

## Introduction

### Prof dr Henk van de Bunt

Organised crime is an intriguing phenomenon. It is very much in the minds of ordinary citizens, policymakers, politicians, journalists and scientists. Their feelings and perceptions are often guided by mystification, mistaken assumptions and exaggeration, but this is not to say that organised crime does not exist. It is really out there. Serious contemporary social and political problems are influenced by its existence: the problem of migration to Western Europe is to a considerable extent the result of large-scale human trafficking; the international smuggling of drugs has a profound impact on local drug-problems; and without trafficking in women there would be less brutal exploitation of prostitutes.

Organised crime is also closely related to modern global developments. Open borders, corporate governance, modern information technology, globalization, increasing mobility, all these processes offer a wide range of illegal opportunities for organized crime.

But does organized crime actually take advantage of these new opportunities? What can we learn from experience gained elsewhere? Is it possible to make educated guesses about future problems resulting from organised crime? These questions are difficult to address, nevertheless some of the answers may already be available. A great deal of knowledge and information about organised crime is held by various institutions in different countries but it is not used to its fullest potential. Such considerations have inspired us to establish the CIROC. By studying international literature on the subject, analyzing police files or evaluating experiences in the fight against organized crime, we hope to stimulate a greater utilization of existing knowledge.

This newsletter is one of CIROC's activities. It aims to inform international scholars in the field of organized crime about relevant developments and research activities in the Netherlands. It is intended as a contribution to an increase in knowledge about organized crime. We also hope that this newsletter will lead to closer cooperation between the CIROC and international scholars.

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## Analysis

### Containers and body-packers: some trends in cocaine smuggling in the Netherlands *Damián Zaitch*

For the last 15 years, the Netherlands has played a major role as a point of entry for South American cocaine destined for the European Union. In this respect, it is only surpassed by Spain. Around 25% of all annual cocaine seizures in the EU take place in this small country. There are some obvious reasons for this: the Netherlands has huge transit seaports (Rotterdam and Amsterdam), a major international airport (Schiphol), ex-colonies in the vicinity of production regions, an excellent infrastructure connecting it to other EU countries, large migration enclaves from both production and destination countries, and the tacit agreement from local law enforcement agencies that the 'business' should only be disturbed if it leads to visible crime, violence, conspicuous consumption, or if it damages the interests of legal enterprises. In short, this type of illegal business is well embedded in the legal flow of goods, services and people (Zaitch 2002a).

The vast majority of cocaine arrives in the Netherlands by ship, the smuggling method depending on the exporter/importer's financial resources and his/her personal contacts. Larger amounts (often multi-ton) tend to be transported in containers amongst or alongside all sorts of legal merchandise, while smaller quantities are hidden throughout the ship, especially if the smuggler owns the ship (DIC 2000). Crew members of cargo ships may also bring sizeable amounts in their personal belongings. The cocaine is transported to a warehouse or re-shipped to other destinations (in the case of the containers), unloaded from the ship by cocaine importers (by means of diving or burglary operations) or safely brought to land by crew members and their visitors.

The Netherlands also handles and wholesales cocaine arriving at the Belgian port of Antwerp. In this case, the loads of cocaine are transported by truck or car across the common open border. Cocaine is further sent by air, without an actual smuggler being involved, in quantities varying from a few grams (in postal packages) to several hundreds of kilo's (as cargo). Finally, Schiphol airport receives thousands of passengers who smuggle cocaine in their luggage, clothing (mulas) or in capsules inside their bodies (body-packers). Mulas and body-packers constitute the more visible and numerous group of smugglers, but they only account for a very small percentage of all imported cocaine (Prisma Team 2002). Although this general picture has seemed to remain stable over the years, some changes and new trends in cocaine trafficking and law enforcement have taken place since 1999.

### *Waiting for the mega shipment?*

There has not been a multi-ton seizure in any Dutch seaport since 1999. However, in contrast, an increasing number of multi-ton seizures aimed for the Netherlands have taken place in Latin American and Caribbean ports in the last 3 years. While some officials (including the former Minister of Justice) regard this to be a successful trend (a greater exchange of information which leads to earlier detection at the source, a new port 'scanner' to deter traffickers, etc.), practitioners and researchers more

