Overview of Serious and Organized Crime in Africa

29 October 2018

ANALYTICAL REPORT
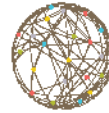
Enhancing Africa's response to transnational organised crime

This project is funded by the European Union

ENACT is implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in association with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

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Contents

Executive Summary

Transnational organized crime in Africa is a growing issue. As a result, INTERPOL under the EU funded ENACT Project has sought to catalogue and assess organized crime on the continent to drive a more strategic law enforcement response.

International criminal organizations continue to target Africa because of the significant illicit wealth that can be generated, stemming from criminal market opportunities that exploit various social and political vulnerabilities, state fragility, and limited policing capacities present on the continent. International criminal organizations or networks operate everywhere in Africa via key facilitators and bring together a significant array of crime syndicates and street gangs that provide illicit goods and services.

Crime syndicates remain highly connected across borders and are active in a number of illicit markets, notably drug trafficking, human trafficking and people smuggling, environmental crimes, financial crimes, counterfeited goods, works of art trafficking, stolen motor vehicles trafficking and maritime piracy. In addition, there are enabling crimes such as cybercrime, and the trade in small arms and light weapons that are supporting organized criminality throughout the continent which overlap with all of the illicit markets noted in complex ways. Organized crime in Africa generates huge profits for all involved, and there are substantial illicit interregional financial flows and illicit profits moving throughout the continent and often heading offshore. Money laundering relating to all criminal market activities is occurring on a global scale.

The threat from organized crime in Africa is substantial, yet there is limited capacity amongst law enforcement to manage this complex issue at a national, regional and continental level. Organized crime is going underreported and undetected, but various data sources reveal the following major activities and dynamics of groups and networks, which need to be addressed strategically, through building greater partnerships amongst all law enforcement agencies everywhere on the continent.

Key Findings

❖ Crime syndicates are a common trans-border criminal element on the continent, connected to the world's illicit markets through close collaboration with transnational criminal networks of associates that target the continent specifically to maximize illicit gains.

❖ International organized crime elements from all over the world are implicated in a number of criminal markets throughout the continent, and these elements are suspected to be active in most countries, beyond the rates of detection. These elements often link local gangs to the international supply of illicit commodities.

❖ International criminal organizations active on the continent are able to exploit a range of socio-economic dynamics to maximize illicitly gained profits. Their involvement in illicit markets is often met with only limited law enforcement response and sometimes even enabled by corruption.

❖ Terrorism and insurgency are constant and persistent elements of organized crime on the continent, and estimated to be growing both in scope and in impact, and remain linked to a range of criminality.

❖ Environmental crimes on the continent are typically transnational in nature, linking countries together and the continent to the world. Asia is identified as the main destination for a number of illegal African wildlife trades. Criminal organizations involved in environmental crimes can consist of many different actors such as poachers/illegal loggers, non-state armed groups, mid-level traders, smugglers and individuals responsible for exportation, making detection more difficult, and are ready to use different methods and adapt their tactics to law enforcement efforts.

❖ The continent is suspected to be a consumption, production and transit hub for various illicit drugs en route from Asia and South America to other global markets, noting Europe.

❖ Financial crimes are suspected to be on the rise on the continent and are frequently facilitated through cyber capacities. A range of frauds are routine throughout the continent, targeting financial institutions. Counterfeit currency and money laundering are also major organized crime elements.

❖ Trafficking in human beings and people smuggling are crime threats of significant concern to the entire continent, with nearly all countries qualifying as source, transit, and/or destination countries. All aspects of human trafficking, including sexual and labor exploitation as well as organ removal are occurring on the continent. Migrants moving illegally across the continent are vulnerable to human trafficking and high levels of violence. The Northern African region is a transit hub for migrants smuggled towards Europe.

❖ The capacity of organized crime groups on the continent to move significant quantities of small arms and light weapons across borders and between the regions indicate that some of the organized crime groups involved in small arms and light weapons trafficking have the capacity of connecting suppliers to buyers at national, regional and trans-regional levels, and have the necessary expertise to move firearms undetected. It also illustrates the level of porosity of many borders on the continent. The significant number of trafficked weapons originating from looted governmental stockpiles and from UN peacekeeping missions present on the continent is a concern.

❖ Counterfeited pharmaceuticals as well as other goods are frequently trafficked on the continent, which poses a direct threat to public safety and security. This criminal market links many African countries with the rest of the world and counterfeit goods are often manufactured in one country and assembled in another, to be illegally transported through/to a third country. This type of criminality is often a convergence of contraband and financial crimes.

❖ Maritime piracy remains a threat for the continent, affecting both the security and economic development of the coast countries from the Gulf of Guinea, Gulf of Aden and Horn of Africa.

❖ The diversity of origins of foreign stolen motor vehicles (SMV) arriving on the continent with vehicles trafficked from Europe, North America and Asia confirms that African criminal groups involved in SMV trafficking are well connected to accomplices operating abroad. The capacity of organized crime groups on the continent to defeat modern car anti-theft equipment, such as GPS tracking devices, indicates that these groups are technologically proficient.

❖ The illicit traffic in cultural heritage is a thriving transnational crime affecting the continent. Fueled by a high demand and the degraded socio-economic and security conditions in some African regions. Criminal organizations, including terrorist groups, traffic a wide range of cultural objects mainly to Europe, North America and increasingly, the Gulf states.

❖ Cybercrimes and cyber-enabled crimes are growing issues that are increasingly affecting the continent. Crime syndicates and gangs on the continent are becoming more sophisticated and are capable of carrying out a range of new types of crimes through cyber capacities. The lack of investment and awareness exacerbated by limited capacities to prevent, detect, and investigate cybercrime incidents is further driving this criminality on the continent.

Introduction

Organized crime, categorized in this report as all crimes committed by groups of individuals, working in concert to generate illicit profits over time, for continued and collective gain, is a global issue, leaving no jurisdiction unaffected. Groups of individuals, in order to carry out a range of crimes, will form networks or syndicates, often characterized as criminal organizations. These criminal organizations will seek to grow and expand their illicit activities, taking advantage of opportunities wherever they may exist. By nature, they operate in ways that are reflective of the jurisdiction they operate in, exploiting weaknesses and entrenching themselves in any way possible.

The nature and dynamics of organized criminality jeopardize sustainable peace and development, political stability, erode trust in public institutions, nurture corruption, and fuel violence. Organized crime further disrupts the rule-of-law and undermines real economic potential and growth. In many instances, organized crime and associated criminal activities are linked to the activities of armed insurgent groups or terrorist organizations, which accents the increasing threats posed by organized crime to public safety and social order. It is a major threat to all aspects of any society, and, for this reason, must be understood in detail for law enforcement to have an effect.

Criminal organizations will exploit any aspect of society that is, either by law or convention, illegal, as long as it is lucrative. Therefore, they pose a direct threat to government and civil society. Crime groups are responsive to what is explicitly illegal, given any particular local set of laws and regulations, and thus will take on different forms, norms, and practices depending on where the group is based in the world. They will operate at a level commensurate with the state's ability to respond, and their activities may be accepted in varying ways by the general public and society at large. Criminal organizations therefore form and function in ways reflective of the given cultural, economic, and political realities in which they are based. They will differ accordingly and take on unique systems and practices from country to country, region to region, and will pose different challenges to law enforcement as a result. It is the intent of this report to outline these details for the African continent.

Organized crime systemically controls every aspect of complex criminal enterprise. Africa is not immune to organized crime and in fact may be at an even greater risk of harm, given its distinctive set of socio-economic realities: vast natural resources, an array of political jurisdictions and systems, porous borders, varying and differing criminal or penal laws, varying levels of corruption, poverty, high levels of unemployment, and a range of security and state fragility issues including the lack of full effective control over the entirety of a State's territory. The free movement of people and goods, varying levels of development and economic prosperity, and the interconnectivity of it all, is therefore fueling complex crime in the region in a unique way. All of these socio-economic realities underpin a strong and unique organized crime element that is operating throughout the continent.

To better understand organized crime in the African context, and indeed to combat it more effectively, a thorough understanding of how it functions must be attained. Law enforcement and decision makers need to understand how organized crime operates locally and transnationally. They need to know in which criminal activities groups are involved and how, and they must understand the various enabling crimes that are being committed to drive these types of crimes. The dynamics of criminal groups operating across the continent must be assessed and an understanding of how they facilitate the flow of vast volumes of illicit goods and services is necessary in order to form effective law enforcement strategies.

With these analytical objectives in mind, the ENACT Project (Enhancing Africa's response to transnational organized crime) has undertaken this assessment of serious and organized crime on the African continent.

> *Two versions of this report exist. This report is the public version of the completed analysis, which included police information; where specific police information was used, this information has subsequently been sanitized for public distribution.*

Scope and Methodology

The objective of this report is to provide a comprehensive assessment of organized crime in Africa.

The assessment draws upon an analysis of available data and presents conclusions about the current nature, scope, dynamics, and activities of organized crime on the continent.

The following assessment provides an overview of the major aspects of organized crime both in terms of which groups are active throughout the continent and the types of illegal enterprise in which they are engaged.

This assessment follows an all source intelligence analysis methodology. It is the result of integrating multiple data sources. The integration of multiple data sources provides the most accurate picture of what is occurring on the continent. Only when various data are used in conjunction, can an accurate picture of complex issues emerge, seeing them beyond any constituent part or perspective. Multiple data sources allow for cross-referencing and information verification or corroboration. All data sources herein are combined through analysis; analytical judgments were made throughout the analysis based on all facts available at the time of writing.

Analysis and Findings

This analysis is broken down into four parts as per INTERPOL's Organized and Emerging Crime Strategy, thereby covering criminal organizations or networks, illegal trafficking and illicit markets, enabling crimes and criminal convergences, and finally the illicit flow of money and assets. Many of these sections have several sub-types and are broken down by those patterns and trends detected through the analysis. This analysis was completed for the African continent, however, any substantial links to the world are also highlighted throughout. Despite there being many ongoing crime types in the continent, this assessment highlights those that most affect the continent as a whole.

Criminal Organizations or Networks

This section examines the various dynamics of those crime syndicates found to be engaged in serious and transnational organized crime in Africa. It highlights how criminal networks connect across the regions and beyond, and focuses on the activities in which groups or gangs are involved and how. Where possible, it draws attention to specific criminal networks and outlines how they organize and operate locally, regionally, and transnationally.

Structure, Dynamics and International Criminal Organizations Links

Organized crime throughout Africa involves vast criminal networks, linking many of the countries on the continent together, and to other parts of the world. These networks, with limited high-level or centralized leadership, undertake a range of criminal activities, driven by constant criminal opportunities, arising out of the many unique socio-economic conditions found within countries across Africa.

Generally, criminal organizations benefit from areas where state control is weakest, thriving on corruption, relying on bribes, payoffs, and coercion to conduct their operations.

The majority of criminal networks in Africa are run by key facilitators, and most often syndicate structures remain horizontal, largely going undetected at a higher-level. Occasionally, there is a small percentage of groups that are run by major crime 'bosses' or 'kingpins', but when syndicates are centrally controlled, these major criminal actors will remain isolated from the criminal activities, making syndicates difficult to dismantle. The wealth and power of these persons will frequently grow into legitimate business and enterprise, suggesting close connections between organized crime and the private sector on the continent.

A significant number of transnational crime syndicates in Africa seem to operate at the national or regional level. Local groups/gangs are also present in the region, such as the "26s," "Pretty Boys," or "Young American" gangs, suggesting that gang activity is a pervasive element of organized crime on the continent.

Ethnicity can be a determining factor of group organization, structure and scope of operations in Africa. Some tribes in North Africa historically control certain cross-border smuggling routes. This does not prevent collaboration between crime syndicates of different ethnicity, but rather, entails a geographical division of respective areas of control. In West African countries, criminal groups appear to be expanding their operations into diaspora communities across the region, with some based exclusively on familial or ethnic lineage. The diaspora communities are used by organized crime networks for the recruitment of gang members and/or to facilitate the transportation of illicit goods all over the world. This operational strategy is believed to mitigate the risk to exposure and prosecution.

