



TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF CHINESE CRIME ORGANIZATIONS

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PREFACE

This study investigates the major pockets of activity of Chinese criminal groups from 2000-2003, throughout the world except for mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. The main geographical regions of such activity are Australia, Europe, Japan, Latin America, North America, Russia, South Africa, and Southeast Asia. The report notes the participation of such groups in all major types of crime, including trafficking of human beings and various commodities, financial crimes, extortion, gambling, prostitution, and violent crimes. For the purposes of this report, the term “Chinese” refers to individuals of purely Chinese ethnic origin living in any part of the world. The criminal groups described vary in size and degree of structure; they include syndicates, triads, gangs, and ad hoc combinations of organization members and non-members. Because of this variety, an increasing tendency toward ad hoc activity, and the lack of specificity in many open sources, the term “group” is used when a criminal activity is not attributed to a specific type of organization. The report’s sources are several recent monographs, journal articles on various aspects of such crime in the geographical regions where it occurs, and Internet reports by journalists and law enforcement agencies. Some sources published prior to the time period covered by the report have been used to provide background and establish long-term trends.

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- Chinese crime organizations outside China and Taiwan are varied in size and flexible in structure, retaining some traditional triad and tong structures but adapting readily to conditions in host countries.
- Chinese crime organizations are found in most world population centers having substantial ethnic Chinese populations.
- In most cases, the starting point of Chinese crime is extortion and protection practiced against indigenous Chinese populations; subsequently, expansion into other crimes and into the general population often occurs.
- Chinese groups adjust pragmatically to conditions in a country; for example, law enforcement in France has forced a movement away from narcotics trafficking toward trafficking in humans.
- Several large criminal groups have established footholds in more than one country; numerous smaller groups are independent or allied with the large groups in a particular country.
- In some countries, Chinese groups have formed pragmatic, temporary alliances with other ethnic criminal groups.
- Chinese organized crime has established a significant foothold in Australian cities, and Australian authorities consider it a serious law enforcement problem.
- Chinese trafficking groups still use routes that were established through Eastern Europe in the corrupt late communist era.
- “Snakehead” groups, which move illegal Chinese migrants to Western Europe and North America using networks of specialized accomplices in local communities, are an active and persistent feature of Chinese crime in many countries.
- In recent years, Chinese criminal activity in Japan has increased noticeably, often in cooperation with indigenous groups.
- Canada has become an important site for Chinese narcotics trafficking and financial crimes.
- In the United States, Chinese groups established their initial footholds on the West Coast and in New York City; from there they have spread to other large metropolitan areas, and their activities have diversified.
- Chinese criminal activity in Russia has been concentrated in Moscow and the Russian Far East, where numerous forms of trafficking have proliferated.

- Several countries of Southeast Asia are the sites of narcotics and human trafficking, money laundering, and counterfeiting of electronic products.

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, the activities of Chinese criminal groups have caused increasing alarm among law enforcement officials in Australia, Japan, North America, Russia, South Africa, Southeast Asia, and Western Europe. Exhibiting substantial flexibility and pragmatism, such groups have expanded their territory and their range of activities to take advantage of conditions and markets in host countries. Chinese groups around the world are active in trafficking of narcotics, arms, people, and endangered animals and plants; financial fraud; software piracy; prostitution; gambling; loan sharking; robbery; and high-tech theft.¹ The two most widespread and profitable criminal activities are trafficking narcotics and people.

Chinese criminal groups are transnational in the most literal sense. Their members may have been born in the People's Republic of China (which now includes Hong Kong and Macau), Taiwan, or one of many overseas Chinese communities located throughout the world. Émigré members have migrated widely without losing touch with their home base. International crime expert Roger Faligot says of the Teochow, which from its base in Guangdong Province has become one of the most powerful crime groups in Europe: "Organized on the basis of tight links and featuring great loyalty, all the Teochow in the world are connected today by a dialect and a common origin from seven villages near the city of Swatow [Shantou]." ²

Despite this context of organizational loyalty, even in today's Hong Kong Chinese transnational crime enterprises show a strong tendency toward overlapping membership and pragmatic, ad hoc cooperation that defies categorization of the participants. Transnational trafficking expert Jennifer Bolz reports that the major triads (see below and Appendix) of Hong Kong all have members from the Big Circle, which is a large, loose triad-like crime group.³ In

¹ Mike Bruner, "Asian Gangs Are Brothers in Crime," MSNBC online report, 31 August 1999. <<http://www.msnbc.com/news/165145.asp?cp1=1>>

² Roger Faligot, *Le Mafia Chinoise en Europe* [The Chinese Mafia in Europe] (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2001), 154.

³ Jennifer Bolz, "Chinese Organized Crime and Illegal Alien Trafficking: Humans as a Commodity," *Asian Affairs*, 22, no. 3 (Fall 1995). <<http://www.csuohio.edu/polisci/courses/PSC422/Chinesecrime.htm>>

the words of Hong Kong police superintendant Bob Youhill, “Being a Triad member is incidental to carrying out the crime,” and “It’s all negotiable. The dollar is their only loyalty.”⁴

The triad, a form of secret society that first appeared in the seventeenth century in southern China in opposition to emperors of the Qing Dynasty, is the organizational form most often associated with Chinese organized crime.⁵ In the twentieth century, after centuries of existence as guilds and benevolent societies, the triads lost their political *raison d’être* when the Manchu Empire ended in 1911. Some triads then turned to narcotics trafficking, extortion, gambling, and loan sharking. The Vietnam War brought significant overseas expansion of the groups’ narcotics activities.⁶ Hong Kong now is the center of triad activity in China, although triad membership there is a criminal offense.⁷ As many as 57 triads, varying greatly in size, have been identified in Hong Kong—although only 15 to 20 of those organizations are currently involved in criminal activity.⁸

Although the triad is a hierarchical organization with fixed rituals and division of labor, the upper levels function more as resolvers of disputes and sources of international prestige and financing than as direct managers of criminal activity. Compared with the strict hierarchical structure of Italian crime groups, for example, the triads are “loose affiliations in the extreme,” offering full autonomy to members in their selection of criminal activities.⁹ Top individuals in the triad structure often have established reputations as legitimate businessmen.¹⁰ All transnational Chinese crime groups do not owe their membership or their structure to the triad model. Narcotics syndicates, for example, may include both members and non-members of a

⁴ Diane Stormont, “Hong Kong’s Secret Triad Societies Spread Their Wings,” Reuters report, 6 November 1994. <<http://www.stormont.net/triads.htm>>

⁵ The term triad sometimes is applied to groups that do not have the traditional background described here. An example is the Big Circle group, whose organization and activities resemble those of the conventional triads but whose origin, as described below, is quite different.

⁶ Howard Abadinsky, *Organized Crime* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1997), 274-75.

⁷ “An Introduction to the Triads,” Illuminated Lantern report. <<http://www.illuminatedlantern.com/triads/page1.htm>>

⁸ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, “Beneath the Dragon’s Shadow: Canadian Investigators Face Off with Hong Kong Triads.” <<http://www.rcmp-learning.org/docs/ecdd0062.htm>>

⁹ “An Introduction to the Triads.”

¹⁰ Ning-Ning Mahlmann, “Chinese Criminal Enterprises from Asian Criminal Enterprise Program Overview: A Study of Current FBI Asian Criminal Enterprise Investigations in the United States.” U.S. Department of State International Information Program. <<http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ea/chinaaliens/ningning.htm>>

triad. In contrast to the triads, the syndicates tend to be pragmatic assemblages that dissipate and reconfigure over time, making detection more difficult.¹¹

Other types of ethnic Chinese criminal groups also have appeared in the geographical areas under study here. One such type, the Taiwanese organized gang, originated in Taiwan in the 1950s and adopted some triad-like rituals and structure. By the 1980s, the Taiwanese gangs had diversified significantly in activity and spread to other parts of the world. Characterized by one crime expert as “the most powerful and important ethnic group in transnational Chinese organized crime,” Taiwan-based groups are active in transnational trafficking of arms, narcotics, and people, as well as financial crimes.¹² The two largest such groups are United Bamboo and the Four Seas, both of which are present in the United States.

Economic reforms and openings to the West since the 1980s encouraged criminal groups based in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan to expand into the southern China provinces of Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, and Yunnan. Having established narcotics connections in the Golden Triangle adjacent to Yunnan Province and a strong demand for migrant trafficking in Fujian and Zhejiang provinces, these groups now constitute a third source of transnational Chinese crime.¹³

AUSTRALIA

Australia’s proximity to Southeast Asia opens it to the full range of criminal activities in which Chinese organized gangs and triads engage. Growing trends in human trafficking, drug smuggling, and credit-card fraud have prompted the Australian government to direct significant resources to halting the growing presence of Asian organized crime in the region through the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC).¹⁴ In addition, Australia is cooperating with regional forums such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to combat the problem multilaterally.¹⁵

¹¹ Abadinsky, 277.

¹² Willard Myers, “The Emerging Threat of Transnational Organized Crime from the East,” *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 24, 1994, 195, cited in Ko-Lin Chin, Sheldon Zhang, and Robert J. Kelly, “Transnational Chinese Organized Crime Activities: Patterns and Emerging Trends,” *Transnational Organized Crime*, 4, nos. 3-4, 2002, 128.

¹³ Chin, Zhang, and Kelly, 129-30.

¹⁴ Australian Institute for Criminology. <<http://www.aic.gov.au/institute>>

¹⁵ Alexander Downer, statement at 31st ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference, 28 July 1998. <<http://www.aseansec.org/4180.htm>>

The widespread presence of Chinese criminal networks began in the 1970's, when Singapore and Malaysia enacted a series of anti-crime laws at the same time as significant political changes abolished the White Australia policy that had limited immigration to Australia from Asia. The combination of those events began an exodus of ethnic Chinese to Australia that has continued, with some variations, through the 1990s and until the present.¹⁶ In 2000 the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported the legal immigration of 36,000 Chinese and the legal presence of 168,000 persons of Chinese birth. The latter figure is an increase of 100 percent since 1991 and an increase of 500 percent since 1980.¹⁷ Australia's Chinese population, hence the activity of Chinese criminal groups, is concentrated in the major urban centers of New South Wales and Victoria.¹⁸

The structure and prominence of specific Chinese criminal groups in Australia is not clearly established; Australian reports generally indicate criminal activities under the vague title of "Asian gangs," or "Asian crime." This imprecision is a result of the fact that Chinese organized crime remains relatively new to the continent and still is concentrated in Sydney and other major cities. A second reason is the high degree of cooperation shown between Chinese criminals and other criminal groups operating in Australia and elsewhere, and the lack of clear hierarchical structures generally characteristic of triad and gang activity.¹⁹ For example, although the main groups responsible for heroin trafficking in Australia are the 14K, Sun Yee On, Wo Hop To, and Wo Shen Yee triads, Chinese organizations are utilizing Vietnamese gang members (some of whom are descended from Chinese who migrated to Vietnam) to sell processed heroin from Thailand in Sydney. In Melbourne, Vietnamese and Romanian organizations vie for the role of primary distributor of heroin brought into the country by Chinese traffickers.²⁰ Australian authorities also have reported possible cooperation between Italian and Chinese organized crime groups.²¹

¹⁶ Bertil Lintner. *Blood Brothers: The Criminal Underworld of Asia*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002: 318.

¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia 2002*. <<http://www.abs.gov.au>>

¹⁸ "The China-Born Community Historical Background." <<http://huaren.org/diaspora/oceania/australia/id/051201-01.html>>

¹⁹ Rebecca Tailby. "Organised Crime and People Smuggling/Trafficking to Australia." *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 208 (May 2000):1. <www.aic.gov.au>

²⁰ Lachlan Colquhoun. "Asian Underworld in Australia," *Bangkok Asia Times* [Bangkok]: 25 February 1997 (FBIS Document FTS19970625002098).

²¹ Australia, Parliament, Joint Committee on the National Crime Authority, "Asian Organised Crime in Australia," 1995.

Heroin trafficked from the Golden Triangle, also known as “China White,” accounts for an estimated 80 percent of the heroin marketed in Australia. Although the primary export point for these drugs is Thailand, the main traffickers are Chinese syndicates, composed of both émigré and mainland Chinese.²²

The transport of narcotics generally is combined with trafficking in humans, either as a cost-effective method of utilizing transport, or as an employment scheme for the use of illegal immigrants as employees in the narcotics distribution system. According to Australian criminologist Rebecca Tailby, Australia is a desirable destination for illegal migrants from Asia because of its reputation as a democratic society with a high, easily attainable standard of living and as a tolerant, multicultural society; because of existing ethnic communities that act as support systems; and because Australia’s economy survived well the economic downturn that damaged most of the economies of the Pacific rim. The 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney enhanced Australia’s international image for both legal and illegal trade.²³

Despite the lack of a clearly structured hierarchy, the trafficking of narcotics and humans from Southeast Asia into Australia is a very sophisticated operation that relies on flexible and immediately responsive networks with resources in enforcement monitoring.²⁴ The trafficking route for heroin destined for Australia includes mainland China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Bangkok, using both maritime and air transport.²⁵

Human trafficking into Australia is conducted by so-called snakehead groups by sea and air. Maritime routes bring more illegal immigrants and workers because they are more flexible and because ports of entry can be changed to avoid detection. Trafficking by air is a more complicated process that reportedly relies upon the purchase of forged and legitimate Taiwanese passports for entry into Australia.²⁶ Prior to the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, migrant trafficking increased to accommodate increased employment opportunities. In the first quarter of 1999, authorities reported 31 attempted cases of illegal immigration involving more than 700 ethnic Chinese.

²² Philip Cornford, “Heroin in Australia,” *Sydney Morning Herald* [Sydney], 8 April 1999. <www.smh.com.au>

²³ Rebecca Tailby, “People Smuggling: An Australian Perspective,” paper presented at the Australian Federal Police College, 28 June 2000, 2.

²⁴ Tailby, “Organised Crime and People Smuggling/Trafficking to Australia,” 3.

²⁵ John McFarlane, “Transnational Crime and Illegal Immigration in the Asia-Pacific Region: Background, Prospects and Countermeasures,” Australian National University, Strategic Defence Studies Centre report, July 1999.

²⁶ Tailby, “Organised Crime and People Smuggling/Trafficking to Australia,” 4.

