

Overview of Serious and Organized Crime in East Africa

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ANALYTICAL REPORT

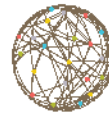


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**THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME**

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Executive Summary

Transnational organized crime in Eastern Africa poses a substantial threat to the safety and security of all member countries in the region, and poses a significant challenge to law enforcement agencies. As a result, INTERPOL, under the European Union funded ENACT Project, has sought to catalogue and assess organized crime in the region in order to drive a more strategic law enforcement response.

International criminal organizations continue to target the region due to the significant illicit wealth generated by syndicates, stemming from criminal market opportunities that exploit various social and political issues found across Eastern Africa. State fragility, limited policing capacities, and corruption drive criminal elements, which operate everywhere and provide illicit goods and services even in the remotest areas of the region. Crime syndicates remain highly connected across borders and are active in a number of illicit markets, notably maritime piracy, organized violence and terrorism, financial crimes and fraud, environmental crimes, narcotics trafficking, theft and robberies, human trafficking and smuggling, and the counterfeiting of a range of goods, amongst others.

In addition, there are a number of enabling crimes such as the trade in small arms, light weapons, and explosives, along with cybercrime capabilities, which are enhancing organized criminality throughout the region. The trade in weapons and the use of cyber-tools drives all of the illicit markets profiled in this report in complex ways, and, as a result, organized crime in the region generates greater profits for all involved. Consequently, there are substantial illicit interregional financial flows and profits laundered throughout the Eastern Africa region, with large volumes of illicit wealth often heading offshore to Europe or Asia.

The threat from organized crime in Eastern Africa is substantial, yet there is sometimes limited capacity amongst law enforcement to manage this complex issue, especially on a transnational level, looking beyond national jurisdictions and borders. Organized crime is going underreported and undetected, despite various data sources indicating there are ongoing organized crime activities and dynamics present across the region. This concern needs strategic action, through stronger partnerships amongst law enforcement agencies throughout the region, enabled through a greater awareness of overall issue at a regional level.

Key Findings

The following are the key findings of this report as found through an analysis of a range of data sources available on organized crime in Eastern Africa:

- ❖ Both locally-based and foreign-based criminal organizations are operating in the region. Criminal gangs are operating in most countries in the region and often tied to larger organizations to facilitate material support and illicit commodities supply; however, transnational structures remain largely undetected and unchallenged.
- ❖ Maritime piracy remains a very high-risk to the region, despite a limited number of actual incidents occurring. It remains a risk because of the criminal network connectivity that facilitates these crimes, enables a range of other coastal crimes, including smuggling and trafficking in illicit goods, and money laundering.
- ❖ Organized violence and terrorism are a constant and persistent element of organized crime in the region, and estimated to be growing both in scope and in impact. Noting terrorism specifically, terror groups are active across the region, pose a direct attack threat, and remain linked to a range of criminality; furthermore, a range of other violent activities are linked to terrorism and other criminal organizations, noting kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and attacks on ATMs or cash-in-transit services.
- ❖ Financial crimes and frauds are presently underreported and are generally an under-investigated crime, due to the transnational nature and complexity of schemes. Frequently facilitated through cyber capacities, a range of frauds are routine throughout the region, targeting financial institutions predominantly through check fraud or credit card skimming. Counterfeit currency is also a major issue that directly threatens the economic integrity of already fragile states in the region.
- ❖ Environmental crimes are occurring throughout the region with poaching syndicates targeting elephants, rhinos, apes, and pangolins to name only a few higher profile illicit animal commodities. In addition, environmental crimes in the region involve illegal logging and pollution crimes, which are having a measurable impact on local ecosystems and industries that rely on healthy flora and fauna.
- ❖ Narcotics trafficking is a persistent crime across the region, suspected to be on the rise and driving an increase in substance abuse issues. The region is a transshipment area for globally traded narcotics commodities. Major drugs trafficked in the region are heroin, cocaine, cannabis, methamphetamine, khat, and a range of precursor chemicals and pharmaceuticals.

- ❖ Organized theft and armed robbery, often involving violence, are ongoing crime concerns in the region, and are increasingly becoming more organized, controlled, and managed by criminal syndicates and larger transnational networks.
- ❖ Human trafficking and illegal immigration are major crime issues in the region. They are not likely growing, but rather getting more law enforcement attention, resulting in an increasing number of cases and incidents detected and reported. All aspects of human trafficking, including sexual and labor exploitation as well as organ removal are occurring in the region; illegal immigration is a driver for human trafficking, with larger diaspora communities remaining vulnerable to human trafficking recruitment.
- ❖ The trafficking in a range of counterfeited goods poses a direct threat to public safety and security; despite limited capacity to enforce trademark and copyright protection, the trade and manufacturing of illicit goods below safety or health standards is resulting in immediate harm to persons and communities. This trade commonly links to other crimes, and is systemic across the region despite lower detection rates when compared to other illicit markets.
- ❖ The trade in small arms, light weapons, and now explosives, is a substantial driver of organized crime in the region. Groups, gangs, and syndicates have ongoing access to different weapons allowing them to carry out criminal business and to exert violence wherever needed. Continental and global arms supplies are both an element of this trade.
- ❖ Cybercrime is a growing issue in the region, with crime syndicates and gangs becoming more sophisticated and more capable of carrying out a range of cyber-enabled crimes.
- ❖ The flows of illicit money and assets remain a primary aspect of organized crime in the region. Yet, this crime area remains under-investigated, likely due to a range of corruption issues. Money laundering is occurring across the region, and a number of vulnerable sectors remain outside regulatory frameworks; mobile money services and crypto currency are continuing to offer criminal syndicates near anonymous transaction capabilities.

Introduction

Organized crime is a global issue known to be affecting all countries across Eastern Africa. It is all crimes committed by groups of individuals, working in concert, to generate illicit profits over time. In Eastern Africa groups of individuals are known to be working together to form transnational syndicates that connect Eastern Africa to the rest of the world, and it is estimated that this threat is growing in almost every country in the region.

The free movement of people and goods, varying levels of development and economic prosperity, and the interconnectivity of it all, fuel complex crime in the region. With an array of political jurisdictions and systems connected through porous borders, combined with differing criminal or penal laws, varying levels of corruption, poverty, high-levels of unemployment, and substantial coastlines, the threat from organized crime across Eastern Africa is estimated to be high.

The nature and dynamic of criminal organizations in Eastern Africa jeopardizes sustainable peace and political stability, erodes trust in public institutions, nurtures corruption, and fuels violence. It disrupts democracy and undermines economic growth, especially in fragile states or developing economies. In many instances, organized crime and associated criminal activities can link to and drive armed insurgent groups or terrorist organizations, which highlights the increasing threat posed by organized crime to public safety and social order. In total, organized crime causes significant harm to persons and communities, and significantly affects all countries across the region in intricate ways.

Criminal organizations reflect the jurisdiction in which they operate, exploiting existing societal weaknesses and entrenching themselves with a range of criminal techniques. They will operate at levels commensurate with a given state's ability to respond, and the public and society may accept their syndicate activities in varying ways. Consequently, criminal organizations form and organize dependent on cultural, economic and political realities. Accordingly, organized crime will differ and take on unique structures, systems as well as practices in the

Eastern African region, and will pose different and distinctive challenges to law enforcement as a result.

Consequently, to understand organized crime in the Eastern African region better, and indeed to combat it effectively, a thorough understanding of how it is functioning transnationally from country to country is essential.

Law enforcement and decision makers across Eastern Africa need to understand how criminal enterprise works 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 region 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.

Therefore, Project ENACT (Enhancing Africa's response to transnational organized crime) has undertaken this assessment of serious and organized crime in the Eastern African region.

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 & Methodology

The primary objective of this report is to provide a comprehensive assessment of organized crime in the Eastern African region, focusing on the following countries: the Republic of Burundi, the Union of the Comoros, the Republic of Djibouti, the State of Eritrea, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Republic of Kenya, the Republic of Rwanda, the Republic of Seychelles, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Republic of South Sudan, the Republic of the Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania, and the Republic of Uganda.

The assessment will draw upon an analysis of available data and present conclusions about

the current nature, scope, dynamics, and activities of organized crime in the region.

The following assessment provides an overview of the major aspects of organized crime, including the main criminal enterprises found to be active in the region.

This assessment follows an all source intelligence methodology. It is the result of integrating multi-level data sources.

The integration of multiple data sources provides the most accurate picture of what is occurring in the region and 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

The following analysis is broken down into four parts as per the INTERPOL organized and emerging crime strategy. First, it covers criminal organizations and networks and their various structures and dynamics. Secondly, it covers the criminal markets detected in the region and posing a real and systemic organized crime threat. Thirdly, this assessment covers the enabling crimes of firearms trafficking and cybercrime. In addition, it highlights where various criminal markets overlap (convergences). Finally, the report explores illicit profit and illicit financial flows both within as well as out of the region.

Criminal Organizations or Networks

The following section assesses major criminal organizations or networks found to be engaged in serious and transnational organized crime across Eastern Africa. It highlights how criminal networks connect across the region and beyond, and highlights overall the activities in which groups or gangs are involved and how. Where possible, it highlights specific criminal

groups, gangs, syndicates, or networks identified throughout the research phase.