Several African crime syndicates are suspected of operating outside of their region to maximize illicit gains. North African crime syndicates are well-connected with their counterparts in sub-Saharan African and Sahel countries. Based on open source data, consistent links have been identified in five criminal markets, noting drugs, people smuggling, trafficking in human beings, weapons trafficking and trafficking in counterfeit goods.

Ties to international criminal groups and syndicates appear highly probable throughout the continent. European-based criminal organizations are suspected of being involved in diverse illicit activities in East Africa, from ivory trafficking and elephant poaching, to fraud, money laundering, armed robberies, cigarette smuggling and human trafficking.[1] The Eastern African region is also linked to South American, Australian, and United States-based criminal elements. Syndicates in the North African region have demonstrated links with crime syndicates from South America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, enabling a variety of criminal markets. Available information also strongly indicates connections between crime networks in Central Africa and international criminal organizations based in the Middle East and Asia. Notable international criminal organizations and elements of North and South American, Eastern and Western European, and Asian criminal elements have also been detected in the Southern African region.

These findings suggest the existence of various foreign-based syndicates and criminal organizations operating across Africa and the extent of criminal connectedness to the rest of the world. The diversity of activities as well as the variety of illicit trade routes they have established, suggest that foreign criminal groups involved in illegal activities across the continent are firmly entrenched.

Typically, these larger, transnational groups are thought of as cohesive systems, with clear and established hierarchies and membership, especially in their countries of origin. However, information suggests that foreign-based crime groups are increasingly dependent on partnerships with locally-based criminal associates. As a result, it is rare to find clear indications that a global crime syndicate is operating on the ground in Africa, even when they are apparently indirectly involved in illicit activities going on there. Instead of direct and identifiable associates of these core groups operating on the continent, there are often proxies, coordinated through regional key facilitators, which then link to local gangs or cells in order to carry out street-level criminality. These links are typically deduced from the known trafficking of illicit commodities between the regions.

Terrorism and Armed Insurgency

Terrorists and armed insurgents often draw proceeds from illicit activities, carry out campaigns of violence, and commit violent crimes in the name of their ideological motivation. Even the individuals involved will often have detected criminal backgrounds, and criminal records. As such, these types of criminal groups are one of the top organized crime challenges facing Africa not just in terms of attacks, but also because illicit activities finance terrorist and insurgent operations.

Terrorists and armed insurgents' activities on the continent are highly suspected to be funded by financial proceeds derived from transnational organized crime activities including, but not limited to, human trafficking, selling of stolen artifacts on the black market, counterfeiting and trafficking of various illicit goods, theft of motor vehicles, drugs trafficking, and illegal poaching.

The movement and activity of terror groups in Africa and the rise of the Islamic State-affiliated groups have become a threatening phenomenon that requires attention. Foreign fighters have the potential to enhance and fortify such groups at the regional level, and create criminal connectivity across not only the region, but also the continent and beyond. Again, it is likely that the activities of these groups receive support from criminal enterprise.

Furthermore, crime syndicates are sometimes compelled to cooperate with armed insurgents or terrorists by paying taxes or resorting to their protection services, such is the case in North Africa.

Overall, terrorism and armed insurgency remain significant issues for law enforcement across Africa, and are major facilitators of organized crime, drawing on criminal networks for support and financial backing.

Illegal Trafficking and Illicit Markets

This section highlights the serious and more significant organized criminal activities underway in Africa. Each criminal market will be assessed separately and in detail in order to determine what illegal commodities and other illicit goods or services are being trafficked on the continent and how. This section highlights the many elements of each criminal market broken down into specific commodities where applicable, transportation routes, countries affected, modus operandi, etc. The ensuing analysis covers the most significant criminal markets currently detected and operating on the African continent including drug trafficking, human trafficking and people smuggling, works of art trafficking, environmental crimes, financial crimes, counterfeited goods, stolen motor vehicles trafficking, and maritime piracy.

Drug Trafficking

The African continent is both a growing global transit hub for the trafficking of a large range of drug commodities en route to other continents, and a developing market where drugs are increasingly abused.

Various socio-economic factors, such as the development of trade and transports, lack of alternative economic opportunities for youth, corruption, weak enforcement, and high profit margins for criminal syndicates are nurturing this trade throughout the continent.

Increasing flows of cocaine originating from South America with final destinations Europe, Asia, and to a lesser extent African regional markets are transiting through the continent mostly via Western, Eastern, and Northern African regions. The African continent is also a transit point for heroin coming from Asia with Europe as final destination. Cannabis is grown in almost every African region and is trafficked and abused mostly at the regional level, except for North African hashish, which is destined for Europe.

Cocaine

Western Africa is a transit region for cocaine and other drugs from South America, moving to destination markets in Europe.[2]

Eastern Africa is a transit region for cocaine en route from South America to Europe and Asia, and also a destination region.[3] Moreover, flight routes have created favorable conditions for an increase of the trafficking in the region.

Northern Africa is also an increasingly important transit hub for South American cocaine destined for Europe.

An estimated 18 tonnes of cocaine originating from South America and destined for Europe are transferred through West Africa every year. A fraction of this cocaine reportedly transits through North African countries, mostly Libya.[4]

Information on Central Africa suggests that the region is a hub for the trafficking of cocaine and serves as a point of transit. According to the United States Department of State, cocaine is smuggled via Chad and Sudan to the Arabian Peninsula.[5]

In Southern Africa, information suggests that cocaine is one of the fastest growing drug markets. It is sourced from South America for Europe as final destination.
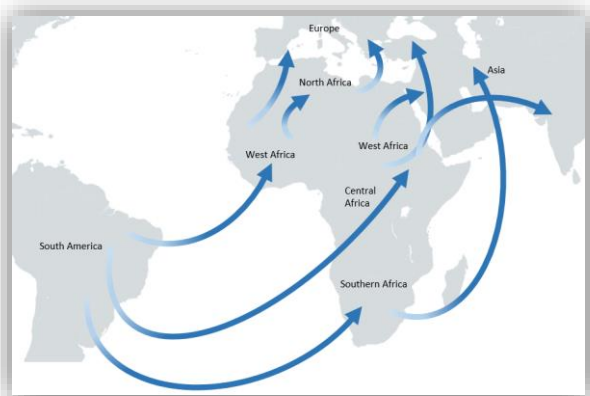
Figure 1: Cocaine routes into and out of Africa

Heroin

Western Africa is a transit and destination point for heroin coming from Asia with Europe as the final destination.[6]

Eastern Africa is a growing transit, destination and transhipment zone for heroin from Afghanistan. Heroin is entering the region via air and by sea route both for growing domestic consumption and transshipment to Europe.[7] According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 70,000 kilograms of Afghan heroin is trafficked via East Africa to Europe each year, facilitated by porous borders and weak border security.[8]

In Northern Africa, heroin originating from Afghanistan enters the region mainly via Egypt, land routes from the Middle East,[9] maritime routes from Iran and Pakistan,[10] and airports.[11] The increase in maritime seizures of heroin in recent years,[12] indicates the growing importance of the Red Sea route for heroin traffickers. Egypt is suspected to be an important transit hub of heroin bound to Europe or Turkey. However, an important part of the heroin seized in or off the coast of Egypt is destined for local consumption,[13] as heroin is often cited as the second or third drug most consumed by Egyptians,[14] and is suspected to be on the rise.

Open source information indicates that seizures of heroin are low in other Northern African countries,[15] suggesting a limited local demand supplied by small scale trafficking networks.

In Southern Africa, Afghan heroin is smuggled predominately from Asia with destination Europe.[16] Traffickers continue to experiment with different transit routes, combining air, land, and sea smuggling. Analysis suggests that Madagascar, Reunion, and Mauritius form a major aspect of sea-based heroin importation onto the continent and onwards to Europe.[17]
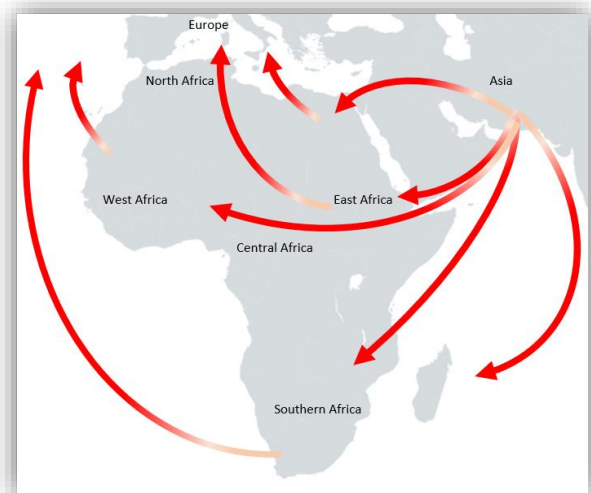
Figure 2: Heroin routes into and out of Africa

Cannabis

In Western Africa, analysis suggests that cannabis continues to be trafficked between West African countries, and is largely cultivated across

the region.[18]

Eastern Africa is highly impacted by consumption and trafficking of cannabis, which is widely cultivated, with Arusha, Tanzania being a key cannabis-producing spot.[19]

In Northern Africa, cannabis is historically the first and main drug produced and trafficked across the region, mainly towards Europe. Open sources indicate that Egypt, followed by Morocco, have had the largest cannabis herb seizures in the region, while Algeria is second to Morocco as far as cannabis resin seizures are concerned. [20] Information suggests that cannabis herb is trafficked mostly within the region, but cannabis resin produced in North Africa is trafficked to Europe, with the main supply coming from Morocco. It is estimated that 80 per cent of cannabis resin seized in Algeria alone is bound for Europe, while 20 per cent is destined for local consumption. [21] It is very likely that these proportions are typical for the whole region. The value of the European cannabis resin market can be estimated at around EUR 11 billion, [22] suggesting a significant economic incentive to import or smuggle resin across the Mediterranean.

Moroccan syndicates play a major role in the trafficking of cannabis resin towards Europe and in the Northern African region; they sometimes build partnerships with European crime syndicates,[23] notably with Spanish groups.[24]

Open sources further highlight an emerging trend: a possible bartering system between hashish, suspected to be of Moroccan origin, smuggled to South America and the Caribbean, where it is then exchanged for cocaine destined for distribution in Europe.[25] If confirmed, it may indicate that Moroccan crime syndicates have greatly strengthened their links with South American and European criminal organizations involved in cocaine trafficking with the goal to increase their profits by developing new markets for their cannabis resin and diversifying their offer in North Africa and Europe.

In Southern Africa, cannabis has long been one of the most produced and abused substances. Information suggests that Swaziland is one of the principal producing countries in the region, with illicit product from there being found throughout Southern Africa and beyond.[26]

Several sources reported cannabis or hashish trafficking as an important threat affecting Central Africa insofar as it provides profits for organized crime groups across the region. Open sources further corroborated that both military and rebel groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo were known to be involved in the production of cannabis. [27] According to the United States Department of State, cannabis is also smuggled via Chad and Sudan to the Arabian Peninsula.[28]

Synthetic drugs, controlled drugs, precursors, other drugs

In Western Africa, production and trafficking of methamphetamines have been detected. This drug is inexpensive and easy to manufacture, resulting in high profit margins for traffickers. In 2016, a laboratory for production of methamphetamine was uncovered in Nigeria resulting in the arrests of four nationals from Mexico together with five Nigerians, [29] which suggests that West African syndicates operate in connection with criminals from Latin America.

Previous research has reported that different dosages of Tramadol are trafficked or legally imported from production centers in India to user markets in West Africa.[30]

The Northern African region is affected by the abuse and trafficking of several psychoactive drugs, including, Tramadol, Rivotril, Valium and Captagon.

