ATLANTIC FUTURE

SCIENTIFIC PAPER

08

# Significant Trends in Illicit Trafficking: A Macro View of the Problem and Potential Means to Address It

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## ABSTRACT

The following paper provides an evaluation of recent trends relating to weapons, drug, human, and animal trafficking. The resulting conclusions will be scrutinized in order to determine the extent to which these threats impact the broader security environment within the Atlantic space. While trends pertaining to weapons, drug, human, and wildlife trafficking vary in terms of growth, a growing convergence of trafficking, organized crime, and terrorism has emerged. By examining general trends in these illicit industries, in addition to several country-specific and regional cases, a framework for an overall counter-trafficking strategy can be developed. This strategy should be a holistic approach aimed at collectively addressing the various zones of criminal activity as well as integrating synchronized national efforts to curb the threat posed by these trades.

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# 1. Introduction

The illicit movement of weapons, drugs, humans, and wildlife across international borders is a transnational problem that cannot be dealt with through national policies and approaches alone. That said, however, it is not simply a matter of empowering international bodies to address this scourge, but rather synchronizing sanctioned national approaches – implemented with increased resources – to forge a more visible cohesion among various national counter-trafficking strategies. Rising instability, greater technological sophistication, and continued globalization have complicated the 21st century strategic environment. Coping with illicit trafficking has become increasingly complex in an environment ripe for direct, indirect, and deliberate cooperation between trafficking organizations and violent extremist groups.

Atlantic Future is a European Union-funded research project that seeks to analyze fundamental trends in the Atlantic basin and to show how changing economic, energy, security, human, institutional, and environmental links are transforming the wider Atlantic space. Its research focuses on mapping the interconnections between these issues as well as interregional dynamics across Europe, Africa, and the Americas. The purpose of this paper is to assess the state of weapons, drug, human, and animal trafficking as a Pan-Atlantic security challenge. In particular, the growing "convergence" of trafficking, organized crime, and terrorism will be analyzed to determine the degree to which these phenomena drive each other in the Atlantic space. This paper will provide a "state of play" for each of the four major trafficking areas: weapons, drug, human, and wildlife. This will include a review of relevant data relating to trends in these illicit industries as well as several country-specific or regional examples. Each state of play will also include a contextual discussion of these trends before introducing policy implications for the respective trafficking areas. The paper will then frame the wildlife trafficking threat as a mechanism to identify novel approaches in dealing with transnational trafficking. A final explanation will detail the repercussions of trafficking convergence while also addressing a potential vehicle to disrupt these illicit networks.

# 2. Weapons Trafficking: State of Affairs

Data measuring the global illicit arms trade is restricted by the blurred relationship between the legal and illegal sale of small arms, light weapons, and conventional weaponry. Nonetheless, the illegal trade of small arms and light weapons alone is now estimated to represent a $1 billion-a-year global business (Council on Foreign Relations 2013). In 2004, the number of small arms projected to be in circulation surpassed 600 million (Stohl 2004, p. 21). These weapons have resulted in 60-90% of conflict deaths worldwide (Lamb and Schroeder 2006, p. 72). While this limited data may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the development of this industry, these numbers reveal the destructive potential behind any proliferation of illicit weapons.

Mexico represents but one example where the threat posed by the illegal arms trade has increased significantly. From late-1994 to mid-2010, Mexican authorities seized over 306,000 illegal firearms in addition to 26 million rounds of ammunition (Schroeder 2013, p. 289). These figures include an increase in illicit firearm recoveries for each of the years between 2006 and 2010 (Schroeder 2013, p. 289). The growth of the Mexican arms trafficking industry not only threatens its internal security but the security of neighboring states such as the United States. From early 2009 to mid-2011, roughly 80,000 rounds of small-caliber ammunition destined for Mexico were seized at

American exit ports (Schroeder 2013, p. 285). These flows are truly worrisome given that handguns are recovered at five times the rate in Mexico as in Iraq (Schroeder 2013, p. 293). While it remains difficult to enumerate these weapons networks, their end product is consistently violent. In 2010, of all homicides committed worldwide, 42% were carried out with a firearm (UNODC 2011, p. 39). This figure reached 60% in South America, with over 25% of these homicides the result of organized crime-related violence (UNODC 2011, pp. 10-11). Areas where organized crime and instability are more prevalent are therefore subject to greater vulnerability to violence associated with illegal weapons. This has been borne out in Mexico, with 85,000 people killed in drug-related incidents since 2007 (Rama 2014).

