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CROSS-BORDER CRIME

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Introduction

- Cross-border crime refers to illegal activities that transcend national boundaries, involving multiple jurisdictions and affecting global security and economics.
- WHY IT MATTERS:
 - 1. threatens national security 2. impacts economies and societies 3. involves organized crime networks.
- KEY AREAS:
 - 1. human trafficking 2. drug smuggling 3. money laundering 4. arms trafficking.

Geographical and Strategic Importance of Montenegro

- Montenegro, due to its strategic location in the Western Balkans, plays a crucial role in regional crime dynamics. The country serve as:
- 1. **a transit point** for drug trafficking between Latin America, the Balkans and the EU
- 2. **a hub for human trafficking and illegal migration**, especially along the Balkan route
- 3. **a source and transit country for weapons smuggling**, often linked to conflicts in Europe and beyond
- 4. **a financial center for money laundering**, with strong ties to offshore banking and real estate investments.



Types of Cross-Border Crime in Montenegro

- 1. Weapons smuggling
- 2. Drug trafficking
- 3. Human trafficking and illegal migrations
- 4. Money laundering and financial crime
- 5. Organized crime networks



Weapons Smuggling

- Weapons smuggling is a major problem for Montenegro, and it has deep historical roots in the region. The legacy of the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s left behind large quantities of illegal arms, which continue to circulate today. The porous borders of the Balkans, combined with limited enforcement, make it an ideal region for weapons trafficking.
- Montenegro's criminal groups, such as the Kavač and Škaljari clans, are heavily involved in weapons smuggling. These groups often have strong ties to larger international criminal organizations, allowing them to move arms across Europe and into other conflict zones, further complicating efforts to dismantle these networks.



Drug Trafficking

- Drug trafficking is one of the most prominent forms of cross-border crime in Montenegro. Situated along the Balkan route – one of the main corridors for smuggling narcotics from Latin America to Western Europe – Montenegro has become a key transit point. Reports, including those from Europol and the UNODC, have highlighted the involvement of Montenegrin organized crime groups in cocaine trafficking networks, with notable cases linking them to seizures in ports such as Bar and international hubs like Rotterdam.



Source: UNODC

Drug Trafficking

- **Role of Montenegrin criminal clans**
- Montenegrin criminal clans – most notably the Kavač and Škaljari groups – are deeply involved in drug trafficking and have built extensive networks across Europe. These rival clans, originally based in Kotor, have been linked to violent conflicts and high-profile cocaine trafficking cases, particularly in Spain, the Netherlands, and South America. Europol and regional investigations have documented their collaboration with major international cartels, including ties to Colombian and Mexican drug networks.



Drug Trafficking

- **Montenegro as a transit country for cocaine and heroin**
- Montenegro's ports and airports are frequently exploited for drug smuggling, with organized criminal groups controlling significant parts of the trade. Cocaine is trafficked via maritime routes from Latin America, often arriving through the port of Bar – linked in several cases to seizures hidden in banana shipments. Heroin, on the other hand, is transported overland from Afghanistan and Turkey along the Balkan route, with Montenegro serving as a key transit point, as noted in reports by Europol and the UNODC.



Human Trafficking and Illegal Migrations

- Montenegro serves as a significant transit point for human trafficking along the Balkan route, with migrants from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa often passing through en route to the European Union. These individuals frequently fall prey to criminal syndicates that exploit their vulnerable status. Women and children are particularly susceptible to trafficking for sexual exploitation.



Human Trafficking and Illegal Migrations

- A notable case highlighting local involvement in such networks is that of Ljubomir Đedović. In March 2020, the High Court in Podgorica confirmed an indictment against Đedović and nine accomplices for smuggling migrants. Đedović was identified as the leader of a criminal group that, from January until their arrest, smuggled at least 250 migrants from Syria, Pakistan, and Eritrea through Montenegro towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. The group charged migrants for transportation and concealed them in various locations before facilitating their illegal border crossings. While the indictment was confirmed, the court proceedings were ongoing at that time. Criminal organizations often charge exorbitant fees for perilous and illegal passage, further exposing migrants to abuse and exploitation.



Law Enforcement and Challenges

- **Cooperation with EUROPOL, INTERPOL, and regional bodies**
- Montenegro has made progress in combating cross-border crime through agencies like the Police Directorate and Customs Administration, which are central to addressing organized crime—particularly in drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, and human trafficking. Joint operations with Europol have led to the arrest of high-risk drug traffickers and the dismantling of smuggling networks. Cooperation with Interpol and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) has improved cross-border intelligence sharing.
- However, persistent challenges remain, including corruption, which often leads to the protection of criminal activities at local levels; limited resources that hinder effective policing and border control; political influence that can undermine judicial independence and law enforcement actions.



Conclusion

- The challenge of cross-border crime in Montenegro is not unique to the country but is part of a broader issue affecting the entire Balkan region. Montenegro's efforts to combat these crimes will not only contribute to the stability of the country but also to the security of Europe as a whole. By strengthening its institutions, enhancing cooperation, and focusing on long-term reform, Montenegro has the potential to overcome these challenges and play a significant role in curbing organized crime in the region.
- To conclude, the fight against cross-border crime in Montenegro is ongoing, but with sustained effort and a comprehensive strategy Montenegro can enhance its security, stability and reputation in the global fight against organized crime.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION



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