According to media reports, Libya and Egypt appear as the main gateways of Tramadol to the Northern African region, whether for local consumption or for transit towards other countries. It mostly originates from India, Sri Lanka, [31] and China. [32] Italy, [33] Dubai, Greece, Malta, Singapore, Spain, and Egypt [34] are important transit points for Tramadol trafficked to North Africa, illustrating the multiplicity of routings for Tramadol trafficking and suggesting links with several crime syndicates, notably from Italy, India and Sri Lanka.

As illustrated by recent important seizures, Egypt is not only a destination country, but also a transit

hub for Tramadol destined to Libya[35] and West African countries.[36]

The "Karkoubi" is a popular drug in Morocco and Algeria made of a mixture of psychotropic drugs, hashish, and sometimes alcohol or glue. The psychotropic substances such as Rivotril or Valium, used in the fabrication of the Karkoubi, are trafficked to Algeria by international counterfeited medicine networks active in Italy, France, UK and some Balkan countries.[37] Then, the drugs are trafficked from Algeria to Morocco.[38] Since 2017, a new supply route bringing the psychotropic substance necessary for the manufacture of Karkoubi directly from Spain to Morocco has emerged. These psychotropic substances are mostly obtained by Moroccan crime syndicates based in Spain, from local pharmacies by forging medical prescriptions. The drugs obtained this way are then smuggled to Morocco where they are mixed in local laboratories with other components of Karkoubi, such as crumbs of cannabis, flour and red coloring to create several small pills to be sold in Morocco for DH 10 (USD 1.06)[39] per pill.[40]

Southern Africa is suspected to be a hub for the production and trafficking of methamphetamine, and Laboratories have been detected in the region.[41]

Also, pharmaceutical crimes such as the rerouting and abuse of legal or prescription drugs or the counterfeiting of pharmaceuticals are a growing concern in the Southern African region. South Africa is suspected to be one of the largest markets of Methaqualone or Mandrax (a sedative and hypnotic medication) in the world.[42] Open sources suggest that Mandrax continues to enter the region from China and India via East African seaports, including Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique.

Trafficking In Human Beings and People Smuggling

Millions of persons migrate annually in Africa both fleeing armed conflict and seeking out greater economic opportunities. The majority of African migrants resettle or seek refuge in other African nations.[43] Intrinsically linked to this mass movement of persons is the exploitation of vulnerable populations for material gain by criminal organizations or syndicates.

Trafficking in human beings and people smuggling are crime threats of significant concern to the entire continent, with nearly all countries qualifying as source, transit, and/or destination countries. These two crimes are often linked, as migrants can become victims of human trafficking at any point throughout their journey before reaching their final destination. This section covers therefore the overall crime issue of trafficking in human beings in Africa and people smuggling.

Trafficking in Human Beings

Trafficking in human beings (THB), as defined by the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons,[44] is of significant concern in Africa. Although this phenomenon is analyzed globally for the purpose of this report, each region presents its particularities, with some countries having people fleeing armed conflict and others offering better transit routes for trafficking in persons, like the North African region which serves as destination and transit point for people from sub-Saharan countries trying to reach Europe.

Beyond the individual victimizations, this crime type has indirect impact on public health through the spread of communicable disease. It also has an impact on the economy, disrupting the real value for labor, with illicit business undercutting legitimate industries by saving costs on labor. As a source, men, women and children (both boys and girls) are most likely trafficked from Africa to Western Europe, Middle East and intra-regionally within the continent. With regard to regional trafficking trends, open sources indicate that men, women and children (both boys and girls) in almost all African countries are subject to both labor and sex trafficking (Figure 3)

Women may be lured by fraudulent internet marriage proposals or offers of well-paid jobs, and subsequently subjected to forced prostitution or forced labor within their countries and/or abroad, primarily in Europe and the Middle East.

Togo, for instance, has issued in 2014 an official statement that prohibits women to travel to Middle East countries without prior authorization from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Cameroon may be an
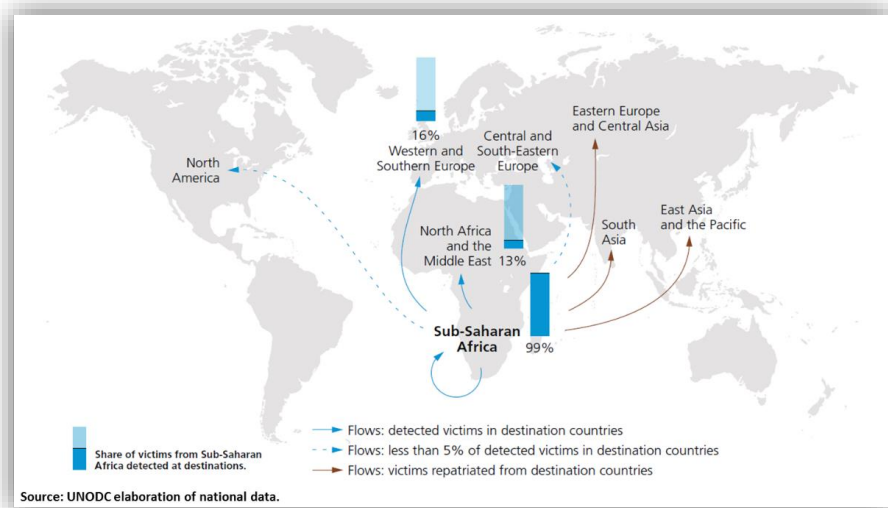
Figure 3: Destinations of detected trafficking victims from sub-Saharan Africa, by sub-region, 2012-2014

important transit country for women and girls being brought from West Africa and destined for Europe.[45]

These examples illustrate the transnational nature of this crime and suggest that syndicates have connections in several regions within the continent in order to recruit and move victims to African countries and beyond.

Beyond the exploitation of African victims in the aforementioned jurisdictions, a significant flow of human trafficking occurs within the continent. Intraregional human trafficking has been detected whether as an intermediate step as part of a trans-regional human trafficking chain or as part of a regional trafficking network frequently linked to forced labor and sexual exploitation.

On the continent, labor exploitation is suspected on farms, in manufacturing facilities, construction, agriculture, low-paying service jobs and domestic work. Exploitation of human beings in the domestic labor market is difficult to detect due to the nature of this job. In Southern Africa, domestic labor is largely an informal industry that employs illegal immigrants[46] who move throughout the region in search of work.

Moreover, open source information suggests that criminal organizations may benefit from diaspora communities both on the continent and across the world to recruit, move and exploit victims of human trafficking. The singularities shared by these communities, such as language and culture, make them difficult to penetrate and criminal syndicates take advantage of them to extend their networks across the world.

As an example, an Ivorian-based criminal network reportedly organized the trafficking of Ivorian nationals to Tunisia in order for them to be exploited as domestic servants. Such networks are reportedly active in major urban centres such as Sfax, Tunis, Sousse and Gabès, which are known to be major hubs for the recruitment and employment of sub-Saharan victims.[47]

Children, both boys and girls, across the continent are particularly vulnerable to trafficking internally for both labor and sexual purposes. Analysis suggests that almost all African countries are affected by this type of crime and it is most likely that children will continue to be forced to work due to natural resources exploitation, porosities of borders and poverty. The custom known as "confiage"[48] may also render children more vulnerable to the risks of being trafficked, making the detection of this crime even more complex. In Central Africa, there are numerous cases of children being sent to urban centers after being promised educational opportunities only to be subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking.

Furthermore, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has reported that unaccompanied migrant children are a common feature in the West African region and are often at risk of abuse, exploitation or trafficking.[49] In

North Africa, minors are also subject to forced begging and sex trafficking and some are even coerced to commit various types of crimes.[50] In addition, some children who leave their villages to attend schools may be forced into begging, street vending, domestic servitude, or other labor.

Migrants and refugees appear to be at high risk of exploitation on the continent. In Southern Africa, women from refugee-source countries may be more vulnerable to human trafficking. Within the region, Angola is a home country for many human trafficking victims.[51]

Victims, including refugees and undocumented migrants, enter voluntarily, but illegally, Northern African countries while in transit to Europe. Other victims include migrants arriving legally into Northern African countries under genuine or false promises of work, and subsequently are subjected to forced labor in the domestic service, construction, farming, cleaning, begging and prostitution sectors.

Libya presents the most extreme cases of trafficking and violent exploitation, comparable to traditional or chattel slavery, with victims being auctioned in open markets as documented by some news sources.[52]

The trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal has also been detected on the continent. This type of crime was detected in Northern Africa. In Egypt, for example, open sources revealed that Egyptian authorities disbanded in August 2017, a criminal network involved in the trafficking of human organs in the area of Abu Nomros in Giza, South of Egypt. Authorities arrested 16 offenders involved in the case, including doctors, nurses and brokers, who exploited victims from poor, rural and working class areas.[53]

Moreover, open-source analysis suggests that human trafficking for the purpose of organ removal is occurring in Central Africa in particular. Searches via Thomson Reuters World Check database yielded the profiles of 12 Cameroonians and 4 Gabonese involved in respective criminal organizations perpetrating so-called "cult crimes," which involve killing young girls, prostitutes, or children and trafficking their organs for use in cult rituals.[54]

The detection of syndicates across international boundaries is increasingly difficult for law enforcement, with identification rarely going beyond the victims at the local level. It has been reported that in Central Africa, trafficking networks typically involve destination country recruitment agencies that use local intermediaries to fraudulently recruit fellow nationals for work abroad. Reports suggest local awareness-raising activities targeting fraudulent recruitment have caused intermediaries to operate with greater discretion, often directing victims to travel to the Middle East through neighboring countries, including Nigeria.[55]

Criminals may or may not be organized in syndicates, depending on the type of exploitation. For instance, the trafficking of minors for begging or forced domestic work may be carried out by a single individual. As for the trafficking in persons for organ removal, it can only be done in the framework of complex networks, due to the required skills and logistics. These networks are often of transnational dimensions. They target nationals but also migrants or refugees, and then sell their organs to wealthy national and international customers.[56]

In North Africa, the transnational trafficking of victims from the region for the purpose of forced labor or sexual exploitation abroad implies, in most cases, the involvement of international organized networks. These networks facilitate the recruitment of victims as well as their border crossing, on a regular or irregular basis, of one or several borders, to the destination where the exploitation takes place.[57]

For example, according to media outlets, the Tunisian Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment stated in 2013, that more than 6 fictitious employment agencies located in foreign countries were recruiting young Tunisian girls into prostitution networks by luring them with fake work offers.

People Smuggling

As described above, there is a large movement of people across the continent who leave their countries, legally or illegally, in the search of economic opportunities and/or fleeing conflicts. It has been largely reported that this migration occurs either voluntarily, facilitated by freedom of

movement agreements within Africa, or under the assistance of smugglers who will be paid by the migrants to help them gain illegal entry into a country.

It is well documented that migrants moving illegally are vulnerable to human trafficking and high levels of violence. Moreover, women may become victims of sexual gender-based violence during their journey, both across African borders and abroad. In addition, illegal migrants are often being targeted by syndicates for exploitation because of their illegal status in host countries.

As illustrated in the above section of this report, it was broadly reported by international media outlets and international organizations the notable case of African migrants seeking the services of migrant smugglers to travel to Europe and being held captive in "detention centers" and sold in clandestine slave markets in Libya in 2017 and 2018.

An analysis of all sources of information suggests that migrants are smuggled across several African borders to reach their final destination, notably Europe and other African countries.

Illegal immigration and the ensuing people smuggling often mirror regular migration flows. North Africa is nowadays a hub for African smuggled migrants towards Europe. Either transiting through or departing from the region, smuggled migrants movement can be subdivided into four main categories:

➢ North African migrants hoping to reach Western Europe;

➢ Sub-Saharan migrants hoping to reach Western Europe;

➢ Migrants from other nations passing through North Africa on their way to Europe;

➢ Refugees and asylum seekers settled in North African countries yet hoping to reach Europe.

