

## Introduction

*Dina Siegel (Utrecht University)/CIROC*

Ten years ago, in August 2002, the first issue of the CIROC Newsletter came out. In the wake of the first CIROC seminar on cocaine trafficking, during which leading experts on organised crime and drugs trafficking such as Francisco Thoumi and Alain Labrousse presented their findings, the first Newsletter focused on the trafficking of drugs and the smuggling of human beings. Damian Zaitch wrote an article on 'containers and body-packing' and the role of the Netherlands in transnational cocaine trafficking. Richard Staring analyzed the problems of illegal migration and the development of an 'immigration industry' in the Netherlands. The first Newsletter also discussed two important Dutch publications: *Misdaad-profielen* (Crime Profiles) by Frank Bovenkerk, on typically Dutch forms of organised crime, and *Geliquideerd* (Liquidated) by Mattijs van de Port, on the emotional aspects of contract killings in the Netherlands (for more information on the first CIROC Newsletter see [www.ciroc.org](http://www.ciroc.org)).

Since its first issue, the CIROC Newsletter has continued to inform its readers about ongoing criminological research on organised crime, with an emphasis on developments in the Netherlands. Topics such as human trafficking for sexual or labour exploitation, corruption, fraud, underground banking and money laundering, the link between the legal world and the underworld, the relationship between organized crime and law enforcement, etc. have been analyzed by leading Dutch criminologists and guest researchers. Two specific 'Dutch' subjects in particular (legalized prostitution and the sale of soft drugs in coffeeshops) have always figured prominently in this Newsletter and we continue to try to keep abreast of recent developments concerning these issues. Will the tolerant attitude of the Dutch authorities persist in the coming years, or will the Dutch government, under pressure from the US and the EU, change its course regarding soft drugs and legal prostitution? The ongoing discussion on these issues among academic researchers and practitioners continues in this instalment of our Newsletter with an analysis by Thaddeus Müller of recent changes in soft drug policies in the Netherlands.

Another fascinating subject is the illegal wildlife trade, which has become a hot topic in the Netherlands. Daan van Uhm, a Ph.D. candidate at Utrecht University, reports on this type of organised crime in his contribution to this issue. His article is followed by a report on another form of illegal trade, namely the under-the-counter sale of erection pills. Rosa Koenraadt, also from Utrecht University, conducted an ethnographic study on this relatively new form of organised (or disorganised?) crime by interviewing victims and illegal dealers in erection pills. The last CIROC seminar, which was held on May 23, 2012, was dedicated to the use of telephone taps and internet surveillance as investigative methods. In this Newsletter, Christianne de Poot presents the results of research carried out by the Dutch Ministry of Justice (WODC) on this method of criminal investigation as it is conducted in the Netherlands.

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## Analysis

**The Dutch Experiment with Cannabis. A short historical overview**  
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### Introduction

To understand the Dutch experiment with cannabis, the concept of 'gedogen', which is closely related to 'condoning', is of major importance. In brief, the meaning of *gedogen* is that the state does not take action when a law is broken because of a societal agreement that the transgression constitutes an acceptable, victimless activity. In the last 15 years, the Dutch policy of *gedogen* towards cannabis has changed: a process of criminalization has emerged. In the following, I will describe this development and explain the transformation.

### Decriminalization as a policy

From the mid-sixties onward, the attitude towards cannabis changed drastically with the rise of youth culture, especially youth from the middle-class such as artists, students and activists who were interested in an alternative life-style. For them, cannabis became a symbol to provoke the authorities. Those who were arrested for possession of small quantities of cannabis were faced with prison sentences of six months or longer. Repression was seen as the only way to counter cannabis use.

In the second half of the 1960s, a public debate developed in which the severe punishments came to be seen as ineffective and unjust. In the media, articles were published that portrayed cannabis use as harmless. The difference between cannabis and cocaine and heroin was emphasized and cannabis was redefined as a non-addictive 'soft drug'. The local governments of the major cities, such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam, were not sure how to handle the situation and took a wait-and-see attitude (Kort 1995).

