http://www.timesonline.co.uk).

<sup>18</sup> Journalistic Investigations Center, "Guarding the Rusty Cartridges as Shield for Modern Military Technology" (2004); available at [www.investigatii.md/eng/index.php?art=96](http://www.investigatii.md/eng/index.php?art=96).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

ment to produce household goods. Initially, this transaction was suspected to be nothing but money laundering, especially because at the end of 2004 the plant was scheduled for privatization, and its assets were estimated at only USD 900,000. Later, it was discovered that the plant had an order from the Russian Federation to produce certain sophisticated electronic devices. Things began to become clear when it was discovered that “Electroaparatnyi” participated in a weapons exhibition in the Russian Federation, where the plant had its own booth and it could either present a final product or certain components for weapons or military equipment, according to military experts. Thus, the order to the plant from the Russian Federation is in fact an order for the manufacture of electronic systems for the military. The missiles received from Russia have been re-equipped with devices produced at “Electroaparatnyi.” This is how the line for the manufacture of weapons was established—weapons that might also have circulated as far as Iraq.<sup>20</sup>

The weapons trade has become an increasingly lucrative business for airway companies as well. On 10 May 2006, an Amnesty International report entitled “Dead on Time” which, in its analysis of the international arms trade, referenced a famous multimillion-dollar arms trading agency that dealt with companies from Israel, Switzerland, Bulgaria, and Great Britain. The agency launched its business with the help of the Moldovan airway company Aerocom. The paper outlined the ways in which the collapse of the Soviet Union had provided companies like Aerocom not only with huge amounts of cheap weapons to sell, but vast numbers of airplanes for transporting the weapons to conflict areas around the world.<sup>21</sup> In March 2001, the Aerocom company was identified as having transported weapons to different regions in Africa and Middle East over the span of several years. The company used another African entity owned by Victor Bunt (without its knowledge) for the illegal transport of weapons by proxy. Another component of the case was the payment for the illicit transfers by a company registered in Ireland. Through these related connections and methods, the case illustrates the difficulties that Moldovan authorities are confronted with concerning the control of this illicit trade. Renan’s Company was able to make three flights for weapon and force ammunition transportation from the Democratic Republic of Congo in June 2003. This correlates with the activities of the Moldovan company Aerocom, which was accused by international experts of being involved in the transport of approximately 200,000 AK-47 assault rifles from Bosnia to the coalition-backed Iraqi forces; the rifles never reached their intended destination in Iraq. The company’s name has frequently appeared in UN and Amnesty International reports for its involvement in wars in Africa and Middle East. The 17 May 2006 edition of the magazine *Counterterrorism* wrote that there was no data that could tell us what has happened to the weapons bound for Iraq, but it is obvious that Aerocom took part in the venture.<sup>22</sup> In

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International and TransArms, “Dead on Time: Arms Transportation, Brokering, and the Threat to Human Rights” (10 May 2006); available at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engact300082006>.

<sup>22</sup> See <http://counterterrorismblog.org/2006/05/>.

the meantime, an African newspaper, *Mail & Guardian Online*, wrote in its May 12 edition that Aeroacom was criticized in a 2003 UN report concerning the illicit diamond and arms trade in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Now the company has been shut down, but its assets and aircraft are registered under the name of another airway company from Moldova, known as Jet Line International. Four illegal flights were made from the “Eagle” air base in northeastern Bosnia without license.<sup>23</sup>

Analyzing these cases, it becomes evident that many small companies started their illegal activities by selling ammunition to governments, later expanding their activities as important distributors on the international market. Some commercial companies from Moldova, China, and Armenia have been sanctioned and accused of supporting Iran in its manufacture of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Sanctions were imposed for a period of two years, by which time “not a single state or private company or natural person from the United States will have the right to contact commercially the representatives of the sanctioned companies.”<sup>24</sup> The Reuters news agency has reported that the individuals working for the Moldovan companies could be a “screen” for Russian interests, because Moldova was a former Soviet republic.<sup>25</sup> Moldova was listed as tenth in the world on a list of countries involved in the weapons trade. The Moldovan share of exported ammunition in the general exportation process is 2.1 percent, while Georgia and Belarus are responsible for 6.2 and 5.2 percent, respectively. Bulgaria took fifth place, with 5.1 percent; Ukraine and the United States shared sixth place; while Russia is in eighth place. But the study also found that none of the former Soviet countries was included in the top ten of the most militarized (paramilitary) countries and purchasers of ammunition. Russia is a leader only as an owner of a great atomic arsenal containing 24,000 warheads. Romania was the only country in the region that did not occupy any place in the top ten. Ukraine shared sixth place, with USD 550 million from export revenue with Australia and Canada, among the world leaders in the weapons trade.<sup>26</sup>

