

Balkans Organized Crime

This case study is set in the year 1999. Since the end of the Balkan communist regimes in the early 1990s, organized crime has taken advantage of the new freedom (and in some areas, ensuing anarchy) in this region to grow and expand. The Balkan region from its earliest history was a smuggling zone, but, after the collapse of communism, organized crime thrived as never before. Criminal groups gained an even larger freedom of movement in the conflict of 1997 and in the post-conflict environment. This growth of organized crime is well known both in and outside of the region.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

This exercise provides practical experience in the following:

- introducing network modeling as an analytical technique for visualization and decomposition for the purposes of defining threat networks within an organized crime operational environment
- generating Target Network Models (TNMs) based on social network analysis (SNA)
- demonstrating the use of the Political, Military, Economic, Society, Infrastructure, and Information (PMESII) analytical construct in a law enforcement setting (where the *M* refers to the use of armed force by criminal and law enforcement groups, not to military use of force)
- providing an opportunity for a deeper SNA

ASSIGNMENT

In this scenario, you are the strategic all-source analyst for the newly established Europol Balkans Organized Crime Task Force that will be working out of the city of Shkodra (or Shkodër), Albania, from 1999 onward in order to assist the Albanian government with the establishment of law and order in the region.

Your assignment is to assist Europol with modeling the criminal networks associated with the Shkodra Region, including the Pattern Of Life (PoL) of the criminal

organizations (i.e., their Tactics, Training, and Procedures (TTPs) related to their criminal activities). The following is based on the Intelligence Reports (INTREPs):

1. Develop TNMs as needed in order to support Europol. Start by creating TNMs illustrating the key players, their functions or roles within their own group, organization, or society as a whole. (Hint: Consider creating separate TNMs for each local and regional criminal syndicate.)
2. Establish a rough timeline overview of events in the area of operations (AO).
3. Identify the intelligence gaps relative to the tasking. Create a simple Intelligence Collection Plan (ICP) by generating ten questions to be answered by your collection assets. You may assume you will have access to Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Imagery Intelligence (IMINT), Measurement and Signature Intelligence (MASINT), Open Source Intelligence (OSINT), and Signals Intelligence (SIGINT).
4. Identify and list any early warning indicators of criminal activities that may be monitored or tracked.
5. Generate a High-Value Target List (HVTL) based on the intelligence provided. Use this to generate a new ICP of thirty questions to be answered by your collection process.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Abbreviation or Acronym	Description
AO	area of operations
DOCEX	Document Exploitation
DoS	denial of service
DP	Democratic Party (Albanian)
ECMM	European Community Monitor Mission
EU	European Union
GMTI	ground moving target indicator (a MASINT technique using airborne radar to identify moving targets)
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
HVTL	high-value target list
ICP	intelligence collection plan
IGO	intergovernmental organization
IMINT	Imagery Intelligence
INTREP	intelligence report

Abbreviation or Acronym	Description
MASINT	Measurement and Signature Intelligence
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSINT	Open Source Intelligence
PMESII	political, military, economic, society, infrastructure, and information
PoL	pattern of life
SIGINT	Signals Intelligence
SNA	social network analysis
SP	Socialist Party (Albanian)
TNM	target network model
TTP	tactics, training, and procedures
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

SCENARIO

Following is an assessment of organized crime in the Balkans as of 1999.

The types of organized crime operating out of eastern Europe through Albania can be divided into four key areas: narcotics trafficking,¹ illegal arms dealing,² money laundering, and human or alien smuggling.³ The most serious criminal activities in the area include racketeering, a stolen car trade (luxury cars from the European Union [EU]), sex-slave smuggling (females from eastern Europe), and kidnapping. There are also reports of drug and human organ smuggling. Other criminal activities involve the smuggling of goods such as flour and fruit or of luxury goods such as TV sets and furniture.

The city of Shkodra is a criminal boomtown. More cars are being reported as stolen than there are registered car owners. Shkodra has one of the highest murder rates in all of Europe, averaging well over twenty-five murders per 100,000 inhabitants per year. The word *Kalash* (Russian slang for the AK-47) has been promoted from the short form of a proper noun (*Kalashnikov*) to a verb in the Albanian lan-

¹United Nations International Drug Control Programme, ODCCP Studies on Drugs & Crime Statistics, *Global Illicit Drug Trends 2000* (Vienna: United Nations, 2000).