To end the confusion, two committees (Hulsman and Baan) were asked to give advice to the state on how to deal with the use of drugs in the Netherlands. Both reports were in favour of decriminalizing cannabis. The report of the Hulsman committee was more radical and advised the decriminalization of all drugs in the long run. Almost all suggestions of the more moderate report of the Baan committee were integrated into the new drug act of 1976. Two lists of drugs were defined: List 1 for hard drugs, such as cocaine and heroin, with unacceptable risks and List 2 for soft drugs, such

as hashish and marihuana. The possession of soft drugs up to 30 grams would not result in a conviction. With regard to drug users, the focus was placed on harm reduction and health, instead of punishment and crime. The punishment for the trafficking of hard drugs was made more severe. The existing situation in the Netherlands at this time was that 'house dealers' were selling cannabis in youth centres. Because most of these dealers carried more than 30 grams, they were in effect breaking the law. In 1978, the law was changed in order to create an exception for the house dealers in youth centres (ibid.).

From the 1980s onward, the retail sale of cannabis through coffeeshops expanded drastically. Because of the protection offered by the law, many entrepreneurs thought it would be safe to invest money in a coffeeshop as a commercial project. Within ten years, there were between 1200 and 1500 coffeeshops in the Netherlands. As a reaction, the state developed five rules for coffeeshops in the early 1990s: coffeeshop owners were not allowed to sell hard drugs, to advertise their cannabis products, to create a nuisance because of anti-social behaviour of their customers, to sell cannabis to customers less than 18 years of age, and to sell more than 30 grams a person. Local municipal governments were given a choice on how to deal with coffeeshops. Some opted for the zero option, meaning that they did not accept any coffeeshops within their municipal boundaries.

The increase of cannabis selling points resulted in a new situation, which became the Achilles heel of the Dutch policy. In the process of lawmaking in the 1970s, the production of cannabis (growing more than five plants) was prohibited, which meant that the supply of cannabis, by definition, involved illegal activities. This created a schizophrenic situation: cannabis was legal at the front door, but illegal at the backdoor. At first, this was not seen as a big issue, but because of the large increase in the number of coffeeshops, the police and the authorities began to wonder where all the cannabis was coming from and the answer they came up with was 'organized crime'. According to many local governments, the increase also resulted in anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of coffeeshops.

#### *The criminalization of cannabis*

Since the mid-1990s, the central principle of harm reduction and the separation of hard and soft drugs has been continued, but there has also been a greater emphasis on a repressive approach to coffeeshops and the production of cannabis. The general goal of this policy has been to reduce the number of coffeeshops. Some rules have changed, such as that customers can only buy five grams or less, alcohol consumption is prohibited and coffeeshops are only allowed to have a stock of 500 grams of cannabis on the premises. Coffeeshops are being monitored and if they break the rules, sanctions are bound to follow, such as temporary closure for three to six months or final closure. The monitoring of coffeeshops has become stricter since 2007, when local governments made the inspection of coffeeshops into a priority. This procedure can now take place up to ten times a year per coffeeshop (Van Laar & Van Ooyen 2009).

Since the late 1990s, the Dutch policy can be characterized by an increase in the number of laws designed to regulate and reduce the number of coffeeshops. These laws, which are focused on issues of organized crime, the vulnerability of minors and anti-social behaviour, have resulted in the closure of many coffeeshops. In 2009, there were only 266 coffeeshops left (Bieleman, B. & Nijkamp 2010).

In 1999, a new law (*Wet Damocles*) was implemented which offered the possibility of imposing administrative sanctions against coffeeshops with a connection to the criminal world. In 2003, the BIBOB law came into force, which can be used to investigate the integrity of coffeeshop owners. In 2008, the 'Taskforce approach to organized cannabis cultivation' was launched with the aim of detecting and dismantling cannabis plantations and organizations investing in these plantations.