As hard as it is to link sex slavery with illegal arms purchases, it is arguable that the region’s sex slave trade has enriched crime syndicates. Each year, approximately one million women are trafficked as sex slaves worldwide, with an estimated 200,000 passing through the Balkans. Human trafficking represents serious human rights violations on a massive scale. Already, Bosnia, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo have become destination and transit countries, and Bulgaria, Albania, Macedonia, Romania, and Moldova have been identified as origin countries. While it is apparent that this business is flourishing, its actual scale is unknown. The absence of reliable regional data also makes it difficult to understand and track the problem.

Moldova and the self-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria, both wedged between Romania and the Ukraine, have been important factors in the geopolitical balance of

<sup>23</sup> *Ziarul de Garda* (Moldova) 84:18 (18 May 2006); available at [www.garda.com.md](http://www.garda.com.md).

<sup>24</sup> Announcement made by Richard Boucher, spokesman of the U.S. Department of State, at a press conference in Washington on 9 May 2002.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> This conclusion was given by Russian experts in the journal *Merchant-Money*.

South Eastern Europe for some time. Since 1991, the history of these two entities has not been a happy one: Moldova effectively lost part of its territory (and much of its industry) when the Transnistrian Republic declared its independence, which resulted in a brief but bloody war of secession in 1992.

Privatization, which ensued after the secession of Transnistria, impoverished the Moldovan population to such an extent that many Moldovans emigrated. Consequently, a flood of migrants has left Moldova in a desperate search for work. Thus, there are two main reasons for the preeminence of Moldova in this sad tale of trafficking. First, Moldova is nearer to the Balkan destination points for trafficked girls than Ukraine. Second, it has been reduced to grinding poverty, providing concrete incentives for young girls to wish to escape.

When tracing the common route through the Balkans to human trafficking and captivity, the pattern of events leading victims to this trap is fairly common. When they cross the border into Romania, they are usually taken by networks of Romanian pimps and “sold” at markets. One of these markets is said to be just outside Timisoara, near the border with Serbia. The price for a sex slave ranges from between USD 800 to as much as USD 5,000. Once they are bought, the girls are typically drugged and have their passports taken from them. In 82 percent of these trafficking cases, the purpose of the crime is sexual exploitation, which brings a high profit. As many as 83 percent of the victims are women from 14 to 26 years of age. Of this group, 15 percent are minors, 50 percent come from rural areas, and 80 percent come from vulnerable environments. Additionally, 85 percent of the trafficked women have not graduated from school, and in 90 percent of the cases they have no professional skills.<sup>27</sup>

Trafficked women are then smuggled across Serbia to Kosovo, Bosnia, Macedonia, or Albania, and in some cases also to Italy. Indeed, sex slavery is profitable not only for the pimps, whose earnings are immense, but also for “dealers,” who can make USD 500–600 on each girl they sell for a price of USD 1,000–1,500. Statistical data and information about trafficking victims, including Moldovan citizens who have been exposed to sexual and labor exploitation and forced to commit criminal activities, is collected by the following organizations: Save the Children, La Strada Moldova (next to Gencliar Birlii), the International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) Rehabilitation Centre, the Italian Solidarity Consortium, the Centre for Preventing Woman Trafficking, IOM Mission in Chisinau, the Young Generation (Romania), Koofra (Germany), and the Poppy Project (Great Britain).<sup>28</sup>

The final destination of many trafficked women is the Balkans, especially Kosovo and Macedonia. But a large number of victims are also taken to Italy. In the recent past there has been an exponential increase in the power of the Albanian mafia in Italy, which was documented in a 1998 report submitted to the United Nations (UN) by the