²Chris Hedges, "Kosovo Rebels and Their New Friend," *New York Times*, June 6, 1999.

³John Follain and Edin Hamzic, "Mafia Smuggles Refugee Women into Sex Slavery," *Sunday Times*, May 16, 1999; C. B., "Crimes Committed in Italy Provide Funds for Kosovo Guerrillas," Reuters, January 19, 1999.

guage. In a bloody process that kills an average of three week in a city of 100,000, irrespective of politics, religion, age, sex, intentionally, or accidentally, all are now susceptible to having their cause of death noted as *kalashed*.

Five environmental (PMESII) factors affect the development of criminal activity in Albania: the political, economic, law enforcement, social, and information environments.

Political

Albanian criminal activity is concentrated in the prefecture of Shkodra, shown in Figure 4.1. The prefecture consists of three districts: Shkodra, Hani Hotit, and Pukë. It has a population of about 320,000 people, about 100,000 of whom live in the town of Shkodra. The area shares a common border with Montenegro in the north and the northwest and Kosovo in the northeast. Well before the fall of communism, the prefecture of Shkodra was a politically sensitive area, as it was the biggest Democratic Party (DP) stronghold in Albania and was the power base of Sali Berisha (president of Albania, 1992–1997). During communist times, many Shkodrians belonged to the anticommunist “opposition” and were therefore persecuted. After the end of communism, the region was quick to embrace the democratic reforms under the Berisha government. Due to these historical developments and the political turmoil of 1997 and 1998, the political atmosphere between DP and Socialist Party (SP) supporters is confrontational. Criminal activity adds to the confrontational political climate.

Throughout the period from 1991 to 1997, there was a high degree of political abuse of the local justice system. The Western-supported government of Sali Berisha appointed untrained police and judiciary to posts throughout the region. These officials often used their authority to exact revenge on those who were known supporters of the former Hoxha regime. This lack of professionalism undermined the general confidence of the population in the police and the judiciary.⁴ There was also a high degree of corruption nationally, allowing a number of pyramid schemes to flourish. The pyramid schemes collapsed in 1997, and thousands of Albanians who had enjoyed some economic growth from development aid in the early 1990s lost everything. The result was the Albanian Rebellion of 1997.

Albania consequently does not have an independent judiciary or police force, and this in itself is a serious flaw in the political system. Worse, the lack of a basic functioning law and order system permits criminal access to developing political structures. The result is that there are no restraints on corruption at any Albanian government level. Various forms of development aid have been channeled for personal use under bogus project submissions, from the smallest villages to the state level. For example, a mayor in a town outside of Shkodra used infrastructure funds, designated for the road through the centre of the town, to instead build a road and

⁴Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights in Post-Communist Albani*, 1996, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/pdfs/a/albania/albania963.pdf>.

FIGURE 4.1 General Routes Used for Criminal Activity



Source: Map courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin.

a water system directly to his house outside of the town. More to the point, it was common in northern Albania for politicians and bureaucrats to be selling official stamps, licenses, permits, and university degrees.

Customs control is another example of an acute political problem. Individual town officials have established a customs tax on development goods that had already been taxed upon arriving in Albanian port cities. There are cases where customs must be paid three or four times before goods arrive at their end locations. Seizing the opportunity, officials imposed a 50 percent goods tax on some aid that came through the seaport of Durres during the Kosovo crisis. Taking advantage of the large amount of international development aid that has arrived in Albania since 1997, both the SP and DP use the police and judiciary to politically legitimize nondemocratic activities or to demonize political opponents.

The existing difficulties with political development were exacerbated at the national level when the West—led by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)—decided to promote decentralization before a basic law and order system was functioning nationally in 1999. This made the establishment of a coherent law and order system more difficult by increasing the opportunities for corrupt public administration at subnational political levels.