In 2007, the government issued the so-called 'distance criterion', which states that no coffeeshops are allowed within 250 meters of a school. This was changed to 350 meters in 2011. The aim of this new law is to protect minors from visiting a coffeeshop. This criterion resulted in the closure of 16 coffeeshops in 2009 in Rotterdam (Müller et al. 2012). Other cities have not gone this far yet.

In the border provinces of the Netherlands, many coffeeshops have been closed because of the alleged anti-social behaviour of customers from Belgium, Germany and France. In order to prevent the influx of cannabis consumers from outside the Netherlands (since 2012) only those who live in the Netherlands are now allowed to buy cannabis in coffeeshops.

In 2009, the committee Van der Donk (Van der Donk 2009), which evaluated the Dutch soft drugs policy of the last 30 years, stated that the current policy on cannabis should be changed. The commission equated some strains of cannabis to hard drugs because of the increased percentage of THC in certain products and it argued for the redefining of cannabis as a hard drug. In the report of the committee, organized crime is seen as a major issue, especially given the increase in the size of coffeeshops, which require a constant supply of cannabis.

The committee advised a change in the law in order to create small-scale coffeeshops with a local clientele. The committee recommended the transformation of coffeeshops into clubs where customers have to be registered members in order to be able to buy cannabis. Each 'cannabis club' may have up to 2000 members. This advice has already been implemented as a law in the border provinces of the Netherlands with a view to halting the influx of foreign customers. The current Minister of Safety and Justice, Ivo Opstelten, has announced his intentions to implement this law in all provinces of the Netherlands in 2013. At the current moment, many cities oppose the membership law because they foresee an increase in the illegal sale of cannabis, which could lead to the emergence of an uncontrollable criminal market.

The future of the Dutch cannabis policy depends on the coming elections for the Dutch lower house on September 12, 2012. The political parties in the middle and on the left are opposed to the changes proposed by the current Minister of Safety and Justice.

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#### **Organised crime in the wildlife trade**

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In 2011, in the neighbourhood of Losser in the Netherlands, Dutch authorities kept their eye on a suspicious Irish group, which was apparently selling generators and power tools. At that time, there was insufficient evidence to link the group to criminal activities, except for a report of harassment filed by a rhinoceros horn owner. Coincidentally or not, a year later an Irish organised crime group was found to be responsible for the theft of rhinoceros horns, which were being sold on the black market for more than \$35.000 per kilo (Enforcement Support Officer, 2012).

According to Europol (2012), more than 100 rhinoceros horns were stolen from museums and private collections in 16 European countries between 2011 and 2012. The Irish organised crime group was linked to many of these thefts; we obviously live in a time where even dead rhinos are hunted.

Although the rhinoceros is nearly extinct, there is a high demand for its horn. China, Vietnam and Thailand have been identified as both transit and consumer areas (UNODC, 2010). Despite the fact that there is no scientific evidence of its healing qualities, the powder or shavings of the horns are widely used in traditional Chinese medicine. Moreover, illegal rhino hunting is increasing significantly: a stunning number of 448 rhinos were poached in South Africa alone last year compared to 13 killed in 2007 (DEA, 2012).

To what extent are these groups organised? Besides the theft of rhino horns, the Irish crime group is also involved in tarmac fraud, the distribution of counterfeit products, organised robbery, money laundering and drugs trafficking. "The criminal group does not fear the use of intimidation, threats and violence and has been active in Asia, North and South America and Europe" (Europol, 2012). The question is whether or not and to what extent organised crime is related to the endangered species trade.