Another factor that may facilitate illicit migration is the existence of migrant or diaspora communities in destination countries. Also, smugglers often

rely on local vulnerable populations to recruit fellow nationals for illegal migration purposes. Information suggests that smugglers from North African countries (notably Egypt, Morocco and Libya) recruit unemployed youth in Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, to serve as recruiters in their local communities.[58]

Among European countries, France appears to be one of the most targeted destination for people smuggling. According to the Pew Center, France appears, by far, to be the most important European destination country for migrants from the Central African region with the exception of Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe whose nationals respectively migrate most often to Spain and Portugal.[59] The predilection of these countries as a destination for migration may be due to the cultural and economic ties that link these European countries with their former colonies.
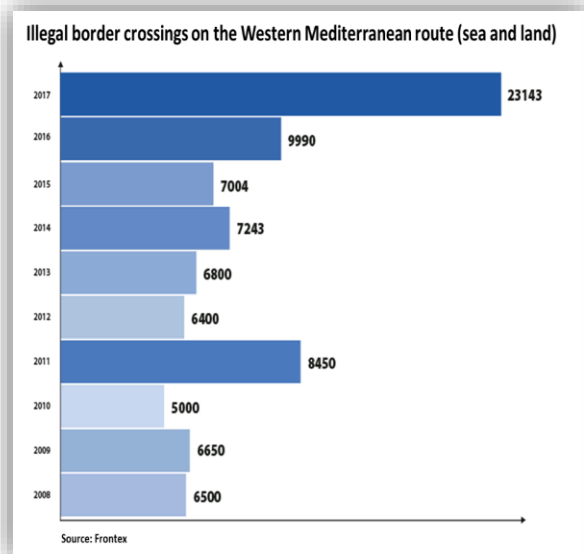
Figure 4: Illegal border crossings on the Western Mediterranean route (sea and land)

It has been widely documented that many migrants from sub-Saharan African countries have hired smuggler services to travel from their home countries to North Africa, most frequently into Libya, to reach one of several departure points to attempt the perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea in order to enter Europe. A substantial number of those failing to enter Europe prefer to stay, legally or illegally, in North

Africa, as a second-best option, rather than returning to their home countries. They would engage in economic activities there and/or wait until they will be able to continue their journey to Europe.[60]

Nationals from several African countries will traverse intraregional borders before reaching the following major routes and departure points in North Africa. There are three major routes used by migrants from the continent in their attempt to reach Europe:

> ➢ The Western African route from Senegal, Mauritania and Morocco to the Spanish Canary Islands;[61]

> ➢ The Western Mediterranean route bringing migrants from Morocco or Algeria to Spain;

> ➢ The Central Mediterranean route with Italy as a main destination country, Libya as the principal departure point and Tunisia and Egypt as secondary departure points.[62]

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) has reported that the number of migrants traveling along the Western Mediterranean route has increased significantly since 2016 (see Figure 4) in parallel with a decrease of departures from Libya.[63]
According to the International Organization of Migration (IOM), West Africa concentrates the highest number of intra-regional migrants and, in a lower level, migrants moving towards Northern Africa and Europe.[64]

Furthermore, IOM has reported that the security situation in Northern Mali has led to the displacement of people internally and regionally, with consequences for regional migration, border management and community stabilization. Within the West African region, Niger is the main entry point for Western and Central Africans to Libya as well as returnees fleeing insecurity in northern Nigeria.[65] The city of Agadez is reportedly the main migrant transit hub towards Libya. Some sources indicate that criminal groups with links to militia in the south can demand between USD 800 to 1000 to transfer migrants from the Fezzan area bordering Algeria, Niger and Chad to

Tripoli.[66]

From Niger and Mali, some migrants also choose to travel to Morocco through Algeria to take the Western Mediterranean route leading to Spain. Many are also able to cross into Libya from Algeria (after entering Algeria from Mali).[67] According to Frontex, in order to facilitate the crossing of road checks in Algeria, smugglers temporarily supply Malian passports to migrants[68] and/or false United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees documents, which enable them to pose as refugees registered in the country.

Smugglers will use different transportation methods to move people illegally noting air, boat and land. Moreover, migrants will employ various methods to illegally cross borders and stay in a country, such as overstaying visas, falsifying documents, hiding in vehicles being transferred on ferries, and jumping over or swimming around the fences surrounding the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Morocco.[69]

In terms of organized criminal groups, open-source information suggests that the majority of migrants who reached Europe illegally from North Africa, used maritime routes with the help of organized networks of smugglers.[70] Furthermore, the 2018 Frontex Risk Analysis report indicates that human smuggling facilitators are active in 41 different countries, which illustrates the international scope of some smuggling networks. According to the report, in North Africa, Libya has the most diverse nationalities of facilitators operating on its soil, which denotes the importance of the country as a major regional hub for irregular migration into Europe. It has been reported[71] that smuggling rings in Libya may be composed of active and former military/law-enforcement officers structured in hierarchical and strict criminal organizations.
In the Central African region, people may require the services of one or multiple smugglers to facilitate travel across the rugged terrain and to handle negotiations with the militant or Islamist groups whose control it may be under. Research and interviews conducted by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in 2016, specifically focusing on the migration corridor between Niger and Libya, indicated that migrant smugglers operated both in highly organized networks as well as loosely formed alliances. Most of the smugglers they encountered had previously been involved in the movement of contraband and illicit goods, including cigarettes, narcotics, and small

arms through the Sahara and the Sahel and only turned toward the movement of migrants when the demand for such services increased significantly around 2012.[72]

Works of Art Trafficking

The African continent is affected by an increase in the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage. Antiquities trafficking is an increasingly attractive activity for criminal organizations as there is high market demand for cultural objects, which makes their illegal commerce profitable. Due to poor socio-economic and security conditions in some regions, these objects are fairly easy to obtain through theft, illicit excavation and removal of cultural property. Moreover, regulation and detection are not very effective due to the interconnections between the licit and illicit antiquities sectors.[73] Works of art are mostly trafficked from the African continent to Europe, North America and the Gulf states.

In North Africa, according to open sources, there is a high demand for Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities [74] and an increased demand for ancient Islamic objects in the Gulf region.[75] North Africa counts 34 UNESCO world heritage sites and numerous historical and archaeological sites containing priceless ancient treasures. As a result, the region emerges as an attractive target for criminal networks.

Poor socio-economic and security conditions affect the capacity of states to efficiently control and secure their borders, resulting in an increase in trafficking of works of art in Egypt, [76] Libya, Tunisia and Algeria. The situation has led the International Council of Museums (ICOM) to publish Red lists[77] of Egyptian and Libyan cultural objects at risk. Available open source information suggests that the situation is as serious in Algeria[78] and Tunisia[79] where authorities seized important quantities of stolen archaeological artefacts.

The traffickers of cultural heritage can be divided into two main groups. First, the poverty-driven individuals with good knowledge of local sites but with rudimentary equipment; second, the profit-driven organized looting gangs who employ several workers and use heavy equipment, state-of-the-art technology and state registers to target

archaeological sites.[80] Terrorist groups constitute other important actors in the illicit trafficking in cultural heritage in North Africa. The systemic use of trafficking in cultural heritage as a source of income by terrorist groups such as ISIS, in Syria and Iraq, has been largely documented. [81] A similar phenomenon has been identified in Libya,[82] Tunisia,[83] and Egypt,[84] yet, to a lesser extent.

Western Europe and North America have traditionally been known as destinations for trafficked ancient Egyptian antique objects. In addition, the Gulf region has emerged in recent years as an important market for Islamic objects sourced from North Africa. [85] Identified transportation methods include land, sea and air routes. Sea shipping using containers is the preferred method of transport for bulky artefacts.[86] Small objects such as coins, jewellery and organic materials (textile or parchment) can be trafficked by air. Traffickers use direct routes to the main destination countries in Europe, North America and Gulf states, or indirect, which helps in concealing the origin of goods. Identified transit points include Gaza, Jordan, Israel, United Arab Emirates and Turkey. Finally, stolen cultural heritage from Western African countries, such as Mali, may have been transiting through North Africa along human trafficking and people smuggling routes.[87]

Illicit cultural property is sold through art dealers and galleries, auction houses, newspaper adverts, flea markets, antique shops and online platforms. Online selling facilitates and boosts the trafficking of artefacts,[88] as illustrated by recent cases of Egyptian artefacts on eBay. [89] Finally, the production of fake provenance documentation is an integral part of the illicit trafficking in cultural heritage. This practice aims at concealing the real provenance of trafficked goods to enable their selling on the market.[90]

In Southern Africa, art crime has included the physical theft of various high-value items, obtaining art or other items through fraud, and the raiding or robbery of various cultural sites and museums. Art and cultural artifacts may be traded for a range of other illicit commodities, such as firearms or drugs. The theft of a range of works of art generates profit directly and also drives other criminality, often being found to be used in money laundering activities.

In Western Africa, cultural heritage objects are at

risk of theft from museums and religious sites and can also be vulnerable to illicit exportation and importation. Criminals may also illegally transfer the ownership of cultural property and produce then use forged documentation for its trading. Syndicates could participate in the traffic of fake or forged cultural property to obtain incomes to finance or grow other illicit activities.[91] It is believed that cultural property is at risk of destruction and theft during armed conflicts or in places where terrorist groups operate.

Although theft of cultural objects is often motivated by economic gain, analysis suggests that terrorist groups may be interested in the historical symbolism of the works of art and therefore its destruction. These actions may have a great impact not only on the economy and security of the continent but also in its cultural and global patrimony conservation.[92]

Environmental Crime

Environmental crimes pose a great threat to Africa. The exploitation of natural resources and the poaching of animal species impact negatively on the development and economy of the countries and erode the biodiversity and environmental integrity of the continent to varying degrees. This type of criminality generates large profits for criminal syndicates. It is typically transnational, linking African countries together, and the continent to the world, and is often linked to corruption.[93]

Environmental crimes can be broken down into the exploitation of natural resources and wildlife crimes. The exploitation of natural resources section covers illegal logging, and the wildlife crimes section covers the poaching of different species of animals.

It is important to note that North Africa is not covered in the following sections since there is little open source information covering this type of crime in North Africa.

Illegal logging

Africa has vast forested areas, including the Congo Basin, the world's second largest tropical rainforest. Due to high profit margins and growing global demand for the continent's forest resources, the illegal logging trade is thriving,[94] accelerating the degradation of Africa's forest ecosystem.

Illegal logging leads to loss of tax revenue and economic opportunities, contributing to poverty and conflicts in communities dependent on forest resources. Illegal wood is used for various reasons, such as to make charcoal and wooden furniture; and to build houses. It is also used in the perfumery business.

Many actors are involved in the illegal logging industry in Africa, including industrial logging companies. In one law enforcement operation, 75 per cent of more than 120 timber companies in Mozambique were found to be involved in illegal activities in March 2017 alone. During this operation, at least 150 000 cubic meters of logs were seized.[95]

A significant number of companies in Africa have been found to have not paid taxes on profits, bribed state officials to ignore violations, and have misused their artisanal logging permits by under-reporting the amount of timber felled and harvesting timber below the legal size and outside designated concessions.[96]

In the first quarter of 2016, Cameroon issued warning notices to 35 companies, postponed the licenses of four logging companies and generated CFA 54.2 million (around USD 97,000) in fines related to illegal activities in the forestry sector.[97]

Armed groups are also suspected of being implicated in the illegal trade industry in Africa in order to fund their operations, including Central African Republic's anti-Balaka and ex-Seleka militias,[98] and the Democratic Republic of Congo's Allied Democratic Forces.[99]

Terrorist groups are also involved. Al-Shabaab, for example, is suspected of being a major exporter of illegal charcoal in Somalia. According to the United Nations Security Council, the group derives revenues from charcoal and other natural resources in the country, gaining profits of at least USD 10 million a year.[100]

Generally, criminal organizations involved in illegal logging in Africa are locals operating within their country, according to World Check.[101] Criminals exploit the lack of law enforcement presence in certain parts of Africa as well as the weak surveillance practices and financial penalties.[102]

There are a number of routes used by criminals to traffic illegal wood. The Central African Republic is a transit and source country, with 6,000 cubic meters reportedly been trafficked from the country into Chad.[103]

In East Africa, the *combretum* species, which produces one of the highest qualities of charcoal, is in demand in Africa as a main source for household energy as well as in several Middle Eastern countries.[104]
In the Southern African region, illegal timber is sourced from Zambia and Mozambique, and transferred to the Port of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania for export.[105]

Furthermore, three Chinese exporting companies have attempted to illegally export timber from Mozambique, with destination likely to have been Asia.[106] The significance of Asia in the illegal logging industry in the region is further corroborated by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) which reported that the majority of the illicit timber in 2013 from Mozambique ended up in China.[107] Large volumes of illicit timber have also been trafficked to South Africa.[108]
The ports in Africa are key exit points for the smuggling of timber to Asia and Europe.[109] Some European destinations where Central African illegal timber has been detected are Antwerp (Belgium),[110] Caen (France), La Rochelle (France), Viana do Castelo (Portugal), and Leixoes (Portugal).[111]

Wildlife Crimes

Africa is home to a great diversity of animal species including some of the most endangered, and subsequently, vulnerable species on the planet. Animals are poached and trafficked for various reasons, including to be used as pets, for their meat and for their body parts for traditional medicine.