familiar with Dutch seaports seem to point in a different direction. The changes are more likely the result of shifting priorities and information-gathering strategies. Firstly, human trafficking and terrorism are now higher on the local agendas than the import of cocaine. Secondly, Dutch investigators (the police, customs and tax office in cooperation with each other) have decided to work on the principle of the 'quick hit', which involves short investigations aimed at disrupting small and flexible criminal networks. But these networks are too flexible to be harmed by these interventions, and the result is that smaller operations and more vulnerable actors are primarily targeted, while larger, more professional and sophisticated traffickers and their cargos remain untouched. Thirdly, the range of 'risky' ships, routes, merchandises, substances and people to be monitored or controlled when entering the Netherlands seems to have expanded in police and customs' risk analyses, cocaine occupying a smaller place in the general sample selected. Finally, traffickers are not deterred by a port-scanner which is far from foolproof and that only distinguishes objects with different specific gravity (Zaitch 2002b). In conclusion, multi-ton loads of cocaine are still being smuggled into and through the Netherlands, but the authorities have (maybe for the time being) lost track of them.

#### **The 'threat' of the body-packer**

The number of mulas and body-packers flying from the Netherlands Antilles to Schiphol airport has clearly increased since 2000. The number of 1200 drug couriers detained at the Amsterdam airport in 2001 will certainly be surpassed this year. This trend is mainly the result of two developments. Firstly, following the intensification of the war on drugs in Colombia and the increasing controls on the Mexican-American border in the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>, trafficking networks in South America have fragmented even further and the entire Caribbean region has become a key region for transshipping smaller amounts of cocaine to the US and Europe. These smaller exporters can only afford replaceable, cheap couriers (which in the Dutch case include Antilleans, Africans, the Surinamese, Latin Americans and Eastern Europeans) flying in groups with small amounts, but lack the contacts and the financial back-up to ship larger cargo by sea.

The sustained growth in trafficking finally led to a political scandal: in December 2001, the fact that the Dutch customs and migration authorities were letting couriers go after impounding the cocaine, due to cell shortage, became public news. The scandal led to a media hype, and more drug couriers were captured, and more prison cells for drug couriers were made available (which were however full within a few months).

In spite of their large numbers and the over-dramatised attention they receive, body-packers account for only 0.3% of all the cocaine seized in 1999 (Prisma Team 1999) and 1.8% in 2001 (Schipholteam 2002). In the current move to right-wing solutions for social problems and given the current anti-immigration mood, these vulnerable (foreign) couriers are an easy, marketable target for anti-drug strategies. However, these people can neither deliver enough cocaine to satisfy market demands nor can they provide much useful information about the export/import networks that employ them. They are also so cheap and so easy to replace, that they will fill many more prisons before their bosses decide to change airports to continue with their lucrative business of cocaine trafficking.

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- Chain migration versus smuggling chains

#### **Illegal immigrants entering the Netherlands**

*Richard Staring*

Italy, traditionally a labour-exporting country, has become an important target for immigration. In the last decade, Italy has been the first European experience for many non-western immigrants. With its extended coastline of 7,500 kilometres, Italy is also a rewarding target for human smugglers. The following are examples of some recent events. In March 2002, the Italian coastguard saved hundreds of illegal immigrants when their small boats were about to capsize in severe weather conditions. On March 7, 2002, more than fifty immigrants trying to reach Italian shores drowned during a storm on the coast of Sicily. In the same month, a merchant ship with over 900 Iraqi Kurds left Lebanon for Catania (Sicily). The Kurds, who wanted to continue their illegal journey from Italy to relatives in Germany, threatened to throw children overboard if the Italian government did not grant them entry (*Migration News*, April 2002).

Spain has undergone a similar transformation from exporting immigrants to receiving them and has become familiar with irregular immigration activities as has every other western country. The Strait of Gibraltar, which separates the African continent from Europe, is the most important location for human smuggling activities. On a daily basis, people try to cross the sea that separates them from Spain. Annually, hundreds of people are killed due to using boats that are unseaworthy for waters as dangerous as these (*Migration News*, October 2001).

In the Netherlands, much attention has been devoted to human smuggling and human trafficking, especially after the Dover tragedy where more than fifty Chinese immigrants died. Although the geographical location of the Netherlands has so far spared the Dutch from the painful sight of cargo ships packed with illegal immigrants or refugees near the tourist beaches, the country has had its own worries. The Dover smuggling case demonstrated that, at least to some extent, the Netherlands is used as a transit country for human smugglers heading for the United Kingdom, Canada or the United States. Other incidents illustrate that for some smugglers the Netherlands is a country of destination rather than an intermediate station. Considerable media attention and political debate is focused on the activities of these human smugglers. Much less attention is devoted to the majority of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers who enter the Netherlands without the support of human smugglers.