An analysis of data suggests that in recent years, organized criminal groups in the Eastern African region have been mostly concentrated on the Eastern African coast, which witnessed the highest number of listed gangs designated as criminal organizations by local authorities. Yet, information suggests that organized criminal groups are wide-spread across the entire region, with indicators of groups present in the different Eastern African countries, revealing a number of detected individuals being involved in criminal networks, mostly of foreign nationalities. Many individuals involved in these activities link to legitimate foreign companies from various domains, suggesting close connections between organized crime and the private sector in the region. The focus of group members varies from ivory trafficking and elephant poaching, to fraud, money laundering, armed robberies, cigarette smuggling and human trafficking,¹ which highlights the diversity of foreign-based criminal organizations' activities in Eastern Africa.

The modus operandi of these individuals is not particularly clear, yet research found certain similarities. The majority of these international individuals are alleged members of known foreign criminal groups, who according to sources, appeared to be engaged in a range of activities in the Eastern African region. Although these groups may have been already targeted by law enforcement in recent years, it is likely that similar groups are still operating in the region.

The location of activities of these detected groups, between country of origin, transit and destination countries also link the region to criminal elements based in many other regions of the world, such as South America, Australia and the United States. This suggests the existence of various foreign-based syndicates and criminal organizations operating across the Eastern African region 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, suggests that foreign criminal groups involved in illegal activities across Eastern Africa are firmly entrenched, with activities suspected to be on the rise.

Few countries in the region identified and reported clearly defined criminal organizations, however, the extent of this criminality is unclear from the data available. Several African organized groups are designated as illegal by national governments due to involvement in various illicit activities. Some of these groups reportedly have links with regional subversive organizations such as AL-SHABAAB and the MUNGIKI, suggesting transnational connectivity operating through proxy groups on the ground.

For instance, recent reports confirm the return of MUNGIKI sects and that the activities of AL-SHABAAB are escalating.²³ Other notorious criminal gangs, most importantly the WAKALI WANZA and WAKALI WAO gangs, have also reportedly grown, with several smaller organized gangs or cells pledging allegiance to them and conducting activities in their names.⁴ The resurgence of powerful criminal organized groups that adopt various techniques to accomplish their multi-objective agendas demonstrates the growing danger of criminal organizations in the Eastern African region.

The extent of the international connectivity of these local gangs remains unclear, and untargeted. It is difficult for domestic authorities to identify the scope of illicit activities conducted by transnational criminal syndicates beyond their respective borders, as well as their connections to other international criminal organizations. Therefore, the full extent of the operations conducted by international criminal organizations in the region is largely unknown, yet is highly suspected.

Terrorist Organizations and Criminal Activities

Terrorism is becoming less distinct from criminal enterprises around the world, with similar trends experienced in Eastern Africa. Extremist groups often draw proceeds from illicit activities, carry out campaigns of violence, and commit violent crimes in the name of their ideological motivation. However, these violent activities are committed with the hope of earning economic profit rather than achieving ideological goals. The individuals involved will often have detected criminal backgrounds, and criminal records. As such, terrorism is one of the top organized crime challenges facing the

Eastern Africa region not just in terms of attacks, but also because illicit activities finance terrorist operations. Terror groups tend to recruit individuals from crime syndicates and leverage criminal networks to smuggle persons, obtain materials, or to operate more clandestinely.

THE TERRORIST THREAT IN EASTERN AFRICA IS ALSO NOT JUST BOUND TO THE REGION, BUT HAS BEEN FOUND TO HAVE LINKS TO OTHER JURISDICTIONS ON THE CONTINENT AND BEYOND

Most Eastern African countries recognize terrorism as a significant problem. The following is not a comprehensive inventory of all terrorist incidents in the region, but rather, a highlight of those that reveal the ongoing threat.

Some well-established terrorist groups, such as, the AL-QAEDA affiliated group AL-SHABAAB, as noted previously, continue to pose a threat in some parts of the region. There are many potential attack threats posed by these groups in the region, who report to have intensified their recruitment and radicalization of youth from the region and elsewhere, with many recruitment campaigns taking place online through social media. AL-SHABAAB is suspected to have an extensive recruitment network. Within the region, many related cases reaffirm the connectivity of these recruits to maritime piracy, as well as the likelihood of well-entrenched criminal networks operating transnationally between countries of the region to support terrorism activities.

Terrorism activities in the region are highly suspected to be funded by financial proceeds derived from other transnational organized crime activities including, but not limited to, human trafficking, selling of stolen artifacts on the black market, selling and trading in illicit petroleum, counterfeiting and trafficking of various illicit goods, theft of motor vehicles, drugs trafficking, and illegal poaching.⁵

The terrorist threat in Eastern African is not just bound to the region, but has been found to have

links to other jurisdictions on the continent and beyond. In addition, the movement and activity of terror groups in some parts of the region and the rise of the Islamic State-affiliated groups such as JAHBA EAST AFRICA have become a potentially threatening phenomenon that requires attention. Foreign fighters have the potential to enhance and fortify such groups in the region, and create criminal connectively across the region and beyond. Again, it is likely that the activities of these groups get support from criminal enterprises.

The activities of various groups, from AL-SHABAAB to JAHBA EAST AFRICA may vary from country to country, but Kenya has been a consistent target of AL-SHABAAB since 2011, with its most deadly attack to date taking place in April 2015 on the Garissa University campus. This attack claimed the lives of almost 150 individuals.⁶ In early 2016, in an attack on a Kenyan military base, they killed military troops, and captured vehicles, weapons and ammunition as well as military equipment.⁷ In early 2017, they attacked a Kenyan military base in Somalia, using two suicide car bombs.⁸

AL-SHABAAB and the LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY are reportedly active in other countries in the region, such as Burundi. Extremists promise recruits better economic opportunities. These groups are also allegedly involved in human and firearms trafficking (noting the LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY activities specifically). Burundian nationals likely have joined these groups via Kenya and the DRC. In one example, four Burundians were arrested in Kenya trying to join AL-SHABAAB.⁹

Djibouti is also a suspected target for AL-SHABAAB, due to the presence of foreign military bases there and the deployment of the Djiboutian armed forces in Somalia as part of AMISOM. In 2014, a suicide attack in Djibouti resulted in three deaths with dozens injured.¹⁰ In June 2017, the group attacked a military base manned by Somali forces and Djibouti peacekeepers in Bulburde, Somalia.¹¹ In Rwanda, a number of groups are still thought to be operating in and via the country, including AL-SHABAAB, and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDRL).

Data indicates the involvement of individuals with dual nationalities in many terrorism-related

cases, which highlights the potential access these individuals have to other parts of the world.

Politically motivated violence also extends beyond radicalized religious ideology in the region. The issue of armed gangs carrying out campaigns of violence or local terrorism remains a major threat in the region.

Overall, terrorism remains a significant issue across Eastern Africa, and a major facilitator of organized crime, drawing on criminal networks for support and financial backing. Data shows that terrorism is on rise in the region, fuelled by ongoing political instability, and driven by criminal opportunities incentivizing people to become more involved.

Trafficking and Illicit Markets

This section highlights major criminal markets spread across the region in order of magnitude. In order to highlight what illegal commodities are being trafficked by the criminal organizations outlined above, and what trade of illicit goods is occurring and how, each criminal market will be examined separately and in detail. Even if criminal organizations are engaged in multiple markets at the same time, each criminal market will be analyzed separately, broken down into specific commodities where applicable, and transportation routes, countries affected, and modus operandi, etc.

Based on analysis of all available information, the following crime areas were found to be most active in the Eastern African region:

- Maritime based organised crime (including piracy)
- Organized violence and terrorism
- Financial crimes and frauds.
- Environmental crimes
- Narcotics trafficking
- Theft and armed robbery
- Human trafficking and illegal immigration
- Counterfeiting

Maritime Piracy & Coastal Criminality

Eastern Africa maritime piracy is an act of robbery or criminal violence committed by ship or boat-borne attackers upon another ship or a coastal area, typically with the goal of stealing cargo, valuable items or properties. Maritime piracy in the region involves marauding, hijacking, and detention of ships in international waters off the coast of many Eastern African countries. However, currently within the region, the primary goal appears to be kidnapping crewmembers for ransom. While often piracy is a crime of opportunity by individual groups, they are controlled and organized by larger syndicates that have sufficient infrastructure in place to move stolen cargo and kidnapped crewmembers. These syndicates also have been found to have the capability to move illicit profits obtained through acts of piracy.

Although not the most prevalent crime based on raw number of incidents, this crime ranks as a dangerous crime in the region due to the level of threat that groups and syndicates involved in this criminal market pose to the region. Not only are groups involved in piracy, but also are highly connected and possess significant capabilities that likely underpin a host of other crimes. More broadly, this section represents coastal crimes, with those syndicates or larger criminal organizations who control piracy cells, also likely being in firm control of a range of other coastal crimes.

Maritime piracy, is 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. Despite a decrease in reports of piracy acts in region, the syndicates involved are still suspected to be highly active and linked to a range of other criminal markets, including terrorism. In spite of the fluctuating rates of attacks on vessels, the persistence of this criminal market suggests that the criminal links required to support this criminality are steadfastly in place and support a host of other criminal enterprises.