Credit-card fraud recently has been identified as a source of income for organized crime groups in Australia. Working mainly with forged counterfeit cards manufactured in Hong Kong, Chinese crime groups are suspected of selling these cards on the Australian market, although few reports indicate widespread use in Australia.²⁷ A new method of credit-card fraud has been identified as “skimming,” which utilizes hand-held devices capable of recording data on a user’s card for later replication on a new card. The card then is sold and used internationally or within Australia. Although credit companies are currently working on technologies that will detect a duplicated magnetic strip on the back of a credit card, participation by employees of legitimate companies in the skimming process has expanded the scope of the problem.²⁸

In addition to international trafficking and fraud, Chinese organizations have set up protection schemes in ethnic Chinese areas in major cities. The expansion of Chinese communities in Australian cities has contributed to a rise in extortion and violent crimes related to turf wars. In June of 2002, members of the Sing Wa triad engaged in a spree of destruction in Chinese restaurants of Sydney, designed to discourage the competing gang Big Circle from expanding its extortion activities in Chinatown.²⁹ These crimes usually are limited to Chinese communities, where both illegal and legal Chinese immigrants fear reprisal if they provide information to authorities.³⁰

Money laundering has increased in conjunction with the expansion of drug trafficking and human smuggling into Australia. The Australian Federal Police estimate that between US\$1.7 million and US\$6.6 million per year is laundered from heroin profits alone.³¹ Laundering operations increasingly utilize high-speed modem communications for the transfer of funds into and out of Australia’s banks. In addition to the utilization of the banking system, launderers use couriers to carry bulk cash, and they move money through international accounts held under a family name.³²

Chinese triads and gangs also are present in other money-making operations in Australia, and more recently New Zealand. For example, Chinese criminals now have permeated the black

²⁷ Russell G. Smith, “Plastic Card Fraud,” Australian Institute of Criminology, *Trends and Issues*, 71 (July 1997): 2.

²⁸ Anthony Hughes, “Don’t Let Credit Card Skimmers Swipe Your Card,” *The Sydney Morning Herald* [Sydney], 13 November 2002. <<http://www.smh.co.au>>

²⁹ Kathy Marks, “Sydney Triads Bring Terror to Restaurants,” *The Independent* [Sydney], 23 June 2002. <<http://www.news.independent.co.uk>>

³⁰ Grant Holloway, “Triad Turf War in Sydney's Chinatown,” *CNN. Asia*, 19 June 2002. <<http://www.cnn.com>>

³¹ G. R. Owens, “Asset Confiscation: A New South Wales Overview,” *New South Wales Police* 2002.

³² G. R. Owens.

market in exports of abalone shell and rock lobster.³³ Because of Australia's abundance of marine wildlife, Chinese organizations also reportedly have bought out local commercial fishermen in a bid to take over the lucrative live coral trout trade to Hong Kong.³⁴

EUROPE

Eastern Europe

Before 1990 Chinese snakehead groups established people-trafficking routes through eastern Europe by taking advantage of official corruption in the communist regimes of critical countries. Kiev became a key transit point from which "tens of thousands" of Chinese have moved into Slovakia and Moldova, and thence to Hungary, Romania, and the Czech Republic. In recent years, however, local authorities have offered more resistance because international pressure is stronger and because indigenous criminal groups demand elimination of their Asiatic competition. Post-communist Romania became an important staging ground for Chinese human traffickers, who often came into violent conflict with indigenous gangs.³⁵

In 1997 a Romanian security official estimated that 300 Chinese groups were active in Romania, taking advantage of legislative loopholes to establish trafficking routes into Hungary.³⁶ In the late 1990s, the Chinese population of Hungary was estimated at 30,000, and the cities of Budapest and Szeged were strongholds of Chinese triads. At that point, Chinese groups in Budapest were very active in trafficking cigarettes, narcotics, adulterated alcohol, and migrants. The establishment in Budapest of an office of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation substantially reduced this activity, however. Under the pro-mafia policies of Serbian President Slobodan Milošević and his powerful wife, Mira Marković, Chinese triads and snakehead gangs established new strongholds in Serbia. A Chinese population estimated at 100,000 concentrated in Belgrade, which became a new transit point for illegal migrants arriving on direct flights from Beijing. From Belgrade, snakeheads moved their people to Vienna via Vojvodina and Hungary, to Italy via Montenegro, and to Austria and Italy via Zagreb.³⁷ Although Milošević was

³³ "Five Paua Smugglers Jailed," *The Dominion Post* [Wellington], 12 December 2002: A3.

³⁴ Megan Saunders, "Triads Sink Hooks into Reef Fish," *The Australian* [Sydney], 17 February 2003, 5.

³⁵ Faligot, 305-06.

³⁶ Faligot, 306.

³⁷ Faligot, 306-07.

overthrown in late 2000, Serbian authorities have had difficulty dismantling the various mafia organizations with which Serbia became entangled in the 1990s.

Western Europe

In Western Europe, as in many other parts of the world, trafficking in illegal migrants by Chinese criminal groups depends on two major factors: the presence of large Chinese émigré populations, which provide cover and a ready source of profits through protection rackets, and the cooperation (formal or informal) of indigenous criminal organizations. Trafficking in people to Western Europe is facilitated by the perceived desire of Chinese to find a better life on that continent. That ongoing demand assures Chinese criminal groups a reliable supply of laborers and contributors to criminal activities.³⁸ Within Chinese communities, legitimate enterprises such as restaurants and shops are the facades behind which criminal activity is concealed.³⁹ However, like other forms of transnational crime, Chinese criminal organizations are highly pragmatic: they constantly change their routes and connections according to ambient conditions. A much-used asset is the institution of “flying money,” an informal exchange system invented in the seventh century and serving today as a means of international money laundering transactions that leave no conventional trace.⁴⁰

Because large ethnic Chinese populations and indigenous organizations with which to ally are available in virtually every country in Western Europe, that continent plays an active role in the trafficking of people, at least providing transit points along the route from East to West.⁴¹ Document forgery, an indispensable part of human trafficking, is aided by the inability of many westerners to differentiate the features of Asian faces.⁴² Mainly under the stimulation of membership in West European international organizations, former members of the Warsaw Pact alliance such as the Czech Republic and Hungary have taken steps that have substantially shrunk the trafficking routes passing through their countries. West European countries such as France and the United Kingdom have established special units in their domestic security agencies to deal with Asian or Chinese crime. Such special attention has discouraged some forms of criminal

³⁸ Domenico Di Petrillo, “The Chinese Mafia,” report to Falcon One European Seminar on Organized Crime, 27 April 1995. <<http://www.sisde.it/Sito/Supplemento.nsf/ServNavig/26>>

³⁹ Faligot, 158.

⁴⁰ Faligot, 155.

⁴¹ Faligot, 299.

⁴² Faligot, 137.

activity in those countries, although Chinese groups have tended to change the form of their activity rather than withdrawing from the country.⁴³ The reversion of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China brought another pragmatic reaction: some triad groups moved their operations from Hong Kong to other cities with large Asian populations. The chief destinations of such moves were Budapest, Manchester, Perth, San Francisco, Vancouver (British Columbia), and Vienna.⁴⁴

Belgium and the Netherlands

Belgium and the Netherlands began to experience increased Chinese immigration in the 1990s. Netherlands police authorities believe that the 14K triad has had full control of heroin importation into the Benelux countries since 1987. The line established by the 14K is a direct connection with Hong Kong via Bangkok, the chief transit point. In the Netherlands, the 14K is divided into seven- to ten-person cells (mainly in Amsterdam) that function as relay posts for moving heroin elsewhere in Europe and make domestic sales. However, authorities believe that Belgium now plays an equally important role; heroin laboratories that were discovered in the Netherlands have been reassembled in Flanders, with strong bases in Brussels and Antwerp. A foothold in Belgium also has brought the narcotics traffickers closer to the money-laundering banks of Luxembourg.⁴⁵

In 1998 the chief of Belgium's security agency described Chinese criminal organizations in Belgium: "They include several hundred Asiatics and have a strong familial characteristic. Their activities are very diverse, also including [besides narcotics] gambling and illegal workshops. They also are developing money laundering, both small-scale (restaurants, etc.) and large-scale such as real estate and even industrial projects."⁴⁶ For example, the 14K controls illegal gambling casinos in Antwerp. Belgium and the Netherlands form two corners of a triangular narcotics route of the 14K triad; the third corner is Paris.⁴⁷

⁴³ For example, in the 1990s harsh penalties for drug dealing in France caused Chinese groups to turn to migrant trafficking, prostitution, and protection rackets. See Faligot, 202.

⁴⁴ Antonio Nicaso, "The Chinese Triads Are Digging Their Claws into Canadian Businesses," *Tandem Online*, 23 March-30 March 2003. <<http://www.tandemnews.com/viewstory.php?storyid=99>>

⁴⁵ Faligot, 199-200.

⁴⁶ Bart Van Lijsebeth in *La Dernière Heure* [Brussels], 30 January 1998, quoted in Faligot, 201.

⁴⁷ Faligot, 200-01.

Besides the 14K, six Chinese triads and two other major criminal groups have been documented as active in the Benelux countries: the Ah Kong, the Luen group, the Red Sun group, the Sun Yee On, the Wo On Lok, and the Wo Shing Wo triads and the Big Circle and United Bamboo group. The groups most active in Belgium are the 14K (in Brussels and Antwerp), the Wo Shing Wo (in Antwerp), and the Ah Kong (in Brussels). All of these groups are connected with transit ports for migrants in London and Germany as well as in China. Migrant trafficking routes with Belgium as their final destination lead through Moscow and Eastern Europe and through Gambia (by air, using counterfeit documents furnished by the Nigerian mafia).⁴⁸

The Benelux countries have several second- and third-generation Cantonese-speaking Chinese communities. In Belgium, which has 23,000 legal Chinese residents, illegal migrants from Hong Kong and Guangdong have settled mainly in the Flanders region. Increasing numbers of migrants from Zhejiang and Fujian are settling in the francophone provinces of Belgium.⁴⁹

France

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that 200,000 Chinese live in France legally; the magnitude of the accompanying illegal population can only be speculated but surely is large. France's General Intelligence Agency (Renseignements Généraux) estimated in 2000 that 80,000 illegal Chinese immigrants were living in the Île de France, the region that includes Paris, and that the number is growing constantly. About 90 percent of the Chinese diaspora in France has arrived (directly, or indirectly through Southeast Asia) from the south central Chinese provinces of Guangdong, Fujian, and Hunan. Although that population is divided by dialect, it has strong cultural unity as it relates to its foreign ambience.⁵⁰ An indication of the seriousness of the problem in France is that in October 2002 the focus of the first meeting between the interior ministers of China and France in 38 years was reduction of narcotics trafficking, money laundering, and illegal immigration from China to France.⁵¹

⁴⁸ "Quelques Images du Phénomène de la Traite des Êtres Humains" [Some Descriptions of the Phenomenon of Trafficking in Humans]. <<http://www.antiracisme.be/fr/rapports/traite/2001/01b-traite01.pdf>>

⁴⁹ "Quelques Images du Phénomène de la Traite des Êtres Humains."

⁵⁰ Faligot, 108-09.

⁵¹ "Paris Hosts First Meeting of French, Chinese Interior Ministers since 1964," Agence France Presse report, 22 October 2002 (FBIS Document EUP20021022000299).

In 2000, one major crime group from the Chinese mainland, the Big Circle, and five major Chinese triads were present in France. The triads are the Ah Kong, the 14K, the Red Sun, the Sun Yee On, and the Wo Shing Wo.⁵² Worldwide, the largest of these is the Sun Yee On, which has an estimated 56,000 members, and the second-largest is 14K, with about 20,000 members.⁵³ Of the groups, the 14K, Sun Ye On, and Wo Shin Wo are based in Guangdong Province, and the Big Circle has several bases in mainland China.

In Paris, Chinese merchants make periodic payments of US\$500 to US\$2,500 in “tea money” to buy protection from gangs. Some gangs practicing this form of extortion are known to be operated by higher-level mafia officials with impeccable credentials as legitimate businessmen.⁵⁴ A group of immigrants known as the Wenzhou originate in that city or its environs in Zhejiang Province and now number about 80,000 in France. Wenzhou gangs are active in extorting money from Chinese merchants from the same group in the Belleville section of northeast Paris, where gangs have waged violent turf battles.⁵⁵ Similar protection rackets operate in Paris’s Chinatown, in the 13th Arrondissement (where the dominant group is the Teochew, from southeastern Guangdong Province), and in the suburbs of Paris, but gang competition in those areas is not as violent. Illegal Wenzhou migrants are known to pass through Belleville on a route run by the international Red Sun group.⁵⁶

After the murder of two Chinese godfathers by rival gangs in Belleville in 1997, control of the local extortion business and the trafficking of illegal migrants went through a chaotic period. By 2000, the main activities of organized Chinese criminal groups in Paris were illegal labor and the traffic in illegal workers, illegal gambling and prostitution, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, and extortion. All these crimes often are accompanied by violence. However, in recent years the Chinese population has departed somewhat from its traditional reticence to report crime to the police.⁵⁷

By the late 1990s, French authorities were able to substantially limit narcotics trafficking by the 14K organization and others, causing many criminal groups to seek less risky forms of illegal activity. However, some trafficking groups have resumed their activity. In 2000 some

⁵² Faligot, 10.

⁵³ Faligot, 345.

⁵⁴ Faligot, 120.

⁵⁵ Faligot, 113.

⁵⁶ Faligot, 113, 124.

⁵⁷ Faligot, 124-25.

Chinese groups began using radio control along their heroin trafficking routes, which originate in the Golden Triangle and are run by Albanians and Turks. British investigators have alleged that opium from Afghanistan also has appeared along these routes. In 2000 Chinese traffickers also resumed heroin shipments from Bangkok, Hong Kong, and Singapore to France, using Australian, U.S., and European mules moving along routes organized by the Chinese or by Nigerians.⁵⁸

Chinese groups also use French financial institutions to launder illegal profits. The receipts from criminal activities are collected in restaurants and stores, from which they pass to a French bank for laundering. The “clean” money then is transferred from France to China, where it funds future trafficking of migrants, women for the sex trade, and narcotics.⁵⁹ As a ritual of the annual Chinese New Year’s festival, hundreds of small protection payments are offered; because the Banque de France has no requirement to justify the source of a deposit smaller than US\$8,000⁶⁰ and the number of such smaller deposits is not limited, this money is effectively laundered as soon as it is deposited. In 2000 an investigation revealed that two Chinese money-changing offices had laundered an estimated US\$200 million over a period of three years.⁶¹

Germany

With the assistance of local Chinese criminal groups, Germany is a transit country for illegal Chinese migrants moving from Moscow to France, Spain, and Italy. Those with forged visas move through official border crossings, while those without use back trails.⁶² Other illegal migrants arrive by air from the Czech Republic. Germany is a reunion point for groups who then move by automobile or railway to Florence via Paris.⁶³ German authorities reported that the Wan Kuok-koi, a powerful group in Macau with a branch in Germany, had organized the German phase of the operation that resulted in the deaths of illegal migrants at Dover in June 2000. It is known that the 14K triad provided some of its narcotics trafficking routes to the planners of this people trafficking route, even cooperating with its usual enemies in the Big Circle organization.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Faligot, 202.

⁵⁹ Faligot, 347.

⁶⁰ In 2000 the limit was 50,000 francs, approximately US\$8,000.

⁶¹ Faligot, 148-50.

⁶² Faligot, 142.

⁶³ Faligot, 137.

⁶⁴ Faligot, 309-10.