#### **Scope of the problem**

Reliable figures on the number of illegal immigrants and the involvement of human smugglers are scarce, due to the invisible nature of the phenomenon. In their review on human smuggling and human trafficking, Salt and Hogarth (2000) indicate the unverifiable character of most estimates of the number of illegal immigrants. They also indicate the importance of human smugglers for the arrival of these immigrants. One of the few estimations which is considered to be accurate, is that of the number of illegal immigrants who have entered a Western European country as a result of the activities of human smugglers, which lies at around fifteen to thirty per cent. For asylum seekers, this number was estimated at approximately twenty to forty per cent (Salt and Hogarth 2000: 32-3). For the Netherlands, Hesseling and Taselaar (2001: 348) illustrate that the involvement of human smugglers in the arrival of asylum seekers lies between ten and sixty percent, and this depends to a large extent on the country of origin. During the mid-1990s, the number of illegal immigrants in the four major Dutch cities was estimated at around 40,000 (Van der Leun et al. 1998). Recently, the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics estimated the number of illegal immigrants in the entire country somewhere between 46,000 and 116,000. One of the few things we can be certain of is that during the last decade, about 38,000 immigrants applied for asylum in the Netherlands annually.

#### **Official solutions from the authorities and their consequences**

The official response of various European countries to the arrival, or

potential arrival of these uninvited guests are similarly restrictive. To counter illegal entry, Germany uses helicopters on their eastern borders as well as special units who have been given far-reaching powers. The Italian government uses military naval patrols in their territorial waters. The Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla on the Moroccan coast of the African continent are surrounded by high fences and highly sophisticated security equipment. Infrared cameras, heat sensors, barricades, and intensive border patrols are characteristic of the 'high-tech' borders of contemporary Europe.

The restrictive migration policies of various European countries have contributed to the development of a so-called 'immigration industry'. This is to a large extent invisible and offers informal opportunities for entering Europe. This immigration industry can be perceived as an illegal response to official policy and it involves people who are directly confronted with the restrictive policies and those who feel that they could make a profit from these restrictions. What is characteristic of this immigration industry is its enormous diversity with respect to those involved and their motivations. For example, legal immigrants in the countries of settlement who offer support to relatives in traveling and staying abroad are among the more innocent participants in this informal industry (Staring 2001).

In the most extreme cases this immigration industry is occupied by professional – and, as the Dover-case made painfully clear, - multi-ethnic, criminal smuggling networks with a constant flux of participants (Kleemans and Brienen 2001). These networks organize the entry of large numbers of illegal immigrants to obtain high profits and, depending on the methods applied, at considerable risks for the immigrants involved. Between these two 'extremes' there is a huge grey area where motives diverge from altruism to financial profits, where the number of persons involved ranges from just one relative to thousands of unknown customers, and where the level of professionalism and modus operandi vary accordingly. Within this grey area one could think of, for instance, the carriers who occasionally transport immigrants into Europe, free of charge or for a fee. Amongst others, the participants of this industry are the local specialist who guide immigrants across borders, travel agencies within the countries of origin whose services extend to supplying one-way travel tickets, professional or semi-professional document forgers and corrupt civil servants working in consulates who turn a blind eye to the illegal handing out of visa.

#### **Why do illegal immigrants come to the Netherlands?**

The Dutch government fears that a relatively humane immigration policy will attract and provide a pulling force for potential newcomers in a harsh European context. Many recent policy changes should be viewed from the perspective of making the Netherlands less attractive for illegal immigrants and asylum seekers, and of moving more in line with the immigration policies of other Western European countries. The notion that certain immigration policies or attractive living conditions lead to further illegal immigration, is thus based on the assumption that potential immigrants are aware of these policies and conditions. One could even go one step further and say that potential immigrants would have, at least to some extent, to make a comparison of the immigration policies or labour market potential of various European countries, in order to decide where they want to go. It is assumed that on the basis of such an evaluation, illegal immigrants and asylum seekers will inevitably choose the Netherlands. But what happens in reality?