Despite this crime having fewer incidents compared to other criminal markets, the connections to other socio-economic issues, and the violence that occurs in these incidents, make it a major criminal threat in the region. The major root causes of maritime piracy in Eastern

Africa are most notably linked to the political instability in the Horn of Africa. Largely, 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.

Maritime routes within the region remain critical to global maritime trade, which makes the Gulf of Aden and Horn of Africa hotspots for attacks. A number of incidents were recorded off the coast of Somalia in 2017.¹² These incidents demonstrate that Somali pirates still have the capability and intent to launch attacks hundreds of miles from the coastline.

MARITIME ROUTES WITHIN THE REGION REMAIN CRITICAL TO GLOBAL MARITIME TRADE, WHICH MAKES THE GULF OF ADEN AND HORN OF AFRICA HOTSPOTS FOR ATTACKS

Also, up until June 2018, there has been an increase in the number of attempted attacks off the coast of Somalia with the pirates attempting opportunistic attacks on slow moving vessels.¹³

Among the associated offences committed by those involved in maritime piracy are illegal immigration, kidnapping/illegal imprisonment, trafficking in human beings, assault/maltreatment, hijacking of means of transport, threats, aggravated theft, and various firearms offences. This indicates the greater range of activities present in this criminal market including the connectivity of groups to arms supplies. It is highly likely that criminal syndicates active in this criminal market have capacities far beyond coastal crimes.

For instance, available data indicates that the terrorist organization AL-SHABAAB has been allegedly linked to maritime piracy incidents.¹⁴

The coast of Eastern Africa is the region most affected by or linked to maritime piracy in that part of the continent. 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.¹⁵

Overall, this criminal market continues to pose a threat and significant harm to the region. It also has residual or long-term effects on the economy, by upsetting major shipping routes and local economies or development efforts. This crime is rooted in political instability, and in some instances could be linked to providing material support to terrorist and other criminal organizations. It is estimated to remain a criminal market in the near future. It is also linked to and drives organized violence and terrorism, narcotics and human trafficking, and the trade in a range of illicit or stolen goods.

Organized Violence for Profit

Beyond the use of violence in maritime piracy, there is a range of other organized violence activities undertaken by both criminal organizations and politically-motivated or extremist groups/proxy gangs across Eastern Africa. These groups and gangs pose a significant threat to public safety and security. This section covers the most notable trends in terrorism, and explores the subject of systemic violence used as a tool by organized crime, when it is motivated by ideology or profits. Also included in this section are other violent crimes such as kidnapping for ransom, assassination, extortion, threats, and intimidation.

Kidnapping for Ransom and Extortion

Although not widely reported, kidnapping for ransom remains an ongoing criminal threat in the region, one that is estimated to be on the rise. Several cases from the region suggest a potential transnational nature of this crime in the Eastern African region. This criminal market is ongoing and often controlled by syndicated criminal elements. Kidnapping for ransom is estimated to be a widespread market for organized crime, inciting violence across Eastern Africa.

Several cases of kidnapping for ransom from the region involve alleged operatives and leaders of organized criminal groups with links to terrorist organizations, such as AL-QAIDA, ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND THE LEVANT (ISIL), and AL-SHABAAB. In some areas, the

MAGAFE NETWORK emerged as an active syndicate in kidnapping for ransom and human trafficking with alleged links to the ISIL.¹⁶ In a case from 2014/2015, an alleged leader of African foreign fighters for AL-SHABAAB was found to be targeting churches, tourists, and several other establishments. This leader was reportedly wanted for recruiting Kenyan youth in AL-SHABAAB in addition to kidnapping foreigners and demanding ransom. Several organized criminal groups appear to be involved in this type of organized violence in the region, also have been found to link to the ALI ZWAHILA GROUP, ANSARU, HOBYO-HARADHERE PIRACY NETWORK, LAASQORAY ACTION GROUP, MAGAFE NETWORK, MARKA GROUP, and the NATIONAL VOLUNTEER COAST GUARD AND PUNTLAND GROUP.¹⁷

Perpetrators involved in the crime of kidnapping and ransoms are closely related to the groups carrying out extortion schemes. Regarding extortions, available data suggests that extortion is fairly widespread in Eastern Africa, with cases detected in most of the countries of the region. In some Eastern African countries, there have been cases involving the impersonation of police or officials, noting in one case the impersonation of an Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission official for the purpose of extortion.¹⁸

Cases of extortion may also involve individuals from the private sector including, lawyers, journalists, and teachers with few cases of impersonation. Among the actors involved in extortion in the region is a number of well-known organized criminal groups, including, AL-JIHAD, KURDISTAN WORKERS' PARTY, WAKALI KWANZA, RUD URUNANA, BOKO HARAM, GAMA'A AL-ISLAMIYA, HAMAS, HEZBOLLAH, and PALESTINE ISLAMIC JIHAD-SHAQAQI FACTION.¹⁹

Kidnapping, ransom, and extortion are on the rise in the region with information indicating a growing spread of organized violence in Eastern Africa. This is an issue affecting many Eastern African countries. It is estimated that this activity will likely continue to grow in some jurisdictions, alongside terrorist incidents.

ATM Attacks and Cash-in-Transit Heists

Among the systemically violent organized crime activities profiled in this report is attacking or bombing Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), which remains a continuing concern for almost all countries in the region. Whilst ATM attacks in the past were mainly conducted with the modus operandi known as “skimming”²⁰, now, syndicates are using more aggressive and direct tactics to target cash or high value items directly. ATM burglary and ram raids are the most common tactic employed. Syndicates will attack an ATM by either pulling it from its foundation (often using a ram raid) or will target the safe in-situ (burglary). The attacks can be carried out by force, by using explosives or gas. In addition, ATM malware and black box attacks are another common tactic used by crime syndicates. Attackers will gain access to the ATM with the use of a universal key or by violence, by targeting persons (i.e. bank employees) who have access (linking to the above-mentioned kidnaping and extortion activities), and then syndicates will take control of the ATM system, and either send cash or conduct withdrawals.

Closely related to these violent activities is a growing trend of ‘cash-in-transit’ heists that are increasingly violent and involve a wide variety of weapons. Syndicates would use a range of weapons, including various small arms such as automatic rifles as well as explosives, to target cash-in-transit, or armoured cars, either in the open or at more vulnerable points (stops and deliveries). It is estimated that these crimes will continue to increase and the level of violence used will continue to be used as a common tactic. This poses significant risk and threat to bank employees, armoured car companies, and communities in general.

Financial Crimes and Fraud

Reports from the Eastern African region show that credit card fraud, ATM attacks, malware, cyber-attacks on financial institutions, and counterfeit currency are but a few of the major financial crimes occurring in the region. Estimates show that these types of crimes are the main detected schemes in which syndicates are involved. Most likely, they are the most substantial financial crime issues, given the total illicit profits earned, and the harm they

have on the economy and on development goals. The following outlines the major financial crimes and fraud crime elements detected across the region, but is not inclusive of all financial crimes and frauds occurring in Eastern Africa.

Frauds Targeting Financial Institutions

Crime syndicates are targeting financial institutions across Eastern Africa directly to obtain illicit funds. Simple check fraud cases are ongoing in the region, as well as targeting of credit cards or point of sale machines. Check frauds and credit card skimming are suspected to be on the rise, especially the latter, increasing with the growing number of point of sale machines in use and the continuous development of financial infrastructure in the region.

Although suspected to be highly underreported when compared to other data sources, cases of fraud are spread across several Eastern African countries, which suggests a regional trend which impact is on the rise.

Cases from recent years suggest the cross-border links when it comes to fraud and financial crimes between Eastern African countries and some European countries.

Various credit or bankcard frauds have been detected throughout the region. Card-present fraud, card-not-present fraud, and other offences relating to payment systems are noted. In the case of card-present frauds, when a physical card is present, this indicates that a card has either been stolen or duplicated, which would suggest links between the fraud and either robberies or theft, or alternatively reveals higher-levels of sophistication amongst groups who may be able to manufacture cards. Card-not-present means that the fraud leverages only the card number or details, which is often committed online for purchases, suggesting the skimming or theft of card information only. This type of fraud indicates either that the card details have again been stolen or skimmed from a point-of-sale (swipe) device, ATMs, or via online schemes, which demonstrates a certain level of sophistication.²¹

Cyber-Attacks and Hacks on Financial Institutions

The unprecedented “Bangladesh bank heist” in February 2016 is one of the biggest and most impressive cyber-crime attacks targeting banks and financial institutions in recent history. The criminal syndicate responsible for this attack managed to steal millions in USD. It involved hacking the Bangladesh Central Bank’s internal information system and issuing fraudulent SWIFT orders to withdraw money from the banking institution.²²

Whilst this incident is public due to the significant media coverage, other cyber-attacks and hacks targeting banks and financial institutions have not received similar coverage with some of them not being released to the public. In those cases, criminals managed to get access the bank’s 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.