In Berlin and other German cities, Chinese trafficking organizations cooperate with their Vietnamese counterparts. These cooperative ventures move large amounts of luxury automobiles (from Europe to Vietnam) and counterfeit cigarettes (from China to Great Britain). Although heated rivalries have developed between Vietnamese and Chinese groups, the large number of ethnic Chinese in the Vietnamese gangs has facilitated cooperation.⁶⁵

Great Britain and Ireland

In 1995 an estimated 156,000 ethnic Chinese were living in Great Britain. Of that number, one-third were in London and significant numbers were in Manchester, Liverpool, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The number has increased significantly since that time because of very active migrant trafficking by Chinese groups. Police have estimated that 500 to 600 triad members constitute the core of Chinese criminal activity in Great Britain, but that figure is likely to be too low. Four major groups are active in London: three branches of the 14K, the Big Circle, the Chu Lien Pang (based in Taiwan), and the Shui Fong. The Shui Fong is also active in Southampton, Glasgow, Dublin, and Belfast.⁶⁶

The Big Circle threatened the profits of the other groups, which are more traditional triads, at many points in Europe, including Great Britain. A fourth triad, the Wo Shing Wo, is active in Manchester, Portsmouth, Dublin, Cork, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Glasgow. Triads gained a firm foothold in Ireland in the 1980s, when large numbers of Chinese restaurants opened in Cork and Dublin.⁶⁷ In the 1990s, British and Irish police gained greater cooperation from Chinese communities because of successful raids and the desire of wealthy Chinese to disassociate themselves from the criminal elements.

As many as ten gangs may be active in people trafficking from China across Europe to Great Britain.⁶⁸ The seriousness of this activity was emphasized in June 2000, when more than 50 Chinese illegal migrants were found dead in a shipping container at the English Channel port of Dover. At that time, British police estimated that total illegal migrant traffic across the Channel had increased by 500 percent in the last half of the 1990s and that more than 600 illegal

⁶⁵ Faligot, 310.

⁶⁶ Faligot, 92-94.

⁶⁷ Faligot, 94-95.

⁶⁸ Emma Batha, "Chinese Gangs' Cruel Trade," BBC News Online, 2 April 2001.
<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/world/asia-pacific/797489.stm>>

Chinese migrants were entering the United Kingdom every month. Chinese migrants, who pay as much as US\$22,000 to the “snakehead” organizers of their trek, usually pass overland through Russia and Eastern Europe. After as much as four months of travel, they move across the channel in container trucks. After arriving in the United Kingdom, they must pay off their debts by prostitution or forced labor that may continue for several years. In 1997 Britain’s National Criminal Intelligence Service reported that Chinese and Russian gangs were cooperating in moving illegal Chinese migrants to Great Britain via Russia.⁶⁹ Infiltration of snakehead gangs has been hindered by a lack of Chinese speakers in the police.⁷⁰

In London’s Chinatown, Chinese merchants and restaurateurs pay between 200 and 500 pounds sterling per week (about US\$125 to US\$300) in protection to local criminal organizations. Failure to pay results in property damage or large-scale disruption of a restaurant at busy times. Violence against family members is the next step for recalcitrant clients. Competition among gangs for this protection business often escalates to violence as well. Chinese groups also run prostitution operations in the West End of London, employing primarily Malaysian and Thai women. In the late 1980s, Chinese triads began overseeing distribution in Great Britain of heroin from Hong Kong and of a wide variety of counterfeit goods (perfumes, whiskey, art objects, and designer clothes) from Southeast Asia.⁷¹ Although stiff penalties for narcotics trafficking have caused a shift from narcotics to people trafficking, as of 2000 the 14K and Wo Shing Wo triads still shared the British narcotics market with trafficking organizations based in from Turkey, Kosovo, and Colombia.⁷²

Chinese groups in Great Britain are involved in other forms of illegal activity. In 1995 British police dismantled a triad-run operation that was selling medicinal substances derived from endangered animals to customers in Asia. Animal protection groups have criticized Great Britain for inadequate laws that have made the country a center for the trade in illegal animal parts by Chinese groups.⁷³ In recent years, triad gangs in Belfast, Birmingham, Cardiff, Glasgow, and London have waged a struggle to control stores selling pirated videos originating in China. The triads involved are the 14K, the Wo On Lok, the Sun Yee On, and the Wo Shing Wo. As

⁶⁹ Faligot, 296.

⁷⁰ “The Last Frontier (Illegal Immigration into Britain),” *The Economist* [London], 24 June 2000, 63.

⁷¹ Faligot, 96.

⁷² Batha and “More Minder than Hollywood: Who Runs the Drug Business?” *The Economist* [London], 13 January 2001, 53.

⁷³ “Animal Parts Trafficking Rife in Britain, Says WWF,” Reuters report, 9 May 2002. <<http://www.enn.com>>

many as 5,000 copies of an original video cassette and an unlimited number of DVD copies can be made before quality is lost. Videos of Chinese television programs also are sold through urban outlets in the major cities.⁷⁴

Italy

According to Faligot, the substantial growth in power of Chinese criminal groups in Italy during the 1990s corresponds to the growth of Chinese immigration in that period. In 2000 Italian authorities estimated that 50,000 Chinese were living legally in southern Italy, compared with only 18,000 in 1990. The number of illegal residents was not known.⁷⁵ Overall, the vast majority of Chinese in Italy are from mainland China; few are from Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Macau. The regions of Italy with the highest concentration of legal Chinese immigrants are Lombardy, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Tuscany, the Piedmont, Lazio (the province that includes Rome), and Emilia-Romagna. All except Lazio are in the northern part of Italy (north of Rome).

The Public Prosecutor's Department in Rome identifies one large region of Italy as "dangerously open to organized foreign crime." That area includes Rome, the wealthy northern urban centers around Turin and Milan, and Tuscany--all of which have large Chinese populations.⁷⁶ The concentration in the north offers easy access to the borders of four countries with trafficking routes—Austria, France, Slovenia, and Croatia—as well as access to the "fiscal paradise" money-laundering bank centers in Monaco, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland.⁷⁷ A second region, comprising the entire Adriatic (east) coast of the country, is a primary staging area for illegal immigrants arriving by sea to move northward in Italy.

According to Italy's Anti-Mafia Investigative Department (DIA), Chinese criminal groups in Italy are small (between 12 and 50 members), differentiated by their native region, and organized under a single chief according to the traditional triad structure. There is no overarching unity among these groups.⁷⁸ However, Chinese groups may cooperate among themselves, and they increasingly cooperate with other ethnic criminal groups in a variety of activities. The Ji Rong Lin group of Rome is an example of a multinational group with Italian ties. Under a chief

⁷⁴ Faligot, 263.

⁷⁵ Faligot, 129.

⁷⁶ Claudia Fusani, "Plan Against Foreign Mafia from CSM," *La Repubblica* [Rome], 19 November 2000 (FBIS Document EUP20001120000110).

⁷⁷ Faligot, 134.

⁷⁸ Faligot, 133.

who resides in Paris, the group is active in prostitution, gambling, trafficking in people, extortion, and theft in Italy, Austria, Spain, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. In Rome, the group's document forgery operations are especially notable, having established "a veritable underground passport factory in the Bastoncini dioro, a Roman restaurant."⁷⁹

As in other European countries, one of Chinese organized crime's major activities is trafficking in people, which increased substantially in the 1990s. As of 1995, illegal immigrants arrived in Italy by several overland and water routes. The arrival points in Italy are Rome, Brindisi, Trieste, Milan, and Sicily. Several routes pass through Eastern Europe (some combination of Romania, Hungary, Albania, the Czech Republic, and Yugoslavia), and several pass through West European countries (Austria, France, Germany, or Malta) before reaching Italy. Illegal migrants cross the Strait of Otranto from Albanian ports to the Italian port of Brindisi, from where they move north into Tuscany and Lombardy. This route requires cooperation with both Albanian and Italian criminal groups.⁸⁰ Other migrants pass from northern China into the Maritime (Primor'ye) Territory of Russia, then to Moscow. In Moscow they buy Italian visas for US\$10,000 to US\$15,000 per visa, "legalizing" their entry into Italy.⁸¹ Local criminals in northern Italy are known to have established cooperative people-trafficking ventures with Chinese criminal groups.⁸²

In late 2002, the Italian Anti-Mafia Investigative Directorate (DIA) reported that the powerful Neapolitan Camorra mafia organization has established cooperative agreements with Chinese groups seeking to gain a foothold in the Naples market for counterfeit goods, from which Chinese might expand into other criminal activities in that region.⁸³ Reportedly, Chinese groups also have an accord with the Italian mafia in Rome, by which the former engage only in illegal migrants, leaving the Italians with narcotics and arms trafficking.⁸⁴

Italy is home to several very active groups that fall under the general term "Black Society," which is based in Milan and Rome and also has member groups in France, Spain, and the United States. Among the Chinese groups in Italy are two Milan groups, the Yu Hu and the

⁷⁹ Faligot, 136-37.

⁸⁰ Faligot, 131.

⁸¹ "Russian, Chinese Security Officers Stem Illegal Immigration Channel to Italy," RIA-Novosti [Moscow] report, 20 February 2002 (FBIS Document CEP20020220000134).

⁸² DiPetrillo.

⁸³ Lirio Abbate, "The Mafia Is Active and Is Concentrating on Contracts," *La Stampa* [Turin], 10 October 2002 (FBIS Document EUP20021010000023).

⁸⁴ Faligot, 132.

Da Huang, which dominate that city's racketeering and participate in various economic crimes. A second branch, made up of immigrants from Qingtian (Zhejiang Province), is the dominant Chinese group in Rome. The third branch, from Wenzhou (Zhejiang Province) is known for its brutal extortion of protection money from the Chinese community, which has resulted in some collaboration with the DIA.⁸⁵

Besides human trafficking, the second most common crime is counterfeiting documents such as residence permits, driving licenses, and passports, a craft in which criminal groups have become very expert. In the 1990s, Italian authorities also attributed substantial illegal gambling activity to Chinese groups.⁸⁶ Chinese groups also have gained a share of the trade in counterfeit cigarettes, which Albanian groups smuggle into southern Italy. Chinese mafia groups from Fujian Province (southeastern China) are active in trafficking counterfeit designer clothing into Italy through Genoa. Such activity relies on support from the non-criminal émigré community from Fujian.⁸⁷ The DIA also has documented Chinese participation in prostitution, kidnapping, and robbery.⁸⁸

Spain

In 2000 Spain had about 10,000 legal Chinese residents, of which about half lived in Madrid. Most of that population came from Zhejiang Province. According to Spanish police sources, the number of illegal Chinese migrants into Spain has increased significantly over the last decade. One estimate places that number at 50,000. In 2000 another source estimated that 15,000 illegal Chinese migrants were performing virtual slave labor in workshops run by local and international Chinese gangs in Spain.⁸⁹

Very high-quality document counterfeiting has contributed greatly to recent expansion of the migrant traffic from China to Spain. Illegal migrants move from China to Spain by following the usual route from northern China to Moscow, where some obtain illegal visas. From there, migrants move to Germany through several different countries; those with visas get "legal"

⁸⁵ Faligot, 132.

⁸⁶ DiPetrillo.

⁸⁷ Faligot, 172.

⁸⁸ Faligot, 133-34.

⁸⁹ Faligot, 147.

passage through Germany, and those without follow forested routes.⁹⁰ Chinese people traffickers cooperate with local criminals; based on recent arrests, the Spanish police report that the traffickers also have contacts in Portugal, Italy, Belgium, and France.⁹¹

Two groups, known as the Gang of Seven and the Gang of Thirteen, are Spanish branches of the Zhejiang-based Red Sun group, which also has branches in France and Italy. Although Li Ji Min, founder of the Spanish branches, was arrested in 1995, the activity of the gangs has continued. Authorities believe that six other criminal groups are operating in Madrid, under a Chinese leader known only as “Big Uncle.” The Hong Kong-based 14K triad is known to be present in Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia, in some cases working with Red Sun gangs.⁹²

JAPAN

Traditionally the most active Chinese criminal groups in Japan have been based in Shanghai, Beijing, and Fujian Province.⁹³ However, in 1997 the National Police Agency, Japan’s equivalent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, reported that several Hong Kong-based criminal organizations, including the 14K, had been expanding their operations in Japan since the 1980s. Already in 1997, the 14K had branches in Fukuoka, Osaka, Sapporo, and Tokyo, each with at least 1,000 members. Reportedly, the 14K operatives are feared even by Japan’s powerful Yakuza crime groups. The Yakuza have cooperated widely with snakeheads from Chinese trafficking syndicates (sometimes but not necessarily involved with the 14K) in importing large numbers of illegal Chinese migrants. That practice takes advantage of a long tradition of Japanese authorities allowing Chinese illegal migrants to take up residence and fill the gaps in Japan’s labor market. Hong Kong’s Kai Tak airport is a central starting point for this activity. Because that market has been depressed for some time, in recent years the illegal Chinese have turned increasingly to crime after arriving in Japan.⁹⁴

Chinese groups in Japan also have been identified with other forms of crime. According to a report of the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute, Chinese snakehead groups have

⁹⁰ Faligot, 142.

⁹¹ “Chinese Immigrant Trafficking Ring Smashed in Spain,” *El Mundo* [Madrid], 4 July 2002 (FBIS Document EUP20020704000187).

⁹² Faligot, 147.

⁹³ Glenn Schloss, “SAR’s Sun Yee On Triad ‘Spearheading a Push’ into Japan,” *South China Morning Post* [Hong Kong], 13 December 1999 (FBIS Document FTS19991213000262).

⁹⁴ Ajay Singh and Murakami Mutsuko, “Japan Is the New Frontier: Behind the Influx of Chinese Illegal Immigrants,” *Asia Week*, 9 May 1997. <<http://www.asiaweek.com/asiaweek/97/0509/nat6.htm>>

used Japanese underground banks to launder the profits from their operations in Japan.⁹⁵ The 14K, Sun Yee On, and Wee Hop To organizations use sophisticated techniques of counterfeiting credit cards in Tokyo and Osaka, and in recent years authorities have attributed incidents of armed robbery to those groups. In 1999 a Hong Kong newspaper report linked the Sun Yee On group with Japan's largest organized crime group, the Yamaguchi-gumi. According to Japanese authorities, the Chinese groups consider Japan an inviting target for fraud and extortion because of a perceived attitude of trust among the Japanese.⁹⁶

LATIN AMERICA

Central America

Large numbers of illegal migrants move directly from China into large Chinese communities in Guatemala, Panama, Honduras, and Costa Rica. In those countries, which have no visa requirement, local criminal organizations obtain documentation for the migrants. In the late 1990s, Interpol identified 18 local Chinese gangs that were federated in Central America under the Fa Yen triad.⁹⁷ According to a 1995 report, Taiwanese nationals in Guatemala established a people-trafficking route connecting Taiwan with Southern California, where other Taiwanese nationals had established a destination point.⁹⁸

A 2002 report characterized Guatemala as “a significant transit country for alien smuggling, both from neighboring Central American countries and Ecuador and from China, Taiwan, and South Asia...”⁹⁹ Reportedly, migrants moving from China to the United States via Guatemala pay as much as US\$25,000 to their Chinese traffickers.¹⁰⁰ Belize reportedly also has

⁹⁵ Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, “Current Situation of Organized Crimes in Trafficking Stolen Vehicles, Card Fraud, Money Laundering and Major Transnational Organized Crime Groups, *UNAFEI Resource Materials Series*, no. 58, December 2001. <<http://www.unafei.or.jp/pdf/58-18.pdf>>

⁹⁶ Glenn Schloss, “Tokyo Fears Hong Kong Triads Increasing Activity in Japan,” *South China Sunday Morning Post* [Hong Kong], 21 June 1998 (FBIS Document FTS19980622000084).

