

# Narcoterrorism in Southeastern Europe

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The dramatic attack against the United States on September 11, 2001, besides its tragic consequences in terms of the loss of human lives and material damage, constituted a wake-up call for the international community regarding the spectacular dimension and the new form that international terrorism had assumed. After that event, huge efforts on the part of national and international actors were directed towards defeating this global peril. Yet one aspect of the fight against terrorism seems to be overlooked: the connection between terrorism and organized crime.

The magnitude of the organized crime phenomenon in southeastern Europe, the presence of well-established networks, and the huge profits obtained through organized criminal activities—especially drug trafficking, the financial backbone of most criminal organizations—all make organized crime and narcotics dealing very attractive activities for terrorists and terrorist groups. Given the efforts of the international community after September 11<sup>th</sup> to freeze the funds and assets of Al Qaeda or Al Qaeda-related terrorist groups, it is very likely that we will witness an increase of these groups' involvement in organized crime activities in order to raise new funds. However, raising money for mounting new attacks, or for maintaining their infrastructure, recruiting and training new members, etc., although very important, are not the only reasons for terrorist groups' participation in organized crime. Equally important are the well-organized networks that are already in use by criminal groups, which could be exploited by terrorist individuals or organizations for extending their infrastructure; recruiting new members; moving people, equipment, and funds without being detected; and establishing new instruction bases.

Southeastern Europe is characterized by a high level of organized criminal activity, especially drug trafficking, along with some presence of terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda (mainly in the Western Balkans). In this context, it is hard to believe—and it would be a mistake to consider—that terrorist groups would not make use of the networks of criminal activity that already exist in the region. Therefore, this analysis will offer a brief assessment of the dimension of drug trafficking activity in southeastern Europe and an examination of the possible connections between this criminal activity and its networks and terrorism, based on the imperative that the region, mainly the Western Balkans, should not be allowed to become a “safe haven” for terrorists.

## Defining the Problem

Transnational organized crime is a major problem in southeastern Europe, and one that is a very complex phenomenon, “overlapping and linked with warlordism and terrorism,” meaning that any attempt to deal effectively with any one of these problems re-

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quires “dealing with the others as well—either at the same time or sequentially—because each one feeds off the other.”<sup>1</sup> Organized crime takes many forms and involves a wide variety of criminal activities,<sup>2</sup> yet I will focus here on one crime market that is considered to be one of the major threats in most European countries; drug trafficking.

Even though organized crime—including drug trafficking—and terrorism are often seen as separate phenomena, raising disputes over the best methods of countering them, the link between the two is undeniable. It is true that terrorists and drug traffickers have different long-term objectives (e.g., political goals for terrorists, and economic ones for drug traffickers),<sup>3</sup> yet they often share some short-term goals; nearly every terrorist group raises some money from the drug trade. The present study starts from the definition of “narcoterrorism” as referring—according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration<sup>4</sup>—to terrorist acts carried out by groups that are directly or indirectly involved in cultivating, manufacturing, transporting, or distributing illicit drugs. Therefore, the term refers to groups that use drug trafficking to fund terrorist activities. Usually, this cooperation between terrorist groups or networks and organized crime networks will assure the former the financial and logistical support. Moreover, the terrorist groups and the illegal criminal networks provide support for each other, so it can be said that it is useless to discuss terrorism separate from organized crime.

As illicit drug trafficking is extremely profitable, it is “also linked to international terrorist organizations that need money to finance their activities. By forging advantageous relationships with drug traffickers or becoming actively involved in the drug trade themselves, terrorist groups such as Hezbollah or Al Qaeda use money from drug sales to further their political agendas.”<sup>5</sup>

According to institutions that deal with this issue, it is certain that organized crime, and especially drug trafficking, represents the most important source of financing for

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis J. D. Sandole, “Combating Crime in Southeastern Europe: An Integrated, Coordinated, Multi-level Approach,” paper presented at the 4th Reichenau Workshop of the PfP Consortium Working Group on Regional Stability in South East Europe, on *Crushing Crime in South East Europe: A Struggle of Domestic, Regional and European Dimensions*, Reichenau, Austria, 16–19 May, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> *Summary of the Organized Crime Situation Report 2004. Focus on the Threat of Cyber-crime*, Provisional Report (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, Octopus Program, 6 September 2004), 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Terrorism: Q & A/ Narcoterrorism*, available at: <http://www.cfrterrorism.org/terrorism/narcoterrorism.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Asa Hutchinson, *Congressional Testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism and Government Information about Narco-Terror: The World Connection Between Drugs and Terror*, 13 March 2002; available at: [www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/cngrtest/ct031302.html](http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/cngrtest/ct031302.html).