Wildlife crime is typically transnational in nature. Poachers cross borders to poach animals in other countries before bringing them back across the border for wholesale.

Analysis indicates that criminal syndicates are operating at the local, regional and international levels.[112] In addition, the analysis suggests that criminal syndicates involved in wildlife crime collaborate with local criminals to provide resources and sometimes forged documentation, and are working with regional and international

criminal networks to traffic wildlife products and species across borders and coordinate their sale and final destination.[113]

Sea and airports in Africa, such as the Port of Douala in Cameroon or Mombasa in Kenya, are likely hubs for illicit wildlife products as they see large amounts of merchandise entering and exiting the continent.

In addition to organized poachers, non-state armed groups in Africa have reportedly been involved in wildlife crime as a way to generate income, including Central Africa's Anti-Balaka and Ex-Seleka fighters, Sudan's Janjaweed and Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). In 2015, for example, LRA's leader Joseph Kony sent fighters to Garamba Natioal Park in the Democratic of the Congo to collect 100 elephant tusks.[114] Nomadic Fulani cattle herders from Sudan operating in the Central African Republic are also involved in perpetrating wildlife crimes, hunting giant eland and buffalo to consume their "bush meat." The Fulani are also suspected of smuggling wildlife products, including elephant ivory and leopard skins across national borders, particularly into Uganda and South Sudan.[115]

A range of animal species in Africa are particularly susceptible to poaching and trafficking as they are in high demand in certain parts of the world, specifically Asia. The trafficking of elephant ivory, great apes, rhino horns, and pangolins have been identified as major threats in West, Central, East and Southern Africa. Beyond the aforementioned animals, the poaching of all animals is systematic and a growing wildlife issue. Throughout Africa, a range of domesticated and wild animals are poached. However, endangered animals are assessed here in order to highlight key aspects of the illegal wildlife trade taking place on the continent.

Great Apes

Africa has a variety of ape species living in its rain forests, including bonobos, chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans who are especially vulnerable to ape trafficking. Ape trafficking is a very lucrative criminal business. Apes are targeted for their meat or are captured alive for human entertainment purposes. With regard to the former, illegal logging and mining camps in apes range regions of Africa have been found to fuel the market for ape "bush meat."[116]

Apes are smuggled from forests via loosely policed ports and airports before ending up in luxurious homes, the tourist entertainment industry and zoos in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.[117] Ape trafficking in Central Africa involves several transit points, including Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia and Libya[118] (see Figure 5).

Regarding West Africa, apes are trafficked from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Nigeria has also been identified as a transit country.[119]
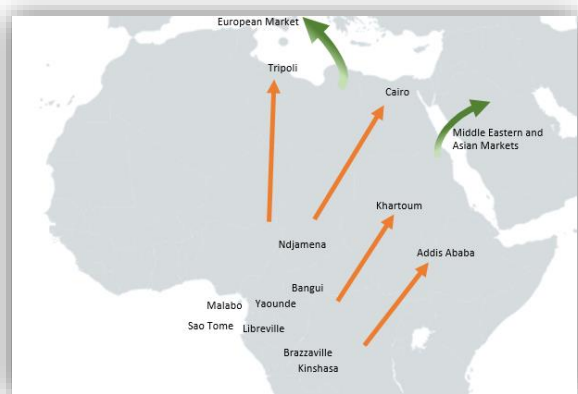

Figure 5: Ape trafficking routes from Central Africa to international markets via transit countries

Pangolins

Pangolins are the most trafficked wild animals in the world and their numbers are rapidly declining. Their scales are more in demand than elephant ivory and rhino horns.[120] Pangolins are targeted for their meat, skin for leather products and keratin plates for traditional medicine in Africa and Asia.[121]

Due to high demand and dwelling numbers, prices for pangolin parts are sharply rising on the illicit market, with several thousand dollars per kilogram in some Asian countries.[122]

Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo have been identified as source countries,[123] and Côte d'Ivoire as both a source and transit country for pangolin trafficking.[124] In July 2017, an international criminal network suspected in the

trafficking of pangolin scales was dismantled in Côte d'Ivoire.[125]
Furthermore, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Cameroon, Guinea, Liberia, Equatorial Guinea are suspected of being pangolin trafficking hubs.[126]

Pangolins have also been smuggled from the Congo Basin to Asia, noting China and Vietnam. During operation Thunderstorm in May 2018, an INTERPOL-led operation against the illegal trade in wild animals and plants, nearly 4 tonnes of pangolin scales were seized by Vietnamese maritime authorities from a ship coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo.[127] It has also been reported that a number of Chinese nationals working in China-backed projects in the Congo Basin are suspected of smuggling pangolin products to China.[128] Furthermore, available information on Central Africa suggests that specialized hunters are used by criminal export networks to poach pangolins in remote areas in order to avoid law enforcement detection.[129]

Elephants

The latest report by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) on the status of elephants and ivory trade indicates that in 2016, elephant poaching in Africa was decreasing and dropped to pre-2008 levels. Nonetheless, the African elephant continues to be poached in great numbers.

Regional cross-border poaching has been detected in Africa. Cameroonian hunters have entered Gabon's Minkébé National Park and smuggled their illegal haul back to Douala in Cameroon, a major hub for the export of elephant ivory.[130]

In 2017, law enforcement in Côte d'Ivoire dismantled a criminal syndicate suspected of trafficking ivory between Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea, according to Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement (EAGLE) network. In the operation, 400 pieces of carved elephant ivory, 40 kg of raw elephant ivory and 7 leopard skins were seized.[131]

In East Africa, elephant ivory has transited through Uganda for destination Tanzania. Other transit points are South Sudan and Burundi.[132]

A significant nexus between Africa and Asia

exists concerning the illegal ivory trade. In March 2018, INTERPOL issued a Red Notice upon request from the Malawi authorities for a suspected ivory trafficker, a Gambian national, following the seizure of hundreds of pieces of elephant tusks in Thailand. The suspect is wanted on charges of 'exporting government trophies without permit' and is suspected of concealing 330 kg of ivory pieces in a shipment falsely labeled as unprocessed gemstones sent from Malawi and seized in Bangkok, Thailand in early March 2018. Due to sharp trafficking concerns following the recovery of illegal ivory in a similar shipment from Africa in 2016, customs authorities conducted additional checks of the cargo and discovered 442 pieces of ivory (worth an estimated USD 500,000) concealed in several containers. Another Gambian national was arrested in Bangkok, Thailand when he attempted to pick up the shipment containing the trafficked ivory. The two Gambians are suspected to be part of an ivory trafficking ring involved in smuggling elephant tusks from Africa to Asia.[133]

Asian nationals are suspected of operating within organized criminal syndicates as key actors in the Central African elephant ivory trade,[134] and Hong Kong has grown into a major transit point for illicit ivory with 7.9 tonnes of elephant ivory having been seized in 2013 compared to 3.2 tonnes in 2010.[135]

Rhinos

Rhino horn poaching is a prevalent crime in East and Southern Africa. In recent years the countries most affected by this criminal activity are reportedly South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Kenya.[136]

This criminal activity is a lucrative business since one rhino horn can be worth at least USD 20,000 in Asian markets. Rhino horn is targeted mainly for its use in tradition medicines in Asia.

In East Africa, Kenya was identified as the main source and transit location for rhino poaching.[137] However, in 2018 Kenya is experiencing a sharp decline in elephant and rhino poaching, according to the Kenyan Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, reportedly due to government efforts to protect national parks and game reserves that began in 2012. A wildlife law adopted in 2014 made penalties harsher for poachers and individuals engaging in illicit trade in protected wildlife species. [138] Despite the decrease in rhino

poaching, and since stock are more protected, syndicates still continue to target rhinos, and the trade remains ongoing.

Criminal syndicates involved in the African rhino horn trade earn large profits by trafficking horns to international markets, with Asia being the main destination.

Criminal links between wildlife crime syndicates and narcotics has been detected in the Southern African region, particularly those narcotics or precursor chemicals for synthetic drugs linked to Asia. Open sources show a recent case where Chinese nationals operating out of South Africa were involved in both rhino horn trafficking and the illegal Mandrax trade.[139]

Even though East and Southern Africa are the main regions on the continent for rhino poaching, this criminal activity extends to other parts of Africa. Criminal syndicates from West Africa are suspected of being connected with a vast ring of organized wildlife criminals in Africa, allegedly supplying rhino horns to criminals in Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.[140]

Financial Crimes

Financial crimes in Africa are often undetectable, complex and, consequently, hard to measure. The predominant use of cash, informal value transfer systems, and remittances from abroad fuel the informal financial sector of the continent.

The impact of financial crimes on Africa cannot be underestimated since the consequences are suffered by companies, governments, national institutions, and eventually the citizens that rely on them.

Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC)'s Global Economic Crime Survey 2016 reported that economic crimes[141] had increased by 7 per cent among African companies compared with the results from 2014. The survey also noted the apparent higher percentage of companies affected by financial crimes in Africa (57 per cent) compared to the global average (36 per cent). According to the survey, while more traditional, easily-detectable financial crimes, including asset misappropriation, bribery and corruption, procurement fraud and accounting fraud continued to lead globally, it was the reports of cybercrimes against companies that increased

most significantly.[142]

Thomson Reuters' 2018 global survey focusing on the cost of financial crimes[143] concluded that African companies suffer from fraud, theft, money laundering and other financial crimes at a rate greater than the global average. According to the Thomson Reuters' study, 53 per cent of those business leaders questioned in Africa compared to 47 per cent of respondents globally, affirmed that their company or organisation had suffered at least one incident of financial crime over the past 12 months, with cybercrime and fraud cited as the most common financial crimes. In terms of impact, the companies surveyed estimated a total loss of USD 1.45 trillion, or around 3.5 per cent of their global turnover.[144]

The findings from these two surveys suggest that financial crimes are on the rise in Africa, with African companies being more targeted than the global average, indicating that this is a significant crime area for the continent.

The following outlines three major financial crimes detected across the different regions in Africa, but is not inclusive of all financial crimes occurring on the continent.

Fraud

Africa is experiencing fraud and complex financial crime schemes are being carried out in every country on the continent, generating enormous profits for syndicates.

Banking fraud is one such fraud which is prominent on the continent, whether it is straight identity theft to drain individual bank accounts or more sophisticated mortgage or investments scams to extract vast amounts of wealth directly from the institution.

There are also other financial crimes relating to banking detected including the skimming or cloning of bank or credit cards, or the defrauding of other types of stored value cards for specific businesses, such as fuel cards. Morocco's financial intelligence unit reported the use of fraudulent bank transfers and prepaid cards in money laundering schemes.[145]

Other schemes are also present across the continent, relating to commercial fraud such as insurance fraud and property transactions fraud, mining fraud, various other email or phishing scams and schemes, or the targeting of the elderly and other vulnerable sectors of the population. Email or phishing scams and schemes are carried out by a number of different criminal networks.