#### *Organised crime*

While there is only a small number of criminological studies on the illegal wildlife trade, it looks as if organised crime organisations are involved in the wildlife trade (UNODC, 2010). According to Europol (2011) criminal organisations from Asia, Central and South America deliver endangered species and derivatives of endangered species – such as reptiles, birds and traditional Chinese medicines – to several companies across the European Union (EU), particularly in North West Europe (Europol, 2011; Sun Wyler & Sheikh, 2009). Within North West Europe criminal organisations cooperate with breeders in other Member States to launder 'wild caught' animals, using false documents to trade them as captive bred on the legitimate market (Clark, 2008; Europol, 2011). According to a series of U.N. studies on the illicit traffic of wildlife, wildlife experts claim that Chinese, Japanese, Italian, and Russian organised crime syndicates are heavily involved in illegal wildlife trade. Triad societies, such as the Wo Shing Wo group, 14K and the Japanese Yakuza have reportedly smuggled ivory, rhino horn, tigers, shark fin, abalone and whale meat. Moreover, the Neapolitan Mafia is said to be behind illegal trading in endangered parrots, and most of the caviar business is reportedly controlled by Russian organised crime (CRS, 2008; ECOSOC, 2002).

Within the EU organised crime groups involved in drug trafficking, the facilitation of illegal immigration, fraud, THB and the distribution of counterfeit products are now active in the wildlife trade along routes established for other types of illicit commodity (Europol, 2011). Apparently, the illicit traffic in wildlife may exhibit at least a high degree of transnational organisation.

#### *Networks*

The chain of the trade, from capture to the market, often covers flexible distribution lines and networks of intermediaries, from harvesters through middlemen and on to wholesalers, exporters, processors and retailers, and may involve intermediate destinations (GFI, 2011; Liddick, 2011). For example, until 2006 the Netherlands legally imported around 100.000 endangered birds each year. From that year on, endangered birds are hardly legally imported into the EU and the Netherlands in particular (WCMC, 2012), because of the import ban and EU protection measures in response to the growing threat of avian influenza (2005/94/EG; Nijman, 2010). According to the Dutch Crime Squad (2012), organised crime groups immediately filled the gap with illegal bird trade to the Netherlands; couriers smuggled birds from Suriname through Spain into the Netherlands several times a month.

In general, Africa, Asia, South America, Central America and Eastern Europe are range states and North America, Western Europe, the Middle East, Japan and Singapore are consumer states. Some countries are both import and export countries, such as China, Australia, Canada and South Africa (Liddick, 2011). The Netherlands is a transit country as well (Van Uhm, 2009). Routes used in the illegal wildlife trade are often complex, where specimens may be transported to a variety of intermediate destinations with weak enforcement efforts or priorities and regulatory loopholes. Especially the free trade agreement between EU states

seems to provide opportunities for the illegal wildlife trade (Cowdrey, 2002; CRS, 2008).

#### *Smuggling*

According to the Dutch Crime Squad (2012), crime investigation demonstrates that crime networks dealing with the smuggling of animals such as birds or reptiles to the Netherlands use a *modus operandi* similar to that of drug traffickers. A common method is to hide the animals or products in concealed compartments in luggage or on the smuggler's body. The similarities with drug smuggling are obvious here (Elliott, 2011; South & Wyatt, 2011). There have been accounts of customs officers in airports stopping smugglers with birds literally strapped to their legs, with reptiles in their underpants and turtles in their luggage (Schneider, 2012). Recently, three suspects were convicted for illegal import of native protected bird species from Curaçao to the Netherlands and of participation in a criminal organisation. The birds were squeezed into plastic crates without water and food, and transported in the hand luggage (Traffic, 2011). Note that the structure and nature of the wildlife trade is species-dependent: smuggling a parrot requires a different technique than hiding 50 ivory tusks.

Nevertheless, the more animal species are becoming endangered, the greater the commercial value on the illicit market and the incentive for trafficking. Some animal parts are worth more than their weight in gold (UNICRI, 2009; UNODC, 2010). For example, rare macaws may be worth more than \$40,000, tiger skins are being sold on the black market for \$35,000 and rhino horns cost between \$35,000 and \$45,000 per kilo (Van Uhm, 2012). Besides that, the illegal wildlife trade is said to be in the financial top three illegal enterprises worldwide, along with the global drug trade and the trade in illegal arms (ECOSOC, 2003; IC-CWC, 2012), with an estimated value of between \$10 billion and \$20 billion annually (McMurray, 2008; Interpol, 2012).