<sup>5</sup> The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, *Drugs and Terror: Just the Facts. The Links Between the Drug Trade, Drug Traffickers and Terrorists*, available at: [http://www.drugstory.net/pdfs/DandT\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.drugstory.net/pdfs/DandT_Fact_Sheet.pdf).

terrorist groups, providing up to 30–40 percent of their funds.<sup>6</sup> It is even accepted that the main threat to national security is not terrorism sponsored by certain states anymore, but from terrorist acts carried out by “unregimented networks,” groups or individuals increasingly motivated by the money obtained through organized criminal activity, mainly the traffic in illegal drugs.<sup>7</sup> The forms of terrorist groups’ involvement in the drug trade vary from selling drugs as such; to collecting taxes from people who cultivate or process illicit drugs on lands that terrorists control; to support from states funded by the drug trade (such as Afghanistan – whose former Taliban rulers earned an estimated \$40–50 million per year from taxes related to opium, Albania in past years, Syria, or Lebanon).<sup>8</sup>

Although terrorists do not need much money to mount an attack, they do need large sums of money for maintaining their infrastructure and expanding their operations. As Phil Williams of the University of Pittsburgh explained, profits are only a means for terrorists, and “not an end in themselves. Money is raised for both macro (strategic) and micro (operational) levels. The macro level is expensive and includes terrorist infrastructure, terrorist training, and terrorist’s efforts to acquire WMD and to buy government support. The micro level is where cells engage in drug trafficking, credit card fraud and robberies in order to fund operations.”<sup>9</sup>

For terrorists, drug trafficking is quite an easy way to earn substantial sums of money, as well as to gather or distribute large sums of cash without being detected by authorities, given the well-organized and hard-to-detect financial networks of the narcotics trade. According to the UN, the traffic in illegal drugs represents a \$400-500 billion annual business, equal to 8 percent of the world’s total trade.<sup>10</sup> Given the fact that after September 11<sup>th</sup>, many steps were taken to block terrorist funding and put pressure on the state sponsors of terrorism, the conclusion could be drawn that the level of drug trafficking related to terrorist groups’ financing has increased, or at least is likely to increase.

The relation between terrorist organizations and drug-trafficking groups is a “mutually beneficial one that allows exchanges of drugs for weapons, use of the same smuggling routes, use of similar methods to conceal profits and fund-raising.” Moreover, almost all of the terrorist groups “identified as being involved in narcotics trafficking

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<sup>6</sup> *Combating the Financing of Terrorist Organizations* (in Romanian), Romanian Intelligence Service, available at: [www.sri.ro/biblioteca\\_art\\_cfot.html](http://www.sri.ro/biblioteca_art_cfot.html).

<sup>7</sup> *Romania and International Terrorist Groupings* (in Romanian), Romanian Intelligence Service, available at: [www.sri.ro/biblioteca\\_art\\_rgti.html](http://www.sri.ro/biblioteca_art_rgti.html).

<sup>8</sup> *Terrorism: Q & A/ Narcoterrorism*, available at: <http://www.cfrterrorism.org/terrorism/narcoterrorism.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Phil Williams, “Organized Crime and the State: A Framework for Analysis,” paper presented at the conference on *Organized Crime and the Corruption of State Institutions*, organized by The Center for International and Security Studies at University of Maryland, College Park, MD (18 November 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Peter Reuter and Victoria Greenfield, “Measuring Global Drug Markets,” *World Economics* 2:4 (October-December 2001), 160.

also reportedly have had contacts with Al Qaeda, which is known to be actively engaged in drug-trafficking activities.”<sup>11</sup> In this context, the issue of the drug trade and its networks is a very serious one, raising many questions regarding future steps that can be taken to prevent this phenomenon.

### **The Drug Trade in Southeastern Europe**

According to experts, drug traffickers and terrorists tend to flourish in failed states with ineffective governments that have been destabilized by war and internal conflicts.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, even transitional countries are used as traffic routes for illegal drugs, and once they are established, these networks tend to become increasingly well organized and hard to detect.