Figure 12.1 **Illicit firearms seized in Mexico, 2000-10**


*Source:* Small Arms Survey 2013

Weapons trafficking has a significant history as an international challenge. As early as 1993, the United Nations noted the growing technical sophistication of conventional weapons, a continued increase in their destructive capacity, and the subsequent amplification of the "destabilizing effects" of weapons trafficking (United Nations 1995, pp. 13-15). Further UN reporting in the 1990s also revealed the relationship between the destabilizing impact of illicit weapons and terrorism, mercenary activity, subversion, drug trafficking, and organized crime. The development of the black market in conventional weaponry has certainly paralleled instability seen in Latin America and Africa in the 1980s, Southeast Europe and Central Asia in the 1990s, and North Africa and the Sahel today. In response, the UN Disarmament Commission report in 1995 emphasized the importance of synchronizing national policies to support the broader international effort, noting that, "legal, political and technical differences in internal control of armaments and their transfer, and in some cases, inadequacy or absence of such controls, can contribute to the growing illicit traffic in arms," (United Nations 1995, p. 14). While progress on the 2013 UN Arms Trade Treaty – signed by 17 European Union nations and the United States – may help to mitigate the risk of illicit international transfer of conventional weapons, without also addressing the drivers of this trade, such as weaknesses in state structures, the impact of these broader efforts will remain limited.[1]

Over a ten-year period, from 1998 to 2008, the international community spent over $2 billion on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) in addition to other

[1] On April 2, 2013 the UN General Assembly Adopted the Arms Trade Treaty. 118 nations have already signed the treaty and it is slated to go into effect after 50 states have agreed to ratify or accede (in accordance with national procedures) to the treaty.

initiatives specifically designed to tackle the challenges of small arms proliferation. However, conventional and state-to-state arms transfers may demand more robust end-use monitoring and tracking mechanisms that could be verified by independent parties such as digital and non-removable serial numbers. Combating weapons trafficking also requires attacking demand as well as supply. This is perhaps a more politically sensitive problem, though, given the myriad of laws governing private ownership of weapons in dozens of nations as well as the "grey market" (legal but not transparent) of weapons flowing in and out of North America and Africa in particular.

## 3. Drug Trafficking: State of Affairs

Available data on the illegal drug market suggests that the trade is stabilizing – as opposed to noticeably increasing or decreasing. The global illicit drug market is now valued at roughly $322 billion per year, representing a negligible increase from $320 billion in 2003 (United Nations 2012). Data suggests, though, that the number of illicit drug users worldwide rose by a much more significant 18% between 2008 and 2013 (UNODC 2013, p. 1). But this does not necessarily imply that the market is set to expand in the coming years, as there is a divergence between the trends in users and cultivation and production. The total area for coca cultivation has fallen by 14% since 2007 and 30% since 2000 (UNODC 2013, p. x). Production of cocaine is starting to fall correspondingly. Despite a 5% increase in cocaine production from 1998 to 2008, when isolating 2007 to 2008 there was a 16% decline (UNODC 2010b, p. 12). Opium cultivation is following a similar path, experiencing a 23% decrease from 2008 to 2010 (UNODC 2010b, p. 4). This has resulted in potential global heroin production falling 100 megatons from 2007 to 2009 (UNODC 2010b, p. 11).