#### *Conclusion*

The wildlife trade is a growing business, which is driven by significant demand for live specimens and animal parts. The Netherlands operates as a hub between Europe and the rest of the world. Some animal parts are worth more than their weight in gold and it is not uncommon for criminal organisations to be linked to the illegal wildlife trade. Dedicated organised crime groups may trade in endangered species (or parts thereof) and often exploit legitimate business structures to facilitate the importation and retail of specimens. Corrupted officials, established transit hubs and networks of couriers indicate a high level of organisation and the notably profitable business may be highly attractive to crime groups. Further research is necessary to identify the structure and networks in the illegal wildlife trade.

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## Blue pills on the black market

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### Introduction

Erectile dysfunction pills, such as Viagra, Cialis and Levitra, are medications that can be prescribed by a doctor when a patient is suffering from erectile dysfunction. In the Netherlands, one legal erectile dysfunction (ED) pill costs between twelve and fifteen euros and can be bought at a pharmacy with a medical prescription. However, in several European countries, ED pills are also one of the most counterfeited and illegally sold medicines (Jackson, 2010). There is still little criminological research on the trade in illicit ED products. This study examines which factors contribute to the demand and supply of illicit erectile dysfunction products in the Netherlands. Questions such as who are the sellers and users of these illicit medicines, and which factors contribute to the current size of this black market will be addressed.

In order to investigate the factors that support the sale and use of illicit ED products, the research included twenty-one interviews with experts, users, dealers and sellers of these medicines in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the research is based on a study of the literature and an internet analysis of five discussion groups and websites related to ED products.

### Counterfeit medicines worldwide

The production, distribution and trade of counterfeit medicines consti-

tute a complex and growing problem worldwide. For example, in several Asian and African countries, the regular medication for the treatment of HIV and malaria is scarce and highly expensive. As a result, there is an increasing demand for affordable medicines. In these countries, the market is vulnerable to the sale and distribution of illicit and counterfeit medicines, which might contain inactive or harmful substances (Bate & Boateng, 2007). However, the use of counterfeit and illicit medicines is not limited to the developing countries. In several Western European countries, counterfeit and illicit medicines are available as well. In these countries this mainly concerns so-called lifestyle medicines, such as sleeping pills, hormones and the popular ED products.

### Erectile dysfunction products

Although questioned by some authors, the story of Viagra's discovery tells how the pharmaceutical company Pfizer conducted clinical tests in order to discover a cure for angina pectoris. The male experimental subjects did not report any improvements regarding their heart problems; however, they mentioned better erections instead. Experiments on this finding proceeded and in 1998, Viagra was first approved by the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) as the new oral medication to treat impotence (Loe, 2004). After the introduction of Viagra, the yellow Cialis pill was approved in 2003, followed by the launch of the third erectile dysfunction pill Levitra in 2007.

In the past ten years, the Dutch *Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu (RIVM)* conducted research on illicit ED products that were intercepted by the Dutch customs office. Based on its results, the RIVM made a distinction between four types of illicit erectile dysfunction products. In the Netherlands, the most common illicit ED products are illicit generics such as the Indian Kamagra (69%), counterfeit erectile dysfunction pills (17%) and illicit food supplements (13%). Overall, the RIVM found that nearly all illicit erectile dysfunction medicines contained a low or normal dose of the active ingredients (Venhuis, et al., 2011).