⁹⁷ Faligot 142-43.

⁹⁸ Jennifer Bolz, “Chinese Organized Crime and Illegal Alien Trafficking: Humans as a Commodity,” *Asian Affairs*, 22, no. 3 (1995). <<http://www.csuohio.edu/polisci/courses/PSC422/Chinesecrime>>

⁹⁹ “Human Rights Report for Guatemala: Trafficking in Persons.” <<http://www.ncbuy.com/reference/country/humanrights>>

¹⁰⁰ International Organization for Migration, “Migrant Trafficking--Case Study: Guatemala,” August 1998. <<http://www.iom.int>>

functioned as a transit point for illegal migrants and narcotics between Taiwan and the United States, under the influence of bribes to government officials from Taiwan-based triads.¹⁰¹

In 2000, the National Institute of Justice described Panama as a major transit point for illegal migrants into the United States from a number of countries, including China.¹⁰² The award of a long-term contract by the government of Panama to the Hong Kong-based Hutchison Whampoa Company to operate shipping facilities at the Panama Canal's port cities of Balboa and Cristobal, has aroused speculation that this Chinese connection might gain traffickers free access to the canal.¹⁰³

South America

The activity of Chinese criminal groups in South America is concentrated most heavily in what is known as the Tri-Border Area (TBA), where the territory of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay meet. Within that region, the center of Chinese criminal activity is Ciudad del Este, a city of about 250,000 in southeastern Paraguay. This boom town reportedly contributes 60 percent of Paraguay's tax revenue, much of which is based on illegal activity. That financial support has prevented government authorities from exercising border controls with neighboring Brazil and Argentina and from establishing a credible police presence in the city. A 1998 report characterizes Ciudad del Este as "the criminal outpost for regional and international mafias and [it] lives off counterfeit goods, smuggling, cheap electronics and clothing, drug-trafficking, prostitution, the trade of minors and the small arms trade." According to that report, four of every five people in the city are illegal immigrants. Initially encouraged by the Paraguayan government, a strong surge of immigration from China began in the 1980s and has continued since that time.¹⁰⁴ The city's mainly Cantonese Chinese population, estimated at as high as 30,000 (about 9,000 of which are legal immigrants), has been an ideal environment for the operations of Chinese criminal groups.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Bolz.

¹⁰² James O. Finckenauer and Jennifer Schrock, "Human Trafficking: A Growing Criminal Market in the United States," U.S. Institute of Justice report, 2000. <<http://www.ojp.usdoj/nij/international/ht.html>>

¹⁰³ See, for example, Douglas J. Davids, "Drug Threat Strategy of Nation Against Nation," *The Officer*, 77, no. 7 (August 2001). <<http://www.csuohio.edu/polisci/courses/PS422/indirect.htm>>

¹⁰⁴ Khatchik der Ghougassian, "Developing a Sub-Regional Approach to Combat Weapons Proliferation," in *Connecting Weapons with Violence*, ISS monograph no. 25, May 1998.

¹⁰⁵ The higher figure is reported in Mariano César Bartolomé, "Amenzas a la Seguridad de los Estados: La Triple Frontera coma 'Area Gris' en el Cono Sur Americano" [Threats to the Security of States: The Tri-Border Region as a

The dynamism of the Chinese community in the city has attracted Chinese criminal groups from China and from Taiwan. Members of at least one triad, the Sun Yee On, are known to be based in Ciudad del Este. The Chinese groups specialize in providing “protection” to the local Chinese business people and in imposing “taxes” on the containers imported by the Chinese businesses from Asia. When the groups import goods directly from Asia, the Chinese business community is obligated to purchase that merchandise, or suffer the consequences of not doing so.¹⁰⁶ In this way, the criminal groups gain monopoly control over the import of particular types of merchandise.

Hong Kong-based criminal groups engage in large-scale trafficking in pirated products, particularly electronics, from China to Ciudad del Este. According to international intelligence agencies, those groups also maintain strong ties with the pro-Iranian Hizballah in the TBA.¹⁰⁷ Ayrton Nascimento Vicente, who was chief of Brazil’s TBA Command, an organization created by the three national governments to control the zone, confirmed the existence in the TBA of Chinese criminal groups with branches in São Paulo (Brazil), Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia), San Francisco (California), and Buenos Aires, among other cities.¹⁰⁸

In 2001 the Paraguayan government was making a significant effort to neutralize the activities of the Chinese mafias, but with only occasional success. A few major organizational leaders such as Wu Wen Huan, an alleged extortionist, tax evader, and trafficker in illegal commodities, have been arrested in the past two years.

According to regional security expert Mariano Bartolomé, Chinese criminal activity has increased in the TBA in general and Ciudad del Este in particular because the region plays a key role in the expansion plans of these criminal organizations into Argentina. The objective of the Chinese criminals is to establish themselves in the duty-free zone of the Argentine province of San Luis. At the same time, economic pressure has increased to eliminate the Chinese criminal element from the region. A group of 15 Taiwanese industrialists has shown interest in

'Grey Area' in the American Southern Cone]. Buenos Aires, November 29, 2001, 7. [<http://www.geocities.com/mcbartolome/triplefrontera1.htm>].

¹⁰⁶ Bartolomé, 7.

¹⁰⁷ “Paraguay: ‘Strong Ties’ Seen Between Hong Kong Mafia, Tri-border Based Hizballah,” *ABC Color* [Asuncion] report, November 22, 2002 (FBIS Document LAP20021122000059).

¹⁰⁸ Bartolomé 5.

establishing branches of their industries in the Eastern Industrial Park of Ciudad del Este, on condition that local authorities eradicate the Chinese mafia in the TBA.¹⁰⁹

The Chinese mafia in the TBA are known to collaborate with the Islamic terrorist groups in the region. According to Brazilian investigative reporter Roberto Godoy, at least two organizations—the Sung-I and Ming families—have engaged in illegal operations with the Egypt-based Gamaa Islamiya (Islamic Group).¹¹⁰ In December 2000, Sung-I sold a shipment of munitions, labeled as medical equipment, to the Islamic Group in Egypt. The Ming family has managed Islamic Group funds from Ciudad del Este in a financial circuit that includes Guyana and the Cayman Islands.¹¹¹ In 2002 and early 2003, Paraguayan authorities were investigating Rajkumar Naraindas Sabnani, an East Indian merchant still at large, an alleged money launderer who has directed funds to Hizballah's military operations chief, Assad Ahmad Barakat, under arrest in Brasília.¹¹²

NORTH AMERICA

Canada

In recent years, Canadian authorities have recognized that Chinese criminal groups are expanding their activities and presenting a serious law enforcement problem in most parts of the country. An important part of that activity is in Vancouver and Toronto, cities very close to the United States border that provide access to U.S. markets. Vancouver and other Pacific ports in British Columbia are key entry points for illegal trafficking of narcotics, arms, and migrants from Asia.¹¹³

The Big Circle group was founded by Red Guard militiamen who were purged or imprisoned in the late 1960s (Chinese prisons were indicated on maps by large circles, hence the name). Based in Toronto and Vancouver, Big Circle controls a very lucrative illicit credit card enterprise that has flourished only in the past ten years. The loosely structured group uses its connections in many countries and with other types of crime, such as trafficking in heroin and luxury automobiles, to maintain a large amount of working capital. Big Circle also is known to

¹⁰⁹ Bartolomé, 8.

¹¹⁰ Bartolomé, 8.

¹¹¹ Bartolomé, 8.

¹¹² “Paraguay: ‘Strong Ties’ Seen Between Hong Kong Mafia, Tri-border Based Hizballah.”

¹¹³ Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada, “Annual Report 2002.” <<http://www.cisc.gc.ca>>

cooperate with other ethnic criminal groups, predominantly but not exclusively Asian. Complete credit-card forging operations are known to exist in Canada as well as on the U.S. West Coast; the most sophisticated operations do authentic reproductions of credit-card holograms, using equipment imported from Asia.¹¹⁴

Major Chinese crime groups also are present in Calgary, Edmonton, and Montreal; some activity also is present in Halifax, Ottawa, and Winnipeg. In the late 1990s, economic expansion and growth of the Asian population in the province of Alberta brought an increase in Chinese participation in financial crime in Calgary and Winnipeg.¹¹⁵ The two most active triads in Canada have been the 14K and the Luen Kung Lok. Others present in some Canadian cities are the Sun Yee On, Wo Hop To, and Wo On Lok (the last two of which are branches of the Hong Kong-based Wo group).¹¹⁶ In the past six years, groups from Fujian Province have grown rapidly. Chinese groups often employ the Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese street gangs that also are present in these cities as enforcers when violence is necessary. Chinese groups also are known to be involved in money laundering, burglary, extortion, counterfeiting checks, illegal gambling, telecommunications fraud, and the pirating of computer software. Profits from criminal activities also are invested in legitimate businesses.¹¹⁷

Chinese groups are involved in all levels of Canada's growing heroin trade, even reaching remote urban centers such as Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. Heroin moves from the source in Southeast Asia through China's Guangdong Province to Vancouver, which is a central distribution point for North American sales. Big Circle and Hong Kong-based triads regularly have used commercial transport to move large shipments of heroin into Canada.¹¹⁸ In 2000 authorities confiscated a shipment of 57 kilograms (about 125 pounds) of heroin and 17 kilograms (37 pounds) of designer drugs that had passed through Vancouver. The cultivation and trafficking of marijuana has increased during the past ten years, especially in British Columbia, the Calgary area, and southern Ontario. Much of the marijuana produced in British Columbia moves via Vancouver into the more profitable markets of the United States. In 2001 Canadian

¹¹⁴ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "Asian-Based Card Crime in Canada," 18 January 1999. <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/crim_int/cardcrimeeng.htm>

¹¹⁵ Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada, "Annual Report 1998." <<http://www.cisc.gc.ca>>

¹¹⁶ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "Beneath the Dragon's Shadow: Canadian Investigators Face Off with Hong Kong Triads." <<http://www.rcmp-learning.org/docs/ecdd0062.htm>>

¹¹⁷ Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada, "Annual Report 2001." <<http://www.cisc.gc.ca>>

¹¹⁸ Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada, "Annual Report 1998."

officials estimated that 10,000 illegal marijuana cultivation operations existed in Vancouver alone. Chinese participation in large-scale cocaine trafficking also has been identified in western Canada.¹¹⁹

Most of the illegal Chinese migrants who enter Canada move along into the United States, either overland or in container ships. The Akwesasne Mohawk Territory in northern New York, Walpole Island, Ontario at the west end of Lake Erie, and the Niagara frontier region at the east end of Lake Erie have been transit points into the United States from Canada for trafficking migrants and goods. Most of the illegal migrants coming into Canada from China originate in Fujian Province.¹²⁰

United States

A wide variety of Chinese criminal organizations are active in the United States. Some are based exclusively in the United States, some have links to triad groups in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and others have links to Chinese communities in other countries. According to Chinese crime expert Ko-lin Chin, no monolithic Chinese mafia organization is present in the United States, and existing organizations do not normally cooperate among themselves in international criminal activities.¹²¹ The groups with links to Hong Kong and Taiwan retain the hierarchical structure of the traditional triad. They receive financial and other assistance, but no directives on how to use such assistance, from their home country.¹²²

The traditional triad hierarchy has been simplified in the United States, and members often switch allegiance if necessary to improve their financial position. Triads and other types of criminal groupings in the United States are not unified entities, but rather loose confederations of independent cells with no identifiable central authority.¹²³ Individual gangs, normally made up of teen-agers and men in their twenties, operate on territory and under the protection of legitimate social, benevolent, and commercial groups called tongs (meeting halls). The tongs provide money, protect criminal activity such as gambling, and use their prestige in the Chinese

¹¹⁹ Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada, "Annual Report 2001."

¹²⁰ Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada, "Annual Report 2001."

¹²¹ Ko-lin Chin, quoted in James O. Finckenauer, "Chinese Transnational Organized Crime: The Fuk Ching," National Institute of Justice report, 2000.

¹²² Finckenauer.

¹²³ Ning-Ning Mahlmann, "Chinese Criminal Enterprises from [sic] Asian Criminal Enterprise Program Overview: A Study of Current FBI Asian Criminal Enterprise Investigations in the United States." U.S. Department of State International Information Programs report, 2000. <<http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ea/chinaaliens/ningning.htm>>

community to reinforce extortion demands by the gangs. The gangs and the tongs are connected in a hierarchical relationship governed by norms and rules.¹²⁴ Membership and group structure are quite fluid; individual criminal enterprises may bring together new groupings that subsequently disappear or shift. For example, in New York City the Drug Enforcement Agency has described trafficking groups as “ranging from loose confederations of businessmen and smugglers who collaborate on a single deal to complex organized crime operations.”¹²⁵ The triad groups in the United States cooperate with similar groups in other countries to conduct narcotics and migrant trafficking, credit-card fraud, theft of vehicles and electronic equipment, piracy of intellectual property, and money laundering.¹²⁶

Following the Tiananmin Square incident of 1989, liberalization of U.S. policy toward Chinese immigrants brought a significant increase in the Chinese populations of U.S. cities, as well as in the amount of money moving from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and (later) China to members of the Chinese communities in the United States. This change provided more fertile ground for existing Chinese criminals who preyed on the Chinese communities. It also brought new gangs such as the Big Circle and the Fu Ching groups from China to challenge the dominant positions of the traditional triad groups from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. As Chinese communities in the United States have become less ethnically homogeneous, the activities of the Chinese criminal groups based in those communities have become more diverse. Those groups have abandoned their reliance on extortion within the community (a practice that still continues) and entered a range of other criminal activities aimed against society as a whole. Those activities range from simple street crime to transnational dealings by Chinese criminals who also operate legitimate businesses. The geographic range of such activity also has increased: in 1998 the Federal Bureau of Investigation investigated crime by Chinese suspects at 29 of its 56 national branch offices.¹²⁷

Reportedly, Chinese groups cooperate with other ethnic criminal groups whenever such groups can be of use. Cooperation is known to occur with Dominican, Hispanic, Korean, Filipino, Italian, and Vietnamese groups. The methodology of Chinese groups has influenced that of other ethnic groups. For example, Vietnamese groups adopted the violent home-invasion

¹²⁴ Finckenauer.