Counterfeit Currency

Counterfeit currency cases are on the rise in many Eastern African countries. Large amounts of counterfeit currency were found on several national markets. It is likely that the counterfeit currency will continue and pose a real risk to economic and money market stability in the future. Available data suggests that financial crime syndicates active in counterfeiting currency tend to link some countries from the region to other parts of the continent, such as West and Central Africa. This suggests that counterfeit currency syndicates in Africa are highly connected, with several networks active in this crime area.²³

Environmental Crimes

Environmental crimes are a priority for most countries in the Eastern African region, as these crimes pose great risk to various species and the different ecosystems found across the region. The poaching of a range of animal species and the exploitation of natural resources that is taking place in the region has a severe impact not just on the environment, but also on development efforts and the economy. These crimes continue to occur across the region, with reported incidents detected in every

country. These crimes yield large profits for the region’s crime syndicates, and are typically transnational. They are often linked to public sector corruption,²⁴ as well as a variety of other crime-types.

Environmental crimes link most countries in the region together, and the region to the world. Environmental crimes cover a wide variety of criminal offences, but for Eastern Africa, this criminal market may be broken down into wildlife crimes and natural resource crimes (exploitation). Wildlife crimes section covers the poaching of various animal species. As for the natural resource crimes section, it covers the exploitation of various natural resources in the region and pollution crimes.

Wildlife Trafficking and Poaching

The systemic poaching of rhinos for their horns and elephants for their ivory tusks and hides are among the most notable environmental crime issues in Eastern Africa. Yet, poachers and poaching syndicates also target a range of other species for profit. Pangolins are poached for their unique scales, hippos are poached for their tusks, lions for the paws; in addition to a host of other game that are poached for their wild meat, bones, hides, and other parts. These crimes even extend offshore, with illegal fishing, depleting ocean stocks and harming the ocean’s ecosystems.

The various poaching crimes detected in Eastern Africa are covered below, with a focus on elephant, rhino, pangolin, and ape poaching; illegal fishing is also covered further in this section. Beyond the aforementioned animals, the systemic poaching of all animals is also a growing wildlife crime issue. Donkeys, wild game, and a range of both domesticated and wild animals are poached through the region. However, the primary endangered animals are profiled herein to highlight key elements of the trade in wildlife parts.

Elephant/Ivory Poaching

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 continued to decrease and dropped to pre-2008 levels, with a significant decline seen in Eastern Africa. Nonetheless, the region experienced the

highest level of seizures of illegally traded elephant ivory by weight since commercial international trade was banned by CITES in 1989. This indicated that increased police action might be having an impact on this crime area.

There is a growing concern that ivory processing is occurring in Africa by Asian nationals, rather than shipments of the raw material to Asia for processing there.²⁵ This is likely leading to a decrease in detection rates, despite the trade in ivory persisting, and even potentially growing. This involves smaller volumes of worked ivory carried through air check-in and carry-on luggage or couriers. This may be a result of crime syndicates adapting to law enforcement and regulatory agency efforts and interdiction.

According to available data, the main transit routes for ivory from Eastern Africa originates in the region with a final destination of Eastern and Southeast Asia. Yet as luxury items, elephant ivory may also be trafficked to anywhere in the world for use in the manufacturing of a range of goods, such as jewellery, furniture, and ornaments. It may also be transited onward, or less often routed through other international jurisdictions outside of Asia. This trade extends beyond Asia and is global in scope.

Over the course of 2017, several seizures of large volumes of elephant ivory tusks occurred in the Eastern African region, which shows that this trade is still fully operating, and when operations look for illicit goods, they are often found.

Seaports in Eastern African coast have been identified as major sources and transit points for elephant ivory poaching.²⁶ In recent years, a number of seizures have been made at the port of Mombasa for example.

In addition, in recent years, there have been seizures in Thailand and Singapore of elephant ivory that can be traced to the Eastern African coastal countries. It is suspected that organized criminal networks in the region are facilitating the transfer of ivory out of Eastern Africa into Asia.²⁷

Eastern African countries with no seaports also witness elephant ivory trafficking, with some of these countries being destinations for the

packaging of illicit cargo and transit to various international markets. Poaching of elephants in some parts of Eastern Africa is reportedly limited, yet, the trade is noted to be highly connected to the rest of the region.

Some Eastern African International airports form significant transit points for smaller scale ivory trafficking activities sourced to various countries in Eastern Africa. In 2016 for example, South Sudan seized elephant ivory that was being trafficked through the Bole International airport, which further underlines the regional aspect of this issue.²⁸

According to available information, it is widely suspected that established organized criminal groups, involving several family networks, are coordinating elephant ivory trafficking from Eastern Africa to Asia. Mid-level Eastern African traders will direct, finance, and arm local poachers, having obtained arms and ammunition from conflict-plagued zones. Poachers sell their elephant ivory to mid-level traders, often in third party countries, who will then transport the ivory to smugglers who will then sell it to individuals responsible for large consignment shipments, for transport onto major cities in Eastern Africa and then abroad. This greatly limits the ability to interdict and to detect the entire illicit organization's structure.

*POACHERS SELL THEIR IVORY TO
MID-LEVEL TRADERS, OFTEN IN
THIRD PARTY COUNTRIES, WHO
WILL THEN TRANSPORT THE IVORY
TO SMUGGLERS*

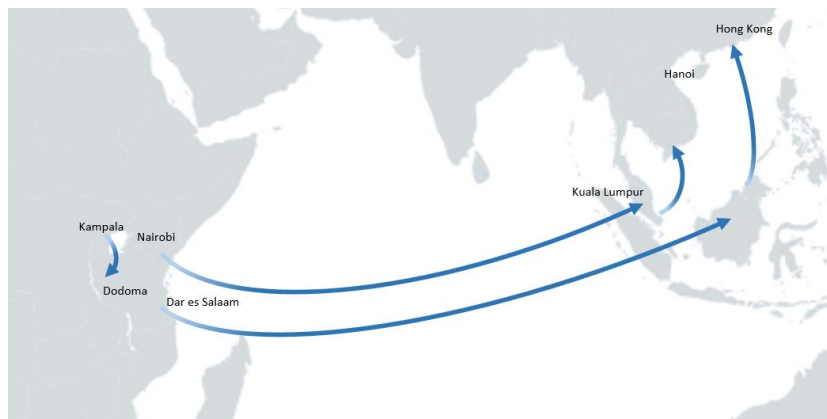
Other data suggests that in some Eastern Africa countries, detected organized crime groups are mainly involved in elephant ivory trafficking and elephant poaching with mostly individuals from the concerned country carrying out the criminal acts. Most activities of these individuals seem to be focused in the concerned country with no clear links to transnational actors, yet they are suspected. The arrest of a ringleader of an ivory trafficking and elephant poaching network, in direct connection with one of the crime syndicates run by a key facilitator known as the "Queen of Ivory", and reportedly involved in a

large number of poaching syndicates across the Eastern African region²⁹, indicates the existence of links between various rings and syndicates across the continent. These transnational connections in addition to specific cases of trafficking between African countries suggest the continuous growth of criminal organizations in this area.

Other cases suggest the existence of trafficking routes with Asia.³⁰

consignments across and out of Africa via major sea and airports to Asia. Various private companies owned by many of these key facilitators may also be used to launder money.

It is widely suspected that established organized criminal groups, involving several family networks, coordinate rhino horn trafficking from Eastern Africa to Asia. Activities are often found to be financed by Asia through various Asian nationals residing in Africa. Similarly to the trade in elephant ivory,



Map 1: Main trafficking routes for Ivory

Rhino/Horn Poaching

Eastern African countries could also be source and transit countries for rhino poaching in Africa.³¹ However, in 2018, the Kenyan Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife announced that the country is experiencing a sharp decline in elephant and rhino poaching, reportedly due to government efforts to protect national parks and game reserves that began in 2012. The passing of a wildlife law in 2014 enhanced penalties for those convicted of poaching and engaging in illicit trade in protected wildlife species.³² Despite this decrease in the overall numbers, and since stock are more protected, syndicates continue to target rhinos, where and when possible, and the trade remains ongoing.

Networks operating in the poaching of rhino horn make large profits by smuggling horns to international markets. It is suspected that African as well as Asian residents in a number of countries across the region are involved in the trafficking of horn consignments. They use their businesses in Africa to facilitate the transportation of the accumulated

transportation continues by land to the coastal Eastern African countries directly or via other countries. Some law enforcement or border officials may even be paid to facilitate transportation across international borders.

Apes, Gorillas, and Other Monkey Poaching

Another major animal poached, trafficked, and traded alive is the great ape and related species. This is a major Eastern African issue, as endangered apes bonobos, chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans are poached. The illegal poaching and trafficking of these animals is driven by the demand for bush-meat, traditional African medicines, and the market for live animals for a variety of other illicit market reasons (i.e. exotic pet collecting, illicit breeding centers, zoos, amusement parks, and circuses). The Eastern Gorilla is now numbering fewer than 5,000 animals. Several Eastern African countries are reported to be source and transit countries in the trafficking of great apes.³³

Pangolin Poaching

Pangolins are one of the most trafficked mammals in the region. They have become an endangered species. In some regions, local populations of the animal have disappeared, and in other areas, their numbers are critically low. They are especially wanted for their scales, but also for their skin and meat, and are viewed as an exotic and delicacy product. Due to the resulting shortage, prices for pangolin are rising sharply on the illicit market (i.e. several thousand dollars per kilogram in some Asian countries).³⁴ Some Eastern African countries often play the role of collection or transit points for pangolin scales originating from Central and Western African countries. The scales are typically destined for Asia. Pangolin skins and scales are usually seized along with parts of other animals and are transported and concealed in a variety of ways. The trade in pangolin is ongoing.³⁵

Some Eastern African authorities have identified a number of challenges to combatting this type of trafficking, including smugglers being responsive to law enforcement and continually changing smuggling routes and methods.