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<sup>27</sup> Rebecca Surtees, *Second Annual Report on Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings in South Eastern Europe* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2005); available at [www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/published\\_docs/studies\\_and\\_reports/second\\_annual05.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/published_docs/studies_and_reports/second_annual05.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

former head of the Italian anti-narcotics unit, Prefect Pietro Soggiu. He worked together with the UN anti-drug chief, Pino Arlacchi, who declared in 1999, “The Albanian Mafia has reached a remarkable level of organization, with branches in Italy and Germany, and it has succeeded in obtaining control of the Balkan route for drug trafficking, to which it has added the trade in illegal immigrants, arms and munitions.”<sup>29</sup> At present, the Moldovan state does not have the means to register the movement of its citizens abroad, although evident transit routes and modes of transport can be identified with the help of information provided by the victims who were aided in 2003 and 2004. Findings from interviews with victims include the following insights:

- To reach the Balkans, victims pass through the southern part of Moldova (Cahul and Vulcanesti), then to the Virzac district in Romania, and on to Serbia.
- To reach Western Europe, victims pass through Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro or Albania to Italy (by sea), Slovenia, and Hungary.
- To reach Russia and Ukraine, victims pass through Moldova by automobile or train.
- To reach Turkey, victims passed through Ukraine; coming from Moldova, they pass through the seaport of Odessa and are consequently “delivered” by ship.

An especially appalling aspect of the trade in human beings is the sexual exploitation of children. Mariana Petersel, director of Save the Children in Moldova, attributed some of the problems to the families themselves. Family structures have been broken down by seventy years of communism, she said, and this meant that parents were sometimes prepared to sell their own children into slavery. It is assumed that the prices she mentioned—USD 7,000 to 8,000—are for underage slaves, since, as has been shown above, the price for adult girls is much lower, at USD 1,000 to 1,500.<sup>30</sup>

There was a case in which a mother sold her newborn child to traffickers, who took the child abroad for foreign adoption. Beginning in 1998, almost 300 Moldovans sold their kidneys, the majority of them having been forced to do so. In addition to this, several people were arrested for selling human organs in 2002. The arrests were made after the victims gave statements to the police, although none of the cases were pursued, and victims were not given medical aid.<sup>31</sup>

The following case can serve as an example of transborder criminal structures. In October 2001, Romanian police disrupted a human trafficking ring that was being guided by Gorceac Svetlana, a Moldovan citizen. From 2000 to 2001, with the help of other Moldovan, Romanian, and Serbian individuals, Svetlana recruited and trafficked a great number of young girls from Romania and Moldova to the former Yugoslavia,

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<sup>29</sup> British Helsinki Human Rights Group, Country Report, “Sex Slaves: Trafficking in Human Beings from Moldova to Italy” (n.d.); available at [www.bhhrg.org/CountryReport.asp?ReportID=160&CountryID=16](http://www.bhhrg.org/CountryReport.asp?ReportID=160&CountryID=16).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Rebecca Surtees, *Regional Clearing Point's Second Annual Report on Victims of Trafficking in South Eastern Europe* (Geneva: IOM, July 2005); available at [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int).

promising well-paid jobs abroad, mainly in Western Europe. The Moldovan girls were attracted by these false job announcements. Authorities identified and interviewed thirty-three trafficked victims through the networks directed by Gorceac Svetlana in order to prosecute her. Starting on 6 August 2001, using information obtained with the help of the Regional Centre for Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, police officers and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents established a task force at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The team launched a special operation targeting Gorceac Svetlana and her criminal networks within Romania and the former Yugoslavia. They discovered that she was renting apartments in Timisoara to house victims before trafficking them to Yugoslavia. On 22 October 2001, officers within the Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs identified an apartment owned by Gorceac Svetlana in Timisoara, where she and three other persons were detained as being her accomplices.<sup>32</sup>

Recent findings indicate that there are increasing numbers of cases in which perpetrators of human trafficking crimes describe themselves as former trafficking victims. These people were released from harsh slavery only to return back to their native country with the mission to recruit new victims. They were threatened—told that their names would be made known, and that public opinion would ostracize them—in order to force them to commit these crimes. There are only rare situations in which some voluntarily attempt to transform this occupation into their own businesses. Transborder networks are the essential elements in managing these trafficking operations. These networks subordinate small trafficking groups and individuals engaged in this process.

