

## Organizational Attributes Sheet – Bulgarian-Nigerian Drug Trafficking Organization(s)

Author: McKenzie O'Brien

Review: Phil Williams

<b>A. When the organization was formed + brief history</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Information not found.</li></ul>
<b>B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,</b>
a. In general
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>As pertains to Central America and the Caribbean:</b> Drug Trafficking</li><li><b>Global activities:</b> Drug Trafficking,</li></ul>
b. <i>Specific detail: types of illicit trafficking activities engaged in</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Drug Trafficking:</b> It appears that a mostly Nigerian organization (or organizations), recruiting mostly Bulgarian mules/couriers (and sometimes Romanian and Lithuanian mules/couriers), moves cocaine from Latin America and Caribbean to Europe, often via Africa<sup>1</sup></li></ul>
<b>C. Scope and Size</b>
a. Estimated size of network and membership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Unable to determine exact size from open source information, however the number of countries in which the group operates would suggest that size is not negligible.</li></ul>
b. Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group's operating area)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>As pertains to Central America and the Caribbean:</b> Jamaica, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia, Uruguay, and perhaps Panama<sup>2</sup></li><li><b>Globally:</b> much of Africa, Bulgaria, Serbia, Turkey, Norway, Sweden, UK, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Greece, Spain, Czech Republic<sup>3</sup></li></ul>
<b>D. Leader Characteristics</b>
a. Who is/are the leader(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All that is known from open source is that Nigerians appear to be the group's leadership. Bulgarians hold positions of "lesser authority," mainly in recruiting and/or training other mules.<sup>4</sup></li></ul>
b. Leadership timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Information not found.</li></ul>
c. Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Probably diffuse.</li></ul>
<b>E. Organizational Structure</b>
a. Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Diffuse network.</li></ul>
b. Membership – is there formal or informal membership in the organization or network? What role do informal or nonmembers play in trafficking and other criminal activities?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>See "familial/ethnic friend network" in Human Resources below.</li></ul>
c. Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Appears largely decentralized but a core directorate of leaders cannot be ruled out.</li></ul>
<b>F. Resources</b>
a. Financial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Information not found.</li></ul>
b. Human
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Bulgarian mule network:</b> There has been a trend of Bulgarian recruitment as mules and couriers for several years now, but it continues to be strong, with Bulgarian</li></ul>

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

authorities acknowledging that hundreds of Bulgarians act as couriers annually.<sup>5</sup> This appears to be because Bulgarians are “cheaper” than other ethnicities – because of economic conditions, they agree to lower prices for moving the drugs<sup>6</sup> (between 800 and 2,000 Euros depending on the destination).<sup>7</sup> This would seem to be corroborated by the fact that, while most arrested Bulgarian mules are young, there have also been elder people and pregnant women among the apprehended.<sup>8</sup>

- **Nigerian familial/ethnic friend network:** It appears that part of the reason this group has such global reach and capacity is because of relatives, however far removed, or ethnic friends who are living abroad in various places.<sup>9</sup>

c. Logistical

i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc.

- Information not found.

ii. Key routes

- Principal route appears to be: Latin America – West Africa – Europe<sup>10</sup>
- Additional route: Caribbean – Europe<sup>11</sup>
- Couriers’ routes are constantly changed to deceive not only the border authorities but also the police services of the states through which the drugs are transited.<sup>12</sup>

d. Transportation

i. Land

- **Cars** – Although it appears to be rare, in some cases when cocaine was being transited to Bulgaria or other places in Europe, mules used cars.<sup>13</sup>

ii. Sea

- **Commercial Cruises** – used extensively by mules<sup>14</sup>
- **Private Vessels** – yachts, speedboats<sup>15</sup>

iii. Air

- **Commercial Flights** – used extensively by mules
- **Private Craft** – small, low-flying aircraft<sup>16</sup>

iv. Intermodal container

- No information.

**G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities**

a. Corruption

- Information not found.

b. Concealment

- Extensive use of concealment, especially by mules, to hide drugs in various items; this includes cocaine: hidden in necklaces, in capsules that are subsequently swallowed, in hidden compartments in bags/suitcases,<sup>17</sup> and hidden by use of specialized clothing (The cocaine had been smeared on this specialized clothing, which was then worn under regular clothes, according to Bulgarian Mafia unit of the Main Directorate on Combating Organized Crime).<sup>18</sup>

c. Deception

- Information not found.

d. Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)

- Information not found.