Law Enforcement

Most Albanian police are not trained to minimum Western standards. The majority of policemen in northern Albania have no training at all. They tend to be politicized, as the government in power names the police chief, and the police chief selects the officers. Family and friends who have gained political positions in the area name most of them. In Shkodra, with one of Europe's highest murder rates, police are paid \$70 to \$100 per month. They have no equipment; donated equipment disappears into private use or is sold. They have no pension or disability income rights.

As a result, policemen are easily subverted to criminal activity, mainly by financial inducements. They can be seen on a regular basis extracting money or goods from cross-border traffic from Montenegro at a series of roadblocks. Stolen cars are routinely fined at these roadblocks before being permitted to pass. Cars owned by well-known dangerous criminals get free passage. Because the average person is subject to this financial coercion while major criminals walk free, the local population hates the local police. Only masked members of the special police sent up from southern Albania on a particular mission can occasionally be seen executing any serious police activity.

The judiciary is also politically appointed. They typically have no professional legal training. They make slightly more than the police and supplement their income by fining those that are brought before them, or simply allowing them to pay for their freedom. They have no protection against even small-time criminals. Therefore, dangerous criminals are rarely held or fined. So it is again the average member of the population who is fined in order to augment the judicial income, further undermining the public's faith in law and order.

In response to criticism from the international community, the Albanians have focused on the shifting around of personnel in the judiciary and the police forces. However, all that this has accomplished is to make a fundamental dilemma much more apparent. The police, if under a new leadership that did try to pick up some of the more dangerous criminals, are undercut by the judiciary. Because of bribes, the same dangerous criminals return to the streets within days. Conversely, new judges that attempt to enforce some sort of punishment on dangerous criminals quickly change their mind; police will not pick up the criminals' associates, so the judges have no protection from retaliation.

Ironically, cooperation between the police and the judiciary occurs only when minor lawbreakers with a little money are arrested and then freed by the judiciary

after paying a fine. The proceeds are then redistributed among those police and judiciary who contributed to the action.

The weakness of the law and order system in Albania, if it were not for the often deadly results, would border on the comical. For example, in one joint Italian-Albanian operation on the Strait of Otranto, six Albanian smuggling boats and numerous people were arrested and handed over to Albanian custody. The boats and people were back in operation within twenty-four hours after armed criminals simply cordoned off the Albanian town where the boats were impounded and demanded their return.⁵

Economic

The prefecture of Shkodra is an economically underdeveloped area with little industry and high unemployment. All economic life is concentrated in Shkodra, whereas the rural areas of Pukë and Malësi e Madhe depend on self-sufficient agriculture. Industrial plants and factories—especially the communist-era large state enterprises—are in bad shape. Although investment is badly needed, no credits are available and there is no bank in Shkodra. Private capital was largely invested in pyramid schemes during the mid-1990s and was lost. The precarious security situation, the unclear business and ownership laws, the lack of managerial skills, the inefficient bureaucracy, and widespread corruption all further hamper economic development.

The number of people on welfare has been rising since 1996, even though measures have been taken to train and educate people, or to employ them in state public service projects. Welfare payments are very low (2600 lekë or \$50/month) in Shkodra and less in the villages. Residents must look for additional income in order to make ends meet.

Furthermore, the area has seen some migration from the even poorer mountainous region northeast of the country, which adds to the economic problems. As a result, the main sources of employment and income in the region are smuggling and organized criminal activities.

Similar to the corruption that undermines political development, the lack of a basic functioning law enforcement system undermines economic development in the region. The main economic problem concerns contract awards and contract enforcement. Contracts for work often are not fulfilled, and the result is a “money for nothing” economic development philosophy that destroys legitimate investor confidence. This philosophy limits the money going into economic development from aid funds that are not as tightly monitored and are easily derailed by corruption.