A major contributing factor to lower opium production has been smaller yields in Afghanistan, which remains the world leader in opium cultivation and production (UNODC 2013, p. x). Afghanistan not only acts as a leading production center but also serves as a main transit hub for drugs produced in Central Asia. Afghanistan acts as the point of origin for three of the top five worldwide drug trafficking routes: the Southern Route, the Balkan Route, and the Northern Route (OCCRP 2013). The value of opiates trafficked through the Afghan border is estimated to reach $350 to 400 million alone (UNODC 2010b, p. 52). The centrality of the Afghan market to the international drug trafficking network suggests that efforts to curtail the trade of opiates in particular will be largely influenced by the success in stymieing the local network in Afghanistan. Given the volatile security context in the country, however, international efforts to curb outward flows from Afghanistan will need to focus on the endpoints of these narcotics more so than their production sites.

The drug trafficking environment has been marked by evident shifts in recent years, with the globalization of the trade having extended the challenge beyond solely the Americas. With cocaine use having decreased in the United States, European users now account for 30% of the worldwide consumption of the drug – now about equal to use in the United States (UNODC 2010b, p. 87). Narcotics flows have consequently shifted from North-South to West-East, with the Dominican Republic having become a weigh station for flows to Europe. Coincidentally, as the amount of cocaine transited through the Dominican Republic rose from 2001 to 2005, the murder rate doubled (UNODC 2010b, p. 236). Furthermore, the network connecting the Andean region in South America to Europe now constitutes the fifth largest drug trafficking route worldwide (OCCRP 2013). The South America-Africa nexus is especially troubling given its tendency to fuel instability and its susceptibility to youth drug use, perpetuating the demand-side drivers. In East, West, and Central Africa, the amount of

heroin seized has risen 500 percent since 2009 (UNODC 2013, p. 33). West African criminal networks are also heavily involved in the sale of cocaine, having earned between $1.8 and $2.8 billion in 2009 (Lawson and Dininio 2013, p. 3). Additionally, roughly 27% of cocaine consumed in Europe is now transited through West Africa alone (Johansen 2008, p.5). The sheer amount of money flowing into Africa has the potential to destabilize, but when considering its source, this capability is magnified. Despite efforts to reform its image, Guinea-Bissau remains the central hub of narcotics trafficking in Africa. Cited by the UN Office of Drug Control Policy as perhaps the world's only true narco-state, the poorly governed country is a transit point for cocaine produced in South America for the European market. In addition to weak governance, a lack of transparency permeates its systems and poverty is rampant. These factors foster instability and increase its vulnerability to trafficker exploitation.

Indeed, the situation in Africa stands in contrast to limited progress in South America, notably Colombia. Although Colombia remains a top producer of cocaine, the area utilized for coca plant cultivation decreased by 58% from 2001 to 2009 (UNODC 2010b, p. 16). Likewise, Brazil remains the number two consumer of cocaine, just behind the United States (Forero 2013). The key challenge is how to translate success in multi-dimensional approaches to supply-side reduction in South America to a more global network. However, the linkage between instability, insurgency, and narcotics trafficking in Africa must be understood more completely and more quickly than it was in Colombia. While it is possible that violent jihadist groups could seek to eliminate drug production and trafficking for religious regions, the history of insurgent-narcotics in Afghanistan over the past thirty years suggest otherwise: group survival and the need to fund the insurgency almost always subordinated norms such as bans on association with narcotics. Ultimately, there must be more attention to sharing best practices for demand-side reduction so that emerging markets such as those in Europe, Africa, and Brazil can attack what has always been the true center of gravity for narcotics trafficking: demand.

## 4. Human Trafficking: State of Affairs

Data indicates that human trafficking is the fastest growing international criminal industry (Stop The Traffik, n.d.). The International Labour Organization estimates that approximately 20 million people worldwide are either forced into labor or are victims of sexual exploitation, a sharp increase from 12.3 million in 2005 (UNODC 2012, p. i; International Labour Organization 2005, p. 10). This equates to an industry value of $32 billion (The Economist 2013). The number of children being exploited globally also rose by 27% from 2007 to 2010 (UNODC 2012, p. 1). Off all victims reported in 2012, 27% were trafficked in the same country where they were exploited and roughly half were trafficked within the same region (UNODC 2012, pp. 12, 41). In short, human trafficking does not require movement across international borders. Local efforts therefore need to prioritize meeting internationally recognized standards as much, if not more so, than attacking transit lanes where international cooperation is critical. Yet should local approaches become more robust, more progress will need to be made in the area of convictions. Of the countries studied in the latest UN report on trafficking in persons, 16% failed to convict even a single individual from 2007 to 2010 (UNODC 2012, p. 14).