Illegal Fishing

According to available data, illegal fishing is widespread along the Eastern coast of Africa, with authorities detecting and interdicting illegal fishing vessels each year.³⁶ Despite being underreported in some countries, this crime area is largely suspected to be a regional issue, occurring both inland, in fresh water lakes, and also off the Eastern coast. The extent of illegal fishing in Tanganyika Lake and other lakes in the country is large, due to the high levels of demand and economic profit. However, the extent of this activity has been recently decreasing because of the work of local authorities in fighting this crime.³⁷

In some cases, the fish are then illegally exported to other parts of the continent. Other Eastern African countries have witnessed an increase in illegal fishing cases over that past few years. There is also an estimated increase in the use of explosives for illegal fishing, suggesting criminal logistics and supply of explosives.³⁸

Natural Resource Crimes

Another aspect of environmental crimes is natural resource crimes or natural resource exploitation. Often illicit extraction of natural resources, bid rigging, contract manipulation, or corruption in the natural resource sector in general is hard to link directly with organized crime, but the exploitation of natural resources through corrupt practices is widely suspected across the region.³⁹ Although exploitation of natural resources is likely a significant crime in the region, limited information is available on the subject. However, illegal logging and illegal polluting or dumping of hazardous waste is detected in the region and is having a severe impact on the environment.

Illegal Logging

Many Eastern African countries have identified illegal logging as a priority crime area. Some countries in the region reported a very high and increasing threat in relation to this crime, with increasing numbers of illegal logging cases in recent years as well as a growing number of persons arrested for this crime. In addition, there was an increase in the volume of timber seized in some parts of the region. The main concealment and smuggling methods reported include, mixing with other forestry products, false declaration and use of forged travel documents.⁴⁰ Illegal logging in the region is reportedly mainly for local wood consumption, and is undertaken by individuals motivated by high economic gains and a high demand for household energy consumption, which is fed through inexpensive illicit wood products. In addition, it is reported that some commit this crime for the purpose of making wooden furniture and building houses. Data also indicates that this crime is sometimes committed by local persons primarily engaged in making charcoal⁴¹ and in some cases of trees (sandalwood), used in the perfumery business.⁴²

Eucalyptus, *Mahogany*, *Teak* *Sandalwood*, *Mkula*, and a range of other trees species are reported as the most affected by illegal logging throughout the region. Major trafficking routes for moving illegal timber note Central Africa. Trafficking routes are reported between Central and Eastern Africa as well as from the Eastern African coast into the rest of the region and Asia. Please see the following map.



Map 2: Trafficking routes for illegal logging in the region

In addition, tied to illicit logging is the illicit manufacturing and trade in charcoal. The *combretum* species that give one of the highest qualities of charcoal is the primary source of household energy in Africa, which is also in demand in a number of Middle Eastern countries. Since strengthening legislations on deforestation, more demand has been placed on this charcoal type from Eastern Africa.⁴³ It is estimated that this trade is ongoing.

The terrorist group AL-SHABAAB remains a major exporter of illegal charcoal from Somalia. In November 2017, the United Nations Security Council stated that AL-SHABAAB group continues to derive revenues from charcoal as well as from natural resources in Somalia, which earns AL-SHABAAB at least USD 10 million a year.⁴⁴ Charcoal is a commodity often transported in bags and sometimes mixed with other goods such as sugar. In order to smuggle the charcoal, criminals sometimes rely on forged authorizations, facilitated by corruption.⁴⁵

Pollution Crimes

Despite being underreported, few Eastern African countries reported concerns regarding pollution crimes, with some describing it as a very high and significantly increasing threat. The most frequent pollution-related crimes affecting the countries in the region include waste, sewage and chemical waste from oil mining companies, among other crimes. Several cases of illegal disposal of electronic

and chemical waste were detected in the region. The aforementioned toxic products originate from various African as well as Asian countries, (i.e. generators, water bottles and cans, plastic bags and soft drinks bottles).

Narcotics Trafficking

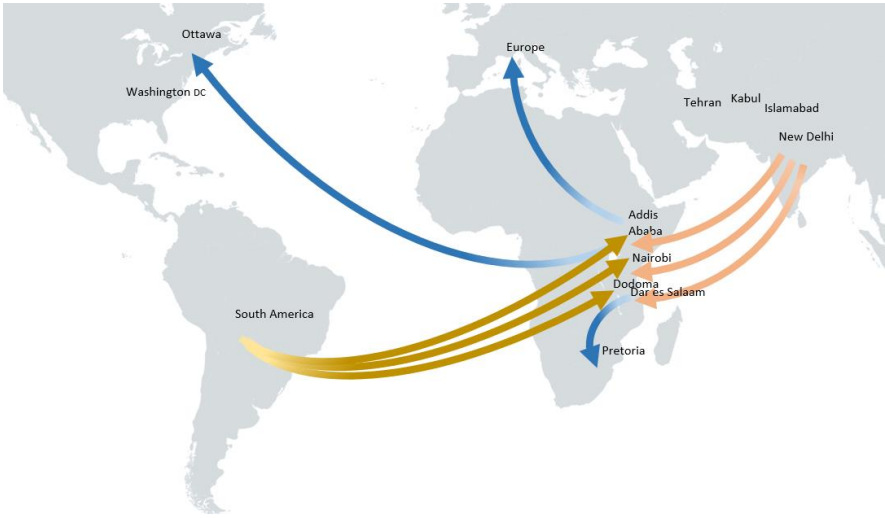
Eastern Africa continues to experience an upsurge in drug trafficking and abuse, with nearly all countries in the region reporting drug-related crimes to be a significant issue. Drug trafficking poses a major organized crime threat to the region, impacts communities, not just in terms of substance abuse, but also as a driver of violence and other related crimes (i.e. theft, prostitution, human trafficking, etc.). Moreover, Eastern Africa is also suspected to be growing as a transshipment hub for a number of internationally trafficked drug commodities; and the drug trade continues to grow its connectivity to the rest of the continent and world via the region. Eastern Africa is affected by a range of drug commodities, noting cannabis, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, khat, synthetic drugs, and both counterfeited and diverted pharmaceuticals. All of which are illicitly traded, trafficked, and manufactured in the region.

Available data highlights a large number of factors that are driving drug trafficking in Eastern Africa. The same issues that are contributing to the spread of a range of crimes are fuelling the trade in illicit narcotics. Factors such as the high profit margins, porous borders, seaports, and expansion of new international airlines as well as corruption, are enriching this trade throughout the region. Coastal Eastern African countries continue to be major transit routes due to the easy access they provide to harbors and airports. Drug traffickers tend to use the Eastern African coast as their open transit route for illicit drug trafficking from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, India, Brazil, Bolivia and Peru with destinations including South Africa, Europe, the United States and Asia. Also, Eastern African ports remain strategic points for drug trafficking, such as the Mombasa port. Other Eastern African countries continue to be major transit points for drug trafficking from Latin America and the Middle East to Europe and the United States. Apart from the strategic geographical location which makes some countries in the region more attractive to traffickers than others, the flight

routes operated by some airlines have created favorable conditions for both heroin and cocaine trafficking in Eastern Africa. The large seizure of cocaine in Djibouti (500kg) in 2017 highlights the importance of this country as a regional drug trafficking transit point.⁴⁶

The common reported methods of concealment used by drug traffickers are the use of drug couriers who ingest or swallow various drugs or who use body packs. There is also the concealing of drugs in false compartments of bags and suitcases. Once on land, drugs may move across borders concealed in false compartments in vehicles. Drugs often commingle with legitimate items as well, such as wine, tea or coffee shipments, or are concealed in a variety of manufactured products.

In some of the coastal Eastern African countries, the quantity of seized heroin has significantly increased in recent years, suggesting transshipment routes via these regions. Heroin has been seized aboard fishing vessels, a type of trade that is suspected to be linked to Iranian organized crime elements.⁴⁷ Some of these countries have reported a decrease in the quantity of seized heroin in recent years, however, this is suspected to largely be related to lack of prioritization, given the many seizures that took place recently off the Eastern African Coast. For instance, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report 2017, an increased use of opioids (primarily reflecting heroin use) was reported in Tanzania in 2015. Tanzania forms part of a major transshipment route for heroin entering the region, but it is not a major end market for consumption of this opiate.⁴⁸



Map 3: Drug trafficking routes in and out of the Eastern African region

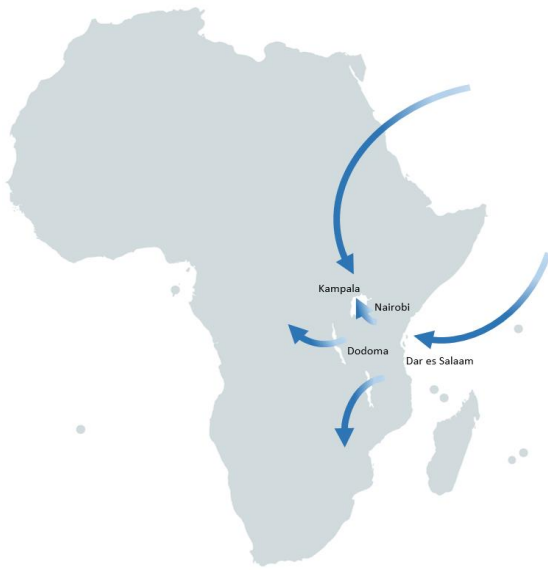
Heroin

Eastern Africa is a transit and destination zone for a range of opiates and opioids, noting heroin as a growing opiate that is being trafficked into the region, and transshipped to other international jurisdictions via Eastern Africa.

