

Transnational Crime

MSCR 640

Regis University

Week 1

History and Early Rise of Russian Organized Crime from Inception Through Soviet Era

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Early History and Development of Organized Crime in Russia

Beginnings of Crime in Russia. In order to adequately comprehend the phenomenon now known as Russian organized crime (ROC), a newly recognized Transnational Criminal Organization (TCO), some historical perspective on the early history of Russian, and then Soviet, crime, criminal gangs and their evolution into the early form of ROC is necessary. First, however, it is necessary to understand what is really involved with the term “Russian” organized crime or transnational criminal organizations. Although the term “Russian” will be used throughout this discussion, it is in reality a host of crime groups from all of the former Soviet Republics. The FBI more accurately classifies them as Former Soviet, Russian, Central Asian and East European criminal organizations. Thus, although the very general sobriquet of “Russian” OC will be used, unless otherwise denoted it is referencing groups from any of these regions, many of which are not based in the Russian Federation, or ethnically Russian at all.

Contrary to accounts in the early post-Soviet period of modern organized crime groups being without precedent in Russia, that country has a long history of organized gang existence. This history was somewhat cloaked in secrecy through the Soviet existence, and much is still not known about Russia’s early organized crime periods. What is certain about the history of pre-Soviet Russia is that organized crime, and its associated activities, is not a phenomenon peculiar to the Soviet era.¹ Numerous publications, both literary and historical, substantiate the pervasiveness of particular criminal schemes throughout Tsarist Russian history.²

The social institution of criminality in Russia well pre-dates the dissolution of the Soviet Union on December 25, 1991; indeed, these roots began well before the October Revolution of 1917.³ According to journalist Stephen Handelman, and as corroborated by Russian mafiya expert Joseph Serio, for centuries, Russia’s criminal underworld enjoyed a rich history of smugglers’ societies, thieves and highwaymen, all existing on the fringes of Russian society.⁴ These loose associations of criminals began to develop in the latter years of the Mongol Era, prior to pre-national Russia’s throwing off the Mongol Yoke in the closing decades of the 15th century. It is now believed by many that these associations evolved into a more formal criminal society over several centuries; they developed rules and codes of conduct, as well as a particular relationship to authority.⁵

During the ensuing centuries the society of the criminal underworld remained a closed one. Its members rejected the tautology of the times and involvement in politics,⁶ as Russia’s numerous and historically feuding principalities were finally joined as a single federated state under Tsar Ivan III, between 1462 and 1505.

This is not to say that early Russian authority was powerless over these anti-social bandits; many were imprisoned or forced into lengthy (if not permanent) exile in labor camps and other remote outposts. These societies came to be dominated by a small group of men who spent the majority of

their lives so incarcerated, enduring an ascetic, monk-like existence.⁷ The men who secured the upper-echelon positions and control of early Russia's loosely confederated organized crime associations were known as *Vory v Zakonye*, or the "thieves-within-the-code".⁸ These first "godfathers" of Russia's criminal culture established a more structured code of conduct, including protocols in dealing with one another, use and application of the proceeds of criminal enterprises, and offenses which were permissible under designated circumstances. Though this code was applicable only to the *Vory v Zakonye* and those members of the truly "organized" part of criminal society, its dictates were pedantically enforced. It is now widely believed that during this period the true Russian "thief-within-the-code" or "thief-in-law" was honor bound to not commit murder outside the strict dictates of the code itself. Well defined "thieves' rules" dictated those times when it was acceptable, if not obligatory, to kill in defense of one's honor or life, and the code required one to steal and rob without bloodshed, where possible.⁹ These aspects of the early Russian *Vory v Zakonye* aided in the manufacture of a romantic, Robin Hood-esque image in the minds of the Russian people.¹⁰

As years passed, the existence of Russia's embryonic and loosely organized crime groups continued with the contemporaneous evolution of their leaders' noble image in the public conscience. A period of social unrest began in Russia in the early and mid-19th century. Faced with increasing national pressure for reform, Tsar Alexander II finally decreed the freedom of virtually all of Russia's approximately 22 million serfs, or feudal slaves, in February 1861. Though the serfs' transition into society was relatively smooth, it was followed by a period of some social upheaval.