### Trade and sale of erectile dysfunction products

Considering the research thus far, it seems that most of the ED products are manufactured in India, China, Thailand and Hong Kong and regularly distributed to the Netherlands in small quantities by parcels, personal luggage or by boat. There are some cases of large amounts of illicit ED products that were intercepted by the Dutch customs office, but the international wholesale trade and potential involvement of organized crime groups require further investigation. Based on the data of this research, a distinction can be made between several points of sale in the Netherlands.

The first selling point is the internet, which has developed as a powerful and important platform for the sale of illicit ED products. Vendors sell ED medicines to customers worldwide via email, websites or personal advertisements. The benefits associated with online purchases are the anonymity, accessibility and ease, for both user and supplier. Secondly, there is a broad range of shops where ED products are sold under the counter. In many sex shops, customers expect they can secretly buy ED products along with the regular products. ED medication is also for sale in less obvious places. For example, in pet shops or barbershops, the owners sell their ED products discretely to their customers. Furthermore, users of ED products and drug dealers also appear to be selling the pills and powders.

In the various shops where ED pills are for sale, sellers gain trust through the personal relationships they maintain with their customers. While serving their clients, the sellers may mention and inform them about their sale of ED products. The workplace is used for both the regular sale of goods and services as well as the illicit sale of ED products, which may blur the boundaries between legal and illegal sales (Ruggiero, 2000). The legal job may improve the moral acceptability of the illicit sale as it mainly provides for some extra income.

### Users of erectile dysfunction pills

With respect to the users of illicit ED products, a distinction can be made between patients and recreational users. The group consisting of

patients can buy the medicines at a pharmacy on the basis of a medical prescription. The use of legal ED products for medical reasons is popular, as evidenced by the fact that legal ED pills are currently the most frequently prescribed medicines not covered by health insurance in the Netherlands (SFK, 2011). However, mostly for reasons of shame, ease, and financial considerations, patients may decide to buy illicit medicines as well. Patients report experiencing fear of discussing erectile problems with their general practitioner or feel labelled as being diagnosed as a person suffering from erectile dysfunction. To what extent this group of users chooses either to purchase the legal or the illegal medicines remains unclear and needs to be investigated in further research.

The second group consists of recreational users, who have no other option than to buy illicit ED products, as they do not meet the medical requirements to obtain a doctor's prescription. They are forced to buy illicit ED pills on the internet, from friends, or from other suppliers. The recreational users vary widely in age and frequency of use. They claim to take ED pills only out of curiosity, to experiment, to boost their self-confidence, or in the hope of improved potency, pleasure and excitement. Others take it mostly in combination with drugs on special occasions or at sex parties, where in some scenes the combination of XTC and ED products is highly normalized.

The reasons for their use correspond with research on adolescents using ED products and might be explained by existing theories on the relation between adolescence and risk taking behaviour, the importance of sex in contemporary society, the earlier onset of sexual behaviour, or an attempt to escape the boredom of daily life (Apodaca & Moser, 2011; Ferrell, 2004; Lazaroms, Vanweesenbeek & Woertman, 2003; Musacchia, Hatrich & Garofalo, 2005; Sharland, 2004).

Shame was not only reported by patients. Recreational users, too, were often reluctant to talk openly about their use and clearly wanted to avoid being perceived as suffering from erectile dysfunction. Respondents frequently mentioned that their use of ED products was exclusively based on curiosity or the desire to improve their sexual drive, instead of being prompted by erectile problems. The secrecy around the use of ED pills might explain why the sale of this medication often takes place on such a small scale. Users want to know whether or not they can trust a supplier. The importance of mutual trust in the exchange of illicit goods, as emphasized by Paoli (2002), seems to be of significant value in the relationship between users and sellers of the 'sensitive' ED pills.

#### *Conclusion and discussion*

The sale, distribution, and use of ED products relates to a particular market characterized by shame and secrecy. A combination of the popularity of illicit ED products with the embarrassment associated with the underlying dysfunction, calls for discretion and trust between suppliers and users. This applies to older men and patients as well as to younger adolescents who use illicit ED pills.