In specialized literature,<sup>33</sup> pimps are classified in three categories, the classification being characteristic for the Republic of Moldova:

- *Occasional traffickers (on the frontier territory)*. These traffickers transport victims internally and internationally. They are often taxi, boat, or pickup truck owners who can pass individuals or small groups of people across borders using familiar places. In sections of the Danube River, for example, boatmen are well paid for the transportation of victims to the Serbian side. The transit routes across the Danube are used with great discretion, and departure points always differ. Once the traffickers reach Serbia, the victims are transferred to other individuals, this time Serbians, and are later distributed to regional restaurant owners. In this way, the majority of trafficked victims never reach Western Europe, but remain somewhere near Romania.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Trafficking in Children for Sexual Exploitation in the Republic of Moldova* (Chisinau: Centre for the Prevention of Trafficking in Women, 2003); available at [www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat\\_inter/projects/promoting\\_law/East-West\\_Research-2004/Moldova\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/promoting_law/East-West_Research-2004/Moldova_ENG.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> The international legislation on Trafficking in Human Beings, Ural Centre for NGO Assistance, Permian Center against Violence and Human Trafficking, Russian Federation (2000), 23.

<sup>34</sup> “The Danube Smugglers Change their Direction: Women Instead of Petrol,” *Evenimentul Zilei* (Romania) (28 March 2002).

- *Gangs or small trafficking groups.* These are well-organized groups that usually specialize in trafficking citizens outside the origin country and consistently use the same routes. These groups can be permanent or temporary in nature, and are based on personal relations among group members.
- *International trafficking networks.* These networks are the most sophisticated, dangerous, and difficult to combat of all trafficking groups. The network members who are present in origin, transit, and destination countries either have access to false and certified documents or steal or falsify them by themselves. They are able to modify routes or transport methods when the usual passageways are blocked. Natives of countries where trafficking is taking place have assumed special roles in these structures; their presence has become increasingly prominent.<sup>35</sup>

The members of the Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Directorate maintain that trafficking is a separate business, but one that has strong connections with other types of criminal structures and activities. Crimes associated with trafficking in human beings imply the following necessary elements:

- The identification and recruitment of persons who, despite ranging in age from 18 to 30 years old, may be sold for sexual exploitation purposes
- The search for external “markets” abroad for the sale of trafficked victims (including the participation of foreign proxies)
- The transportation of victims across borders (using foreign passports and other certified documents, or using false documents)
- The establishment of contacts with corrupt officials, who are implicated in securing necessary documents for the movement of victims across the Moldovan border
- The securing of payments due for the “delivery” of victims abroad.<sup>36</sup>

## Conclusion

Recently, Bulgaria and Romania joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). Regardless of these accomplishments, these countries are still confronted with a security threat posed by a high level of all forms of organized crime. The countries of the western Balkans are in an even worse situation, due to their history over the past decade and their lack of experience in dealing with these problems. In the present context, “nobody can afford the luxury of a fractious Balkans,” and this must be made clear to the United States and the EU, as they “feel compelled to divert political, military, and financial resources away from the region and

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<sup>35</sup> “Trafficking in Women in European Union: Characteristics, Trends and Politics,” European Conference on Trafficking in Women (June 1996).

<sup>36</sup> Interview given by Mr. Ion Turcan, Head of Department, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, 29 August 2002.

into their struggle against terrorism.”<sup>37</sup> Analyzing the dramatic political and societal aspects of criminal activities, it is apparent that organized crime in Ukraine has become a significant political and economic force; collusive and corrupting relationships with the political elite have developed and exert influence over many sectors of the economy. Politics, crime, and corruption have merged to form both a deeply criminalized political system and highly politicized criminal organizations. Organized crime groups are well established in Dnipropetrovsk, Zaparozhe, Lugansk, Kharkiv, Odessa, Crimea, and Kiev.

Transnational organized crime is a considerable dilemma, and represents a complex phenomenon in South Eastern Europe, one “linked with warlordism and terrorism,” meaning that any attempt to deal effectively with any one of these problems requires “dealing with the others as well—either at the same time or sequentially—because each one feeds off the other.”<sup>38</sup> Criminal organizations have therefore become a global concern. Trafficking networks are expanding into legitimate economies, making their activities and philosophy more pervasive. One important factor that must be reconsidered is education, which is the essential instrument in counteracting the negative impacts of the trafficking process.