Also during this era, Russia saw the steady growth of numerous revolutionary groups, many of which advocated the violent overthrow of the tsar. The first Russian revolution of 1905 was surrounded and followed by increasing rates and severity of everyday crime, not only in rural areas but unprecedentedly in cities such as St. Petersburg, the nation's capital at the time. This rising crime rate came to be associated with gangs of street toughs known as *hooligans*. These gangs and a period of uncontrolled *hooliganism* from 1900 to 1914 were but the newest limb of the growing Russian crime tree.¹¹

In the waning years of Tsarist Russia, both the organized crime groups and less organized hooligans came to represent almost romantic symbols of society's growing sentiment against land owners, the tsar and authoritarianism. The secretive nature and carefully enforced codes of these gangs prevented access by, or understanding of, outsiders. This fact alone has made definitive research into this early period difficult. Such authors and experts as Stephen Handelman and Joseph Serio have concluded that this organizational structure was comprised of small sub-groups or cells, a high level of secrecy, and frequent ignorance on the part of cell members as to the identity of compatriots. Moreover, they have argued convincingly that this very system became an early organizational model for, first, the Populist-Terrorists and People's Will of the latter 19th century, and second, Vladimir I. Lenin, the Socialist Revolutionaries, and the early Bolshevik clandestine organizations

that would ultimately dethrone the tsar, take over Russia and create the communist nation before which the world would tremble under its name *Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (USSR).¹²

Early Russia Through Early Soviet Period. Handelsman believes that, “the future founders of the Soviet state not only admired the gangs’ anti-establishment ethos, they also secured employment for them in the revolution. Gang members were recruited for so-called expropriations – bank heists and kidnappings – carried out in order to raise funds.”¹³ After successful resolution of Russia’s third revolution in October 1917, and the subsequent period of internal strife caused by the Civil War which raged from early 1918 until 1921, the criminal groups took on the name which continues in use today, and now defines the modern Russian *mafia*. This name was *Vorovskoi Mir* and is translated as “Thieves Society” or “Thieves’ World.”¹⁴ It is perhaps little wonder that Joseph Stalin, on accession to the titular height of General Party Secretary in 1922, and autocratic ruler of the USSR by 1930 after the death of Lenin in 1924, incorporated many organized crime or gang leaders into his administration.¹⁵ A substantial portion were recruited into the Soviet secret police (the Extraordinary Commission or *Cheka*) and later, after securing Soviet power against continued insurrection in the post-Civil War period – after 1927 – these same criminals were used as enforcers and informers against political prisoners in the gulag.¹⁶

Russian Organized Crime in the Soviet Union. The harsh restrictivism of the newly empowered *Bolsheviks* (literally meaning “majority party” even though it was not) had a prophylactic effect on crime in general, including organized crime activities. At the same time inherent flaws in the Communist system created a society of people who either exploited the system, made their livings attempting to beat it,¹⁷ or suffered at the hands of that system. Ordinary economic activity became a crime during the Civil War period of 1918 to 1921. This was followed by a short six-year period of relaxed restrictions, and then all market-related economic practices again became criminal from 1927 until approximately 1977. The command economy created shortages, and a derivatively huge demand for virtually every desirable consumable.¹⁸ These shortages would be the seeds from which organized crime would take root and continue to grow in the new state.¹⁹

This criminal society, which came to profit from these defects of the Communist system and command economy, would continue until and through the demise of the Soviet Union. After the nation’s collapse the government officials, on the one hand, and organized crime members on the other, would converge in an inseparable, synergistic form.²⁰ This single event would have an unprecedented and profound effect on crime throughout the world, graduate many previously domestic or regional crime groups into true global enterprises, and catapult the world into a new state of transnational criminal chaos and dominance never before seen. Yet, it is important to first understand how this evolution occurred. For without that knowledge of history the current iteration of the Russian mafia cannot be understood, nor can one grasp the current state of the world’s transnational criminal organizations or global crime enterprises.