¹²⁵ Chin, Zhang, and Kelly, 132.

¹²⁶ Mahlmann.

¹²⁷ Mahlmann.

robbery profile of the Chinese Big Circle group. In recent years, Chinese groups in the United States have been most active in narcotics and migrant trafficking and credit-card fraud, all of which are transnational in scope and utilize a “long cultivated international network of criminal contacts.” Narcotics trafficking involves primarily the movement of heroin from the Golden Triangle region of Southeast Asia into the United States.¹²⁸ Credit-card fraud utilizes a very sophisticated counterfeiting system based in Hong Kong and Canada to distribute apparently authentic cards throughout North America and Europe.¹²⁹

Chinese groups have demonstrated awareness of electronic surveillance devices that authorities use against them, evading electronic detection and in some cases even conducting counter-surveillance against law enforcement agents. The Chinese groups also take full advantage of reduced trade barriers and increased transnational contacts to form new connections and move bases of operation when needed. Flexibility and patience are characteristics that have been very helpful in identifying and utilizing optimal market conditions and evaluating potentially dangerous situations.¹³⁰

Several gangs are dominant in New York City: the Born-to-Kill (Vietnamese-Chinese), the Flying Dragons (Cantonese and Toisanese), the Fuk Ching (Fujianese), the Ghost Shadows (Cantonese and Toisanese), and the Tung On (Hakka). The dominant groups in California (notably in Long Beach, Los Angeles, and San Francisco) are the Wah Ching and the Wo Hop To. The former was described in 1995 as the most powerful Asian crime group in San Francisco. Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Honolulu, Houston, Las Vegas, Miami, Phoenix, and Seattle are other U.S. cities where Chinese gangs have been active.¹³¹

One of the most powerful Chinese criminal groups in the United States is United Bamboo, which originated in Taiwan in 1956. After members of the relatively small group began migrating to the United States in the 1970s, the group expanded and diversified significantly. Today, United Bamboo has major branches in California, Chicago, Honolulu, Houston, Miami, and Phoenix, as well as numerous Latin American countries and Canada. The group practices murder, extortion, trafficking of narcotics and people, kidnapping, gambling, and loan

¹²⁸ Mahlmann.

¹²⁹ Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada, “National Organized Crime Priorities 1998: Asian-Based Organized Crime.” <<http://www.cisc.gc.ca/AnnualReport1998/Cisc1998en/asian98.htm>>

¹³⁰ Mahlmann.

¹³¹ Ko-lin Chin, *Chinatown Gangs: Extortion, Enterprise, and Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 8.

sharking.¹³² Other groups with a major foothold in the United States are the 14K triad (in New York, California, Chicago, Boston, and Houston) and the Sun Yee On triad (in New York, Miami, San Francisco, and Los Angeles).¹³³ The structure and activities of the New York groups differ significantly from those of the West Coast.¹³⁴

In New York the Fuk Ching is known to be especially powerful and to have transnational activities. The Fuk Ching's main transnational activity is migrant trafficking from Fujian Province, which is the principal source of illegal migrants moving from China to the United States and the province of origin of Fuk Ching's estimated 55 members. All the New York gangs survive mainly by extortion and racketeering within their respective territories in the city's official and unofficial Chinatowns. Gangs in New York and California also participate in legitimate businesses such as restaurants, stores, vegetable stands, and car services.¹³⁵

Illegal Chinese migrants began arriving in the United States in large numbers in the late 1980s, mainly from Fujian Province. According to the FBI, in 1999 Chinese groups accounted for 45 percent of migrant trafficking by Asian groups into the United States. According to Chin, little is known of the structure and procedure of such human trafficking. Although triad, tong, and gang members are involved, trafficking operations may be ad hoc activities that involve individuals from several organizations, legitimate and illegal, whose location or resources are appropriate to advancing a particular stage of the process. Thus the term "organized crime" may not apply strictly to what is nevertheless a very large and growing form of criminal activity. It is certain that individuals at the transit points are Taiwanese, Chinese, and non-Chinese, although the initiators of this global business are specifically Fujian Chinese in the United States.¹³⁶

Individuals active in migrant trafficking fall into several categories. The "big snakeheads" are the organizers and investors, usually Chinese living outside China, who oversee the operation but are not known to those at lower levels. "Small snakeheads" are Chinese in China who are responsible for recruiting "customers" from the vast numbers of Chinese eager to

¹³² Peter Huston, *Tongs, Gangs, and Triads: Chinese Crime Groups in North America* (San Jose, California: Authors Choice, 2001), 105, 108.

¹³³ Jennifer Bolz, "Chinese Organized Crime and Illegal Alien Trafficking: Humans as a Commodity," *Asian Affairs*, 22, no. 3. <<http://www.csuohio.edu/polisci/courses/PSC422/Chinesecrime.htm>>

¹³⁴ Robert Taylor, "Chinatown Gangs: Extortion, Enterprise, and Ethnicity by Ko-lin Chin" (book review), *Law and Policy Book Review*, 7, no. 6. <<http://www.bsos.umd.edu/gvpt/lpbr/subpages/reviews/chin.htm>>

¹³⁵ Chin.

¹³⁶ Ko-lin Chin, "The Social Organization of Chinese Human Smuggling," in David Kyle and Rey Koslowski, *Global Human Smuggling: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). <<http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ea/chinaaliens/smuggling2.htm>>

leave their homeland. Those recruiters act as middlemen between the organizers and the customers. In the United States and elsewhere, transporters and guides ensure that migrants reach the next transit point or the final destination. Snakehead operations in China and the United States often are linked by kinship.¹³⁷ An important element is the cooperation of officials at the point of origin. Southern California has been an important point of entry for migrants trafficked from China via Central America and Mexico.

As an extension of trafficking in people, Chinese triads and gangs also are involved in recruiting and smuggling of women for the sex trade in the United States and in running brothels in Chinese communities. Chinese groups own some brothels and extract protection fees from others. Gang members protect the brothels from other gangs and from unwanted (non-Asiatic) customers. Reportedly, in California Chinese and Vietnamese gangs involved in prostitution are the most organized and vicious of the state's Asian criminal groups.¹³⁸ Malaysia-based Chinese groups reportedly gain a profit of US\$5,000 to US\$7,000 per Malaysian women delivered to the United States.¹³⁹ According to one report, in 1998 some 5,000 Chinese women were working as prostitutes in the Los Angeles area, and trafficked Chinese women and children have ended up in many parts of the United States.¹⁴⁰

Working on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border, well-organized Chinese criminal groups, based mainly in Vancouver, British Columbia, control the relatively small share of the U.S. heroin market that comes from Southeast Asia. (By contrast, most of the heroin marketed in Canada comes from that region and is imported by Chinese groups.) Increasingly, such groups are from Fujian Province. The main U.S. markets for such heroin are on the East Coast. Although heroin is trafficked mainly among Chinese groups, some groups have had heroin dealings with Dominican and Italian groups in Canada and the United States.¹⁴¹ Chinese groups

¹³⁷ Chin, "The Social Organization of Chinese Human Smuggling."

¹³⁸ Amy O'Neill Richard, "International Trafficking in Women to the United States: A Contemporary Manifestation of Slavery and Organized Crime," U.S. Department of State International Information Programs report, April 2000. <<http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/global/traffic/report/homepage.htm>>

¹³⁹ Richard.

¹⁴⁰ Kathryn McMahon and Daniel B. Wood, "A Crusade to Free Captive Daughters," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 12 March 1998, cited in Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, "Factbook: United States," 1998. <<http://www.catwinternational.org/fb/usa1.html>>

¹⁴¹ National Drug Intelligence Center, "United States-Canada Drug Threat Assessment," December 2001. <<http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs/794/heroin.htm>>

also play an increasing role in the distribution of high-quality marijuana from Canada into the United States.¹⁴²

RUSSIA

Chinese triads have established strong footholds in Russia, particularly in Moscow and in the Russian Far East. Maintaining strict secrecy, the triads generally have eluded Russian law enforcement authorities. Russian police and customs officials are easily bribed, face a formidable language barrier, and also profess difficulty differentiating Oriental faces. Particularly in the Far East, Chinese gangs cooperate closely with their Russian organized crime counterparts. They come to Russia not only to extort from and exploit the Chinese exile community, but also to supply the country with narcotics and alcohol; to promote human trafficking, illegal immigration, and gambling; and to gain access to the country's vast raw materials, including timber, fish, and industrial and precious metals.

Estimates of the total Chinese population residing legally in Russia range widely and often are inflated by Russian xenophobia. A reasonable estimate, based on demographic research, is that in 2000 the legal Chinese population did not exceed 500,000. The Chinese community has grown dramatically in the Russian Far East, where permanent Chinese residents rose from 1,742 in 1989 to 237,000 in 2001.¹⁴³ The permanent Chinese community in Moscow numbers about 20,000 to 25,000, although at any given time the Chinese presence approaches 100,000.¹⁴⁴ The total Chinese population of the Maritime Territory (Primor'ye) alone was estimated at 100,000 in 2001, with a heavy concentration near the Chinese border to the south.¹⁴⁵

Estimates of the illegal Chinese in Russia also vary widely. Criminals are able to enter Russia through loopholes in entry restrictions and by using tourist visas and student visas. Beginning in 1989, many more Chinese have passed through Russia en route to Europe than

¹⁴² National Drug Intelligence Center.

¹⁴³ V. Karlusov and A. Kudin, "Kitayskoye Prisutstviye na Rossiyskom Dal'nem Vostoke: Istoriko-Ekonomicheskiy Analiz" [The Chinese Presence in the Russian Far East: An Historical and Economic Analysis], *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka* [Moscow], 1 May, 2002, 76-87.

¹⁴⁴ Oleg Voronin, "Novaya Vlast' i Novyye Bandity: K Voprosu o Kitayskom Opyte dlya Rossii" [New Power and New Bandits—On Russia's Chinese Experience], *Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda* [Irkutsk], 12 September 2001; and Svyatoslav Timchenko, "V Peterburge Budet Chayna-Taun? Ekho Demograficheskogo Vzryva v Kitaye Dokatilos' do Severnoy Rossiyskoy Stolitsy" [Will There Be a Chinatown in Petersburg? An Echo of the Demographic Explosion in China Has Reached the Northern Russian Capital], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* [Moscow], 7 June 2001, 4.

¹⁴⁵ Alexandr [sic] Nemets and Thomas Torda, "Chinese in Russia's Maritime Region, Part 2." <<http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2002/1/19/145048.shtml>>

have remained on Russian territory. According to crime and security expert Roger Faligot, Chinese trafficking groups have outposts in Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia to take advantage of the flow of Chinese exiles through Russia.¹⁴⁶

Chinese triads exploit fellow Chinese merchants and entrepreneurs by demanding a tribute for “protection” services. In doing so, they take advantage of the strong reluctance of victims and their relatives to contact Russian authorities because of ethnic loyalty and concern about their immigration status. For that reason, witnesses to crimes committed by the Chinese triads are rarely forthcoming. Merchants present a worthwhile target for extortion because an estimated US\$10 billion worth of consumer goods are imported illegally into Russia from China annually, nearly as much as the official merchandise trade between the two nations.¹⁴⁷ The many Chinese restaurant owners in Russia are a second large category of extortion victims.

Anecdotal accounts of Chinese organized crime involvement in murder and robbery suggest that violent crime generally is directed against fellow Chinese in the course of internecine strife between gangs or shakedowns of Chinese merchants. Although some violence occurs between Chinese and non-Chinese criminal groups, the former generally respect the territory of their Russian counterparts.¹⁴⁸ Territorial disputes are avoided because the Chinese groups primarily victimize the Chinese émigré community, which is not a target group of Russian organized crime. A notable exception was a rash of violence that resulted in the 1990s from incursions by Russian criminal groups into the territory of the Chinese Big Circle group (which is not a triad) in the cities of Khabarovsk, Moscow, and Vladivostok.¹⁴⁹ In February 2003, a Chinese triad leader was killed in Irkutsk as a result of a gang war between Chinese and Chechen groups active in timber trafficking.¹⁵⁰

Reportedly, Chinese narcotics trafficking is better established in the Russian Far East than in Moscow. According to a 2001 report in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, about 90 percent of synthetic narcotics or psychotropic substances imported into Russia’s Far Eastern region come

¹⁴⁶ Faligot, 300.

¹⁴⁷ Yevgeniy Verlin, “Cherniy nal i zheltaya opasnost’” [The Black Market and the Yellow Peril], *Ekspert* [Moscow], 18 March 2002, 64-69.

¹⁴⁸ Natal’ya Nikulina, “Dzhem i Lao Da—Russkiy s kitaytsem bratany navek” [Jim and Lao Da—A Russian and a Chinese, Brothers Forever], *Moskovskaya Pravda* [Moscow], 19 September, 2002, 10.

¹⁴⁹ Faligot, 302.

¹⁵⁰ Yuliya Piskareva, “Chinese Criminal Group Leader Killed in Irkutsk,” ITAR-TASS [Moscow] report, 22 February 2003.

from China, where triads have established an extensive network of laboratories.¹⁵¹ In recent years, the precursor substance ephedrine has been trafficked in large quantities from China into the Primor'ye, where it is transformed into the illegal narcotic ephedrone. Ephedrone, which is a comparatively cheap “upper,” has spread across the Far East and into Siberia.¹⁵²

For the Chinese triads, gambling activities are closely related to the human trafficking and prostitution businesses. In the Russian Far East, there have been recent examples of both rivalry and cooperation between Chinese and Russian crime groups in the establishment and support of casinos and prostitution operations connected to them. Russian police have shut down Chinese-run casinos, but Chinese criminal groups have trafficked Russian women, known as “Natashas,” as prostitutes to gambling dens in Macau and Hong Kong, often in exchange for narcotics.

Chinese triads oversee a vast network that smuggles their countrymen from Fujian and Zhejiang provinces into Europe via Russia. One route brings illegal migrants by air to Moscow, then continues by bus toward Western Europe across Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland. Another route brings migrants across the land border at Blagoveshchensk or Nauchki (south of Lake Baikal), where they board the west-bound Trans-Siberian Railroad.¹⁵³ The last stage of such voyages, which is entry into one of the countries of the European Union, often requires concealment.¹⁵⁴ Moscow is the point at which Chinese migrants receive counterfeit visas enabling them to enter Western European countries “legally.”

Chinese triads also are involved in the trafficking of Russian women.¹⁵⁵ “Trading in women for the purposes of sexual exploitation ... is on a huge scale,” according to Far-Eastern State University Professor Lyudmila Yerokhina. Says Yerokhina, “The most massive exports of women go to China. According to various estimates, there are as many as 15,000 Russian women there as slaves, most of them from the [Russian] Far East. The main type of work for these women is prostitution and drug dealing.”¹⁵⁶ Placing a high priority on preventing narcotics trafficking and other crimes, Russian law enforcement officials often have neglected

¹⁵¹ Timchenko.