"Romance scam" or "sextortion" has also been detected on the continent in which the victims are lured to perform sexual acts while nude in front of a web-camera. Their acts are video-captured by the criminals who then use it to extort and threaten the victims. Victims are typically approached by the criminals online with a fake profile.

Terrorist groups in Africa are suspected of being involved in fraud. For example, the North African branch of Takfir wal-Hijra, an Egyptian Pan-Islamic Jihadi movement, is suspected of being involved in document forgery and credit card fraud.[146]

Counterfeit Currency

Counterfeit currency is a lucrative business for criminals, who take advantage of ordinary people to circulate fake currencies. This type of criminality has devastating consequences for Africa, destabilizing national currencies, subsequently slowing down economic growth of African countries.

It has been reported by open sources that counterfeit currency affects almost all countries in West Africa,[147] as fake notes are transited every year, running into millions of dollars.

In April 2018, a Nigerian national was arrested suspected of possessing USD 400,000 counterfeit notes, according to Nigeria's anti-corruption agency. He is also suspected of operating a syndicate that produces fake dollar notes and uses them to scam unsuspected clients.[148]
Nigeria's anti-corruption agency has previously arrested a number of fake currency traders in the northern part of the country, considered to be a hub for foreign currency trading.[149]

Moreover, the counterfeit of dollar bills has increased in recent years since more countries,

including African countries, use the US dollar.[150] In Southern and East Africa, this criminality is also present. In January 2018, South African law enforcement arrested an individual suspected of being involved in a fake money scheme. He was found with R300,000 (approximately USD 20,823) in forged notes, other foreign currency notes, a printing machine, a paper compressor and other material essential to make fake money.[151]

In Kenya, counterfeit currency is the most common form of fraud, with mobile money and bank agents being the key targets.[152]

There is a high likelihood that counterfeit currency is also present in North and Central Africa despite a lack of available information.

Driving this criminality is the lack of illuminating machines used to identify counterfeits, the lack of training among the cash dealers in identification of fake notes, and the lack of reporting from victims of this crime, and where duped, they may try to pass on the fake note to other unsuspecting persons.[153]

Cyber-Attacks and Hacks on Financial Institutions

Cyber-attacks and hacks targeting financial intuitions are increasing in Africa. In East Africa, for example, criminals managed to get access to banks' information and technology (IT) and network systems or some specific accounts, and initiated wire transfers to bank accounts abroad and/or facilitated ATM withdrawals around the world. The region also experienced the unprecedented "Bangladesh bank heist" in February 2016, which is the biggest and most impressive cyber-crime attacks targeting banks and financial institutions in recent history. Users of mobile banking applications were targeted by malware attacks (via banking Trojan software viruses[154]) on their smartphones. The incident occurred when a set of banking Trojans were incorporated and disguised in normal utility applications, which targeted app store users (e.g. Google Play store). Customers of global and national banks as well as financial institutions subsequently downloaded the malicious software that gained access to their banking details. When downloaded with the utility apps, Banking Trojans, aim to imitate real banking applications in an attempt to steal sensitive banking information, especially customer's logins and credit card details.

Counterfeited Goods

Trafficking in counterfeit goods represents a major threat to public safety and health across the world, in particular on the African continent. Counterfeiting harms public safety as well as businesses that produce and sell legitimate products. It also affects national economies when governments lose tax revenues from products manufactured or sold on the black market, which put consumers at risk from substandard products. Organized criminal groups play a central role in the trade of counterfeit and pirated goods and generate important revenues from such illicit markets.

Available data suggests that by the year 2022, it is estimated that the total value of piracy and counterfeiting could reach a staggering USD 2.3 trillion with a negative global impact of USD 4.2 trillion.[155] A variety of products is affected by counterfeiting and piracy on the African continent, however, counterfeit pharmaceuticals are the largest trafficked products in most parts of Africa. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), every year, around 100 000 individuals die in Africa as a result of fake pharmaceuticals. These fake drugs account for approximately 30-60 per cent of the total market of pharmaceutical on the continent.[156]

Counterfeit pharmaceuticals

Counterfeit medicine is a major criminal threat. Joint operation Action against Counterfeit and Illicit Medicines (ACIM), for example, organized by the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the International Institute for Research against Counterfeit Medicines (IRACM) in 2016 resulted in a record seizure of illicit medicines at African borders. The Operation involved 16 African countries, including Angola, Benin, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Togo. During the operation, 113 million illicit pharmaceutical products and almost 900 million counterfeit and illicit medicines were seized at the borders, with a total estimated value of USD 60 million. Some of the biggest interceptions were made in Nigeria, Benin, Kenya, Togo, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa.[157]

In 2017, INTERPOL-coordinated Operation Heera led to the seizure of more than 420 tonnes of illicit pharmaceutical and medical products in West Africa. As part of the operation, around 100 tonnes of illicit pharmaceuticals hidden in trucks carrying fruits were seized in Koro – Benin. The trucks were reportedly coming from Guinea and on their way to different countries in the region.[158]

Overall, counterfeit pharmaceuticals in Africa entails various forms of forging and counterfeiting, including, illegal importation, counterfeit production at the local level, unlicensed diversion and repackaging, rerouting, and exportation of subsidized local supplies. In addition, although not illicit themselves, a range of pharmaceutical drugs are bought, sold, diverted, trafficked, and manufactured in the region, causing harm both to the economies of the continent and also to public health. The examination of this crime area in Africa shows that counterfeit medicines constitute a criminal threat across Africa. It also suggests that illicit medicine is subject to continental trade that causes harm to the individual but also to countries.

The different scopes of the crime examined herein will be further explored in the framework of trafficking in other counterfeit goods in a region that is increasingly becoming a target for counterfeiters.

Other counterfeits

Trafficking in illicit goods beyond counterfeit medicines has also been identified as a major crime on the African continent. In its 2016 study, "Trade in Counterfeit and Pirated Goods, Mapping the Economic Impact", the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimated that the international trade in counterfeit and pirated products accounted for as much as 2.5 per cent of the value of international trade, or USD 461 billion for the year 2013.[159]

This type of criminality is often a convergence of contraband and financial crimes, which sometimes gets overlooked in some areas. A highly visible influx of counterfeit goods, of various types, is occurring across the continent, noting the range of designer clothing and accessories, various electronics and media, computer software and more dangerously, fake or fraudulent foods, in addition to other commodities such as tobacco. Some of the main counterfeited commodities trafficked across Africa include, but are not limited to, the following:

Illicit cigarettes

Although underreported in some parts of the continent, illicit cigarettes are smuggled in many of the African regions, such as in West Africa. Open sources have revealed that the region serves as transit point for the traffic of this commodity to North Africa.[160] For instance, WCO reported a seizure of more than 220 million counterfeit cigarettes in Benin, Ghana and Togo in 2015 destined for Burkina Faso and Niger,[161] which suggests that this commodity enters West Africa through the ports of Benin, Ghana and Togo.

Moreover, open sources have previously reported that in Nigeria, illicit cigarettes are smuggled by land from the north of the country by car drivers locally known as "Yan-Pitos". It is believed that the drivers collect the illegal cigarettes as well as other counterfeit goods such as electronics and food, once the cigarettes have entered the port of the mentioned countries, they are transported by road to Nigeria, either directly or via Niger.[162]

Counterfeit electrical products

In March 2015, a survey on electrical counterfeiting in Africa identified electrical products as major subjects to counterfeit in the region. According to the survey, estimates of the yearly revenues of counterfeit electrical products are very high in many African countries, which lead in many cases to death. As target countries of counterfeit electrical products, the survey suggested Angola and Malawi as main targets, followed by Sierra Leone, Chad, Benin, Liberia and Ivory Coast, as well as Burundi, Uganda, and Zambia. Whereas most of the counterfeit products are locally-made, many of these products are re-exported into neighboring countries. For example, homemade electrical counterfeits manufactured in Uganda, are mostly re-exported into the Democratic Republic of Congo, followed by Sudan and Rwanda.[163]

Information reported by the media indicate that counterfeit goods are largely present on African markets, in terms of quantity and variety of the types of counterfeited and pirated products. Most of the products available on African markets appear to originate from China,[164] followed by other Asian countries and Africa.[165]

There exists flows of counterfeit products from North Africa to sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, there are indications that sub-Saharan Africans residing in Morocco export counterfeit products found on Moroccan markets towards their home countries.[166] It is likely that such a trend exists in other North African countries where sub-Saharan diasporas are present.

In addition to continental trade, this illicit trade market links many countries from the continent with the rest of the world. Counterfeit goods can be manufactured in one country, assembled in another to be illegally transported through a third country.

Often, counterfeiters establish fictitious businesses and front companies to disguise their activities. They forge shipping documents and ship counterfeit products via circumvented routes and several transit points to conceal the original point of departure.

Despite the absence of conclusive evidence of the existence of organized syndicates leading these criminal markets in all African regions, it could be deduced that counterfeit goods converge with most other criminal markets, such as the trafficking of drugs, people, theft, and wildlife crimes. Trade routes used for counterfeit goods, will also be used for these other criminal markets. For instance, persons may be trafficked to work in production facilities for counterfeit goods and corruption underpins this industry.

Stolen Motor Vehicles Trafficking

The following section covers two dimensions of trafficking in stolen motor vehicles (SMV) in Africa: international trafficking originating abroad (i.e. Western Europe, North America and Asia) towards the continent as well as intracontinental trafficking. Crime syndicates are responsible for the movement, theft and resale of large volumes of SMVs throughout Africa. Many countries are at the same time, source, transit and destination points for SMVs. All involved actors generate high volumes of profit which allows them to continuously fuel the trade in this commodity.

International trafficking towards the continent

Motor vehicles stolen abroad enter the continent, primarily, through the major commercial sea ports either in containers or roll-on/roll-off ships. These vehicles are often shipped as second hand vehicles to conceal their illegitimate origin.

Crime syndicates resort to falsifying documentation, forging and altering of vehicle identification numbers (VIN), in order to facilitate the entrance of stolen vehicles onto the continent and to conceal their origins.

Furthermore, countries implementing the right-hand driving system tend to import stolen vehicles from countries with similar driving systems. As a result, Eastern and Southern African countries, which implement the right-hand driving system, are most likely to import stolen

cars originating from United Kingdom, Japan and Australia.

Most often, stolen vehicles trafficked towards the continent are mid-priced segment vehicles, as there is a high demand for such vehicles in Africa. However, there is also a growing demand for high-end vehicles such as Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs) and off-road vehicles. Heavy duty equipment vehicles are also targeted by crime syndicates. For instance, in October 2015, Rwanda's National Police intercepted a heavy duty equipment transport drop deck trailer with a Ugandan plate number as it was crossing from the Democratic Republic of Congo into Rwanda. Using INTERPOL's SMV database, Rwandan police discovered that this vehicle was stolen in Japan.[167] More recently, in June 2018, media outlets reported the case of a 48-ton crane that was stolen in Germany in March 2018 and recovered in Egypt three months later.[168]

Moreover, African crime syndicates collaborate with their counterparts abroad to procure the stolen vehicles and send them to African countries. In this context, some criminal elements of the African diaspora play an important role in connecting syndicates that provide the vehicles in source countries with those present in Africa and which receive the stolen goods. As an example, in August 2017, open sources reported that Spain's Guardia Civil, with the help of Austrian, French and Portuguese police, dismantled a gang that was transporting stolen cars from Europe into North Africa. Twelve individuals of Moroccan, Algerian, French and Dutch nationalities were arrested following this incident.[169]

After arriving into Africa, stolen vehicles are either introduced into the licit or illicit markets of the country of first arrival or, are moved by land across several countries to reach their final destination. For example, some vehicles stolen in Europe enter Morocco via cargo ships or ferries and are then driven to West and Central African states where they are introduced into the illicit market.[170]

Illicit traffic within the continent

Large quantities of vehicles are equally stolen and trafficked at national, regional and continental levels.