Southeastern Europe is a very complex region that has experienced conflict and political instability since the beginning of 1990s, which created the necessary conditions for the establishment of criminal networks as well as for the development of criminal activities, including drug trafficking. Although the involvement of the international community has helped the region to become more closely integrated with the rest of Europe and resolve most of its ethnic conflicts, the threats for regional security coming from this area are now mainly related to organized crime. Yet, in spite of the fact that southeast European countries have proven in the recent past a substantial willingness to cooperate in stabilizing the area, the fight against organized crime remains one of the key challenges the countries in the region face today. The Western Balkans (including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania and, to a certain degree, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) is still considered “the gateway of organized crime to Europe,”<sup>13</sup> which raises the specter of the potential of terrorist activities in, or emanating from, the area. Aside from the scope of organized crime—especially drug trafficking—in southeastern Europe, there are many voices concerned about the presence in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Albania of individuals and groups linked to terrorist networks, including Al Qaeda.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, organized crime activities in the entire region are assumed to support terrorist groups, especially via financial assistance.

It is obvious that the greatest peril directly or indirectly connected with terrorism in the region is to be found in organized crime, which represents not only a funding source for terrorism but also a basis for recruitment of new people and support for its existence. The strategic position of the region, between Western Europe and the Middle East, adds a new dimension to the link with terrorism.

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<sup>11</sup> Rex A. Hudson (Project Manager), “A Global Overview of Narcotics-funded Terrorist and Other Extremist Groups,” Report Prepared by the Federal Research Division, May 2002, 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Terrorism: Q & A/ Narcoterrorism*.

<sup>13</sup> “EUHR Javier Solana’s Intervention on Organized Crime in South-Eastern Europe,” London Conference on Organized Crime in South Eastern Europe, London, 25 November 2002.

<sup>14</sup> International Crisis Group, *Bin Laden and the Balkans: The Politics of Anti-Terrorism*, ICG Balkans Report No. 119 (9 November 2001); available at: [www.crisisweb.org](http://www.crisisweb.org).

Drug trafficking has become so crucial to the cause of Albanian separatism that certain towns populated by Albanians (such as Veliki Trnovac and Blastica in Serbia, Vratnica and Gostivar in FYRO Macedonia, and Shkoder and Durres in Albania) have become known as the “new Medellins” of the Balkans.<sup>15</sup> The so-called “Albanian Mafia,” consisting largely of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, “have for several years been a feature of the criminal underworld in a number of cities in Europe and North America, being particularly prominent in the trade in illegal narcotics.”<sup>16</sup> Since the mid 1990s, “Albanian nationalists in ethnically tense Macedonia and the Serbian province of Kosovo have built a vast heroin network, leading from the opium fields of Pakistan to black-market arms dealers in Switzerland, which used to transport up to \$2 billion worth of the drug annually into the heart of Europe.” In 1995, more than 500 Kosovar or Macedonian Albanians were in prison in Switzerland for drug or arms trafficking offenses, and more than 1,000 others were under indictment.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, the profits gained through illegal activities are often used for financing terrorism; most often, financing for both local conflicts and terrorist activities draws on illicit activities as one of its main sources, especially the drug trade. For instance, according to the Center for Peace in the Balkans, it has been confirmed that terrorism in the Balkans has been primarily financed through narcotics trafficking. Heroin is the most profitable commodity on the Western market, as a kilogram of heroin, worth \$1000 in Thailand, wholesales for \$110,000 in Canada, with a retail street value of \$800,000.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, southeastern Europe is a bridge between the Middle Eastern and Central Asian drug producers and the Western European drug consumer market. Via the Balkan route, heroin travels through Turkey, FYRO Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania to the Western European markets. The Albanian drug dealers, for example, ship heroin from Asia’s Golden Crescent, frequently from Afghanistan, which is still a huge producer of opium poppies, as it produces over 70 percent of the global supply of heroin and 80 to 90 percent of the heroin found in western and eastern European markets.<sup>19</sup> From there, the heroin passes through Iran to Turkey, where it is refined, and then transported by the Balkan/Albanian drug dealers. According to the U.S. State Department, anywhere from four to six tons of heroin move through Turkey every month.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Balkan – Albania – Kosovo – Heroin – Jihad*, Research Analysis (Toronto: The Center for Peace in the Balkans, May 2000), available at: [www.balkanpeace.org/our/our3.shtml](http://www.balkanpeace.org/our/our3.shtml).