The region remains a major transit route for Afghanistan heroin, further emphasized by the large seizure made by Seychelles authorities in 2016, suspected to be on route to the region. Heroin consumption has reportedly been growing in some parts of the region, in particular on the Eastern African coast.

Furthermore, the injection of heroin is on the rise in other places in the region, in addition to an increase of trafficking being reported since 2013.

During the period between 2016 and 2017, international airports in the region witnessed various seizures of heroin. The heroin transitions the area both for domestic consumption and transshipment. The flight routes in some Eastern African countries have created favorable conditions for trafficking heroin from the Asian continent to Western Africa and Europe via the region.



Map 4: Heroin trafficking routes into and out of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania

Heroin has been detected to be arriving from Afghanistan, via Pakistan, through the port of Mombasa for instance, into the region. This heroin has also been found to be transshipped into Europe.^{49/50}

This trade has been detected in many Eastern African countries. The heroin trade detected in the region could be linked to elements in Syria and other states in the Middle East, indicating different syndicates operating trans-continently.⁵¹

Cocaine



- Liquid cocaine in condoms seized in Hong Kong
- Sao Paulo- Addis Ababa- Hong Kong
- Liquid cocaine is harder to detect in x-rays

Eastern Africa remains a transit and destination region for cocaine on route from South America to Europe, Asia and beyond. This was lately highlighted by recent large seizures in Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia. Cocaine transits from South America via the region to Europe, Asia and beyond.⁵² Some ports in the region are strategic points, such as the Port of Djibouti that serves Djibouti and Ethiopia and is connected to the latter by high-speed rail.

Many countries in the region have experienced an increase in cocaine seizures in recent years, air was the main mode of transport followed by land.

In Ethiopia for example, cocaine trafficking is rapidly increasing due to direct flights from Sao Paulo, Brazil to Addis Ababa. The flight routes have created favorable conditions for trafficking cocaine from South America to Asia and Europe via Addis Ababa.⁵³

Cocaine has been found concealed in foodstuffs, noting concealment in sugar containers in some seizures.⁵⁴ Furthermore, traffickers would use popular brand names to conceal the drugs, to avert suspicion. Various cocaine trafficking routes have been identified by the member countries which suggest a continental trade, such as connections with West Africa as well as direct connections to South America.

Cannabis

Eastern Africa is highly impacted by the consumption and trafficking of cannabis, which is widely cultivated and remains the most commonly used drug in the region.

The trafficking of cannabis throughout the region is complex with almost every country in the region connected to the next in some way.

Methamphetamine and Amphetamines

Methamphetamine continues to be of interest in the region, with the recent discovery of a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory in Uganda.

Eastern Africa is a destination for amphetamine. In May 2017, authorities found a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory in Uganda, following the arrest of two Ugandan nationals in Kenya.⁵⁵ In addition, other Eastern African countries have reported an increase in methamphetamine seizures in recent years.

The consumption and transit of *Captagon* into the Middle East is a newly identified trend that is rapidly growing.⁵⁶ This comes following the seizure of *Captagon* tablets at Khartoum International airport, Sudan in 2016, concealed in phone chargers. It is highly probable that the tablets were in transit to the Middle East.⁵⁷ Considering that *Captagon* was the most

popular narcotic in the Arabian peninsula in 2017, and is currently a popular drug in Western Asia and allegedly used by militant groups in Syria, this development warrants further monitoring. According to the UNODC World Drug report 2017, no route via Eastern Africa has been identified for Ecstasy trafficking between 2012 and 2015.⁵⁸

Khat

Khat⁵⁹ continues to be an issue for some countries in Eastern Africa. Large seizures were reported in many countries in the region, with many indicating an increase in the number of cases reported.

In recent years, Uganda seized several kilograms of khat, including, in one case, 32 kg of khat at Entebbe International Airport in 2017.⁶⁰ This indicates that the drug is a constant aspect of the narcotics trade in the region. Because this drug is not always a priority for law enforcement due to various cultural acceptance of the drug in several jurisdictions, numbers will continue to fluctuate across the region, obscuring whether it is an increasing or decreasing issue. Khat remains a culture element in countries such as Sudan and South Sudan.

Precursors, Controlled Substances, and Illicit Pharmaceuticals

Controlled drugs including Diazepam, Ephedrine/Pseudoephedrine, Pethidine, Morphine and Tramadol have been identified as substances subject to abuse in the region.

In some parts of Eastern Africa, drug dealers have focused on trafficking chemical precursors as a new means of evading law enforcement. Drug dealers have also used them to manufacture illicit drugs. Many law enforcement officers have limited knowledge of the new and emerging chemical precursors, which poses a significant challenge to these countries' response to the problem, as drug dealers often choose to traffic specifically precursors in order to avoid and/or confuse police officers.

Some countries reported a limited number of seizures of Ephedrine in recent years, however, reports show the emergence of new trends of transportation of this drug in the region. Moreover, some cases demonstrate a link in the trafficking of Ephedrine between Eastern Africa

and regions such as the United States and Canada. Some countries report Diazepam, often smuggled from neighboring countries, as the most commonly abused and smuggled drug. Other commonly trafficked and abused substances include Pethidine and Morphine.

Tramadol also emerges as a major trafficked drug in Eastern Africa, which is smuggled mostly from the Middle East via or towards the region. In addition, the number of seized precursors (ephedrine/pseudoephedrine) has increased in recent years in the Eastern African region.

Organized Theft and Armed Robbery

There is a major aspect of organized crime in the region that focuses on organized theft and various types of robbery. Syndicates are increasingly involved in the theft of a range of high-value goods for financial gain. The demand for a range of high-value goods is driving an illicit market in the trade of livestock, vehicles, works of art and cultural heritage, in addition to other goods, such as ferrous and nonferrous metals.

According to available data, cases of theft and armed robbery have been reported consistently in the region to date.

Stock Theft

Stock theft, also referred to often as 'cattle rustling' continues to affect the Eastern African region. Livestock theft, a crime targeting various rural areas in many countries, is the theft of cattle, sheep, goats or big game (for products other than those being systemically poached for special items like horns or ivory). It is a major criminality occurring outside urban centers.

These crimes committed in the rural areas across the region generate significant profits for syndicates or local offenders involved. They may be transnational, as they often occur near borders, and are controlled at times by crime syndicates who control the demand. This criminality has a significant impact on the livelihood and development of many rural areas. Reports show that it is a crime often driven by poverty and various social/cultural issues.

In some Eastern African countries, high numbers of cattle rustling cases, as well as stolen and recovered cattle cases were registered. This crime often covers a range of livestock that directly threatens economic viability in a number of rural areas. The existence of this crime is suspected across the entire region.

Groups or syndicates involved in stock theft are reportedly operating mostly at a local/national level, with some limited cross-border activity, but this likely reflects reporting capacity, and the limited ability to detect transnational syndicates active in this crime area. The crime is generally not perceived as organized, but rather, committed by various conflicting and opportunistic tribes. However, given the large volume of cases detected, there needs to be an illicit market active in order to buy, sell, and trade the range of livestock. Criminal organized groups in one country are reportedly connecting with criminals in neighboring countries, which suggests some level of transnational syndicate activity.

The modus operandi of some offenders active in stock theft in Eastern Africa suggests this crime typically involves the use of weapons. The use of these weapons also suggests some level of syndicate activity, which are able to supply weapons to local offenders. They also travel mostly on foot, rarely by vehicle, suggesting limited resources at local levels, and ties to the local communities in which they operate.

Trafficking in Stolen Motor Vehicles (SMVs)

Stolen motor vehicles (SMVs) is an ongoing illicit market in Eastern Africa. The region remains a source, transit and destination for stolen motor vehicles (SMVs), with most of the seized/recovered vehicles being mainly of Japanese, European and American origins (Toyota being the most commonly reported manufacturer).⁶¹ Methods of theft include use of duplicate keys, diversion of hired vehicles to foreign countries and robbery at gunpoint/carjacking. Often, cars from outside the region are shipped as second-hand vehicles into the region, using falsified documentation while those stolen within the region are driven across various borders for resale throughout the Eastern Africa region.⁶²



Map 5: Trafficking routes for stolen motor vehicles in Eastern Africa

Eastern Africa is arguably a major global hub for illegal importation of stolen cars originating from UK, Japan, Australia and South Africa, due to the right hand driving system adopted in some countries in the region.