Brezhnev and Beyond. As the Soviet Union moved into the Brezhnev era of renewed restrictivism (1964-1982), after the loosening of tight totalitarian reins by Khrushchev (1953-1964 in the aftermath of the horror of the Stalin and Lenin years, the country, its economy and military, were maintained by both thieves and government officials who stole. The common thieves or criminals stole the property of private citizens and the state. By the very early 1990s, Russian critic Claire Sterling presented the case that the government officials or *nomenklatura* did the same “through graft, expropriation, embezzlement, wholesale extortion and ‘ceiling statistics’ (inflated production figures dreamed up by staring at the ceiling)”, calling the Soviet Union a vast *kleptocracy*.²¹ The most profitable form of cooperation between these two groups began to emerge in the 1960s with the rise of black market trading. ROC members served the function of middlemen or brokers, distributing stolen state materials and goods produced in underground or secret factories into both the grey and black economies.²³ The system of corruption was extensive and far reaching, penetrating the tiers of the government hierarchy. Moreover, it relied upon the implicit, if not explicit, cooperation and involvement of the country’s leaders. This fact alone marked the Brezhnev era as one of cronyism. Indeed, Brezhnev insiders gradually took over the KGB. This clique was so powerful, and governed so much in both the official and unofficial sectors of the country, that it came to be known as the Dnieprpetrovsk Mafiya, in honor of Brezhnev’s hometown.²⁴

There appears little doubt that Brezhnev removed many government officials and other functionaries from their positions and replaced them with loyal members of the new government code, what Russian author Arkady Vaksberg called “the celebrants in the all-round and ongoing festival of plunder.”²⁵ This was the predecessor to today’s post-Soviet mafiya. The core of the developing mania in the Soviet Union during this time came from the Sochi region. When Brezhnev took over the reins of the Soviet Union, his first appointment was of Sergei Medunov as First Party Secretary for that region. Medunov quickly disposed of all Khrushchev-era appointees who occupied any potentially useful job. They were replaced with people he could trust, those who were loyal to him and, more importantly, to his style of exploitation and profiteering. Arkady Vaksberg has written that these people “were shaped by a new phenomenon which had then appeared in society. Nowadays this new phenomenon is known by its proper name, the black economy, but in those days it did not exist.”²⁶

During this period Communist party officials and government functionaries “took second to no one in criminal behavior.”²⁷ That this system developed through the constructive ratification of Leonid Brezhnev himself is without question. This is not to say that such illicit behavior was without its risks. Even under Brezhnev the Soviet Union continued to be a nation obsessed with appearances. There were risks for those who committed the unpardonable offense of not conducting their illicit affairs with sufficient discretion. When embarrassments came to light, whether by happenstance or by the calculated maneuvering of a government opponent, sanctions were severe. During the 1970s and 1980s a number of scandals rocked the Soviet government. The Cotton Affair, where Communist Party bosses and the Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan were making enormous amounts

of money through the falsification of production reports, “revealed a previously unsuspected talent for larceny beneath the puritanical exterior of the soviet leadership.”²⁸ It was at this time that Russians first incorporated the word “*mafiya*” as a way of describing the networks of corruption within the government at all levels.²⁹ Corruption in the Soviet government was so rampant that the First Secretary of Odessa’s Party Committee was sentenced to death in the 1970s for black marketeering.

As time went by, the situation changed dramatically. The organized crime people developed closer associations to those in power, and began to expect protection from prosecution and punishment. Eventually, there was no further need to hide their criminal activities or proceeds.³⁰ The Brezhnev era practice of supplanting the Communist Party and government career professionals with those loyal to the *korruptsiya* (corruption), marked a shift to the appointment of mafiya members to top positions. Bribery, a virtual institution throughout the history of the Russian government, continued through this era and netted the ROC groups vast amounts of money. Correspondingly, the organized crime groups grew in size and strength, fed by the profits from the theft and resale of any state resource they could appropriate. There was no oversight department or regulatory agency which could or would enforce the rule of law of this nation. No institution existed which had not been corrupted by its own integration in the system. Even the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) was headed by one of Brezhnev’s closest friends and drinking companions. The MVD or Ministry of the Interior, charged with law and order, was not in a position to take on the burgeoning mafiya as its own Minister Shcholokov was involved in mafiya affairs.³¹ Even Brezhnev’s son-in-law Yuri Churbanov, Deputy Minister of the Interior, was implicated in the exploitation of state resources wherever and whenever they could be accessed.³² He was known to be taking bribes from an Uzbekistan mafiya group, and even Churbanov’s wife was implicated with a diamond smuggler.³³