Across the continent, high-end and valuable vehicles such as Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs) and off-road cars are targeted for transnational trafficking and resale. Low-end, second or third hand small cars common on local markets are targeted for easy reselling and stripping of parts. Also, in Central Africa, commuter taxis are popular targets of theft among organized crime groups.

In Central Africa, the majority of vehicles are reportedly stolen from public places such as parking lots, car washes, supermarkets, bars and nightclubs; sometimes with the help of security guards and parking lot employees.[171] In Eastern Africa, in addition to carjacking, common methods of theft include the use of duplicate keys and diversion of hired vehicles to foreign countries.[172]

Throughout the continent, crime syndicates have demonstrated high capabilities in terms of disarming modern car anti-theft equipment such as GPS tracking devices. In addition, to further complicate the process of tracking stolen vehicles, crime syndicates commonly change license plates, repaint the vehicles, falsify engine and chassis numbers, and produce false vehicle documents before reselling the vehicles.[173]

Vehicle insurance fraud has been detected in many regions. This involves car owners attempting to dispose of their vehicles via criminal syndicate associates and make theft reports with the aim of getting paid twice, once from the fraudulent sale and a second time from the insurance rebate.[174]

Available information indicates that cross-border trafficking in SMV is an important phenomenon in Africa. Stolen cars are driven across several borders for resale in final destination countries. Cars stolen in Uganda have been recovered in the Democratic Republic of Congo; and vehicles stolen in Kenya and South Sudan were recovered in Uganda.[175]

Criminal syndicates take advantage of porous borders in some parts of the African continent, to move stolen vehicles between the countries more easily. In Western Africa, the freedom of movement of goods and people within the framework Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) regional economic union is an additional facilitating factor for the movement of stolen vehicles.

Other factors contribute to the growth of this crime market, such as the corruption of officials. Corrupt officials could facilitate the entrance of stolen vehicles in some countries, or help in forging documents for stolen vehicles to enable their insertion in licit vehicle markets. [176]

Finally, low or high intensity conflicts plaguing some African countries further reinforce the danger of porous borders and create a conducive environment for crime syndicates of all sorts, including for those involved in vehicle theft and trafficking.

Maritime Piracy

Maritime piracy covers two geographical areas in Africa: the coastlines of the Gulf of Guinea basin countries in West and Central Africa and the shores of the Gulf of Aden and horn of Africa countries in the East.
Among the factors that drive pirate attacks along African shores are economic deprivation, state fragility, lack of law enforcement capacity, geographic opportunity, and absence or weak legislation and judicial provisions. Maritime piracy can also involve human trafficking and the transportation of illegal substances by criminal syndicates. [177]

According to data provided by the International Maritime Bureau for the period between 2013 and 2017, a total of 288 attempted and actual acts of piracy were reported for Africa, amounting to 26 per cent of all maritime piracy acts recorded in the world. Close to 46 per cent of the attacks and attempts that were recorded for Africa took place off the coast of Nigeria, followed by 8 per cent off the coast of Congo and almost 6 per cent off the coast of Somalia (see Figure 6). It should be noted that 58 per cent of the attacks recorded for Africa took place between January 2013 and December 2015 and 40 per cent of the attacks and attempts occurred between 2016 and 2017. [178]

Gulf of Guinea

The Gulf of Guinea extends from the shores of Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tomé and Principe, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola.

Since 2011, the Gulf of Guinea has been the main maritime piracy hotbed in Africa. [179]

Acts of piracy and theft in the Gulf of Guinea count for more than a quarter of reported attacks globally [180] and in 2016, more than half of the kidnappings for ransom happened there, with 34 kidnapped seafarers compared to 62 globally. [181] Pirates are attracted to the Gulf of Guinea since it is home to some of the biggest offshore oilfields in the world.
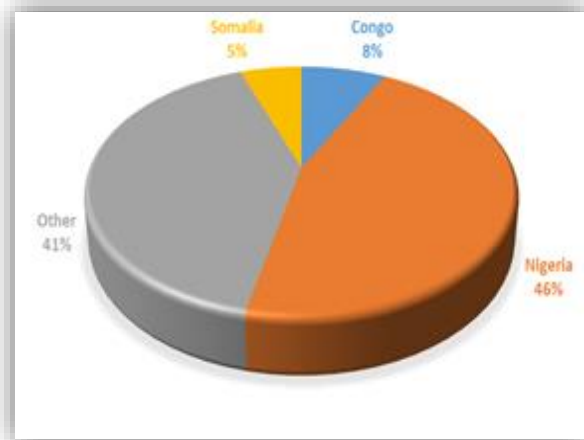
Figure 6: Piracy attacks and attempted attacks in Africa, 2013-2017

Increasingly, acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea are carried out by professional well-coordinated organized criminal groups who are driven by the low-risk, high-profit nature of maritime piracy. [182] They hijack or attack vessels or maritime structures such as petrochemical tankers, oil and petroleum storage and transportation platforms. According to the International Maritime Bureau, in 2017 there were 16 incidents involving a vessel coming under fire, 7 of which happened in the Gulf of Guinea. [183]

Acts of maritime piracy pose an obvious threat to the security of navigation, the physical safety of people working at sea, sea vegetation and animals, the regional economy and the international oil and natural resource business. Maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea affects the trade of around 455 million people and impacts the shipment of 5 million barrels of oil every day, accounting for 40 per cent of European and 29 per cent of American imports. [184]
Pirates generally employ the kidnap-for-ransom tactic, with attacks occurring often at night at both anchorages and off the coast, and use firearms

and violence to take crew members hostage. Another practice is to hijack ships for numerous days and sail to unknown locations to steal oil cargo and other high value assets after disabling tracking devices.[185] The cargo is then syphoned onto smaller ships and sold on the black market. The Niger Delta, in Nigeria, is one of the largest deltas in the world, strewn with thousands of crude oil tankers and scene of a constant influx of vessels importing refined fuel to the country. In this context, the country is a hotspot for violent piracy and armed robbery.[186] Pirates attack oil tankers to steal the crude oil, or as commonly called "illegal oil bunkering", which may be sold to refineries inside the country or illegally exported to other West African states. All sources of information suggest that nationals from Nigeria and other neighbor countries, such as Ghana, Benin and Togo, are involved in the handling of local tapping and loading whilst the transportation, financing and money laundering activities related with the illegal oil operations may be in charge of criminals from other jurisdictions, notably Eastern Europe and Asia.[187]

Many of the Central African countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea lack the judicial provisions, capacity and legislation to effectively carry out prosecutions against these criminal acts, which complicates repression of maritime piracy [188]

Gulf of Aden and Horn of Africa

Maritime piracy, remains an ongoing organized crime threat in the region, and is a crime area that can have a significant impact, in terms of disruption of trade or erosion of economic activity. Syndicates involved are suspected to be highly active and linked to a range of other criminal markets, including terrorism.

The countries most affected by or linked to maritime piracy in this region have been found to be Somalia and Kenya, with some links being noted to Sudan. The port of Mogadishu continues to be a major center for piracy activities. Whereas some piracy groups have been found to operate out of the Puntland State of Somalia, a region in northeastern Somalia, other groups have been found to be operating in Las Khorey and Sanaag, cities in Somaliland State across the Gulf of Aden from Yemen.[189]

The major root causes of maritime piracy in

Eastern Africa are most notably linked to the political instability in Somalia. Largely, Somali pirates are driven by widespread poverty and depleted and looted fish resources. In addition, dense and vulnerable maritime traffic in the Horn of Africa offers an opportunity for various organized crime networks to engage in this lucrative criminal enterprise.[190]

Maritime routes within the region remain critical to global maritime trade, which makes the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa hotspots for attacks.

Open sources indicate that the terrorist organization al-Shabaab has been allegedly linked to maritime piracy incidents.[191] An alleged pirate network operating between the port cities of Hobyo and Harardheere (both north of Mogadishu on the Arabian Sea) in 2017 was under investigation for providing material support to al-Shabaab and the Islamic State in Somalia.

Enabling Crimes and Criminal Convergences

Beyond an assessment of each distinct criminal market detected in Africa, this section assesses the links between different organized criminal activities, and identifies several "crime enablers" such as the use of cyber-tools and firearms in the commission of various offences. Cybercrime easily enhances the scope of the operations of any group, as well as their ability to go undetected, and firearms increase the level of violence used by groups to further their criminal objectives across all criminal markets. These types of enabling crimes may vary from region to region, but are critical to assess because they may be important areas for law enforcement to focus on in order to prevent criminal elements from growing or from becoming more entrenched. The following enabling crimes are outlined in this section: cybercrime and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons (i.e. illicit firearms).

Small arms and light weapons trafficking

Many, if not all, countries on the African continent are affected to various degrees by illicit small

arms and light weapons (SALW). Many African countries are source, transit and destination points for the trafficking of these weapons.

Data gathered in the framework of this analysis suggests that this type of trafficking is often linked to post-conflict countries or to those plagued by internal armed conflicts, were weapons influx are frequent and/or massive. A variety of SALW are trafficked across the continent, sometimes across several hundreds of kilometers, borders and jurisdictions. Throughout Africa, trafficking of firearms is a major crime facilitator and enabler, and armed groups appear to be among the major actors responsible for this illicit trade.

Over recent decades, several African countries have witnessed many conflicts – low as well as high intensity conflicts that left their mark on these countries. These conflicts led to massive influx of millions of SALW and ammunitions into Africa that helped equip the various state and non-state stakeholders involved in the armed disputes.

Weapons are durable commodities that survive wars and conflicts. Weapons held by non-state actors such as rebel groups, are not always decommissioned when the crisis ends, due to the lack of traceability, inventory, proper storage and destruction mechanisms. These weapons likely represent a significant part of weapons being trafficked on the continent.

Military and police stocks, acquired in times of peace or accumulated during conflicts, which are diverted or looted, constitute another important source of SALW trafficked in Africa. Most recently, the situation in Libya entailed the proliferation and trafficking of weapons looted from governmental depots. It is estimated that prior to the political events affecting the country since 2011, the Libyan army was in control of between 250 000 and 700 000 weapons of which 70 to 80 per cent were assault rifles. After the fall of Qaddafi's regime, weapons, ammunition and explosives stolen from Libyan depots were spread, especially between 2011 and 2014, across as many as 12 countries in the Maghreb, Sahel, Levant regions, Horn of Africa and Central Africa.[192]

Weapons diverted from Ivorian governmental stockpiles have likewise been identified in the hands of armed groups operating in the Central African Republic. Similarly, armed groups operating in Mali appear to have obtained much of their weapons through diversion from Malian army stocks.[193]

Nonetheless, in post-conflict or peace times, depending on the given country, part of these weapons are still diverted, as a result of insufficient and inadequate physical security and management controls of weapons stockpiles. For instance, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) reported in June 2018 that the proliferation, accumulation, misuse and unsafe storage of weapons and ammunition is a persistent problem for peace and security in the Democratic Republic of Congo.[194]

Another source of SALW trafficked on the continent is weapons diverted from peacekeeping missions. The non-governmental organisation Small Arms Survey reported that between 2004 and 2014, there were at least 22 major incidents involving loss and theft of military equipment by the United Nations (UN) Blue Helmets missions deployed in Sudan and South Sudan. Some of these incidents refer to attacks against UN contingents by armed groups. More than 500 weapons of various types including pistols, assault rifles, machine guns grenade launchers, anti-tank weapons, and mortars, as well as over 750 000 rounds of ammunition and munitions were lost during these incidents. Moreover, the Small Arms Survey indicated that the true scale and scope of the diversion of weapons taking place from peace operations in Sudan and South Sudan is significantly higher than the number of instances of military equipment losses recorded in its study.[195] It is likely that similar incidents occur in other UN peacekeeping missions deployed on the continent.