A second major economic factor is that Albanian organized crime has easy access to hard currencies such as the U.S. dollar. Much of this access is an indirect result of international aid programs. In Albania, there are few banks

⁵Frank Viviano, “Migrants Offered Package Deal to Freedom,” *National Post*, March 1, 1999; Reuters, “Albanian Gang Recaptures Boats Seized by Police,” January 23, 1999.

where international currency can be officially exchanged and many towns have no bank at all. Most international currencies brought in by InterGovernmental Organizations (IGOs) and NonGovernmental Organizations (NGOs) are changed on the street from the trunk of a Mercedes, where the exchange rate on Albanian currency (the lekë) is much better than the official exchange rate and no receipts are issued. Consider that just one OSCE Field Office with all transport, communication, utilities, and salaries where five internationals are stationed can easily change over \$25,000 per month. There are eight OSCE offices that must do this, along with the European Community Monitor Mission (ECMM), EU, the United Nations (UN), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and other international NGOs and their respective personnel. The result is that millions of dollars per month of hard currency are being made available to fund criminal organizations' international operations.

Social

Exploitation of NGO aid efforts has become an attractive work option in Northern Albania. Over three months during the Kosovo refugee crisis, more than 125 local NGOs were formed in Shkodra, a city of 100,000, in order to compete for lucrative subcontracts from the UNHCR or the Red Cross. The competition for contracts was sometimes violent and opened a whole new economic area for criminal exploitation.

Absent a functioning criminal justice system, the weaker elements of society have no protection. Orphans are particularly vulnerable. Children are kidnapped and sent to Greece to work in factories. Females without family attachments are forced to become sex slaves. Some reports indicate that orphaned children are victimized to support an organ trade.

Information

Without a functioning legal framework, the media is constantly exposed to politicization and abuse. In an environment where the judges are constantly under threat, media personnel face serious consequences if they take a stand against organized crime.

INTELLIGENCE REPORTS

Rep #	Date	Text
R1	April 1, 1999	HUMINT—011-C3: The leader of the Albanian international human smuggling syndicate is Isuf Bardhi, and the whole of the DP is involved in the trafficking of sex slaves.
R2	April 1, 1999	DOCEX: Accounting documents recovered by special police from Tirana banker Tori Lokaj indicate that several international currency transactions involve known human sex slave traders from Moldova.

Rep #	Date	Text
R3	April 1, 1999	OSINT: Four people connected to the Aldonis Mafia were gunned down in an Aldonis restaurant (Shafari Palms, in the west end of Shkodra) at around 2000 hours.
R4	April 1, 1999	HUMINT—023-B2: The Ristani family has the monopoly on the cigarette market in Northern Albania.
R5	April 2, 1999	HUMINT—011-C4: At least three Mafia hit men currently are in the Shkodra region. They are Lumtri Gashi mob.042576847, ⁶ Murat Haxhi mob.042989475, and Gjon Celaj mob.042393878.
R6	April 2, 1999	DOCEX: Documents retrieved from a local brothel bust in Shkodra indicate that each sex slave was purchased for \$30,000.
R7	April 2, 1999	INTREP: A typical sex slave can bring \$200,000 per year gross in income to the criminal organization, while the overhead cost to the brothel owners are often the absolute minimum.
R8	April 2, 1999	INTREP: It is assessed that there are significant links between the DP and the Nesimi Crime syndicate, which operates in the mountain border areas with Montenegro.
R9	April 3, 1999	SIGINT: Saban Lokaj, a suspected member of an international crime syndicate, called Edi Jasari, who is the police chief, and reported that the flowers Jasari ordered were going to be delivered within three days.
R10	April 3, 1999	SIGINT: Emir Dosti called suspected mafia financier Edon Lokaj, asking if Lokaj had received the funds.
R 11	April 4, 1999	Cyber: Several servers belonging to the known members of the Nesimi crime syndicate were attacked with distributed denial of service (DDoS) packets. The origin of the attack could not be determined, as the source Internet protocol (IP) addresses appear to have been hijacked.
R 12	April 4, 1999	OSINT: Police corruption complaints in the Shkodra region have increased by 68 percent during the last year.
R 13	April 4, 1999	HUMINT—050-F6: Smugglers are using a tunnel to transport goods to and from Montenegro. The tunnel is 3 km long and is located on the south end of Lake Scutari. It is working twenty-four hours a day and is guarded at each end with at least two men armed with AK-47s.
R 14	April 4, 1999	SIGINT: Azem Pojani, reported head of a regional crime syndicate, told “Kristi” to pick up “Fatmir,” take him to the “Fisherman” for a meeting, wait for him, and drive him back to Shkodra.
R15	April 4, 1999	HUMINT—050-F6: Cars at the stolen car market located outside of Shkodra primarily come from Austria, Switzerland, Montenegro, and Serbia. A stolen Mercedes sells for \$5,000 to \$10,000 at the market. Sales are conducted every third Saturday of each month.
R16	April 5, 1999	SIGINT: Traffic analysis indicates there has been an increase of calls made between two international criminal syndicates located in Moldova and Albania.