¹⁵² Nemets and Torda.

¹⁵³ Faligot, 302.

¹⁵⁴ “Zmeynyye golovy gubyat kitaytsev” [Snakeheads Are Killing Chinese], *Parlamentskaya Gazeta* [Moscow], 21 June 2000.

¹⁵⁵ Ilichev.

¹⁵⁶ Lada Glybina, “Black Traffic,” *Uchitel'skaya Gazeta* [Moscow], 18 September 2001 (FBIS Document CEP20030110000294).

enforcement against human traffickers. One reason for this is the cultural attitude that the women are responsible for their fate, even though they were deceived.

Cooperation between the Russian mafia and Chinese triads was a pre-requisite for the expansion of northeastern China's very profitable sex tourism business into Russia's Maritime (Primor'ye) Territory. Groups of 50 to 60 pay as much as US\$1,000 per person to visit Chinese-run sex establishments in Primor'ye. Russian "guides" and Chinese owners share additional revenues from saunas, massages, striptease clubs, and pornography.¹⁵⁷ Following on the heels of Chinese pleasure seekers is a class of swindlers and thieves who commit robberies and other violent crimes against their countrymen. The rate of serious crime by Chinese criminal groups against Chinese citizens in Primor'ye has risen significantly in recent years.¹⁵⁸

A highly profitable activity of Chinese criminal groups is the smuggling of raw materials from Russia into China. Citizens of the economically depressed Russian Far East see cooperation with Chinese traffickers as a means of survival. The raw materials of primary interest are ferrous and non-ferrous metals, gold, timber, fish, and agricultural products.¹⁵⁹ Many of these items are considered to be precious national resources in Russia. The exchange of smuggled goods across the border decidedly favors the Chinese, because contraband alcohol (much of it substandard or even poisonous) and cigarettes are the items most often moved into Russia from China. Millions of gallons of illegal vodka move across the Chinese border into the Russian Far East, where the beverage is very popular because of its cheap price and despite its potential lethality.¹⁶⁰

Chinese markets have a high demand for ferrous and non-ferrous metals, which have industrial applications, and for precious metals, particularly gold. However, profits are made on both sides of the border. According to a 2002 report, Chinese citizens who purchase gold in the Khabarovsk and Primor'ye territories for the purpose of illegal smuggling often are cheated by Russian sellers who substitute substandard metals.¹⁶¹ The Chinese metal market stimulates cannibalization of local equipment to sell metal parts and scrap to Chinese traders. Huge

¹⁵⁷ Voronin.

¹⁵⁸ Voronin.

¹⁵⁹ Aleksandr Grebenyukov, "Polemicheskiye zametki dal'nevostochnika" [Polemical Comments of a Far Easterner], *Suvorovskiy Natisk* [Suvorovo], 12 December 2000, 6.

¹⁶⁰ Voronin and Nemets and Torda.

¹⁶¹ V.V. Filippov, "Nezakonnaya dobycha i realizatsiya zolota v Khabarovskom kraye" [The Illegal Extraction and Sale of Gold in Khabarovsk Kray], report of Vladivostok Center for Research into Organized Crime, 30 May 2002. <<http://www.crime.vl.ru>>

stockpiles of illegally obtained scrap metal await removal by Chinese traffickers in Nakhodka, Ussiriysk, and Vladivostok.¹⁶²

Chinese triads also are active in the timber business in the Russian Far East, which offers abundant untapped resources, the lack of effective enforcement by forestry and law authorities, and the potential for high profits.¹⁶³ Chinese criminal gangs are involved in the selection, harvesting, and export of Russian timber.¹⁶⁴ The groups control large timber yards in Khabarovsk, and Primor'ye and in the Amur and Chita provinces that adjoin China's northern border.¹⁶⁵ In illegal timber enterprises, Chinese groups often cooperate with Japanese Yakuza and Russian groups.¹⁶⁶ According to a 2002 report, in cooperation with specialized Russian criminal organizations called the "timber mafia," Chinese triads illegally export an estimated 1.5 million cubic meters of timber annually, valued at US\$300 million.¹⁶⁷ The value of Russian timber continues to rise on the Chinese market because little timber remains available for harvest in China.¹⁶⁸

The growing industry of marine poaching is another area of cooperation between Chinese and Russian groups. Russian authorities are unable to stop illegal fishing off the eastern coast because the fishing is done from Russian boats and because the entrenched Russian "poaching mafia" is an integral part of harvesting rare fish and sea products by Chinese groups.¹⁶⁹ Marine poachers are further encouraged by high profits from many of the commodities available off Russia's Pacific Coast. One of the most coveted types of sea products is trepang, also known as sea cucumber. A delicacy in China, trepang can be priced at US\$100 per kilogram on the retail market. Reportedly, three criminal groups dominate the trepang smuggling business.¹⁷⁰

Chinese poaching activities also extend to other resources from Russia that are in high demand on Chinese markets. Profitable animal and vegetable products are soft-body sea turtles and their eggs, rare plants, Siberian tiger skins and body parts, and products from other wild

¹⁶² Nemets and Torda.

¹⁶³ Forests Monitor, "The Wild East—The Timber Trade Between Siberian-Russian Far East and China," October 2001. <<http://www.forestsmonitor.org/reports/russia/twe2.htm>>

¹⁶⁴ "The Wild East."

¹⁶⁵ "The Wild East."

¹⁶⁶ "The Wild East."

¹⁶⁷ Joe de Courcy, David Line, and Alexander Pick, "Asia and the Russian Far East: The Dream of Economic Integration," *AsiaInt Special Report*, November 2002. <<http://www.asiaint.com/special/secure/AsiaRFE-DEL.pdf>>

¹⁶⁸ Nemets and Torda.

¹⁶⁹ Voronin and Nemets and Torda.

¹⁷⁰ Voronin.

mammals.¹⁷¹ Poachers use increasingly sophisticated equipment and techniques to harvest such items, and species such as the Siberian tiger are near extinction because of this activity.

Chinese and Russian criminal groups cooperate in a variety of enterprises. In the Primor'ye region, about 50 organized crime groups include both Russians and Chinese who reportedly enjoy amicable relations. Chinese criminals active in Russia are known to imitate their Russian colleagues. They study the Russian language diligently, take on Russian names and nicknames, and even change their traditions. For example, some Chinese have forsaken their traditional reticence about revealing their crimes. Instead, they have begun bragging about their “scrapes with the law,” a practice that gains stature among Russian criminal groups.¹⁷²

SOUTH AFRICA

During the 1990s, South African authorities identified Chinese criminal groups as a major factor in the country's dangerously rising crime rate. The first type of criminal activity linked with Chinese groups was trafficking in shark fins and abalone. By 1993, police had detected the presence of members of Hong Kong-based triads in every harbor city and in the inland Johannesburg/Pretoria region. Since that time, several activities of Chinese groups have flourished because their crimes—trafficking in migrants and abalone and the importation of counterfeit goods—fall outside the categories of transnational enforcement emphasis of the national South African Police Service. By 2001, however, authorities recognized that groups in the Western Cape also were trafficking in narcotics, laundering money, and dealing in prostitution.¹⁷³

In 2000 the legal Chinese population of South Africa was estimated at 100,000, and police estimated that the country was home to another 100,000 to 200,000 illegal Chinese. As in other countries, the close-knit Chinese communities provide a protected atmosphere and contacts for criminal groups. The visibility of both whites and blacks in such a community makes infiltration difficult, and informers are relatively rare. Since 2000, expansion of official commercial ties between South Africa and the People's Republic of China also has provided improved cover for illicit trafficking between the two. In this environment, Chinese triad-based

¹⁷¹ Nemets and Torda.

¹⁷² Nikulina.

¹⁷³ Peter Gastrow, “Triad Societies and Chinese Organised Crime in South Africa,” Institute of Security Studies *Occasional Paper* 48-2001. <<http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Papers/48/48.html>>

groups now are practicing a wide variety of crimes in most South African cities, and they have established a presence in most of South Africa's neighboring states. Abalone trafficking, once the basic activity of the coastal groups, now is one in a long list of activities including fraud, extortion, gambling, and tax evasion, in addition to those identified in the 1990s.¹⁷⁴ South Africa's laws make acquisition of legal firearms a simple process for criminal groups.¹⁷⁵ Seven major groups now are represented in both Capetown and Johannesburg. Four of the groups are based in Hong Kong, three in Taiwan. The four from Hong Kong are two 14K groups, the Sun Yee On, and the Wo Shing Wo. Little violence has occurred among the four Hong Kong groups, although they do use violence to eliminate outside competitors and to enforce extortion payments.

The Hong Kong groups retain the traditional hierarchical triad structure and ritual. The three Taiwan-based groups are small and organized less rigidly. One of them, which has only about ten members, still specializes in shark fin trafficking, one concentrates in abalone trafficking, and the third specializes in gambling and prostitution. Many group members have established legitimate businesses. Companies owned by the groups facilitate the importation of counterfeit items such as watches, clothing, and electronic equipment, and legal exporters of abalone provide a shelter for illegal trafficking of the same commodity.¹⁷⁶

The Sun Yee On group is most heavily involved in narcotics trafficking. They compete with Indian, Pakistani, and South African groups to dominate the importation of methaqualone from China to South Africa. The Chinese groups completely control the abalone trafficking business, which remains very profitable although constant poaching has substantially diminished the harvest of that mollusk. Local South African criminal groups are known to harvest abalone for sale to the Chinese exporters.¹⁷⁷ In 2000 the estimated gross income from illegal exportation of abalone to Hong Kong was US\$32 million. The Chinese groups normally act independently, although some instances of cooperation are known in South Africa.

¹⁷⁴ Gastrow.

¹⁷⁵ Gastrow.

¹⁷⁶ Gastrow.

¹⁷⁷ "Case Study 4: A Chinese Syndicate—Transnational Organised Crime," in *Organised Crime in Southern Africa*, monograph no. 28, August 1998.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

In Southeast Asia, Chinese organized crime groups are mainly involved in narcotics and human trafficking and money laundering. The countries in this region are prone to these types of criminal activity because of poor banking transparency, weak border controls, and geographic proximity to a major source of narcotics, the Golden Triangle (including parts of Burma, Laos, and Thailand). Slow economic development and government instability provide a hospitable environment for significant trafficking in arms, humans, and narcotics in the Southeast Asian states of Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

In addition, rampant illicit markets and relatively unimpeded international transportation invite the presence of organized crime syndicates as both havens and income sources. As the transportation infrastructure and tourist markets promote transnational movement, lax visa laws and the steady stream of narcotics coming from the Golden Triangle assume paramount importance as factors in illicit activity. As often occurs, the trafficking of narcotics, humans, and arms has fostered another form of transnational crime, money laundering, in the region.¹⁷⁸ Continued pressure by the Chinese government on domestic syndicates has had the unfortunate effect of sending criminal groups into Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, where the laws and local police have less power.¹⁷⁹

Burma, Cambodia, and Laos

Burma, Cambodia, and Laos have been significantly affected by the massive amounts of poppy cultivation and the heroin and methamphetamine trade that runs the length of the peninsula from Thailand to China. In addition, these countries are characterized by chronic, severe economic hardships and political strife. As a result, arms trafficking and human smuggling also make up a great deal of the Chinese syndicate interests in the three countries. Although specific data is available only about Chinese narcotics trafficking in these areas, reports have confirmed that arms smuggling as a result of civil wars in these countries is a major

¹⁷⁸ “Organized Crime Moves into Migrant Trafficking,” *Trafficking in Migrants* [Geneva], no. 11 (June 1996).

¹⁷⁹ Sanjiv Kumar Upadhyay, “Current Situation of Organized Crimes in Trafficking Stolen Vehicles, Card Fraud, Money Laundering and Major Transnational Organized Criminal Groups,” Asian and Far Eastern Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, *Resource Material Series* [Tokyo], no. 58.
<<http://www.unafei.or.jp>>

problem.¹⁸⁰ Because sufficient technology and distribution networks are lacking, none of these countries is involved significantly in high-tech or high-end crimes such as piracy or credit-card fraud.

Chinese criminal organizations are responsible for brokering and backing the production and transport of methamphetamines from Burma to the rest of Southeast Asia. Chinese mafia groups are known to work in conjunction with the junta leadership of Burma and the United Wa State Army (USWA) in the trafficking of methamphetamines and heroin throughout the region.¹⁸¹

In Burma the oppressive military junta led by General Than Shwe continues to stifle international attempts at an effective crackdown on the narcotics trafficking that originates from that country. According to a recent report, the 14K triad operating from Mong Nawng, a town in Burma near the Chinese border, has established a working relationship with the USWA in the sale and smuggling of heroin into China and Thailand.¹⁸² The 14K also is known to traffic heroin to Australia in an attempt to expand the group's regional control over narcotics smuggling.¹⁸³

Cambodia serves as a haven for the laundering of drug and arms sales by Chinese syndicates. As a result of years of civil war in Cambodia, a very large stockpile of arms has accumulated. These arms frequently are smuggled through Thailand to the Liberation Tigers of Eelan (commonly known as the Tamil Tigers) of Sri Lanka. Other recipients are ethnic minority insurgent groups in Burma and a variety of more distant customers.¹⁸⁴ Among many crime syndicates that reportedly are involved in the arms trade in the Golden Triangle, the Taiwanese United Bamboo Gang emerged in 2000 as a major supplier of these arms.¹⁸⁵

Cambodia also serves as a major trafficking point for illegal Fujian Chinese migrants to Thailand and the West. As of 1996, Cambodian law enabled any person donating US\$400,000 to the state or investing US\$500,000 in the country to receive automatic status as a Cambodian

¹⁸⁰ Lintner, 219.

¹⁸¹ "Asian Organized Crime," in ch. 3 of U.S. White House, *International Crime Threat Assessment*, December 2000. <<http://clinton5.nara.gov/WH/EOP/NSC/html/documents/pub4527/pub45270chap3.html>>

¹⁸² "Thai Daily Urges Burma to Join Regional Efforts to Suppress Drugs," *Bangkok Post* [Bangkok], 30 September 2001 (FBIS Document ID SEP20010730000013).

¹⁸³ "Two Drug Seizures Confirm Link Between Wa, Chinese Triads from Hong Kong," *Bangkok Post* [Bangkok], 22 December 2000 (FBIS Document ID SEP20001222000006).