<sup>16</sup> “The Kosovo Liberation Army: Does Clinton Policy Support Group with Terror, Drug Ties? From ‘Terrorists’ to ‘Partners,’” U.S. Senate Republican Policy Committee, 31 March 1999. Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> *Balkan – Albania – Kosovo – Heroin – Jihad*.

<sup>19</sup> Michel Chossudovsky, “The Spoils of War: Afghanistan’s Multibillion Dollar Heroin Trade,” 5 April 2004; Center for Research on Globalization, available at: [www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO404A.html](http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO404A.html).

<sup>20</sup> *Balkan – Albania – Kosovo – Heroin – Jihad*.

## Terrorism Connections in Southeastern Europe/Western Balkans

After September 11<sup>th</sup>, the question of the potential for terrorist activity in (or emanating from) the Balkans was raised, based on the presence of a large Muslim population in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Albania. And such a potential terrorist threat could be significant.

Although the activity of terrorist groups in the Balkans is hard to uncover, and the connections between these groups and drug lords are difficult to prove, the evidence must not be ignored. Moreover, the common factors that exist for all the Balkan countries—e.g. inefficient governance, poor public security, weak rule of law, pervasive economic backwardness, institutional corruption, and organized crime—are catalysts for producing an environment where international terrorist networks can easily conceal personnel and money.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, since September 11<sup>th</sup>, terrorist attacks were also carried out or thwarted in Macedonia and Bosnia, indicating that Al Qaeda is present in the Balkans.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Albania, Bosnia, and Kosovo are considered to have become “European hotbeds of Iranian-backed Islamic terrorism and Al Qaeda in particular.”<sup>23</sup> And this is not surprising, given the large Muslim population living in these countries and the trend of terrorists today “to move from Islamic countries where they have traditionally assimilated and found employment, to the long-established Islamic diasporas in other countries where they can network through religious and social systems.”<sup>24</sup>

Some have even suggested that, “starting in the mid-August 2003, radical Islamist leaders elevated the role of the terrorism infrastructure in the Balkans as a key facilitator of a proposed escalation of conflict into the heart of Europe, Israel and the United States.” For recruiting new cadres and strengthening their infrastructure in the Balkans, Al Qaeda leaders even nominated Shahid Emir Musaa Azyi, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan who is close to the Al Qaeda elite and the Taliban leadership, to coordinate and run special recruitment operations in the Balkans, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia.<sup>25</sup> People connected to Al Qaeda have even

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<sup>21</sup> International Crisis Group, “Bin Laden and the Balkans: The Politics of Anti-terrorism,” ICG Balkans Report No. 119 (9 November 2001), 2.

<sup>22</sup> Brian Michael Jenkins, “Countering Al Qaeda,” in *Defeating Terrorism: Shaping the New Security Environment*, ed. Russel D. Howard and Reid L. Sawyer (Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 133.

<sup>23</sup> “Europe May Face a New Wave of Domestic Terrorism,” Richard Bennett Media - AFI Research, 7 April 2002; available at: [www.btinternet.com/~nnjv/tereur070402.htm](http://www.btinternet.com/~nnjv/tereur070402.htm).

<sup>24</sup> Wayne A. Downing, “The Global War on Terrorism,” in *Defeating Terrorism*, ed. Howard and Sawyer, 151.

<sup>25</sup> Yossef Bodansky, “Osama Bin Laden Focuses on the Balkans,” in *Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 19 September 2003, available at: [www.balkanpeace.org/rs/archive/sep03/rs230.shtml](http://www.balkanpeace.org/rs/archive/sep03/rs230.shtml).

tried to penetrate Romania, although they have reportedly been expelled before their efforts could take root.<sup>26</sup>

What is even more terrifying is that, due to lax institutional control and corruption practices, the countries of the Balkans are becoming points of “attraction to terror groups’ interests.”<sup>27</sup> This is especially the case with Al Qaeda, which is spreading its roots easily in the region, while this potential danger is “inadmissibly neglected” by the international coalition against terrorism.<sup>28</sup>

Despite their limited resources, since late 2001 the countries of southeastern Europe have actively supported the international coalition against terrorism. Albania, Serbia-Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Romania cooperated to combat organized crime and various forms of trafficking, enhance border security, and improve training for border security personnel.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, they have taken measures to arrest suspects, close and investigate NGOs suspected of financing terrorism, and freeze bank accounts of terrorist organizations. Yet the level of organized crime and corruption, the lapses in border security, and the institutional weaknesses in these countries still make them an attractive target for exploitation by terrorist and Islamic extremist groups.

Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), recently remarked that “the revenue generated by organized crime offers terrorist groups a steady flow of funding, making the effort to eliminate drug trafficking and to reduce drug abuse critical strategies in the global fight against terrorism.”<sup>30</sup> According to Costa, “terrorists and warlords in Afghanistan, as well as insurgents in Central Asia, the Russian Federation, and along the trafficking routes on the former Soviet Union’s southern rim all the way to the Balkans, share part of the es-

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<sup>26</sup> Radu Timofte, Director of Romanian Intelligence Service, according to “Al Qaeda Made Its Way to Romania,” *Novinite*, 30 March 2004; available at: [www.novinite.com/newsletter/print.php?id=32808](http://www.novinite.com/newsletter/print.php?id=32808).

<sup>27</sup> “Al Qaeda ‘Roots Easily’ in the Balkans,” *Novinite*, 28 April 2004; available at: [www.novinite.com/newsletter/print.php?id=33960](http://www.novinite.com/newsletter/print.php?id=33960).

<sup>28</sup> “Danger of Islamic Terrorism in the Balkans,” “Terrorism/Counter-terrorism,” *Tuzla Night Owl*, 14 November 2003; available at: [http://www.tfeagle.army.mil/tfeno/Feature\\_Story.asp?Article=72243](http://www.tfeagle.army.mil/tfeno/Feature_Story.asp?Article=72243).

<sup>29</sup> *Patterns of Global Terrorism-2003, Europe Overview*, Released by the Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, 29 April 2004; and *Patterns of Global Terrorism-2002, Europe Overview*, Released by the Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, U.S. Department of States, 21 May 2002.

<sup>30</sup> “UN Warns about Nexus between Drugs, Crime and Terrorism,” *M2 Presswire*, 1 October 2004; The International Association for the Study of Organized Crime, available at: [www.iasoc.net/news.htm](http://www.iasoc.net/news.htm).

estimated \$30 billion world heroin market.”<sup>31</sup> As it has become increasingly difficult to “distinguish clearly between terrorist groups and organized crime units, since their tactics overlap,” we are now witnessing “the birth of a new hybrid of ‘organized crime/terrorist organizations,’ which requires cutting off the connection between crime, drugs, and terrorism.”<sup>32</sup>

The states of southeastern Europe still “demonstrate characteristics that make them inviting targets for transnational criminal groups seeking favorable territory from which to operate,” with drug trafficking representing the most profitable business for criminal groups.<sup>33</sup> Despite the democratic reforms in those countries, they are still considered to be hospitable to transnational crime and terrorism, very often due to corruption and the ease of penetration into state institutions.

For example, since the beginning of the 1990s, ethnic Albanian organized crime groups took advantage of the instability and war in the Balkans to become “the fastest growing ethnic criminal presence in Europe, with operations reaching as far as Australia and the United States, and becoming the direct distributors of an estimated 40 percent of heroin in West European markets.”<sup>34</sup> Given the extent of this reach, it is clear that the local/regional criminal groups were closely cooperating with international crime organizations, even being suspected of connections with Arab groups and markets in the Middle East, which are often “protected” by the authorities responsible for combating such criminal activities. Even in Romania, the main anti-narcotics agency, the Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Anti-Drug Operations, has itself been implicated in the drug trade.<sup>35</sup>

Accordingly, a substantial amount of terrorist activity has also occurred in parts of the former Yugoslavia. Since the beginning of the conflicts in the former Yugoslav territory, the most senior leaders of Al Qaeda have visited the Balkans, including Osama Bin Laden himself on three occasions between 1994 and 1996, and the Egyptian terrorist leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri has operated terrorist training camps, weapons of

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<sup>31</sup> The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates the total annual turnover of international trade in Afghan opiates at \$25-30 billion. United Nations for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNDCPP), “Afghanistan: Opium Survey 2002 – Executive Summary,” October 2002, 2 ; also “Area Under Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan Has Increased by Eight Percent, UN Says,” 29 October 2003; United Nations Information Service, Vienna International Center, available at: [http://unodc.org/unodc/press\\_release\\_2003-10-29\\_1.html](http://unodc.org/unodc/press_release_2003-10-29_1.html).

<sup>32</sup> “UN Warns about Nexus between Drugs, Crime and Terrorism.”