Although the sale and use of illicit ED pills is prohibited, the direct health consequences seem to be relatively mild, at least until now. Retail selling provides easy access to ED pills for men who are afraid to consult their doctor or cannot afford the regular prices of the medication. From the point of view of the Dutch Health Care Inspectorate (IGZ) and various pharmaceutical companies it is understandable that the illicit sale of these medicines is being tackled. The sale of counterfeit medicines will decrease the sales of legal medicines and might harm the pharmaceutical brand. On the other hand, the small scale illicit use can be viewed as a consequence of the high prices of medicines and the choices made by users who wish to avoid a visit to the doctor.

Within a couple of years the Viagra patent will expire in most European countries, which will allow for generic and consequently cheaper ED products. Although this will not change the fact that the medication still needs to be bought on a doctor's prescription, it will most probably decrease the need for illicit medicines for financial reasons. In the near future, further research is necessary to investigate the international wholesale market, the illicit use by patients, as well as the medical and

ethical dilemmas regarding this extraordinary market in illicit erectile dysfunction products.

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#### **The use of telephone and Internet taps in criminal investigations** *Christianne de Poot & Geraldina Odinet (WODC, Ministry of Justice)*

In the past decades, telecommunications traffic has grown explosively. There has been an enormous expansion of the use of mobile phones. In addition, the way in which these phones are used has changed as well. An ever growing number of phones are connected to the Internet, and a growing share of communications take place through the Internet. As a result, communication gets increasingly fragmented, because of the various ways and channels available for communication. It is expected that this has major consequences for the way in which phone taps can be used during criminal investigations.

Recently the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice published a study on the use of telephone and Internet taps in criminal investigations in the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and England and Wales. The goal of this study was to find out how telephone and Internet taps are used during criminal investigations and how differences between countries in the use of the tap can be explained.

The publication gives an overview of the regulation of the tap in the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and England and Wales and on the safe-guards built in to ensure that the requirements to use this instrument have been met. The report describes the extent to which the tap is deployed in these countries, the underlying goals and considerations and the results it yields.

Due to differences in registration, it is difficult to compare the phone tapping practices in various countries. In England and Wales, for instance, the number of individuals against whom a tapping warrant is issued is registered, whereas in the Netherlands and Germany each tapped telephone number is counted. Furthermore, the application-periods of the registrations are different for each country. Despite this, the available

figures seem to indicate that the tap is used more frequently in the Netherlands than in the other countries. However, other covert investigation means, such as infiltration or recording of confidential communication through microphones, are much less deployed in the Netherlands. Presumably there is a difference in perception between the various countries, when it comes to the infringement on the privacy of different investigative means. In the Netherlands deploying infiltrators is seen as a heavier investigation means than the use of the telephone tap. In England and Wales, Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) are the most commonly used covert investigation means, and the use of the telephone tap is relatively limited.

Despite these differences, investigation teams both in the Netherlands and in the other countries highly appreciate the tap. In particular the investigation of serious and organised crime heavily leans on the deployment of the tap.

The information obtained by the tap, plays a role in the investigation process in different ways. Intercepted communications can, for example, clarify which people have contact with each other, how they relate to each other, where they are located and sometimes what activities they are engaged in.

Although people communicate more and more via the Internet and it is expected that the telephone tap will provide increasingly less useful information, the study shows that the number of Internet taps annually installed during criminal investigations is still very modest, both in the Netherlands and in the other countries.

The investigated police forces lack enough people with digital expertise. In addition, the Internet tap yields large amounts of data and the police do not have enough knowledge of high-quality analytical techniques to search large amounts of data quickly and thoroughly. Finally, with an Internet tap it is not possible to choose beforehand which information should be intercepted and stored, and which information should be kept out of the data stream. This possibility might make the Internet tap more focused and efficient.

The Internet tap itself and the laws and regulations are not yet ready for the bigger role and the more efficient use of this investigative means. It is therefore important to have a discussion whether existing laws and regulations need to be amended to better fit the needs of law enforcement.