The late journalist and Russia OC specialist Robert I. Freidman reported that, by the close of the Brezhnev era in November 1982, the country’s underground economy accounted for upwards of 50% of the individual income of Soviet citizens.³⁴ If this was true for the average Soviet citizen, the incomes derived from such illicit activity for the *apparatchiks*, higher government officials and racketeers, would have been substantially greater. Such profiteers lived in decadent luxury, enjoying access to the two greatest luxuries of that country: special stores with foreign consumer goods, and travel abroad.³⁵ Corruption in the Soviet Union during this period became so universal that it supplanted governance as the business of the Soviet state; it was, “...as if the entire Soviet Union were ruled by a gigantic mob family known as the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union).”³⁶ The underground economy of the nation was vast and integrated every aspect found in an economic system. It is estimated that up to 40% of the nation’s foodstuffs were distributed through the black market.³⁷ The implicit cooperation between mob leaders and government officials, particularly in the regions, became so great that by the end of the Soviet era there would be more than 600 *Vory* existing at the upper-most echelon of the organized crime hierarchy.³⁸

During the early periods of the Soviet Union the ethos of Leninism-Stalinism had created a regime of political tyranny. Next, Khrushchev, sensitive to the dangers and historic realities of that monster, implemented a system of reforms, liberalization and increased freedoms which set the stage for a culture of criminality and corruption. In a very real way, in an effort at being a more benevolent leader for his people he had released from the bottle an evil genie that his predecessors had created but had kept in some check. This was due, in part, to his own corruption. The country simply could not have, both, increased freedoms and lessened fear of the government, and crime and corruption. The one fed the other. In the aftermath of the Khrushchev freedoms, Brezhnev reintroduced Stalin-esque restrictions. But, rather than correct the criminal excesses from Khrushchev's period, this completed the cycle: political criminality merged with the organized criminality which had been operating quietly, beneath the surface of the harsh Soviet regime. Arkady Vaksberg described it thus: "...power and criminality mingled, the rulers of the country became not figuratively, but quite literally, criminals, although they were criminals who were also the leaders and rulers of a country."³⁹

From Gorbachev Through USSR's End. Though little scholarly or archival research has been accomplished on this phenomenon, it is generally believed that as with the Khrushchev-era reforms, the introduction of *perestroika* (restructuring of the government) and *glasnost* (openness) by Mikhail Gorbachev after his appointment as General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1985 (1985-1991) and later President (1990-1991), merely created an environment which further fostered the growth of organized crime. Suddenly the enormous wealth which had been accumulated by racketeers and corrupt government officials had a legitimate outlet.⁴⁰ Private commerce was suddenly allowed, and fortunes accumulated from the black and grey economies poured into new businesses and joint ventures with foreigners, and out of the Soviet Union.⁴¹ Party and government insiders, the *apparatchiks* who had so long exploited the vagaries of the Communist system, began to position themselves through accumulated wealth, continuing control of limited economic sectors, and a network of contacts both domestic and foreign. Their goal was to take advantage of this new era. In this way, the corruption of the earlier period merely adapted to new conditions and continued, and flourished. New Russian businessmen, who tried to commence legitimate concerns, complained that it was impossible to survive against both the official and criminal competition.⁴² Russian organized crime expert and journalist Stephen Handelman wrote that by the close of the 1980s most individually created businesses would be either owned, controlled or in debt to organized crime groups.⁴³

Though ROC groups had previously existed on local, regional, and national levels, the dissolution of the Soviet Union cast them for the first time into international organized crime circles.⁴⁴ When the Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989, the Western mafia organizations which had plagued Europe and America, the Colombian cartels, the Sicilian mafia, the Chinese Triads and the Japanese Yakuza all were steadily moving east or north to exploit opportunities in the ex-Communist Eastern Bloc.