Despite expectations that laws against trafficking would be more staunchly enforced in highly developed countries, regional evidence from the European Union demonstrates this is not necessarily the case. The 2013 Eurostat report on trafficking in human beings covered the years 2008 to 2010. Data from these years shows a 13% decrease

in convicted traffickers within the Union (Eurostat 2013, p. 11). Member states have also been subject to the same general increase in trafficking victims as seen globally. Between those same years, the number of victims identified in the EU rose by 18% (Eurostat 2013, p. 10). Another cause for concern is the growing reach of the EU human trafficking market. More and more victims being identified within the EU originate from non-member states. For males, there was an increase of non-citizen victims from 12% to 37%, and for females the increase was from 18% to 39% (Eurostat 2013, p. 10). Not only is the market expanding, but the number of EU citizens involved in the trade has risen during the years under observation. In 2008, 67% of traffickers prosecuted held EU citizenship, and by 2010 the figure was 76% (Eurostat 2013, p. 13). Due to the insufficient conviction of traffickers across the Union as a whole, the EU market therefore possesses considerable potential for expansion. The rise in both non-citizen victims and citizen offenders as components of the broader increase in EU trafficking suggests that this development is already underway.

Trafficking in persons is potentially the most complex of these illicit industries given that the challenge is not simply the transportation of persons but the recruiting, harboring, and potentially enslavement of an individual for "compelled labor or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud, or coercion."[2] While international standards should guide international cooperative initiatives, those created by the United States provide a valid baseline from which to evaluate the state of international counter-human trafficking efforts. According to the 2013 U.S. Department of State Report on Human Trafficking, almost a dozen countries on the African Continent remain at Tier 3. This classification signifies both non-compliance with the minimum standards of the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and the lack of significant efforts to do so.[3] At least a dozen more risk slipping into Tier 3 status and are failing to demonstrate efforts to attain TVPA standards. While similar problems exist in Central and South America, Colombia and Nicaragua continue to aggressively attack the problem and most countries – Cuba being a notable exception – are working towards these standards with reasonable success. From 2008 to 2012, the number of child laborers in Latin America – which account for 27% of all trafficking victims in the Americas – declined by 12% (International Labour Organization 2013; UNODC 2012, p. 5). In Europe, there remains a distinction between east and west, with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, and Albania edging towards Tier 3 and Russia essentially already there.

As with drug trafficking, the demand-side of the equation, in this case the need to address the problem at local levels, means that international cooperation only deals with symptoms of the problem and less so the root causes. Where the international community can band together – across the Atlantic – is in changing the culture that allows for trafficking to take place. As many as 136 nationalities were trafficked in 118 countries in 2012, signifying the growing reach of this trade (UNODC 2012, p. i). The belief that trafficking does not occur in developed nations, that victims are criminals to begin with, that those forced into commercial sex acts have a choice, or that there is nothing citizens can do are all views which must be broken. Reshaping these perspectives can be done by emphasizing public diplomacy efforts, strategic communications programs to educate citizens, and giving diplomatic priority to the discussion of how to encourage the development of rule of law cultures that stamp out this modern day practice of slavery.

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[2] As described in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 200 (US Public Law 106-386).

[3] This includes: Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau, Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Zimbabwe, and Eritrea. While TPVA is a U.S. law, it has clear and consistent standards worth considering internationally.