Available information shows that SMV trafficking in Eastern Africa is both an international as well as a regional phenomenon. Syndicates involved in the trafficking of motor vehicles originate also from across the region, which suggests that there are local cells operating in all jurisdictions across Eastern Africa.

Some of the current methods of motor vehicle theft include car cloning, when the identification numbers (VIN) of stolen vehicles are replaced with VIN numbers of non-stolen vehicles. Stolen vehicles, often those stolen locally, are broken down into spare parts.

Works of art/cultural property crimes

Works of art/cultural property crimes are a lower threat generally due to the lower rates of violence, yet this trade is ongoing, has the potential for money laundering, and may form aspects of various financial crimes. In addition, works of art can be used as a remittance system to move significant volumes of illicit wealth. Works of art/cultural property crimes are detected in several Eastern African countries, with some of them emerging as source, transit and destination countries for work of art thefts.

Some archeological items and sculptures from the region are destined for European and Middle Eastern countries. An underreporting of this crime in the region could be noted.

Human Trafficking and Illegal Immigration

The movement and exploitation of people in Eastern Africa is a consistent and persistent criminal threat. Ongoing in the region is the mass movement of persons, both fleeing armed conflict and seeking out greater economic opportunities. Intrinsicly linked to this mass movement or irregular migration of persons is the exploitation of vulnerable populations for material gain by criminal organizations or syndicates. It is estimated that increasingly, criminal organizations and syndicates are involved in all dimensions of these activities.

Covered in this section is the overall crime issue of trafficking in human beings, largely for labor or sexual exploitation. Also noted is the trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal. This crime area has been listed in the region as an emerging crime priority, and has taken on various dimensions that go beyond exploitation, including the use of direct violence to fuel a regional demand. Finally, there is the issue of illegal immigration or migration, or people smuggling. People smuggling is separate and distinct from human trafficking but included in this area as it is often interrelated and dealt with in overlapping ways by law enforcement.

Trafficking in Human Beings

Eastern Africa is both a source and transit area for trafficking in human beings (THB), but not as common a destination for persons being trafficked transnationally. As a source, persons are typically trafficked to Europe, the Middle East, or Southern Africa. Typically, men, women and children are trafficked intra-regionally.

Domestic trafficking is largely underreported because of the lack of illegal status of the individuals, although it is largely suspected to be widespread in all member states across the region. Domestic trafficking, especially for women and children, is estimated to be widespread; victims are trafficked for purposes of domestic work, servitude, forced labour and

prostitution. According to available information, most activities in the region are concentrated, but not limited to, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania as source countries for human trafficking.⁶³ This crime has been identified as an ongoing issue by most countries in the region with some reporting an increase in activity.

THB is often committed by international criminal networks that have developed links with corrupt national officials.⁶⁴ THB has been associated with document forgery, fraud, money laundering, tax evasion, smuggling of weapons and drugs. Traffickers are highly dependent on the Internet as part of their modus operandi.⁶⁵

Available information suggests that international trafficking in the region is carried out mainly along predominate prescribed routes. There is the route originating in Eastern Africa and ending in the Gulf States. There is the route that originates in Eastern Africa, passes via North Africa and then reaches the Middle East. In addition, there is the route that links the Eastern region via the Central Mediterranean to Europe. There is also the Southern route that links the Horn of Africa to South Africa.⁶⁶

In recent years, there have been numerous cases of human trafficking reported, linking the Eastern African region to various parts of the world.

Maritime piracy is one of the crimes that was reported in several instances with human trafficking, which suggests a link between the two crimes, especially in the Horn of Africa where maritime piracy is spread.



Map 6: Major routes for trafficking in human being into and out of the Eastern African region

The UN convention on human trafficking identifies the trade in body parts as the other major aspect of this illicit market. The trade in human body parts has been detected in Eastern Africa.

People Smuggling

People smuggling is on the rise in the region as individuals look for better opportunities in foreign countries; and criminals move through porous borders, mostly using falsified documents. Within the region, the distinction remains blurred between trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling, and records show that there are overlapping cases where smuggling becomes trafficking. Human trafficking starts as migrant smuggling, but many people later fall at the hands of human traffickers who take them hostage. Victims are then required to pay for their own release, and many of them are sexually exploited and even killed and their organs taken.⁶⁷

Some of the main trafficking routes link the Eastern African region to the rest of the world, including a route originating in Eastern Africa with final destinations in Europe. Another route originates in the Horn of Africa, noting general smuggling to Europe, the Americas, and other African countries. Other Eastern African countries constitute transit points in the trafficking of Africans into Europe and the Middle East most notably, as well as South Africa, China, Europe and the Gulf countries.

Counterfeit Goods

The illicit manufacturing of a range of commodities and goods is a major organized crime in the region; yet it is significantly underreported. When compared to other criminal markets, the counterfeiting of goods is not represented due to limited reporting, limited recognition of the harm this crime causes, regulatory issues, and the common perspective in many regional jurisdictions that this is a victimless criminality.

The manufacturing of a range of items contrary to copyright or patent laws or in contravention of safety regulations, poses a direct risk to the public and also has a significant effect on economic performance and growth. Sub-par or pirated goods may be manufactured in facilities that do not meet health standards or may be laced with poisons or toxins. These same products are sold below true market value and undermine the value of legitimate goods, lowering quality standards over time. The two major aspects of this criminal market for this report cover counterfeit medicines and other counterfeited goods more generally.

Counterfeit Medicines

The counterfeiting of various medicines and pharmaceuticals is suspected to be a growing issue in the Eastern Africa region. According to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), counterfeit pharmaceuticals pose a direct health threat as they may be contaminated or contain the wrong or no active ingredients. In addition, “they could have the right active ingredients but at the wrong dose”, posing a different life threatening issue.⁶⁸

In 2016, the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the International Institute for Research against Counterfeit Medicines (IRACM) initiated a joint operation to target counterfeit medicines across Africa. The operation resulted in a record seizure of illicit medicines at the borders, suggesting a continental trade. The operation involved 16 African countries, including Kenya and Tanzania. The biggest interceptions for the region were made in Kenya. The majority of seized medicines were anti-malarial drugs, anti-inflammatory drugs, antibiotics, analgesics, gastro-intestinal medicines, as well as anti-cancer drugs. The port of Mombasa in Kenya is

reportedly a major point of entry for counterfeit and illegal medicines, often found to be arriving from India and China.⁶⁹

According to available information, several regional countries have identified counterfeit medicine as a moderate to high criminal threat. Operation FAGIA OPSON II (December 2016 – February 2017), conducted in coordination with INTERPOL, led to the seizure of large volumes of counterfeit medicines, including in Eastern African countries, worth RWF 140 million (approximately USD 160 000⁷⁰).⁷¹ In addition, during operation USALAMA IV (May 2017), counterfeit medicine were also found in the

counterfeiting is an ongoing crime across the region.⁷³ In addition, during the operation USALAMA IV (2017), counterfeit goods were also seized in the region.

Some regional countries have reported a significant increase in expired and substandard food, beverages and medicines, with some of them playing the role of source and destination countries for such goods, transported through neighboring countries.

Illicit goods, suspected to be sourced largely from China, were reported to be trafficked into the region via the coast.



Map 7: Trafficking routes for illicit goods into and out of the Eastern African region

region.⁷² This suggests that counterfeit medicine constitutes a criminal threat across the region. Common types of counterfeit medicines found in the region are painkillers, such as *Paracetamol*. Counterfeited antibiotics and antimalarial, in addition to various HIV/AIDS medicines, have also been seized or detected. When counterfeited, medical products will not have any active medical ingredients, posing a direct health risk to persons and communities.

Other Counterfeits

The trafficking in illicit goods beyond counterfeit medicines has also been identified as a major crime in the region by many Eastern African countries.

In addition to counterfeit pharmaceuticals, Operation FAGIA OPSON II (2016 / 2017) led to large seizures of counterfeit goods in many Eastern African countries indicating that

Enabling Crimes and Criminal Convergences

This section assesses the links between organized crime and 'enabling crimes' such as the trade in firearms and cybercrime. This

ARM SUPPLIES ARE SUSPECTED TO BE STEADY AND CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE STABLE ACCESS TO WEAPONS IF REQUIRED

section explores how these crimes support and drive various criminal activities in Eastern Africa. Enabling crimes are uncontrolled by a

syndicate or gang, but inevitably empower criminal organizations to grow and prosper. Certain enabling crimes, such as corruption, travel document fraud, and various other financial crimes, are rarely an end in themselves for criminals, but facilitate or drive other crimes. These types of crimes may vary from one region to another, so it is important to assess them because they may be essential areas for law enforcement to combat in order to prevent additional criminal elements from taking hold on the region or growing.

Trade in Small Arms, Light Weapons, and Explosives

The trade in small arms, light weapons, and increasingly, explosives, is a major criminal issue in Eastern Africa as it perpetuates violence and underlies a range of organized crime activities. It is likely an issue for all countries in the region. Firearms used in the commitment of crimes are found across Eastern Africa. In addition, reported incidents suggest that explosives are increasingly becoming a tool of crime syndicates. Criminal organizations are equipped with various weapons to carry out a range of crimes, project violence, and control communities and various segments of the population through force.