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<sup>37</sup> Misha Glenny, “Heading off Terrorism in the Balkans,” *New York Times* (16 October 2001).

<sup>38</sup> Dennis J.D. Sandole, “Combating Crime in Southeastern Europe: An Integrated, Coordinated, Multi-level Approach,” paper presented at the 4th Reichenau Workshop of the PfP Consortium Working Group on Regional Stability in South East Europe, “Crushing Crime in South East Europe: A Struggle of Domestic, Regional and European Dimensions,” Reichenau, Austria, 16–19 May 2003.



## Summary of Conclusions: Combating Terrorism Working Group (CTWG)

*Brigadier General (Ret.) Russell D. Howard and Colleen M. Traugher*

The preceding articles in this issue of *Connections* have explored the following question: Is there a “nexus” between terrorism and arms, drug, and human trafficking? Specifically, the articles examined potential links between terrorism and trafficking in Central Asia, the Caucasus, South Eastern Europe, and Western Europe. The authors researched both the routes of terrorist and criminal activity and the financial relationships between terrorist and criminal groups.

Before engaging in research, the members of the Combating Terrorism Working Group (CTWG) developed the following hypotheses:

- Terrorists are using the same routes as arms, drug, and human traffickers.
- Terrorists are using arms, drug, and human trafficking to finance their activities.
- If a “nexus” exists between terrorism and trafficking, there may be an opportunity to counter terrorism by penetrating trafficking groups.

The CTWG was interested in the extent of collusion between terrorist and criminal groups, particularly terror-crime interaction that is indicative of a close relationship. Moving along the terror-crime interaction spectrum over time, terrorist and criminal groups have the potential to move from *activity appropriation* to a so-called *nexus* to a *symbiotic relationship* to, ultimately, a *hybrid*.<sup>1</sup> The position that terrorist and criminal groups occupy along the continuum indicates the degree of collusion between terror and crime.

The results of the research focused on local, regional, and international terrorist and criminal groups. However, terrorist and criminal networks that operate transnationally were of particular interest. Transnational terror and crime networks can potentially have an impact *across* regions, from Central Asia to Western Europe. The presence of transnational networks, which constitute the “new terrorism” and the “new crime,” has implications for transnational counterterrorism and counter-trafficking strategy.

Ultimately, indicators of collusion between terrorist and criminal groups were found across all regions. However, the extent of the collusion or the depth of the interaction along the terror-crime spectrum varied by region and type of crime. The following section is a summary of the findings from this research, which draws parallels across regions. Subsequent sections will discuss the conclusions in relation to the original hypotheses and briefly touch upon the policy implications of the study.

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<sup>1</sup> Louise I. Shelley, et al., *Methods and Motives: Exploring Links between Transnational Organized Crime & International Terrorism* (Rockville, MD: National Criminal Justice Reference Service [NCJRS], 2005), 35.

## **Terrorism and Drug Trafficking**

By far the greatest amount of collusion was found between terrorists and drug traffickers. In South Eastern Europe and Western Europe, evidence suggested that terrorist groups and drug traffickers have a strong relationship. For example, direct links were discovered between drug traffickers and Al Qaeda backed groups, the ETA (Basque Homeland and Freedom), Hezbollah, and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party). Moreover, in South Eastern Europe, terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, and the PKK were found to be connected with Turkish, Albanian, Kurdish, and other criminal groups.

In contrast, the research uncovered fewer evident links between transnational terrorists and drug traffickers in the South Caucasus, although some do exist. There was, however, evidence of ties between non-state armed groups in the separatist enclaves in the region and drug traffickers. Finally, Central Asia remains both a source and transit region for drugs. While drug trafficking remains a huge industry, its links with terrorism remain unclear. In sum, because of the great amount of collusion between terrorists and drug traffickers, the relationship between them is best described as a *symbiotic relationship*.

## **Terrorism and Arms Trafficking**

After drug trafficking, the second greatest amount of terrorist-criminal collusion was found between terrorists and arms traffickers. In South Eastern Europe and Western Europe, solid links were discovered between terrorist groups and arms traffickers. In Western Europe, links between arms traffickers and terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, ETA, the GIA (Armed Islamic Group), the IRA (Irish Republican Army), the PKK, and Salafist extremist groups were uncovered. By contrast, terrorists in South Eastern Europe appeared to have secondary relationships with arms traffickers through Russian-Moldovan criminal groups, who are in turn connected to the weapons trafficking industry.