## 5. Wildlife Trafficking: State of Affairs

Much like human trafficking, animal trafficking indicators display an immense growth of the industry. The illicit wildlife trade now represents the fourth largest international criminal industry with a value of $19 billion (Vergano 2013). The major growth is most visible, though, when observing the increasing number of rhinos and elephants being poached across the African continent. From 2007 to 2013, the number of South African rhinos killed by poaching rose by 7,000 per cent (South African Department of Environmental Affairs 2014). As for elephants, over the course of the past two decades the population has declined 76% in the Central African subregion (Nelleman et al 2013, p. 35). The price of illicit ivory has also skyrocketed, tripling since 1998 (Gabriel, Hua, and Wang 2011, p. 3). The Chinese and Thai markets are notable contributors to the demand that has enabled raw ivory to now price at $1,300 per pound (Agger and Hutson 2013, p. 10). The rate at which populations are depleting and prices are escalating implies that current resource levels to combat poaching are vastly insufficient.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in particular is a hotbed for poaching. Elephant populations that span the DRC and Central African Republic have declined between 50% and 90% (Agger and Hutson 2013, p. 2). In Eastern Congo, Garamba National Park, Okapi Faunal Reserve, and Virunga National Park have all been targeted by armed trafficking groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). In 2009, the LRA attacked Garamba Park headquarters killing sixteen people (Agger and Hutson 2013, p. 4). In the 1970s, the park was home to over 20,000 elephants, but now only around 1,800 can be found within the confines (Agger and Hutson 2013, p. 7). Sadly, elephant populations are recovering at a slower rate – approximately 5% - than they have been poached from 2006 to 2011: 7.4% (Nelleman et al 2013, p. 69). These figures reinforce that there is a notable resource disparity between poaching groups like the LRA and the park rangers working to foil them.

While the threat posed by drug, weapons, and human trafficking is well established in international dialogue, serious international discussion about combating wildlife trafficking has not taken place until recent years. Efforts to combat the problem have failed to achieve sufficient success due to a wide parameter of obstacles on the individual, state, and supranational levels. For individuals, the low-risk/high-reward dynamic of poaching is one of its most significant appeals when legitimate jobs cannot provide nearly the same level of return. This becomes even more problematic in areas with dire economic conditions where viable forms of employment may not be readily accessible. Volatility of the job market in less developed countries can mean few reliable sources of income for individuals who are deeply affected by poverty. Thus, poaching and wildlife trafficking provide those seeking to escape from poverty a possible route, and this attraction is intensified even further due to the comparatively lower risks incurred by poachers. When convicted, poaching does not always carry as severe penalties relative to other criminal activities such as narcotics distribution, Botswana being a notable exception (Dalberg and WWF 2012, p. 11).

State-level strategies to clamp down on poaching are undermined by the border situations between source and transit countries. Weak border controls enable poachers to move contraband from countries with stricter internal regulations to ones with inferior enforcement and subsequently a more desirable shipment location. Corruption is fueled by the monies created in any trafficking regime and thus remains an impediment to strengthening law enforcement and punishment. Likewise, weak financial regulations can enable shell companies to blur their connection to poachers, making it difficult to

track the illicit flow of funds (Cardamone 2013, p. 5). Finally, the astronomical market prices reflect a demand – particularly in Asia – that incessantly drives the market.

Approaches formulated by individual countries to combat wildlife trafficking are not always internationally integrated, and the lack of a systematic approach can keep successful strategies from impacting regions as a whole, as opposed to one state in particular. Furthermore, coordination between source and demand countries is not nearly as profound as would be expected, which diminishes the mutual accountability between them (Dalberg and WWF 2012, p. 3). Another commonly cited problem is the priority that is afforded to counter-trafficking by governments since poaching is labeled almost exclusively as an environmental issue. This has closed it off to the resources provided to countering weapons, drug, and human trafficking. This is understandable when one considers the immediate dangers to populations caused by these three types of trafficking, however, it ignores the interconnected nature of the trafficking networks. Park rangers currently face the same fight against transnational criminal groups and terrorist organizations associated with the larger criminal networks engaged in weapons, drug, and human trafficking. The biggest challenge facing the international effort to combat poaching is the lack of intergovernmental urgency dedicated to this threat. As long as animal trafficking continues to occupy the lower levels of government agendas, capabilities to stem this trade will remain insufficient. To frame poaching within a security context will not only allow for the creation of an overall counter-trafficking strategy, but could provide better approaches to maximizing resource allocation to enforcement agencies. Increasing border supervision matters for all forms of trafficking, and strengthening rule of law can assist with the internal measures that are especially important for combating wildlife and human trafficking, particularly in terms of maximizing punishment and therefore increasing the risks of engaging in trafficking.