Claire Sterling lamented the fate of the world when she wrote, “There they met the Russian mafia coming west.”⁴⁵

There is little argument that the political and economic reforms of the late 1980s and very early 1990s, created institutional disorder within the country. Virtual chaos within the government and economy merely fed the growth of Russian organized crime.⁴⁶ That is not to say there was no effort on the part of government officials seeking to control these criminal excesses and corruption. During the decade of the 1980s, alone, the Soviet Prosecutor General’s office, a department which had been previously stripped of any legitimate law enforcement capabilities, charged fully one-quarter of a million officials with embezzlement. This included eighteen men who were then employed with the federal government’s Department to Combat Embezzlement.⁴⁷ By 1988, scandals involving corruption and criminal activity had rocked the government at national, regional and city levels. Revelations of organized crime connections and publicity surrounding official corruption resulted in the termination of more than 100,000 police officers, comprising fully 15% of the entire police forces of the Soviet Union.⁴⁸ By 1991, merely three years later, approximately 20,000 police officers were being fired annually for alleged involvement with organized crime. Although the Soviet Union collapsed and effectively dissolved with the televised resignation of Mikhail Gorbachev on December 25, 1991, the newly constituted Russian Federation would fare no better. In 1992, while in its infancy, more than 2,000 Russian policemen were charged with crimes.⁴⁹ It was at this time that the MVD’s Sixth Department to Combat Organized Crime estimated that 80% of the Interior Ministry’s *militsia* (federal police) were under the control of, or had been compromised by, ROC groups.⁵⁰

The same changes seen by the Soviet government in the 1980s and early 1990s affected the development and structure of organized crime as well. The old code, the culture of honor among thieves which had existed for centuries, was replaced by a new ethos of short-term profiteering and maximum personal exploitation by any means available. Previously, Vory v Zakonye had led ascetic lives, while judiciously administering the proper distribution of large funds of money. These accounts and fortunes in cash, known as *chornaya kassa* or black fund, were maintained for the bribery of necessary officials and other criminally essential expenditures. This “new generation of crowned thieves” still had access to the *chyornaya kassa*, but suddenly it was increasingly for their own personal use.⁵¹ Contrary to the age-old code, these new Vory v Zakonye began to engage in economic enterprises of their own, for their own profit. They opened stores and kiosks, and began to work their way into the control, if not management, of banks, investment companies and other financial institutions.⁵² This new generation of *mafiya* was thus far more expansive, enjoyed a more extensive hierarchy, was wealthier, and greatly sophisticated relative to its predecessors. It far out-classed the one that had flourished under Brezhnev,⁵³ though it can be argued that it was simply the evolutionary extension of the former.

Russian Organized Crime in the Early Post-Soviet Years. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed, organized crime had evolved into an elaborate institution, firmly entrenched in the soil of common crime, illegal economic activity, and the government structure. The successor Russian Federation inherited ROC groups of a vastly more extensive hierarchy and structure, wealth and sophistication than previously existed. Through its anchor in the nomenklatura of the Soviet government, and of its Russian successor, the Russian mafiya would prove to be a most formidable enterprise.⁵⁴ Having survived a government system that kept its people in line for three-quarters of a century⁵⁵, organized crime in Russia was more than prepared for the huge growth which could be effected under the new system. By the time of the Soviet Union's collapse, the majority of resources in both capital and wealth came from the black market, and much of this was owned or controlled by various echelons in the Communist Party.⁵⁶ The institutions which existed to secure the sanctity and safety of the nation and to ensure law and order such as the police and judiciary, became "nebulous organizations, floating desperately betwixt the state and the underworld, half-respectably above the water line, half submerged in the mire."⁵⁷ Since the Communist collapse, the same people, the very nomenklatura who had corruptly managed the illicit economy and other criminal activities in conjunction with their mafiya counterparts, continued to be seen operating throughout the new Russian Federation in racketeering activity.⁵⁸

What had not been anticipated was the soon-to-be marriage between ROC and Western mafias. Not only did the various organized crime groups from the Newly Independent States (NIS) (a post-Soviet confederation in which each of the former Soviet republics was its own, new country) unite for continued and increased criminal activity and wealth, but the big crime syndicates from Europe and America urgently sought a profitable arrangement with the newly freed Russian groups. Author Claire Sterling contended that, "As the old geopolitical frontiers fell away, the big crime syndicates drew together... and declared a pax mafiosa. The world had never seen a planet-wide criminal consortium like the one that came into being with the end of the communist era."⁵⁹