¹⁸⁴ Bertil Lintner, "The Phuket Connection," *The Week* [India], 30 April 2000. <<http://www.the-week.com/20apr30/events1.htm>>

¹⁸⁵ Lintner, *Blood Brothers*, 219.

citizen. Smaller bribes to immigration officials often achieve the same result, expanding the field of potential migrants. Because entry into the United States is easier with a Cambodian passport than with a Chinese one, Cambodia has become a major route for the snakehead groups operating in Southeast Asia.¹⁸⁶ In recent years, the government of the People's Republic of China has actively promoted commercial and cultural ties with Cambodia, using the resurgent Chinese population (estimated at 400,000 in 2000) as its base.¹⁸⁷ The influx of ethnic Chinese investment and immigration also has made Cambodia's urban regions a safe haven for Chinese to strengthen their network of trafficking beyond the authority of Chinese police forces.¹⁸⁸

Laos is now the second largest world producer of poppies grown for heroin production.¹⁸⁹ Laotian poppy cultivation is controlled by Chinese syndicates who refine and smuggle them to Australia and Hong Kong for distribution.¹⁹⁰ Laos also has an extremely high rate of domestic opium abuse, which has fostered production and trafficking and contributed to the country's instability and poverty.¹⁹¹ The authoritarian regime of Laos has resisted the flood of political dissent that has plagued neighboring Cambodia, but recent pro-democracy attacks have led to growing instability.¹⁹²

Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore

Either because of substantial amounts of censorship or unwillingness to report the presence of gangs, these countries yield very little detailed information concerning Chinese organized crime. In the mid-nineteenth century, Malaysia and Singapore experienced a large influx of Chinese immigrants during the Taiping Rebellion (1851-64). Accompanying this movement was the importation of Chinese syndicates that operated mainly within the ethnically Chinese communities in each country. Since that time, the Chinese syndicates have evolved into

¹⁸⁶ Lintner, *Blood Brothers*, 220.

¹⁸⁷ Paul Marks, "The Growing Cambodian-Chinese Alliance," Foreign Area Officer Association report, 2000. <<http://www.faoa.org/journal/cambod07.html>>

¹⁸⁸ Lintner, *Blood Brothers*, 225.

¹⁸⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Fact Sheet: U.S. to Help Laos Cut Back Production, Distribution of Illegal Drugs," 4 June 2002. <<http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/global/drugs/02060436.htm>>

¹⁹⁰ D. Suba Chandran, "Drug Trafficking and the Security of the State: Case Study of Pakistan," Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses [New Delhi] report, 1997. <<http://www.idsa-india.org/an-sep8-7.html>>

¹⁹¹ Mustafa Abdullah, "Analysis on Situation of Current Drug Trafficking," Asian and Far Eastern Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, *Resource Material Series*, 58, December 2001.

¹⁹² "Political and Tribal Dissent in Laos," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 2000. <<http://www.janes.com>>

a multi-ethnic organization comprised of both Malays and Chinese.¹⁹³ At present, human trafficking accounts for the major part of the Chinese syndicate activities in Malaysia and possibly Indonesia. The large number of sex workers and illegal Asian immigrants moving around the world from these countries indicates indirectly the existence of Chinese snakehead groups. According to one report, Chinese syndicates operating in Malaysia received between US\$5,000 and US\$7,000 per person for women trafficked into a prostitution system in the United States¹⁹⁴. Malaysian authorities also have reported the sale and smuggling of Malaysian women throughout Southeast Asia for use in Chinese owned nightclubs and bars.¹⁹⁵

Southeast Asia is increasingly becoming synonymous with pirated software and compact disks. Malaysia and Singapore are the two largest clearinghouses for pirated discs exported to the United Kingdom. According to one estimate, Asia produces up to 56 billion counterfeit disks per year, the bulk of which come from Malaysian plants. It is unclear how many of these discs are distributed by Chinese syndicates, but these items reportedly are marketed door-to-door by ethnic Chinese living in Singapore.¹⁹⁶ Reports also indicate that immigrants smuggled from Southeast Asia into Western countries are being recruited to use the sale of pirated discs as a method of paying off their debts to the syndicates that arranged for their transport.¹⁹⁷

Credit-card fraud also is prevalent in Malaysia. However, the lack of substantial reports of direct links between Chinese syndicates and criminals utilizing software to “skim” credit-card numbers and information from magnetic strips hinder quantification of the involvement of Chinese groups in this activity. Chinese groups are known to be involved to some extent, however, and instances of credit-card fraud in Malaysia and Singapore are increasing.¹⁹⁸

As in the case of Thailand, the large volume of bulk shipping that passes through Malaysia and Singapore creates an environment favorable to all types of smuggling involving containerized shipping. Singapore handles most of Southeast Asia’s air cargo, and nearly 80

¹⁹³ Martin Booth. *The Triads* (New York: St. Martin’s Press 1991), 63.

¹⁹⁴ Amy O’Neill Richard, “International Trafficking in Women to the United States: A Contemporary Manifestation of Slavery and Organized Crime,” Center for the Study of Intelligence report, November 1999. <<http://usinfo.state.gov/topic/global/traffic/report.pdf>>

¹⁹⁵ Richard.

¹⁹⁶ Seto Nu-wen, “You May Be Funding Terrorism,” International Federation of the Phonographic Industry report, 2001.

¹⁹⁷ Jack Valenti, “International Copyright Piracy: Links to Organized Crime and Terrorism,” testimony before U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Courts, the Internet, and Intellectual Property, 13 March 2003.

¹⁹⁸ Upadhyay.

percent of all the region's maritime cargo travels from or through Singapore.¹⁹⁹ Given the prevalent use by Chinese syndicates of container ships to distribute narcotics, humans, and pirated discs throughout the world, the presence of Chinese syndicates in Singapore is likely.²⁰⁰

Malaysia and Singapore are offshore financial havens in the Asia Pacific region. Because Chinese syndicates use these countries as production points for disc piracy and as starting points for human smuggling, they also presumably are involved in laundering their funds through these countries.²⁰¹ In 2001, a report published by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development cited Indonesia as one of nineteen countries whose financial systems' weaknesses make them vulnerable to money laundering and related crimes.²⁰²

Malaysia's lax visa laws also promote human trafficking. Currently, Malaysia serves as a receiving country for women trafficked from most other Southeast Asian countries.²⁰³ Because trafficking in humans for the sex trade and for illegal immigration is lucrative, Chinese organized crime organizations have become deeply involved in the conduct of Malaysia's global trafficking rings.²⁰⁴ Although prostitution is illegal in Malaysia, corrupt members of the Mahathir government reportedly have been complicit in supporting the industry.²⁰⁵

Indonesia has a highly sophisticated organized crime nexus and large enclaves of ethnic Chinese. However, the activities of Chinese criminal groups have been significantly curbed by competition and government enforcement. In most areas, the ethnic Indonesian *preman* (or freemen) dominate local extortion, drug, and black markets, leaving very little room for a Chinese foothold.²⁰⁶

¹⁹⁹ "Worldwide Areas of Criminal Activity," in ch. 3 of U.S. White House, *International Crime Threat Assessment*, December 2000. <clinton5.nara.gov/WH/EOP/NSC/html/documents/pub45270/pub45270chap3.html

²⁰⁰ "Worldwide Areas of Criminal Activity."

²⁰¹ Sheldon W. Simon, *The Many Faces of Asian Securit.* (New York: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2001), 214.

²⁰² John McFarlane, "Piracy, People Smuggling and Drugs: Globalising Crime and Terror," conference presentation to Organised Crime and Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific Region: The Reality and the Response, 9 May 2002.

²⁰³ Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Protection Project, "A Human Rights Report on Trafficking of Persons, Especially Women and Children," March 2002. <<http://209.190.246.239/iomz.pdf>>

²⁰⁴ Rina Jimenez-David, "Sex Abuse and Sex Trafficking in Malaysia," *Financial Times Asia Intelligence Wire* report, 5 September 2002.

²⁰⁵ Jimenez-David.

²⁰⁶ Lintner, 260.

Philippines

The Philippines hosts a number of Chinese organized crime groups, most of which are involved in narcotics trafficking to the islands. Other significant law enforcement problems are Chinese participation in human trafficking, money laundering, and arms dealing. The Philippine legal system is ill equipped to enforce international law or to protect against transnational crime. Loopholes in the system continue to frustrate the efforts of Philippine police to prosecute non-indigenous insurgent groups such as Chinese syndicates.²⁰⁷

Chinese syndicates are responsible for the domestic drug trade in the Philippines, which is mainly limited to methamphetamines known as “shabu,” and “ice.”²⁰⁸ The major syndicates involved in these activities are the 14K and Big Circle. The Philippines is at the end point of an international narcotics ring that traffics most of its illicit drugs from China and Hong Kong for domestic use rather than for transport to other countries.²⁰⁹ Chinese drug traffickers in Manila sell shabu to native Filipino dealers, who then distribute it in domestic markets.²¹⁰

The participation of Chinese organized criminals in Philippine drug trafficking has led the Philippine and Chinese governments to initiate a cooperative effort to stem all organized crime activities, including human trafficking, terrorism, money laundering, and narcotics trafficking.²¹¹ In late 2001, reports of corruption raised suspicion that Senator Panfilo Lacson and the Philippine Department of Justice had links to Chinese and Hong Kong organized crime syndicates trafficking narcotics in the Philippines. Although it is not clear to what degree the corruption exists, Colonel Victor Corpus, chief of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP), has reported that Lacson maintains bank accounts in the United States, Canada, and Hong Kong totaling more than US \$1 billion.²¹² Corpus has found proof that

²⁰⁷ Pamintuan, 184.

²⁰⁸ Alberto Rama Olerio, "Current Situation of Transnational Organized Crime in the Philippines," Asian and Far Eastern Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, *Resource Material Series*, no.54, 1999.

²⁰⁹ Mustafa Abdullah, "Analysis of Current Situation on Illicit Drug Trafficking," Asian and Far Eastern Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, no.58, December 2001.

²¹⁰ Mercedes Rullan, "Five 'Big Circle' Members Arrested, P116-M Shabu Recovered," *Manila Kabayan* [Philippines], 23 December 2001 (FBIS Document SEP20011223000011).

²¹¹ Perseus Echeminada, "Philippine, PRC to Enforce Mechanism of Cooperation Against Organized Crime," *The Philippine Star* [Manila], 25 December 2001 (FBIS Document SEP20011225000035).

²¹² Maritess N. Reyes, "Philippines on Its Way to Becoming a Narco-State," *Intersect Magazine*, 27 November 2001. <http://www.cyberdyaryo.com/features/f2001_1127_03.htm>

senators, including Lacson, have had dealings with Chinese drug lord Kim Wong and other Chinese triad members.²¹³

Chinese organized criminals also launder profits from narcotics trafficking in the Philippines, taking advantage of the lack of transparency in the Philippine national banking system. In October 2002, the Philippine government responded to this deficiency by adopting an anti-money laundering law that targets transnational criminal organizations. The new law also was a response to a threat of sanctions by the European Union (EU) if the flow of “dirty money” were not reduced.²¹⁴ The new law requires banks to open the accounts of suspected launderers for investigation.²¹⁵

Trafficking in humans also is widespread in the Philippines. Although the human trafficking issue has received substantial public attention in recent years, the Philippine Congress has been slow to enact legislation that would prohibit the trafficking of women and children for prostitution or forced labor. Such a bill was under consideration in March 2003.²¹⁶ Organized crime syndicates from China have been successful in transporting women from their countries of origin to destinations in the West via the Philippines, and Philippine women have been trafficked to customers in the international sex trade. In September 2001, immigration officials captured Chinese national Chung Chee Hui, a suspected leader of a trafficking ring that utilized false documents and passports to export Chinese women to other countries.²¹⁷

Increasingly prominent in the Philippines are high-tech syndicates adept at computer crime. The growth of these groups, which originate in Hong Kong, has contributed to an increase in and violation of the security of bank transactions. Although the connection of Chinese groups with such electronic fraud is relatively recent, the prevalence of such activities in neighboring countries makes an increase in this trend in the Philippines likely.²¹⁸

²¹³ Amando Doronila, “The Senate—the Nation’s Laundry Machine,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer* [Manila], 24 August 2001 (FBIS Document SEP20010824000031).

²¹⁴ “EU to Target Philippines, Nauru in Money-Laundering Crackdown,” Agence Free Press [Paris] report, 12 October 2001 (FBIS Document EUP20011012000252).

²¹⁵ Aurea Calica, “Analysts Say Philippines’ Anti-money Laundering Law ‘Lacks Teeth,’” *The Philippine Star* [Manila], 1 October 2002 (FBIS Document SP20011001000034).

²¹⁶ “Philippines’ Congress to Pass Anti-Trafficking Act . . .,” Human Trafficking.org report, March 2003. <<http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/eap/philippines/news/antitraffickinglaw.htm>>

²¹⁷ “Chinese National of Human Smuggling Syndicate Nabbed in Cebu,” *Philippine Star* [Manila], 4 September 2001 (FBIS Document SEP20010904000063).

²¹⁸ Upadhyay.

In addition to its narcotics and human trafficking activities, the 14K group also has been involved in smuggling arms to the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group in Mindanao. Reports in 2000 indicated that corrupt government officials were working in tandem with Chinese syndicates to smuggle arms from China, possibly procured in Cambodia, into the Philippines to assist in Abu Sayyaf's kidnapping for ransom schemes.²¹⁹ Chinese groups also reportedly have cooperated with the Abu Sayyaf to launder and transmit ransom money, taking a percentage of the ransoms in exchange for their assistance. A 14K representative known as "Golden Dragon" has worked with Malaysian organized crime groups in arranging the kidnappings and wiring funds back to the Abu Sayyaf.²²⁰

Issues of governance have helped to maintain the illicit Philippine economy. Not only is the Philippine government lax in its enforcement of the law, but the language of existing laws is not easily applicable to conditions created by transnational organized crime and terrorist threats. The Philippine government, linked with corruption, may lack the political will to apply obscure legal procedures when political patronage is commonplace. The governing system lacks an appropriate agency to investigate and try the offenses of transnational criminal groups.²²¹

Thailand

Thailand experiences the full range of organized crime activities that accompany the narcotics-trafficking networks that use Bangkok as a transit point and a playground for Chinese syndicate activities. The red-light districts of Thai cities are home to Chinese-owned brothels, casinos, and entertainment facilities that function both as sources of income and as operations centers for trafficking in humans and narcotics and extortion.²²² Bangkok also is a major source of the false documents and passports that support human trafficking operations.²²³

Its geographical location in the Golden Triangle makes Thailand a prime narcotics trafficking route for heroin and methamphetamines. Thailand also is a center for trafficking in

²¹⁹ Rose Tamayo, "Former Philippine Military Rebels Allegedly Supplying Arms to Abu Sayyaf," *Pilipino Star Ngayon* [Manila], 31 August 2000 (FBIS Document ID SEP20000831000062).

²²⁰ Donna S. Cueto, "Philippines: Source Traces Sipadan Abduction to Malaysian Drug Groups' Rivalry," *Philippine Daily Inquirer* [Manila], 10 August 2000 (FBIS Document ID SEP20000810000065).

²²¹ Pamintuan, 183.

²²² "Report on Transnational Crimes in Thailand," *Matichon* [Bangkok], 23 March 2000 (FBIS Document SEP20000223000032).