In the research project *The Unknown City*, researchers interviewed 175 immigrants living illegally in the harbour city of Rotterdam, in the Netherlands (Burgers and Engbersen 1999). The researchers asked these illegal immigrants from different countries of origin how they had succeeded in entering the Netherlands, and also about their knowledge of the Netherlands before they left. It transpired that most of the illegal immigrants knew hardly anything about Dutch immigration policies or the opportunities in the Dutch (informal) labour market, nor did they know anything about other European labour markets. The limited knowledge of the Netherlands is best illustrated by the disappointment they expres-

sed after being in the country for a while, and the problems they encountered with, for instance, finding a job. For most of them, everyday life as an illegal immigrant in the Netherlands turned out to be considerably more difficult than expected (Staring 2001).

It appeared that many of these illegal immigrants had opted for the Netherlands because they had relatives or friends in the country who were willing to help them with their 'journey', and not because they had drawn a comparison between different immigration policies and labour markets. As a consequence, a remarkably large number of these illegal immigrants traveled legally with a tourist visa, which they were able to extend, and they often found stable homes in the houses of relatives or friends. In theories on immigration, this type of movement is usually referred to as chain migration, although in this specific situation, we are naturally alluding to irregular activities. Around fifteen per cent of the illegal immigrants entered the country by means of smugglers whom they had paid for their services. Many of them did not have contacts in the Netherlands nor any other European countries at their disposal, or, for instance, they were reluctant to over-use their own network. It was also striking that most illegal immigrants who employed the assistance of smugglers, depended for at least some part of the journey on relatives or friends (Staring 2001).

Do asylum seekers analyze and compare the different asylum procedures in Europe? As with illegal labour immigrants, and depending on the possibilities asylum seekers have at their disposal, other elements also seem to play a more decisive role. Böcker and Havinga (1997) conclude that it is impossible to select one main reason why asylum seekers choose a particular country of destination. In their view, it is always a certain set of elements, for instance, the accessibility of specific countries of destination, historical and political ties between countries, economic possibilities in the countries of destination, the images that circulate of certain countries, the completion of asylum policies, as well as the preferences of smugglers (1997: 81-83). It would appear that asylum seekers and illegal immigrants have more in common than one would expect.

#### **The complexity of irregular migration movements**

If illegal immigration movements can be defined as chain migration due to the transnational links connecting source countries with receiving countries, one might wonder about the presence of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers from more exotic countries which lack concrete links with the Netherlands. Part of the answer can be found in the activities of smugglers and their 'organizations' within the country of origin, as well as the transit countries. In general, one could state that the specific circumstances under which asylum seekers have to leave or flee their country, give them greater cause for hiring the services of smugglers. The consequences of employing the services of smugglers (or their organizations) are twofold. Firstly, it is increasingly clear that smugglers are highly influential regarding the choice of a country of destination, even when the client wishes otherwise (cf. Hesseling and Taselaar 2001). Secondly, it seems logical that these immigrants will follow the smuggler's established routes and end up in those countries where the smugglers have networks. Take, for instance, the situation in Istanbul, one of the main ports to Western Europe. Istanbul accommodates many immigrants from many countries, all waiting to enter Europe by means of a Turkish smuggling organization. These Turkish smugglers have strong roots in Turkish transnational networks and smuggling these immigrants from 'new immigration countries' will follow the same roads and enter the same countries as Turkish immigrants who entered Western Europe before them (Staring 2001). Little is known about the specific relationship between smugglers, smuggling chains, and immigrant communities in the Netherlands and other European countries. This kind of knowledge cannot be derived from scientific studies that are solely based on judicial or governmental sources. However, studying the people who enter the country illegally in an attempt to evade restrictive immigration policies, allows us to undertake empirically grounded, ethnographic studies which reflect the realities of smugglers, smuggling chains as well as the smuggled.

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### Recent Books in the Netherlands

#### *Misdaadprofielen*

Frank Bovenkerk  
Meulenhoff, 2001

There should be no taboos in science! This is the message of Dutch criminologist Frank Bovenkerk, the author of *Hedendaags kwaad* (Evils of Today) (1992), *La Bella Bettien* (1995) and, with Yucel Yesilgoz, *De Maffia van Turkije* (1998). In his new book *Misdaadprofielen* (Criminal profiles) Bovenkerk describes the Netherlands as a centre of international crime, where violent 'Yugos' and youth gangs from the Dutch Antilles operate and where a new 'Nederweed economy' has emerged.

#### *Geliquideerd*

Mattijs van de Port  
Meulenhoff, 2001

What lies at the heart of contract killings inside the world of organized crime? The traditional view in criminology is that violence is a means of conflict regulation. In his book Mattijs van de Port tries to explain the violence of criminals as a result of their emotional motives (panic, fear, suspicion, etc.).

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