Most countries report that illicit weapons move via land, suggesting informal routes

Information suggests that firearms are an ongoing issue in the region. Arms supplies are suspected to be steady and criminal organizations are believed to have stable access to weapons if required. Illicit firearms trafficking is a very high threat.

In some regional countries, illicit firearms trafficking is a major crime that provides access to weapons for terrorist groups and other criminal gangs active in the region.

In Tanzania for example, this phenomenon is now decreasing due to several initiatives, such as the destruction of illicit firearms, verification of civilian firearms owners, in addition to the enactment of *The Firearms and Ammunitions Control Act in 2015 with Regulations in 2016*.

According to available data, there have been several cases of illegal use/trafficking of

firearms reported by member states, suggesting a larger transnational aspect to the trade.



Map 8: Trade in small arms, light weapons and explosives in the Eastern African region

Cybercrime

Many Eastern African countries report increasing numbers of cyber-related crimes. In Eastern Africa, this activity has involved illegal access (hacking), online frauds, card frauds, phishing, cyber-stalking, child pornography, malware, computer enabled terrorism, identity theft, unsolicited messages, violation of intellectual property rights, and the use of internet in commission of a range of other transnational organized crimes in general. Cyber-criminals target the financial services sector including mobile money service providers, web/online services, social media platforms, and a number of e-commerce websites, platforms, and services. Generally, cybercrime is increasingly essential for syndicates to conduct criminal activities in Eastern Africa and this capability will likely continue to grow in the coming years.⁷⁴

Cases from the region mostly relate to financial crimes and telephone fraud (schemes involving the skimming of call credit when responding to an unknown number).⁷⁵

The use of hi-tech equipment by syndicates and gangs has been increasing in the last three years, as more criminal-groups systemically

use mobile phones, computers, and other digital devices to enhance and enable their criminal activities.⁷⁶

Cybercrime cases in the region 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 communications technology. This is a growing issue in the region. A contributing factor in the rise of this criminality in Eastern Africa is 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. There is a general lack of awareness concerning cyber security by the public. This lack of investment and awareness exacerbated by limited capacities to prevent, detect, and investigate cybercrime incidents is further driving this criminality. The capacities that do exist in the region are often not keeping pace with the advancement of technology.

Illicit flows of money and assets

This section covers detected aspects of illicit finance in Eastern Africa as it links to organized crime. As organized crime is ultimately a crime for profit, law enforcement needs to disrupt criminal profits by tracing and preventing the movement of illicit money and assets or the proceeds of crime. This is achieved through the understanding of various trends and patterns of illicit financial and asset flows, so that interdiction strategies can be formulated and carried out effectively. This section explores money-laundering issues in the region as an aspect of those criminal markets highlighted earlier in combination with alternative remittance systems used in the region. Other illicit money movement issues such as the use of mobile money services, including *M-Pesa* and crypto currencies, are discussed in this section as emerging trends.

Many Eastern African countries have recognized money laundering as a priority crime area since crime syndicates are illicitly earning significant profits from all markets outlined, with cases increasing in several countries. Estimates find that money laundering is already

an entrenched and systemic aspect of organized crime in the region.

Estimates found this crime to be significantly transnational, with money laundering schemes frequently including more than one country at a time. Often, money-laundering processes will leverage cross-border flows as a means to obscure or conceal the origin of illicit proceeds.

Many Eastern African countries are working on further developing their financial services sector surveillance systems to detect more money laundering overall. Kenya for instance, has recently amended its Proceeds of Crime and Anti-Money Laundering Act to strengthen the enforcement mechanisms⁷⁷; whereas Uganda and Tanzania have experienced recent major court cases against money laundering, which is establishing the jurisprudence for tackling this crime-type.^{78/79} These as well as other cases, show that efforts are underway to combat this aspect of organized crime more effectively in the region. However, it is still in its initial stages.

As money laundering is an aspect of all criminality for profit, it is likely that this criminality is ongoing and occurring in magnitudes greater than what is discovered or detected.

Various schemes occur across Eastern Africa to launder proceeds of crimes, which are succeeding in circumventing state surveillance processes or other law enforcement detection efforts. The limited reporting on this crime area has resulted in no single scheme being noted as predominate or emerging.

*ATOP MONEY LAUNDERING
ISSUES, IN RECENT YEARS, ISSUES
RELATING TO MOBILE BANKING
AND MOBILE MONEY SERVICES
HAVE GROWN SIGNIFICANTLY IN
EASTERN AFRICA*

Atop money laundering issues, in recent years, issues relating to mobile banking and mobile money services has grown significantly in Eastern Africa. Alternative remittance systems

in the region form an aspect of money laundering, and enable criminality. This allows the movement of cash transnationally, and the elimination of the need in some cases to launder the proceeds derived from criminality. In some regional countries, 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. 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 Eastern Africa. A consumer's habits of managing finances is moving away from cash-based processes, towards electronic or digital currencies, especially since their ability to transact anonymously has increased. This has changed the patterns of illicit financial flows away from cash dependency.

The most common mobile money service in Eastern Africa is *M-Pesa*. *M-Pesa* is a mobile phone-based money transfer, allowing users to transact via a mobile phone app. Widely used across Kenya and Tanzania, this service has expanded across most of the region the ability to transact point to point, outside of the traditional financial services sector. The international money transfer capabilities of *M-Pesa* allow users in the region to transfer or receive funds directly across borders, which has made illicit financial flows virtually unproblematic.⁸⁰ Only in some countries are these transactions covered by regulators. In Kenya, they are covered by the Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Act. However, tracking and investigating any suspicious transactions within mobile payment or banking systems remain difficult because of the volume of smaller amount transactions occurring, and the cross-jurisdictional nature of many of these transactions.

Conclusion

The purpose of a threat assessment on serious and organized crime is to identify any organized crime group or activity that could pose a direct danger or threat to any country's continuous safety, security, and development. Threat is an estimate of the intent and capabilities of a

criminal element, and both the intent and capacities of organized crime in the Eastern Africa region were highlighted herein. This report highlights the nature of various networks and syndicates that have demonstrated organized crime intent to continue in a range of criminal market activities and even foster new criminal markets wherever possible. This report also outlines various capacities of syndicates in carrying out a range of criminal market activities. Overall, organized crime in the region has both the intent and capacity to continue to pose a significant and direct threat to the region.

This analytical report explores what the current detected threat environment looks like in the Eastern African region. This threat assessment outlines the current threats stemming from criminal networks and the criminal markets they foster. This report systemically assesses financial crimes, drug trafficking, wildlife crimes, human trafficking, organized theft and robbery, and organized violence. It looks at the most significant enabling crimes and criminal convergences affecting the region, noting cybercrime, and the trafficking and trade in small arms and light weapons. Finally, it covers illicit flow of money and assets, looking at core money laundering activity that is taking place throughout the region and the way funds move around the region and offshore, outside the framework of money laundering.

In terms of drugs, traffickers appear to have a clear vision of growing cocaine and heroin markets in the region, which enables them to gain higher profits globally. Syndicates will continue to exploit persons across the region for sexual or labor purposes. Organized criminal groups have a desire to continue trafficking in illicit small arms, for the purposes of growing their business and for controlling populations through violence, fear and intimidation. Networks will continue to target wildlife in the region and deliver a range of illicit animal products to both local and foreign markets. Small groups and gangs will continue to grow organized property crime activity, deal in stolen goods such as motor vehicles, metals, and livestock, amongst others, in order to generate local profit on behalf of more sophisticated transnational organized criminal elements. More than all other markets, syndicates, groups, and gangs will continue to grow their

capacities in frauds and a range of financial crimes.

In terms of capacities, syndicates have demonstrated an ability to leverage frauds to carry out an array of criminality. They use cyber capabilities, and can access firearms to drive violence and control. They are able to corrupt the public sector, as well as advantage businesses and the private sectors. As groups grow more sophisticated over time, and learn from law enforcement interventions, they will continue to be involved in more than one criminal market at the same time, maximizing opportunity and profits, while ensuring a resilience to law enforcement actions. They have already used a range of tactics to stay ahead of law enforcement efforts. Groups are aware of and are able to exploit legislative gaps from country to country, and leverage the many jurisdictions found within the Eastern Africa region for criminal gains.

Finally, criminal syndicates operating in Eastern Africa have the intent and capabilities to continue exploiting the region for criminal gain, as well as the intent and capabilities to grow their illicit enterprises in almost every country in the region. If left unchecked by law enforcement, any syndicate operating will continue to grow their markets, as well as exploit people and systems for personal gain. As they grow, their unfair and unscrupulous business practices will hinder legitimate businesses, and deteriorate real economies, while perpetuating corruption. Organized crime has a direct impact on civil society and economic progress and it poses a range of social and economic harm to the Eastern African region.

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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.

► **OUR VISION: "CONNECTING POLICE FOR A SAFER WORLD"**

Our vision is that of a world where each and every law enforcement professional will be able through INTERPOL to securely communicate, share and access vital police information whenever and wherever needed, ensuring the safety of the world's citizens. We constantly provide and promote innovative and cutting-edge solutions to global challenges in policing and security.



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