(Continued)

⁶Albanian telephone numbers: 2### ### used from inside the Capital, Tirana; 04 2### ### used from within Albania); +355 4 2### ### used from outside Albania.

(Continued)

Rep #	Date	Text
R17	April 5, 1999	SIGINT: Leka Penaska called an unidentified car dealer in Italy from his location at the stolen car market on the outskirts of Shkodra. Penaska told the Italian that each Mercedes would cost \$11,000.
R18	April 5, 1999	INTREP: Assets recently purchased by DP member Daradana Krizi cannot have been paid for by her salary alone. The assets include two Mercedes, a luxurious villa outside of Shkodra with a large swimming pool, and several hectares of private ground.
R19	April 5, 1999	SIGINT: DP member Gjon Meksi has originated numerous late night (0100–0400) international telephone calls.
R20	April 5, 1999	HUMINT—011-C4: The top three small-time local criminal families in Shkodra are the Ristani, the Thika, and the Duka.
R21	April 5, 1999	SIGINT: Ardi Lokaj, head of the local Shkodra car boot (trunk) currency changers, called Edon Lokaj and asked how much currency Edon Lokaj would have to move next month.
R22	April 5, 1999	HUMINT—023-B2: Alban Lokaj has ordered boat captain Ardit Jasari to make the boats ready for a crossing and that Jasari should coordinate with Ditmir Berishaj on the Albanian side.
R23	April 5, 1999	Cyber: Attempts to hijack local business servers by IP addresses belonging to DP offices in Shkodra have been monitored. The offices are registered to DP Party member Daradana Krizi, wife of DP Party member Valbon Krizi.
R24	April 5, 1999	INTREP: Shkodra ranks as the leading city in Europe for murder rate, currently averaging forty murders per month in a city of approximately 100,000.
R25	April 6, 1999	OSINT: A fund-raiser was held at the DP Headquarters in Shkodra last night. In attendance from the DP were Prek Alia, Roza Topalli, Ledion Krizi, and Isuf Bardhi. Prominent Shkodra citizens attending including Mentor Murati and Ardi Lokj.
R26	April 6, 1999	OSINT: Local Shkodra news has reported that the SP politician Fatmir Berishaj has direct connections to the Pojani crime syndicate.
R27	April 6, 1999	INTREP: The movement of sex slaves from Moldova to Italy is a convoluted process, characterized by moving the victims from one holding brothel to another. The victims have already worked in these waypoint brothels before they reach a brothel inside the destination European countries. A group of slaves can stay at the same waypoint brothel for a very long time.
R28	April 7, 1999	OSINT: Local Shkodra TV interviewed SP Fatmir Berishaj on his reported connections to the Mafia; Fatmir insists these are stories planted by the DP and it is in fact their members who are “in bed” with the Mafia.
R29	April 7, 1999	IMINT: An imagery search of the Adriatic coast south of Shkodra identified the port of Shengjin as a likely candidate port for smugglers moving goods to Italy.