## 6. Wildlife Poaching: The Nexus with Terrorism

The linkage between global animal trafficking networks and other global trafficking networks is quite robust and consists of multiple levels of actors who operate within source, transit, and demand countries. While Africa remains the central challenge, wildlife trafficking occurs globally, with consumers residing on every continent. Local brokers facilitate orders for rhino horn, elephant ivory, and tiger parts among other products, which are later executed by poachers. The contraband is then either shipped to its demand destination or transited to a country where it is safer to export. During this process, animals and their illegal products are moved through an array of methods. The same strategies and routes used by other traffickers – hiding the animals or materials in shipping containers, altering customs forms, and fabricating trade permits – are used to traffic wildlife (Wyler and Sheikh 2008, p. 9).

**Wildlife Trafficking Sites**

| Primarily destination | Transit and origin | Primarily origin |
|---|---|---|
| China | Kenya | Cameroon |
| Egypt | Laos | Central African Republic |
| Thailand | Malaysia | Congo |
| Viet Nam | Mozambique | Democratic Republic |
| | Myanmar | of Congo |
| | Nigeria | Gabon |
| | Nepal | India |
| | Tanzania | Indonesia |
| | Zambia | Russia |
| | | South Africa |
| | | Zimbabwe |

*Source:* Wildlife Crime Scorecard: Assessing compliance with and enforcement of CITES commitments for tigers, rhinos, and elephants. *WWF*. 2012.

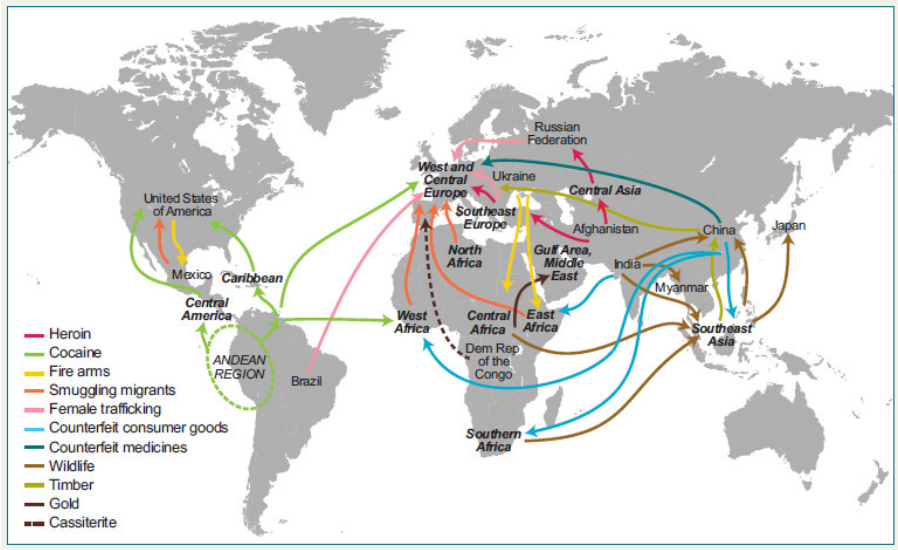
Although wildlife trafficking now constitutes the fourth largest illicit industry in the world, in comparison to other major illicit industries, efforts to counter animal trafficking suffer from a relatively low level of attention. This inadequate attention may be surprising, however, when considering that an ounce of rhinoceros horn is worth about $60,000 per kilogram on the black market – more than even cocaine (Dalberg and WWF 2012, p. 11). International leaders are beginning to take greater notice as a specific security dimension of the trade becomes more salient. Speaking at the Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference on February 13, 2014, UK Foreign Secretary, William Hague, identified wildlife trafficking as a global criminal industry comparable to weapon, drug, and human trafficking (Hague 2014). Hague emphasized not only the role that wildlife trafficking plays in terms of corruption and stunting sustainable development, but the increasing evidence that shows how wildlife trafficking supports terrorist and insurgent groups (2014). The nexus between animal trafficking and terrorism is growing, and the degree to which poaching now helps finance global terrorist operations is an alarming trend. Arguably, though, the hyper-publicity associated with this threat could help to garner international attention to combat these interconnected networks.