Many experts and national law enforcement officials today contend that international criminal enterprises have, indeed, reached the proportions of planet-wide criminal conspiracy predicted by Sterling. What is certain is that organized crime existed and had roots in most sectors of Soviet society and economy at the time of the collapse of the Soviet state on December 25, 1991. Tentative government efforts at controlling or eradicating the ROC groups had been unsuccessful up to that point. By the beginning of 1992, such Soviet institutions as the Sixth Department under the Soviet Ministry of the Interior (MVD), created by Gorbachev in 1989 to fight organized crime, had been dismantled. In the new Russia of 1992, no authority existed for the purpose of controlling ROC activity, investigating governmental corruption or coordinating police intelligence. The only organization which remained fully operational was the Russian mafiya.⁶⁰ It was, perhaps, the only Soviet institution to actually benefit from the collapse of that government.⁶¹

After the USSR's demise by year-end 1991, its fifteen former republics emerged as new and separate nations. These new countries were fertile ground for well-organized crime enterprises already experienced in working the entire Eurasian region. In this new environment, smuggling quickly became a watershed industry as products stolen from Russia were not considered illegal by a host country, once moved across Russia's borders.⁶²

The early period after the collapse of the Soviet Union thus saw the dismantling of most of the legitimate institutions and effective aspects of that nation's government and economic systems. The one institution which enjoyed immediate success and growth both domestically and internationally was Russian organized crime. Indeed, the total collapse of the Russian economy in 1992 and 1993, coupled with the decline of governmental power or control, resulted in a substantial increase in organized crime activities. It has been contended that this increase was accompanied by a dramatic rise in corruption within the new government as well.⁶³ It does appear that the heavy influence of organized crime activities carried over from the Soviet era had had a significant impact on its successor states. This can be seen particularly in the areas of financial fraud.⁶⁴ In the years after the Soviet collapse, author, expert and Ronald Reagan intimate and adviser, Claire Sterling, argued that the extreme corruption of the old *nomenklatura* in the Soviet Union had given way "to the terrible cancerous growth consuming the country now."⁶⁵ Many nations, and their respective law enforcement and intelligence agencies, today believe that the dire predictions of Sterling and others have come true. They contend that the sources of revenue of Russian organized crime have been multiplying geometrically since the Soviet empire ended.⁶⁶ Moreover, they cite the more recent change in the focus of the western world on Islamist, jihadist terrorism as having caused it to take its eye off of the *Russian ball*, and myopically commit all resources to chasing potential Arab threats. This has only allowed Russian and other nations' transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) to become more careful and surreptitious in the prosecution of their criminal operations, less demonstrative and public in the resolution of their disputes, and fall below the law enforcement radar screen. This has allowed them to expand as never before, enjoying unprecedented profits and movement into new enterprises, while convincing law enforcement that the TCO problem as actually diminished. And part of this expansion has been into legitimate businesses.

Until recent years the persona of the thief-within-the-code was romanticized, on the order of Robin Hood.⁶⁷ This image has since been tarnished.⁶⁸ The new *Vory* continue to be crowned through the recommendation of the others, with each new member displaying a special tattoo on his chest: a heart with a dagger through the middle⁶⁹, although there are myriad other tattoos today that are sported by these criminal leaders. As noted, the early *Vory* were ascetic, a condition which helped to define them and increase their power. This new generation of criminals, however, buys enormous, luxurious apartments and homes and is driven about in costly foreign limousines or high-profile cars. The previous code restrictions against the use of violence and murder have been left behind.⁷⁰ The new *Vory* deal with people with whom they were previously bound by honor and code to have no contact at all. Until recent years it had become commonplace for hired assassins to provide the final

mediation of any dispute.⁷¹ While this mediation technique had even become prolific in the United States throughout the 1990s, it has since been reduced dramatically. Still, it remains a frequent practice in other countries. These are indeed the new “commercial criminals”.⁷² For years, both before and after the USSR’s demise, the new organized crime groups hired Afghanistan war veterans and former members of Soviet *spetsialnogo naznacheniya* or spetsnatz units – the Soviet special forces. The association between the organized crime groups and Russian military is substantial and long pre-dates the demise of the Soviet Union.⁷³

Thus, the long history of Russian gangs, hooliganism, terrorist cells, a Communist coup and 74 years of corruption that ensued, all came together in a perfect recipe for the creation of the greatest and most devastating iteration of organized crime the world had ever known. The release of this hydra-headed monster onto the world, and its marriage with its counterparts from other nations across the globe, has produced the most expansive, terrifying, victimizing and lucrative web of transnational criminal activities ever seen.

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