Rep #	Date	Text
R30	April 7, 1999	SIGINT: Ardit Jasari called Qerim Jasari and told him to get two more boats ready for “the crossing” and that Jasari should “be ready to be captain of one of them.”
R31	April 7, 1999	SIGINT: A scatter plot analysis of six months of COMINT traffic indicates that the preferred smuggler route across the Adriatic is between Shengjin, Albania, and Bari, Italy.
R32	April 7, 1999	HUMINT—014-C3: The regional crime syndicate leader along the Adriatic coast met with Fatmir Kaleci and gave him the name of a hit man his boss could possibly use for an upcoming job. The hit man’s name is Xhon Rama.
R33	April 7, 1999	DOCEX: Analysis of documents seized during a brothel raid by Albanian special police suggests that several well-known Shkodra politicians have used these facilities.
R34	April 7, 1999	OSINT: A content analysis of local news in Shkodra province indicates that the population is opposed to international crime syndicates and the sex slave trade. However, small-time smuggling is not frowned upon but seen rather as a tradition.
R35	April 7, 1999	OSINT: A content analysis of local news in Shkodra province indicates that residents have little or no confidence in the local police but a high degree of confidence in the special police forces from Tirana.
R36	April 7, 1999	INTREP: Historical reporting along with current all-source reporting indicates that local crime is driven by smuggling from Montenegro over Lake Shkodra to Albania. The smuggling is controlled by three families that respectively have the stolen car market, the stolen electronics market, and the cigarette market.
R37	April 7, 1999	INTREP: Italian Carabinieri intelligence combined with a variety of all-source reporting indicates that Alban Lokaj is the dominant figure in the international sex slave syndicate in Italy.
R38	April 7, 1999	SIGINT: Fatmir Kaleci called Pal Vulaj to ask if Vulaj owned a transport bus with air conditioning.
R39	April 7, 1999	OSINT: National media focus is on Albania being seen by the EU as a major source and facilitator of sex slavery. A number of Albanian politicians from both ends of the political spectrum voiced their calls for more action to halt the trade.
R40	April 7, 1999	SIGINT: Edi Jasari told policeman Burim Krizi to be ready to provide an escort for one or two buses with approximately thirty packages.
R41	April 7, 1999	HUMINT—024-B2: Known drivers for the three regional crime syndicate leaders are Luan Zagreda, Loran Simaku, and Kristi Shala.
R42	April 7, 1999	OSINT: In an interview with local Shkodra TV, the mayor of Shkodra says he will soon be asking for the permanent presence of the federal special police.

(Continued)

(Continued)

Rep #	Date	Text
R43	April 7, 1999	SIGINT: Analysis of cell phone traffic over the last four months indicates the presence of a stolen car market in the vicinity of Zus, Albania.
R44	April 8, 1999	OSINT: A large funeral was held recently for Luan Ristani, the cousin of Fatos Ristani. Local media speculates that Luan was killed in a dispute with rival gang members.
R45	April 8, 1999	DOCEX: Documents retrieved from a brothel in London, United Kingdom, indicate that the resident sex slaves were recruited or snatched from Moldova, then smuggled into Albania; from there, they were smuggled over water to Italy.
R46	April 9, 1999	IMINT: Report on the results of a periodic broad area imagery search of the Shkodra region: On the third Saturday of the previous two months, approximately twenty to thirty late model automobiles were observed to be present in the town of Zus (N42° 01" 58,' E019° 28" 33'), south of Shkodra. (Analyst comment: This search was conducted in response to collateral intelligence reporting the general location of a stolen automobile market near Shkodra.)
R47	April 9, 1999	OSINT: Albanian media outlets in Tirana are suggesting that DP politician Gjon Meksi might be indicted for corruption in the near future.
R48	April 9, 1999	HUMINT—049-C3: The leaders of the regional criminal organizations in Northern Albania include Kristi Rama mob.042980905 and Azem Thika mob.042459475.
R49	April 9, 1999	OSINT: A restaurant belonging to Azem Pojani was reportedly raided by four armed men; one person was reported beaten badly and sent to the hospital.
R50	April 10, 1999	HUMINT—031-F6: In the near future, a shipment of about twenty women is scheduled to transit from Moldova to Italy. The person responsible for them during transit has the first name Rezart.
R51	April 11, 1999	SIGINT: Begir Thika called Ardi Lokaj and said after the recent two extra shipments of computers and phones that he has a lot of cash that needs to be changed.
R52	April 11, 1999	Cyber: A series of hacking attempts on DP sites and servers have occurred in the last three months. The origin of these attacks could not be traced due to IP address hijacking.
R53	April 11, 1999	OSINT: National news reports that the special police have arrested several senior members of the national police. Many of those arrested originally came from the Shkodra region.
R54	April 11, 1999	INTREP: All-source reporting generally indicates a strong connection between the DP and several international crime syndicates. There are also indicators that Fatmir Berishaj (SP) is involved in facilitating slave smuggling.