Another potential source of trafficked weapons, is firearms owned by civilians. According to data from the Small Arms Survey, estimates of firearms in civilian possession amount to 39 728 000 of which only 5 402 124 are registered.[196] Some of these weapons end up on the black market and are subject to trafficking. For instance, economic deterioration in Libya after the 2011 events, drove some civilians to sell or exchange guns and ammunition for daily

subsistence goods.[197] A similar phenomenon is likely to have occurred in other African countries, namely in the Democratic Republic of Congo or Central African Republic, where demobilized soldiers or rebels may be tempted to sell the firearms and ammunition they retained in spite of their demobilization.

Trafficking in SALW fuels conflicts, terrorism, organized crime activities, and even street level crime. Available open source information indicate that the use of firearms in street level crime, including robberies, [198] carjacking, home and business invasions, kidnapping, as well as murders, is an increasingly dangerous phenomenon in all African regions. Rural areas are highly affected by the proliferation of SALW, which are used in crimes such as cattle rustling and poaching,[199] including endangered species.

Organized crime groups involved in the trafficking of high value merchandise such as drugs, minerals, endangered species, timber, and others, find in the proliferation and trafficking of SALW, the opportunity to heavily arm themselves and subsequently confront and subdue anyone who poses a threat to their business model.

Moreover, armed groups, rebels and terrorists, play a major role in SALW trafficking on the continent. Whereas some of them sell weapons to finance their activities, others buy arms to equip themselves when carrying out campaigns of violence against local populations or institutions, overpower security forces and exert control over territories and jurisdictions.

Trafficking flows on the continent are constant and largely multidirectional. Weapons remain in constant circulation primarily within given regions. Nevertheless, depending on the demand and available supply chains, weapons can circulate between the African regions across several hundreds of kilometers, jurisdictions and borders. This suggests that some of the organized crime groups involved in this type of trafficking have the capacity of connecting suppliers to buyers at national, regional and trans-regional levels and have the necessary expertise to move firearms undetected.

Cyber and Cyber-Enabled Crime

The technology world has redefined criminality,

proliferating a range of crimes through digitization, allowing them to be committed anywhere by anyone. Cybercrime is a form of organized crime in its own right, but it also significantly enables illicit trade. It has changed the nature of criminal markets all over the world and the African continent is no exception.

Cybercrime facilitates all forms of crime, from financial fraud to sexual exploitation and violation of intellectual property (see Figure 7). It also enables criminal groups to make transnational connections easily, giving them access to new victims, associates and markets. The effect of cybercrime can be extreme on an individual level, but it also can have a far-reaching impact on the integrity and viability of financial markets and the economy.

Figure 7: Different types of cybercrime and cyber-enabled crimes

Overall, the nature of cybercrime cases on the continent are mostly cyber-enabled crimes, and not cybercrimes committed exclusively in cyberspace. Cyber-enabled crimes are traditional crimes that increase the scale or reach of groups through the use of computers, computer networks, or other forms of information and communication technology.
Information suggests that the most common type of cybercrime on the continent involves a range of illegal activities including illegal access (hacking) of a variety of systems such as banks and mail boxes, online scams and fraud (i.e. credit card fraud and insurance fraud), identity theft, malware attacks, the trade and proliferation of various types of illegal or prohibited online content, threats and spread of radicalization via internet, phishing, etc.[200]

West Africa is victim to a frequently perpetrated cybercrime, 'romance scam', in which the victims are lured to perform sexual acts while naked in front of their web-camera. Their acts are video-captured by the criminals who then use the footages to extort and threaten the victims. Victims are usually approached by the criminals online with a fake profile.

In the Central African region, SIM box fraud emerges as a significant crime in Cameroon as well as the Republic of Congo, allowing people abroad to place calls at local tariffs via a SIM box, and leading to big financial losses to businesses as well as the national treasury.[201]

In October 2015 for instance, 4 telephone operators in Cameroon, MTN, Orange, Camtel and Nextel, lost large amounts of money to this type of fraud. The companies did not disclose the exact amount, but it was reported that in 2015 this illegal activity cost telephone companies around CFA 18 billion (approximately USD 31 million).[202]

In some parts of the continent, activities of cybercriminals are highly influenced by the geopolitical tensions in the region. In many cases, buyers want leverage to migrate as refugees to other countries or to escape from the difficult conditions in their countries. Other cases involve cybercriminals buying forged documents to commit insurance fraud for example. This leads to a daunting trend where terrorists purchase forged documents and enter other countries as refugees.

In North Africa for example, identities get duplicated and then sold on primarily Arab-language forums. On some websites, passport scans are sold for USD 18 and more, and identification papers are sold as part of packages, including copies of driver's licenses and local service bills which aid the person to establish a new life in another country. Moreover, crypters, which are a form of software that is able to encrypt, confuse as well as manipulate a malware, in order to make it more difficult to be detected by security software are sold in the region. While some of them are handed out for free, other more sophisticated types are sold for amounts that vary between USD 12 and USD 130.[203]

Figure 8: Criminal markets facilitated by cybercrimes

Open source cases highlight the transnational nature of known cybercrime syndicates operating in Africa. Cases involving West African nationals operating from places like South Africa and Zimbabwe have involved groups participating in various fraudulent business practices or various email or phishing schemes that attempt to and often succeed in scamming thousands of victims around the world.

Cyber-enabled fraud and other forms of criminality such as identity theft, perpetrated from within the continent continue to be detected around the world, noting Europe and North America reporting cases that link back to Southern Africa.[204] Specifically, South Africa is reported to have the third highest number of cybercrime victims in the world.[205]

Generally, cybercrime is increasingly essential for syndicates to conduct criminal activities and this capability will likely continue to grow in the coming years.

A number of cyber-enabled crimes are frauds committed online, including credit or payment card skimming. Often online bank accounts or financial payment systems are accessed through email phishing efforts, where users will unknowingly give up their usernames and passwords.[206]
Cyber-tools are used to support criminal syndicates through the proliferation of forged documents, the trafficking in stolen or counterfeit items, or to communicate and plan other

sophisticated crimes, such as drug trafficking, extortions, or robberies. Cyber capabilities can be leveraged in many criminal market activities and profits are immense when cyber-tools are used. Groups at all levels, from the local to the international, are using cyber capabilities to execute frauds, steal identities from anywhere in the world, and various other cells or gangs are subsequently seeking to build their capacities to use cyber tools more and more.

The two predominate criminal markets that cybercrime facilitates, are financial crimes and theft, but cyber tools can be used to drive other types of crimes. Beyond fraud, cyber-tools have been used to trade in a range of other stolen products. Open sources suggest that illicit narcotics and legitimate drugs (pharmaceuticals) are being bought and sold online, noting the use of the dark web.

Human trafficking has also been found to have a cyber-component in the region. Often, recruitment of victims for domestic servitude will occur online, and specifically sexual services will be advertised and negotiated on a range of online platforms. Firearms trafficking is similarly occurring online, noting the trade in some types of small arms through the Dark or Deep web.

Cybercrime, especially in Africa, can impact on development, and often allows syndicates to operate in almost complete anonymity, and with impunity, operating from across borders to avoid detection and prosecution.

Syndicates may be operating in one country or jurisdiction, yet victimizing persons, businesses, or governments in another. As most countries in Africa are relying more and more on technology, the harm and rate of cyber criminality is suspected to grow and is expected to mature in the near- and long-term future. This is further proven by the development of new modus operandi to commit cyber-enabled crimes on the continent.

Several facilitating factors further aggravate the problem in Africa and contribute to the spread of cyber-enabled crimes in a faster rate, including:

➢ Limited investment in cybersecurity, both in the private and public sectors, which increasingly allows for cyber-enabled

crimes related to fraud and theft to take place, have contributed to the spread of this problem in Africa;

➢ Under-detected and underreported cybercrime incidents on the continent make it difficult to accurately quantify and assess the phenomenon;[207]

➢ Lack of awareness concerning cyber security by the public;

➢ Complexity of identifying cybercrime networks, which is further exacerbated in Africa where the required technology and know-how are lacking in many parts of the continent.

Illicit Flows of Money and Assets

Money laundering is a major aspect of organized crime activities linked to all criminal markets outlined in this report, and all illicit profits generated from these criminal enterprises need to be hidden from detection and state authorities in some way.

Several notable methods of money laundering schemes are suspected, including the use of shelf firms and front or 'shell' companies, the importation and trade of used and/or stolen motor vehicles, the use of casinos, real estate, and cash-based businesses, and the trade in precession metals and stones.

This type of criminality is found to be significantly transnational in nature, with money laundering schemes frequently including more than one country at a time. A significant proportion of money laundered in Central Africa, particularly within the Democratic Republic of Congo, ends in Europe or South Africa.[208]

Mobile financial services and mobile banking have emerged as an alternative solution for financial inclusion and form an aspect of money laundering on the continent. In recent years, issues relating to mobile banking and mobile money services have grown significantly in Eastern Africa. This allows the movement of cash

transnationally, and the elimination of the need in some cases to launder the proceeds derived from criminality. In Kenya for example, millions of residents use mobile financial services (MFS) and mobile banking providers/facilitators to transact on a daily basis, largely outside the view of money laundering regulators. These services are being used for illicit transactions, but are not being monitored by financial intelligence units. The rise of such services in combination with a range of other financial technologies (FinTechs, New Payment Systems, mobile money, and crypto currencies) is changing the nature of threats and crimes being committed in Africa. In West Africa, the use of mobile financial services and mobile banking has increased, through providers such as *MTN Mobile Money* and *Orange Money*, allowing people to send and receive money and perform payments. An analysis of all sources suggests that these instruments are at risk of being exploited by criminals to launder money or even finance terrorist activities.[209]

Moreover, there is a range of vulnerable sectors prone to money laundering that are exploited by criminals in Africa. The most common vulnerable aspects of the financial sector in the Southern African region are formal or charted banking and remittance or wire transfer businesses. Western union and money gram are often used to move money around the region, and are fundamental to the placement and layering phases of the money laundering process. The Financial Intelligence Unit in Malawi has detected money being sent through Western Union, or brought in person to be used for investments to obscure the criminal source of the funds.[210]

Concerning West Africa, the banking sectors and formal remittance businesses are the most vulnerable sectors prone to money laundering in the region. In Ghana, for example, it has been reported that among the most vulnerable products and services of the banking sector are current account products, foreign exchange account products, savings account products, trade finance services, private banking, investment accounts and international money transfers.[211]

Overall, money laundering is occurring on a significant scale across Africa, with multiple schemes being used to hide or conceal illicit proceeds, which poses a significant challenge for the continent.

Conclusion

This assessment sought to identify and examine the various illicit markets and organized crime networks that operate on the African continent and beyond. It also took a closer look at several enabling crimes and criminal convergences affecting the continent, notably cybercrime and illicitly trafficked arms. Finally, this assessment considered the illicit flow of money and assets, looking at core money laundering activities taking place throughout the continent.

Whether trafficking in narcotics, wildlife, natural resources, stolen property, or targeting vulnerable populations for subsequent exploitation, criminal networks operating in Africa will continue to grow and evolve in response to the unique political, socio-economic, and security landscape in which they operate. They will constantly seek to adapt and expand their illicit activities in an opportunistic manner and in order to gain greater profits. In this regard, the powerful nexus between organized crime, terrorism, and armed conflict is critical and is likely to continue to destabilize the continent in the near future.

In summary, this assessment suggests that most organized crime groups and networks operating in Africa have the intent and capabilities to continue exploiting the continent for criminal gain and, to varying degrees, to build their illicit enterprises in nearly every country in their region and beyond. Organized crime has the potential to erode the rule of law by undermining the efficacy and even the legitimacy of state institutions in the continent. The potential impacts this would have on the development and economic progress of African countries would be devastating.

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▶ **ABOUT INTERPOL**

INTERPOL is the world's largest international police organization. Our role is to assist law enforcement agencies in our 194 member countries to combat all forms of transnational crime. We work to help police across the world meet the growing challenges of crime in the 21st century by providing a high-tech infrastructure of technical and operational support. Our services include targeted training, expert investigative support, and specialized databases and secure police communications channels.

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