Wildlife trafficking networks, particularly in Africa, are becoming increasingly sophisticated, especially as terrorist organizations continue to infiltrate the system on various levels of activity. Organizations such as the LRA, Al-Qaeda-affiliated Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI), the Janjaweed, and al-Shabaab have all been linked to the poaching of animals for profit. These groups possess an extensive set of contacts with local brokers, can be highly organized, execute poaching orders, transit the resulting contraband, and even participate in its shipment (Kalron and Crosta, n.d.). This multi-level involvement provides profit from both the sale and purchase of products such as ivory. Al-Shabaab in particular reportedly receives between $200,000 and $600,000 per month in ivory income (Kalron and Crosta, n.d.). This additional and substantial source of funding allows for the purchase of munitions, attractive salaries for fighters, and the financing of specific attacks (Berganas 2014, p. 3). Shell companies help mask the sources of weaponry that terrorists buy with the assistance of animal-related revenue. State-level and international-level strategies to impede these activities have yet to demonstrate they can **significantly** reduce the number of animals being poached each year. The market, thus, continues to expand and a comprehensive and worldwide attack on supply and demand will be required to tear down a growing trafficking network that is directly funding terrorism and extremism that threatens the entire Atlantic space.

# 7. Convergence: New Trends Require New Approaches

Admiral James Stavridis, the former Commander of the U.S. Southern Command and U.S. European Command, has long advocated for a better understanding of the linkages between illicit traffickers, organized crime, insurgents, and terrorists. The name given to this phenomenon by academics and policymakers is “convergence”. For some time, nations have understood the connection between terrorists and narcotics traffickers. Just as emerald smuggling routes became cocaine smuggling routes, the need for terrorists to move money, personnel, and weapons has meant cooperation between those who own drug smuggling routes and those who need to use them. The nightmare scenario after 9-11 was Al-Qaeda using narcotics smuggling routes to move a nuclear weapon into the United States. Convergence, however, goes far beyond the idea of narco-terrorist cooperation.

**Global Trafficking Routes**




*Source:* The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment. *UNODC*. 2010

As the world gets smaller, the ability to effectively smuggle goods becomes an even more valuable commodity. As a result, whether it is weapons, people, cash, or even ideas and information, there will be a premium for those who can cross borders unhindered. The trillions of dollars in crime in both the cyber and physical world is a lucrative target for any type of illicit trafficking organization. Convergence theory therefore holds that groups may seek horizontal integration – becoming involved in various types of smuggling – as it is the transit itself, rather than the product, that is the most valuable commodity.

Given convergence, the identification of the trafficking network and assessing vulnerabilities will become an increasingly important means for international cooperation, especially as groups seek to exploit the seams created by national borders, insufficient regulations, and diluted laws. While the application of military strategies to law enforcement operations can be intellectually and politically challenging, the experience of the U.S. military, in particular, the U.S. Special Operations Command, may hold some lessons for understanding illicit trafficking networks. Intellectually, this is not surprising as U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF)

have worked for decades in conjunction with U.S. law enforcement agencies and a host of national and international law enforcement and counter-trafficking organizations around the world, including in Southeast Europe, Africa, South America, and the Caribbean. Their philosophy is to enable others to leverage capabilities *outside* traditional military structures with civilian organizations in the lead. Their approach is consequently a blend of military and law enforcement strategies to begin with, making it easier to utilize as a framework for addressing illicit trafficking.