Rep #	Date	Text
R55	April 11, 1999	HUMINT—024-B2: Pal Vulaj runs the coastal region crime syndicate and controls casinos in Velipojë and Shëngjin.
R56	April 11, 1999	IMINT: Sokol Nesimi's compound headquarters has been identified at N32° 35' 20" E19° 41' 33" near Vermosh, in the mountains.
R57	April 12, 1999	IMINT: Detailed tactical analysis is now available on Sokol Nesimi's compound HQ imagery.
R58	April 12, 1999	OSINT: A young couple was shot to death yesterday at a main intersection in Shkodra. After the traffic police signaled their car to stop, an unidentified man emptied two magazines into their idling Mercedes.
R59	April 12, 1999	HUMINT—031-F6: The boats used for smuggling slaves across the Adriatic are supercharged and can outrun any other boat on the water.
R60	April 12, 1999	HUMINT—014-C3: Fatmir Berishaj has personally invested heavily in the slave trade but he has no operational role.
R61	April 13, 1999	SIGINT: Zamir Marku called Sokol Nesimi and agreed that he would "ring to Pal Vulaj with the offer."
R62	April 13, 1999	OSINT: Local newspapers report that a special police task force could arrive to set up a long-term base at any time.
R63	April 13, 1999	OSINT: DP members Daradana and Valbon Krizi held their tenth wedding anniversary at the Palma restaurant in Shkodra. Many local celebrities attended the event.
R64	April 13, 1999	Cyber: SP Party servers were hit with denial of service (DoS) attacks from an unidentified source.
R65	April 13, 1999	OSINT: Local advertising in Shkodra papers suggest that the Thika family has a great deal of electronics to sell extremely cheap.
R66	April 13, 1999	INTREP: Three small-time smuggling families operate in Shkodra; there are usually no problems among them as they have their defined markets—cars, cigarettes, and electronics.
R67	April 14, 1999	OSINT: Residents in the vicinity of South Shtoj, a village on the road from Koplík to Shkodra, are complaining about all the activity around the local brothel.
R68	April 14, 1999	MASINT: A ground moving target indicator (GMTI) has observed a considerable amount of boat traffic on Lake Scutari between Shkodra and the opposite shore during the hours between 0200–0300 daily.
R69	April 15, 1999	OSINT: National news reports suggest that the special police will be given new powers of detention without trial for anyone considered capable of assisting with an investigation.
R70	April 15, 1999	SIGINT: Daradina Krizi called Ledion Krizi to assure him that the money was not an issue between family members. She closed by calling him "brother-in-law."

(Continued)

(Continued)

Rep #	Date	Text
R71	April 15, 1999	SIGINT: Police Chief Edi Jasari called policeman Burim Krizi and told him to expect a shooting, as Xhon Rama has been seen in the town.
R72	April 15, 1999	HUMINT—024-B2: Fatos Ristani loads his contraband at a little cove east of the village of Besa along the south coast of Lake Shkodra.
R73	April 15, 1999	DOCEX: Documents exploited from a special police raid indicate that a black market American passport and driver's license cost \$10,000, while similar Canadian and Australian documentation costs \$8,000.
R74	April 15, 1999	MASINT: GMTI shows a high degree of abnormal cross-border traffic on a dirt road west of Shkodra, Albania, and just a short distance from the official border crossing point.
R75	April 15, 1999	OSINT: Local Shkodra media reports that NGO Red Barnet was robbed by five masked gunmen.
R76	April 16, 1999	OSINT: National SP leader stated on national television that the recent spate of cyber attacks on both SP and DP servers could be due to an overexcited youth movement in both parties.
R77	April 16, 1999	Cyber: Special police headquarters servers suffered a six-hour long DoS attack originating outside of Albania.
R78	April 16, 1999	SIGINT: Saban Lokaj called Ditmir Berishaj and told Berishaj that there would be eight more security personnel on the payroll.
R79	April 16, 1999	OSINT: National media suggests that parliament will approve the establishment of a long-term special police unit in Shkodra.
R80	April 16, 1999	SIGINT: Traffic analysis shows a spike in communications between Northern Albania and Moldova just before a group of sex slaves are set in transit.