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Vulliamy, E. (2011) *Amexica: War Along the Borderline*. London: Vintage Books, 359 pages, ISBN: 978-0-099-54656-6, £8.99/ € 15.99

Reviewed by Georgios A. Antonopoulos (Teesside University, UK)

Ed Vulliamy has proven his credentials as a top investigative journalist reporting -among other- on the wars in Bosnia and Iraq and other social issues in these areas (e.g. human trafficking) for the British newspapers *The Guardian* and *The Observer*. What he attempts (and, actually, achieves) in his *Amexica*, this densely-written book which is organised and structured as a 'journey' from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico, is to trace the multifaceted relationship between the United States and Mexico strictly in the common border area. A border which has been described by Peter Andreas (1996) as simultaneously open and closed. In this endeavour he delves into numerous arresting themes such as illegal immigration, blind or sadistic violence, guns, addiction, money laundering, all symptomatic of the failure of the 'war on drugs' and, as the author suggests, the economic degradation caused by a globalised economy. Vulliamy does this by immersing himself into less than idyllic but in many respects colourful and remarkable places to say the least, in a way that is done only in the dreams of the average criminologist.

For *The Guardian* and *The Observer* reader who knows Vulliamy it is more than evident that the author has been honest to his trade and approach: brave, passionate and discreet first-person reportage. Vulliamy finds it very difficult to be always neutral, and humourless as well as uninvolved and uncaring of the people who suffer direct or indirect violence in *Amexica*. Something like this would be extremely difficult anyway as even the images of death, desperation and hopelessness 'collected' in and reported from the field, are either macabre or feel like a strong punch in the stomach (or both). The very first lines of the prologue, for instance, start with a theatrically violent incident: "As dawn breaks over the vast desert, the body is hanging from a concrete overpass known as 'Switchback Bridge'. It has been there for two hours – decapitated and dangling by a rope tied around the armpits" (p.xxix). Indeed, apart from the embellished description one can find the visual aid, a photograph which constitute a continuous message about the decapitated corpse, as well as few more photographs from a place full of exacerbated contradictions and paradoxes (see between pages 228 and 229). While, for example, Ciudad Juárez, is one of the most violent cities in the world, its twin city in the US standing within teasing sight, El Paso, is considered one of the safest cities in the country.

The work is charismatically and visually written, and vivid to the point that often the cold or heat of the desert is felt by the reader (and so is the effect of the beers drunk by Vulliamy and his company in the process of the investigation). It is a *relentless* presentation of stories featuring the microcosms of a great cast of characters across numerous, seemingly normal venues, as well as some of the protagonists' quixotic efforts. Moreover, it constitutes an avalanche of information, historical or otherwise, including quite a few terms from the narco and human smugglers' slang which are less known to non-natives and non-Spanish speakers. The work is also *largely* stripped of the sensationalism that is very often an integral part of similar, shorter or longer, pieces of work. Very importantly, and that's a big asset for the book, Vulliamy neither completely ignores the multilateral benefits of the narco-economy to the area and the illegal trades accompanying the volume of legal trade between Mexico and the US nor the 'eccentrically creative' (p.133) *Amexica* border economics. Forgetting for a tiny moment that *Amexica* is primarily a journalistic endeavour, the 'Achilles heel' of the work, in my opinion, is that Vulliamy suggests that capitalism and international free market is the root of the local problems appearing in this book, yet the argument is rather stagnant; leaving the reader to expect something more.

Notwithstanding this 'limitation', this is a very well-written, pleasurable (often uncomfortably pleasurable) book. Although it is not exactly ground-breaking, by all means it offers an entertaining, forceful and

sharp account of the depressing situation in the US-Mexico border, and is the definition of investigative journalism. Overall, this is a work that absorbs the reader into it and a real page-turner that will definitely not disappoint you.

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