The specific process adopted by SOF to understand and target insurgent networks is known by the acronym "F3EAD", or: "Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze, and Disseminate." When put into the context of illicit trafficking, "Find" simply means the identification and detection of problems, individuals, methods of delivery, mechanisms for moving money, communications and trafficking vectors, key personnel and static operating locations. While in the military environment, "Fix" connotes tracking and identifying the location of targets, for purposes of a multinational counter-trafficking approach "Fix" should be a more holistic process and involve a range of actions to limit the ability of the organization to move its products or to move people easily as well as reducing their ability to move money without it being traced. The "Fix" framework would therefore include a network of national and international laws, regulations, and policies that would enable judicial and law enforcement personnel to reduce the ability of these organizations to traffic. The "Finish" phase is the action mechanism of a comprehensive approach to defeating a network. This could involve the arrest of individuals or an entire group, the capture of illicit weapons or narcotics, or the rescue of victims of human trafficking. The key conceptual difference between "Fix" and "Finish" should be that "Finish" has a tangible and public face and produces actions that can be firmly measured. For purposes of countering-trafficking, "Exploit" and "Analyze" may best be seen as law enforcement activities that involve not only evidence-collection and questioning to further understand the network, but the robust prosecution of criminal cases to convict members of illicit trafficking organizations. In the end, countering these groups is about seeking to reduce their drain on society and bringing justice to the offenders and for the victims. "Dissemination" is largely self-explanatory, and as in the military sense, this is the last step in closing the "feedback loop" so that organizations may determine their own effectiveness in addressing trafficking problems.

## 8. Conclusions

Through reviewing the state of the four major illicit industries, it is possible to observe some of the most prominent trends pertaining to these trades. Though there does not appear to be a sufficient level of coordination in combatting trafficking, the data show that trafficking is a growing pan-Atlantic – as well as global – challenge. Multilateral mechanisms are lacking, and going forward, greater cohesion of national and supranational approaches can both maximize the effectiveness of counter-trafficking strategies and contribute to constructing a more discernible pan-Atlantic security area. As the threat posed by convergence becomes more salient, individual states and multilateral organizations must respond by also integrating their approaches to the illicit arms, drug, human, and animal trades.

While the boundaries separating legal and illegal arms sales remain cloudy, a clear connection exists between homicides, conflict deaths, and the use of small arms. Any future growth in the arms trafficking industry is therefore subject to increased violence in areas with a high density of criminal organizations. Although drug trafficking is the most lucrative international criminal industry, it has not expanded considerably in

recent years. The market is shifting, however, with the globalization of the trade, which will require a reactive approach from the international community to pinpoint new areas of growth. Data covering human trafficking places it as the fastest growing illicit industry worldwide. Moving forward, though, the complexity of the trade will need to be overcome by developing more vigorous local deterrents. Indicators related to animal trafficking show a substantial upswing in poaching of elephants and rhinos. Yet, insufficient international attention will continue to undermine efforts to reverse these trends and ensure violent criminal groups are confronted with better equipped enforcement agencies. In the absence of greater urgency to combat wildlife trafficking, terrorist groups will only become more interconnected with this trade. These threats are compounded by the rising convergence of trafficking, transnational crime, and terrorism. Convergence has exposed the need to develop a more holistic conception of national and supranational counter-trafficking strategies, such as the process employed by U.S. Special Operations Forces, known as F3EAD.

If there is but a single trend to be identified in the assessment of illicit networks to traffic weapons, drugs, human beings, or animals, it is that the critical variable is strength of rule of law and governance within nations rather than the strength of international efforts to control the space between countries. Actions in the international maritime dimensions remain significant, but they are only able to deal with a single symptom of the disease. Development of mutually supporting regulations, laws, procedures, and the enhancement of information-sharing between local and national law enforcement requires concerted efforts within nations more so than coordination between them. The latter is certainly important but cannot be more than a parallel priority. Accordingly, when considering key nodes of illicit transport, nations must consider what actions should be taken by themselves rather than by the international community to solve the problem. Otherwise, efforts are just as likely to simply force the problem to adapt and evolve rather than create a situation wherein these problems can be defeated. A network-focused strategy that looks at key or shared vulnerabilities in trafficking networks should be able to identify potential targets for focus by the international community, but the action itself may involve either actions by individual countries or efforts to bolster those nations' abilities to establish a level of rule of law that allows them to tackle robust illicit trafficking organizations.

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