BACKGROUND READING

In 1990 and 1991, as the Hoxha regime collapsed in Albania, so did border enforcement. It became even easier than before to smuggle foodstuffs and luxury goods from Kosovo or Montenegro, and the permissive environment facilitated the start of the stolen Mercedes trade from the EU. Wholesale beer and cigarette smuggling became common and accepted forms of income supplements for the locals. Still, with the exception of some mountainous regions that had always had a high level of violent crime, the main centers of population enjoyed a relative peace and local banks were able to function normally. Businesses in the region had to deal with a relatively modest level of racketeering. Before 1997, the majority of the population was not armed, and household firearms were not seen as essential. Violent

crimes such as armed robbery and hijacking were not sufficiently widespread to create an atmosphere of fear amongst the general population.

The Albanian Rebellion of 1997 dramatically changed the country's organized crime landscape. Government, law enforcement, and the military were seen by many to have sanctioned the pyramid schemes that had bankrupted an already poor populace, sparking the unrest. Rebels and angry civilians ransacked military bases, and suddenly the general population was armed with everything from 9mm pistols to 14.5mm anti-aircraft weapons. The AK-47 became a household item along with grenades and other pyrotechnics. Factories and successful businesses were looted. Citizens anxious to make up for personal losses became involved in serious criminal activities such as armed robbery and hijacking. The police and judiciary were rendered completely ineffective. During the unrest, many dangerous criminals were freed from prisons. These criminals robbed local banks and undertook racketeering on a wide scale. A sense of anarchy spread over the land, and a self-imposed curfew took place as soon as it became dark. Criminals could behave with impunity; known murderers were able to walk in public, drink at cafés, and conduct business. With the police and judiciary deemed ineffective, businessmen refused to pay taxes and instead supported racketeering as the most promising method of securing protection for their small businesses.

Albanian criminal activity expanded internationally after 1997 by establishing a better distribution network and better bilateral criminal cooperation with criminal networks in the former Soviet Union. Especially noteworthy is the cooperation that developed between the Russian and Balkan Mafias, and between the Albanian and Italian Mafias. Working together with foreign organized crime, the Albanian organized crime groups were able to use Albania as a safe haven and grew far stronger in the post-1997 lawless environment.

The Albanians also began acting more and more as the *camels*—couriers—for eastern European sex slaves and drugs, and Albania became a hub for the sex-slave trade. In that trade, women were kept in holding centers across Albania waiting for travel arrangements into Europe or the Americas via Italy or Greece. The criminal syndicates used the same system for refugee smuggling into the West from Africa and the Middle East, with the Albanians supplying the needed false documentation. Logistical connections, established internationally with former Albanian refugees accepted into European countries and the Americas since 1991, were refined to maximize international criminal efficiency. This efficiency depended on family connections, which are traditionally strong in Albania. An example of this efficiency was the fact that you could buy your way to New Zealand, the United States, or Canada for \$8,000 to \$10,000 using contacts in those countries. This package included all necessary documentation including a bank card, being picked up at the airport, and a construction job. Criminal activity could be seen as divided into two mutually supportive categories: the continuing criminal activity with local implications that had dominated the early part of the 1990s, and the criminal activities beginning with

the 1997 rebellion that became transnational with major international ramifications particularly between Albania and the EU.

In this environment, Albania became the topographical center of eastern European and Balkans organized crime. Post-conflict situations along its northern and northeastern borders provided smugglers with easy land access to Albanian Adriatic ports such as Durrës or Vlora. The Strait of Otranto then provided a water gateway to Italy and from there to the rest of the EU and the Americas.

In 1998, the G8 summit in the United Kingdom labeled transnational organized crime as one of the three major challenges facing the world, with the Balkans noted as a primary source. The Italian, Swiss, Austrian, and German police, being acutely aware of the organized crime originating from the Balkans region, have written numerous reports concerning it.⁷ Inside the Balkan region, there is also recognition of the problem. The ex-president of Macedonia, for example, named organized crime in the region as the major roadblock to democratic development.

⁷Bruce Johnston, "Crisis Talks as Milan Is Hit by Wave of Killings," *Daily Telegraph*, January 13, 1999.