In the South Caucasus and in Central Asia, however, fewer links were found to exist between terrorists and arms traffickers. In the separatist regions, relationships between non-state armed groups and arms traffickers have been inferred. In Central Asia, arms are typically smuggled through the region and destined for both terrorist and criminal groups elsewhere. Despite a lack of direct links, the role of the South Caucasus and Central Asia in arms trafficking cannot be readily dismissed: both regions remain the primary sources of illegal arms, which are largely trafficked to the West for potential use by terrorist groups. Thus, in general, the links between terrorism and arms trafficking can be best described as a *nexus* across all regions.

## **Terrorism and Human Trafficking**

In contrast to the stronger links that were uncovered between terrorist groups and arms and drug traffickers, the links between terrorism and human trafficking were found to generally be fewer and weaker. One exception to this finding was in South Eastern

Europe, where links between terrorist groups and human smugglers were evident. In South Eastern Europe, particularly in the Balkans, terrorist groups make use of human smugglers primarily as a way to enter the region. Terrorist groups also, to a lesser extent, financially benefit from a relationship with human traffickers in South Eastern Europe.

In regions other than South Eastern Europe, the level of interaction between terrorist and human trafficking activity was found to be much lower. More specifically, in Western Europe, human traffickers tend to indirectly provide a supportive environment for terrorists. In the South Caucasus, the links between terrorism and human trafficking appeared to be ambiguous at best. In Central Asia, the victims of human trafficking often become associated with terrorist groups. In short, where terrorist and human trafficking groups are present, the relationship between them—if any—can be described as an *activity appropriation*.

## Conclusions

In conducting these studies, the CTWG took steps to reevaluate its original hypotheses. Based on the results of the research with respect to terrorism and trafficking routes, the first conclusion is: *Terrorists are using the same routes as arms, drugs, and human traffickers*. Both terrorists and criminals throughout Central Asia, the South Caucasus, South Eastern Europe, and Western Europe are benefiting from porous borders that result from a general lack of law enforcement and security. Notably, in contrast to the original hypothesis, both terrorist and trafficking routes are flowing from East to West. Initially, the CTWG believed that terrorist routes would flow toward the East, while arms, drug, and human trafficking routes would flow to the West.

The first conclusion has repercussions for the possibility of financial collusion between terrorist and traffickers. Accordingly, with respect to terror-crime financial collusion, the second conclusion is: *Terrorists are using arms and drug trafficking to finance their activities*. While links between terrorism and arms and drug trafficking have been established through research, the relationship between terrorism and human trafficking remains less clear. Financially, however, both terrorists and human traffickers benefit from the unregulated “shadow” economy and endemic corruption that exists across all regions, which is manifested in the illegal arms and drug trades.

Ultimately, the extent and type of collusion between terrorists and traffickers has implications for the countering of both phenomena. Thus, regarding counterterrorism, the third conclusion is: *The evidence shows that penetration of drug traffickers is a possible way of countering terrorism*. Because of the lack of concrete links between terrorism and arms trafficking, there is only a *marginal value* in penetrating arms trafficking groups in order to counter terrorism. Similarly, because of the general lack of interaction between terrorism and human trafficking syndicates, there is *little to no value* in penetrating groups trafficking in humans. By contrast, the strong links that have been found between terrorist groups and drug traffickers present a greater opportunity for counterterrorism efforts through penetration of drug trafficking groups.

## **Policy Implications**

This research has shown that terror-crime interaction is not just a local or a regional problem; terrorists and criminals operate *transnationally* in Central Asia, through the Caucasus and South Eastern Europe, and on to Western Europe. As a result, effectively countering transnational terror and crime requires increased regional and international cooperation across all regions.

Finally, as the research here demonstrated, combating terrorism requires more than just going after terrorists. Border security and protection is of utmost importance in fighting both trafficking crimes and terrorist activity. The increase of law enforcement and security in “gray areas,” or separatist regions beyond the reach of central state power, is particularly crucial. It is important to reduce the availability of local safe havens where terrorists and criminals interact in order to counter both phenomena internationally.