<sup>33</sup> Glenn E. Curtis (Project Manager), “Nations Hospitable to Organized Crime and Terrorism,” Report Prepared by the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, under an Inter-agency Agreement with the United States Government, October 2003, 32. Available at: <http://loc.gov/rr/frd>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 46, according to the U.S. Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.



mass destruction factories, and money-laundering and drug-trading networks throughout Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Bosnia.<sup>36</sup>

Their activities have been hidden under the cover of dozens of “humanitarian” agencies spread throughout Bosnia, Kosovo, and Albania, and their involvement in “heroin trafficking through Kosovo helped also to fund terrorist activity directly associated with Al Qaeda and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.”<sup>37</sup> On October 23, 2001, the imprisonment of operatives of two Al Qaeda-sponsored Islamist cells in Bosnia, who were linked to the heroin trade, called attention to the presence of narcoterrorism in the Balkans.

In 2001, it was estimated that the traffic in illegal drugs in the Balkans was part of the Taliban’s estimated \$8 billion annual income from global drug trafficking, predominantly in heroin, of which Bin Laden is alleged to have administered a substantial portion through Russian Mafia groups for a commission of 10–15 percent, or around \$1 billion annually.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, it is estimated that Al Qaeda’s “Balkan-directed funds” from “humanitarian” agencies and local banks, without “explicitly counting the significant drug profits,” reached anywhere from \$500 million to \$700 million between 1992 and 1998.<sup>39</sup>

Frequently, there were reports that “Osama bin Laden was channeling, in 2001, profits from the sale of narcotics arriving in Western Europe via the Balkan route to local governments and political parties, with the goal of gaining influence in Albania or Macedonia or both,” or that in 2002 “Al Qaeda had acted as a middleman in the movement of heroin from warehouses in Afghanistan via Chechen mafia conduits and into the Balkan narcotics pipeline, taking a percentage of the drug profits for this service.”<sup>40</sup>

Connections between organized crime groups and terrorists are to be found not only in the former Yugoslavia, but also in Bulgaria and Romania. For example, in October 2004, Genica Boierica, a controversial businessman from the city of Craiova, was detained following a spectacular search by prosecutors from the Service for Organized Crime Prevention within the Prosecutor’s Office under the High Court of Cassation and Justice. Boierica is charged with involvement in alcohol smuggling and illegal VAT refunds, and is also suspected of having connections with terrorists, mainly through activities that channel funds to terrorists. According to the prosecutors, Genica Boierica was brought before the court in 2003 together with an Arab citizen, Jamal Sadik Jamal Al Adi, and another two of his employees. These men were charged with having caused damage to the state of over 115 billion lei (over \$3.5 million); be-

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<sup>36</sup> Marcia Christoff Kurop, “Al Qaeda’s Balkan Links,” *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 1 November 2001.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> According to Yossef Bodansky, the former director of the U.S. House of Representatives’ Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, quoted in Marcia Christoff Kurop, “Al Qaeda’s Balkan Links.”

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Hudson, “Global Overview.”

tween 1998–2000 Al Adi, under an assumed name, founded several phantom companies through which he manufactured and traded ethyl alcohol.<sup>41</sup> And this is certainly not the only example of connections between organized crime and terrorism in the region.

According to the Director of the Romanian Intelligence Service, there is no clear evidence of the presence of members of Al Qaeda or Islamic Jihad in Romania. Yet there is information on Arab citizens living in Romania who carry out financial activities in support of Al Qaeda or Islamic Jihad, as well as information regarding the involvement of certain terrorist organizations, such as the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), or Grey Wolves, in the drug trade, using routes that reach Germany and the Netherlands and cadres located in Romania.<sup>42</sup> On the drug trade in Romania, it is worth noting that in 2001 the seizure of cannabis resin in Eastern Europe reached 17,007 kilos, representing 2 percent of the world total, with the largest quantity being seized in Romania: 13,871 kilos, or approximately 1.53 percent of world total.<sup>43</sup> In 2002, in Romania there were also confiscated 202 kilos of heroin, 2 kilos of cocaine, 14,904 kilos of cannabis herb, 38 kilos of cannabis resin, 14,907 kilos of cannabis plants, and a large quantity of synthetic drugs.<sup>44</sup> These numbers speak volumes about the dimension of the traffic in illegal drugs in Romania, which is both a convenient route for drug dealers going to Western Europe and, increasingly, a consumer country as well.