²²³ "Malaysian Police Say Islamic Militants 'May be Hiding on Thai Soil,'" *The Nation*, 22 September 2001 (FBIS Document SET20010922000003).

humans, money laundering, arms smuggling, and document forgery. The country's infrastructure is advanced enough to provide the communications and transportation that are key requirements for the activities of Chinese organized crime groups. In addition, long-established, widespread corruption among Thai government officials and police greatly eases the operating conditions of crime syndicates and terrorist organizations.

Chinese organized crime activities are generally conducted in conjunction with Thai illicit narcotics, which in turn spurs money laundering and arms trafficking.²²⁴ In 1984, Thai authorities executed a crackdown on heroin trafficking routes throughout the country, reducing the attractiveness of Thailand for that activity. However, an interdiction operation in Bangkok in January 2000 confiscated more than 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of heroin bound for the United States, revealing that the market is still quite active. The trafficking group accused in this case was Thailand's largest Chinese criminal group, the 14K triad.²²⁵

Besides heroin, Thailand's most popular domestic drug is the cheap methamphetamine known as "yaabaa" (mad pill) previously known as "yaamaa" (horse pill).²²⁶ Despite continued government pressures, such narcotics have continued to flow in large quantities via obscure routes across the Burma border into Bangkok.²²⁷ Although yaabaa is manufactured mainly by domestic organizations in Burma, evidence shows that Chinese organized crime syndicates are involved in the transport and distribution of amphetamines to the Thai narcotics industry. The most prominent of these syndicates are the 14K triad and the Wa family, both of whom use Bangkok as a commercial and trafficking base.²²⁸

The Chinese organized crime groups engaging in human trafficking, called the "Piglet Gangs" by the Thai police,²²⁹ utilize the easy availability of false and stolen passports in Thailand to transport immigrants from their home countries to Western countries. Since document forgery and human trafficking are the purported expertise of Bangkok-based Chinese

²²⁴ Pasuk Phongpaichit, *Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja: Thailand's Illegal Economy and Public Policy* (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1998), 248-49.

²²⁵ "Thai Police Seize 126 KG of U.S.-Bound Heroin in Bangkok," *Bangkok Post* [Bangkok], 13 January 2000 (FBIS Document ID FTS20000112001795).

²²⁶ Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, "Drugs and War Destabilize Thai-Myanmar Border Region," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 01, 2002. <<http://www.janes.com>>

²²⁷ Chouvy, "New Drug Trafficking Routes."

²²⁸ King-O Laohong, "Thai Daily Reports on Organized Crime by Foreign 'Mafia' Gangs," *Bangkok Krungthep Thurakit* [Bangkok], 4 November 2001 (FBIS Document SEP20011105000049).

²²⁹ Niu Lang, "Chinese Organized Crime in Thailand Viewed," *Mangu Shibao* [Bangkok], 19 May 1999 (FBIS Document ID FTS19990519002227).

groups, Bangkok has become a significant transit center for human trafficking.²³⁰ Various syndicates are involved at this center. The Chinese Wang Kao Niu gang, which formerly dominated the trafficking of women from locations in China to Bangkok to work as prostitutes,²³¹ was usurped by the Chinese criminal leader Lao Chai, an associate of the 14K triad.²³² The Sun Yee On triad, also well established in Thailand, is known to utilize the easy passport market to assist in its transport of prostitutes to Japan in cooperation with the Yakuza, Japan's mafia criminals.²³³ As a developing city with an international airport hub, Bangkok offers the level of technology required for document falsification, an abundance of authentic passports that can be altered, and a wealth of customers and willing and unwilling participants in human trafficking operations.²³⁴

As a regional air transportation hub, Bangkok also functions as a transit base for the smuggling of arms. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) use the city as a transit point for arms en route to their home base in Sri Lanka.²³⁵ The LTTE continues to procure arms from arsenals abandoned after Cambodia's civil war and via Cambodia from sources in the China's military and Chinese organized crime groups. Although Cambodia's lack of a strong police force and judicial system makes that country ideal for arms trafficking, Thailand is the lynchpin of the LTTE network. The factors in that preference are Thailand's proximity to Sri Lanka, the Bay of Bengal, Burma, and Cambodia; its strong communications infrastructure; and the ease with which illegal commodities can cross its borders.²³⁶ Reportedly, the bribery of border officials is standard procedure.²³⁷ Some arms arrive in Thailand by sea from Chinese plants such as Norinco and Poly Technology. Land routes cross into Thailand from Cambodia and Laos, and sea routes cross the Gulf of Thailand from the Cambodia-Thailand border to points in southern Burma.

²³⁰ "Report on Transnational Crimes in Thailand."

²³¹ Laohong.

²³² Laohong.

²³³ "Triad, Yakuza Linked to Forced Prostitution," *Daily News* [Bangkok], 25 January 1995 (FBIS Document FTS19970508000874).

²³⁴ "Thailand 'Source of Fake Passports,'" *Bangkok Post* [Bangkok], 21 June 2002. <<http://scoop.bangkokpost.com>>

²³⁵ "Special Report-Case Study: The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 October 2001. <<http://www.janes.com>>

²³⁶ Anthony Davis, "Tamil Tigers Continue Procurement," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 May 2002. <<http://www.janes.com>>

²³⁷ Suthep Chaivivan, "Gun Running: Transit to Terror," *Bangkok Post* [Bangkok], 14 July 2002 (FBIS Document SEP20020714000011).

Chinese organized crime syndicates operating from Bangkok long have used Thailand's banks and shops to launder profits from narcotics, the sale and transport of humans to prostitution rings, and trafficking in illegal migrants. Thailand's cities offer varying opportunities to launder funds from illicit activities. Those engaged in money laundering can simply carry large amounts of cash with them as they travel, then deposit their money in local banks that maintain discretion in business matters. Front companies and wire transfers also offer protection for laundering operations.²³⁸ As of mid-2002, Thailand's Criminal Procedure Code and money-laundering law contained serious flaws that prevented effective action against terrorist organizations. As the law stands, terrorism is not a criminal offense and the national Anti-Money Laundering Office does not have the authority to investigate or block the transfer of funds to finance terrorism.²³⁹ Although the national parliament has discussed improvements, the enactment of meaningful reforms has proved politically complex.

The continued influx of Chinese gangs and syndicates into Thailand has produced a series of turf wars between the dominating Wong Koon Wah, leader of the 14K, and smaller groups fighting over territory in Thailand and sections of neighboring Cambodia.²⁴⁰ Bangkok's Rachada Road, reportedly the home base for these rival gangs, has seen increased violence in recent years.²⁴¹

CONCLUSION

In the past decade, law enforcement authorities in many countries have come to the conclusion that the transnational activities of ethnic Chinese criminal groups constitute a serious threat to the societies where such groups have gained a foothold. Those societies are now found on every continent because criminal groups arise in virtually all the major centers of ethnic Chinese population worldwide. Chinese groups have been extremely efficient in creating loose, flexible multinational structures that often are linked with legitimate business enterprises; in exploiting weaknesses in the law enforcement systems of individual countries; and in coercing

²³⁸ Pisan Mookjang, "Current Situation and Countermeasures Against Money Laundering in Thailand," Asian and Far Eastern Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, *Resource Material Series* [Tokyo], no. 58, December 2001. <www.unafei.co.jp>

²³⁹ Surath Jinakul and Songpol Kaopatumpit, "Towards a Terror-Free Thailand," *Bangkok Post* [Bangkok], 2 June 2002 (FBIS Document SEP20020602000027).

²⁴⁰ Surath Jinakul, "Invasion of the Triads," *Bangkok Post* [Bangkok], 7 November 1999 (FBIS Document ID FTS19991107000013).

²⁴¹ Laohong.

otherwise law-abiding members of the Chinese communities of many countries to carry out specific tasks such as supporting illegal migrants.

Unlike more formally structured ethnic criminal groups, the Chinese groups exist in many forms, from small street gangs to transnational triads with branches worldwide. The most universal criminal activity of the Chinese groups, trafficking in human beings, takes advantage of an endless demand, relatively light legal penalties, and a worldwide network of transit points, from the Pacific Coast of Russia to Guatemala. Besides being relatively risk-free and quite profitable, this activity expands the émigré communities that are the foundation of both human trafficking and other forms of crime in host countries.

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APPENDIX

THE EIGHT LARGEST CHINESE CRIMINAL GROUPS

Experts have identified eight major Chinese crime groups, most of which are “umbrella groups” that include several branches in various parts of the world. An eighth group, Red Sun, has been identified in most major European countries. Of the organizations listed, four are traditional triads with roots before the 20th century. The others have adopted some of the triads’ rituals and membership requirements.

Big Circle

Originated in the late 1960s from a group of purged or imprisoned Red Guard soldiers who initially engaged in armed robberies. (The name refers to the designation of prisons on Chinese maps of that period.) After expanding operations successfully into Hong Kong from its mainland bases, diversified its criminal activities and became prosperous. Key members emigrated to Canada, South America, and the United States, establishing operations in those countries and ultimately diversifying into credit card fraud, counterfeiting, and trafficking humans and narcotics. Now one of the largest and most successful Chinese crime groups in the world. Organized in cells, some with their own names. Although not a traditional triad group, includes substantial numbers of triad members and has secret membership rites.²⁴² Estimated membership 5,000.

Four Seas Gang

Next to United Bamboo, the largest Taiwanese group. Developed in stages similar to those of United Bamboo (hence not a true triad). Engages in a variety of activities similar to that of United Bamboo, but is less widely distributed. Known to cooperate with United Bamboo and with Taiwan intelligence agents.²⁴³ In the United States, operates mainly in Los Angeles. Taiwan organization reportedly disbanded in 1997 under amnesty program, but still active elsewhere in 2000. Estimated membership 5,000.²⁴⁴

14 K

A triad based in Hong Kong, with members mainly of Cantonese origin. More than 20,000 members in 30 subgroups, including more than one in some countries. In Hong Kong, the main rival of the Sun Yee On triad. Was also established in Taiwan by a Kuomintang general and retains a substantial presence in Taiwan, including ties with Kuomintang Party. Is present in Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Russia, Slovakia, Southeast Asia, the United States, and all West European countries.²⁴⁵ Heavy involvement in narcotics trafficking in most areas where found.

²⁴² Huston, 109-10.

²⁴³ Huston, 108-09.

²⁴⁴ Bolz.

²⁴⁵ Faligot, 10, “Chinese Triads.”

Luen Group

Based in Hong Kong, with primarily Cantonese membership. Divided into four subgroups: Luen Lok Tong, Luen Tei Ying, Luen To Ying, and Luen Ying She.²⁴⁶ Along with the 14K, the first triad to begin criminal activity in Canada. Canadian branch, which is based in Toronto and associated with triad groups in the United States, calls itself Luen Kung Lok.²⁴⁷ Also present in Benelux. Estimated membership of Luen Ying She: 5,000.²⁴⁸

Red Sun

Not a traditional triad; possibly a mafia originally constituted on the European continent. Active in Austria, Benelux, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy (Florence, Milan, and Rome), Russia, Slovakia, and Spain. In Italy, specializes in extortion, rackets, and trafficking in migrants from Zhejiang Province; in Paris, narcotics trafficking and money laundering. At least some of leadership from Zhejiang Province.²⁴⁹

Sun Yee On

By far the largest of the traditional Chinese triads, with an estimated 56,000 members worldwide. Based in Hong Kong, with several branches. United States subgroups located in Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, and San Francisco, with association in New York City with Tung On gang. Currently considered the most dangerous triad in Hong Kong, with large nightclub, prostitution, counterfeiting, and narcotics processing operations in Hong Kong and trafficking operations moving people and a wide variety of commodities. One of the two largest Chinese criminal groups in Canada. Also present in Austria, the Benelux countries, France, Germany, Great Britain, Russia, and Spain, as well as Australia, Japan, and Thailand.²⁵⁰

United Bamboo

Founded in 1956 as a Taiwanese youth gang, whose members matured to use connections with Kuomintang officials as protection for an increasing range of crimes. Although fundamentally disorganized, gained substantial power in the island's vice, gambling, extortion, and other rackets. After reorganizing itself on the model of traditional Chinese tongs in the 1970s, became the most influential criminal group in Taiwan and retains that position today. Key members emigrated to Canada, the United States, South America, and elsewhere to escape arrest, establishing chapters in many countries with ties to Taiwan. Commits a diverse range of crimes and has links with many non-Chinese criminal groups.²⁵¹ Has worked with Taiwanese intelligence agents. Estimated membership 20,000.

²⁴⁶ Faligot, 344.

²⁴⁷ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "Beneath the Dragon's Shadow: Canadian Investigators Face Off with Hong Kong Triads."

²⁴⁸ Faligot, 10, 345.

²⁴⁹ Faligot, 10, 127-29.

²⁵⁰ Faligot, 10, 345; "Chinese Triads." <<http://www.geocities.com/leixiaoji/Triads>>

²⁵¹ Huston, 105, 108.

Wo Group

Based in Hong Kong, a triad that includes at least 12 branches present in Western countries, including Wo Shing Wo (in Benelux, France, Germany, and Portugal) Wo Hop To (in San Francisco), and Wo On Lok (in Benelux).²⁵² Members from different branches of the Wo group cooperate readily in criminal enterprises, although not sharing rituals or other features of their particular secret society. In Hong Kong, has had territorial wars with Sun Yee On. Members mainly of Cantonese origin. Estimated membership 20,000.

COUNTRIES WHERE THE EIGHT MAJOR CHINESE TRIADS AND OTHER CRIMINAL GROUPS ARE OPERATING

Australia

14K, Sing Wa, Sun Yee On, Wo Hop To, Wo Shen Yee

Austria

Big Circle, 14K, Red Sun, Sun Yee On, United Bamboo

Benelux

Big Circle, 14K, Luen group, Red Sun, Sun Yee On, United Bamboo, Wo On Lok, Wo Shing Wo

Canada

Big Circle, Luen Kung Lok, Sun Yee On, United Bamboo, Wo Hop To, Wo On Lok

Czech Republic and Slovakia

Big Circle, 14K, Red Sun

Denmark and Sweden

14K

France

Big Circle, 14K, Red Sun, Sun Yee On, Wo Shing Wo

²⁵² Faligot, 10; “Chinese Triads”; Stormont.

Germany

14K, Red Sun, Sun Yee On, Wo Shing Wo

Great Britain and Ireland

Big Circle, 14K, Red Sun, United Bamboo, Wo Shing Wo

Italy

14K, Red Sun

Japan

14K, Sun Yee On, Wo Hop To

Latin America

Fa Yen, Sun Yee On

Philippines

Big Circle, 14K

Portugal

14K, Wo Shing Wo

Russia

Big Circle, 14K, Red Sun, Sun Yee On

Southeast Asia

14K, Sun Yee On, Wo Shing Wo

Spain

14K, Red Sun, Sun Yee On

Thailand

14K, Sun Yee On

United States

Big Circle, 14K, Sun Yee On, United Bamboo, Wo Hop To