## Conclusions

Drug trafficking, considered separately from all other organized crime activities, has reached a high level in southeastern Europe, and the countries in the region are—however inadvertently—providing nurturing conditions for this activity. Moreover, those involved in the illegal drug trade, as well as in other organized crime activities, are proving to be very resourceful in preserving their networks by any means, including through cooperating with and receiving protection from terrorist groups. On the other side of the equation, terrorists are becoming increasingly involved in drug trafficking, as it proves to be not only a tremendous funding source but also a basis for life support: using illegal routes for recruiting new members, moving people and funds without being detected, establishing new instruction bases, etc.

While their motives may be different, drug traffickers and terrorists provide each other support, and the connections between them are undeniable. Southeastern Europe is one of the many proofs of those connections, with a high level of organized criminal

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<sup>41</sup> Adrian Dinu, "Genica Boierica incatusat [Genica Boierica Imprisoned]," *Gazeta de Sud*, 4 October 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Radu Tudor, "Romanian Anti-terrorist Brigade Extends the Cooperation in the Fight Against Terrorism," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (January 2002).

<sup>43</sup> *Global Illicit Drug Trends 2003*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (New York: United Nations, 2003).

<sup>44</sup> *2004 World Drug Report*, Volume 2: Statistics, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (New York: United Nations, 2004).

activity—especially drug trafficking—and a not at all negligible active terrorist presence, including Al Qaeda, in the Western Balkans.

In 2005, organized crime, including drug trafficking and corruption, is nevertheless one of the major problems facing the entire southeastern European region. Bulgaria and Romania joined NATO recently, and have concluded the negotiation process with the European Union. Regardless of these major accomplishments, they are still confronted with the threat to their security posed by the high level of all forms of organized crime. The countries of the Western Balkans are in an even worse situation, due to their history over the past decade and their lack of experience in dealing with these problems. In the present context, “nobody can afford the luxury of a fractious Balkans,” and this must be made clear to the United States and Europe, as they “feel compelled to divert political, military and financial resources away from the region and into their struggle against terrorism.”<sup>45</sup> As the former NATO Secretary General Lord George Robertson put it, “the Balkans must not become another ‘black hole’ of terrorism like Afghanistan.”<sup>46</sup> Correctly perceiving the importance of helping local actors to deal with this peril, on 2 December 2004 UNMIK appointed a special prosecutor for financial crimes, Andrea Stefano Venegoni, in Kosovo, the appointment being “directed at focusing prosecutorial resources on cases relating to corruption and financial crimes.”<sup>47</sup>

Combating organized crime and drug trafficking should be part and parcel of the set of measures for defeating terrorism. Otherwise the criminal groups will only extend their already established huge networks, which will also work to the benefit of terrorist groups. It is true that organized crime in southeastern Europe—mainly in the Western Balkans—is “first and foremost a problem for the region.”<sup>48</sup> Yet as long as organized crime constitutes a means of terrorist groups’ penetration and establishment in the countries of the region, and also of obtaining sources of financing for terrorists and terrorist acts, it is also a problem for the international community.

Therefore, any successful strategy of combating organized crime depends on a determined and joint effort of the national governments in the region and the international community. The national governments have the crucial role in the process of drawing up a proper and solid strategy of combating organized crime through passing proper criminal legislation and implementing the laws. However, they should not be left alone in such an important endeavor. International and regional cooperation plays a very important role in drawing up a workable strategy for combating organized crime. As is well known, there is no country that can deal alone with organized crime and terrorist activities. Only through international cooperation could we hope to achieve—if not a complete annihilation of these phenomena—at least a reduction in their scope and effectiveness. Southeastern Europe, especially the Balkans, should not be disregarded in

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<sup>45</sup> Misha Glenny, “Heading off Terrorism in the Balkans,” *New York Times*, 16 October 2001.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> “UNMIK appoints special prosecutor for financial crimes,” ERPKIM Info Service, 2 December 2004; available at: [www.kosovo.com/news/archive/ticker/2004/December\\_02/16.html](http://www.kosovo.com/news/archive/ticker/2004/December_02/16.html).

<sup>48</sup> “EUHR Javier Solana’s Intervention on Organized Crime in Southeastern Europe.”

the international fight against terrorism as a region “hospitable to organized crime and terrorism,” nor should organized crime be allowed to continue as an activity that provides life support to terrorism.

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