**H. Prior / Existing Relationships**

a. Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)

- **Bulgarian criminal groups** – According to Bulgarian authorities, members of the Bulgarian Mafia have been in charge of providing support and logistics services -

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

<p>transportation, reloading the merchandize, and cleaning the transportation means.<sup>19</sup></p> <p>b. Corrupt politicians, law enforcement , political parties and other state entities, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found.</li> </ul> <p>c. <i>Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No indications in open source of past or present dealings with known terrorist groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-ethnic: Nigerian, Bulgarian, Romanian, and Lithuanian</li> </ul>
<p><b>J. Technical Sophistication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group makes extensive use of Internet to communicate.<sup>20</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>K. Penchant for Innovation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found.</li> </ul>
<p><b>L. Activities in United States</b></p> <p>a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found.</li> </ul> <p>b. <i>Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found.</li> </ul> <p>c. Linkages with US groups</p> <p>i. Market/transaction links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found.</li> </ul> <p>ii. Stable supplier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found.</li> </ul> <p>iii. Franchise arrangement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found.</li> </ul> <p>iv. HQ and Branch office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found.</li> </ul>
<p><b>M. Evaluations</b></p> <p>a. Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active Nigerian friend/familial networks span numerous countries (See “familial/ethnic friend network” in Human Resources above)</li> </ul> <p>b. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unable to determine from available sources.</li> </ul> <p>c. Additional insights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is the kind of network that often operates under the radar. The West African connections as well as the Bulgarian links give it potential significance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other Notes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regarding mule transport of cocaine, there appears to be a trend away from mules swallowing the cocaine toward mules concealing the drug in various items. According to Bulgarian organized crime authorities, “the current tendency indicates a decrease in the number of ‘swallowers,’ at the expense of couriers or ‘carriers.’” This is because the swallowing method of transport is not only riskier, but less cost-effective. Bulgarian authorities report that the new strategy of the Nigerian cartels is to send many couriers, each carrying a small quantity of narcotics so that should a courier be apprehended, the loss to the criminal organization is minimal.<sup>21</sup></li> </ul>

---

<sup>1</sup> "Report Describes How International Rings Use Bulgarians as Drug Couriers," *Sofia 24 Chasa* Online, May 31, 2010, OSC: EUP20100531065004.; and "400 Bulgarian Drug-Traffickers Captured Every Year," *Novinite* Sofia News, March 12, 2010. [http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news.php?id=114135](http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=114135).

<sup>2</sup> "Report Describes How International Rings Use Bulgarians as Drug Couriers," OSC: EUP20100531065004.; "JIATF-South Weekly Counternarcotics Report: 13-23 Nov 07," *JIATF-South*, November 13-23, 2007, OSC: FBS20071123740644.; "JIATF-South Weekly Counternarcotics Report 23-30 Nov 07," *JIATF-South*, November 23-30, 2007, OSC: FBS20071130772596.; and "JIATF-South Weekly Counternarcotics Report: 4-11 Apr 08," *JIATF-South*, April 4-11, 2008, OSC: FBS20080411759680.

<sup>3</sup> "Report Describes How International Rings Use Bulgarians as Drug Couriers," OSC: EUP20100531065004.

<sup>4</sup> "JIATF-South Weekly Counternarcotics Report: 7-14 Nov 08," *JIATF-South*, November 7-14, 2008, OSC: FBS20081115148405.

<sup>5</sup> "JIATF-South Weekly Counternarcotics Report: 7-14 Nov 08," OSC: FBS20081115148405.; "Report Describes How International Rings Use Bulgarians as Drug Couriers," OSC: EUP20100531065004.; and "400 Bulgarian Drug-Traffickers Captured Every Year," *Novinite* Sofia News.

<sup>6</sup> "JIATF-South Weekly Counternarcotics Report: 7-14 Nov 08," *JIATF-South*, November 7-14, 2008, OSC: FBS20081115148405.

<sup>7</sup> "JIATF-South Weekly Counternarcotics Report: 13-23 Nov 07," OSC: FBS20071123740644.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> "JIATF-South Weekly Counternarcotics Report: 7-14 Nov 08," OSC: FBS20081115148405.

<sup>11</sup> "JIATF-South Weekly Counternarcotics Report 26 May-9 June 06," *JIATF-South*, June 9-16, 2006, OSC: FBS20060609754089.

<sup>12</sup> "Report Describes How International Rings Use Bulgarians as Drug Couriers," OSC: EUP20100531065004.

<sup>13</sup> "JIATF-South Weekly Counternarcotics Report: 13-23 Nov 07," OSC: FBS20071123740644.

<sup>14</sup> "Report Describes How International Rings Use Bulgarians as Drug Couriers," OSC: EUP20100531065004.

<sup>15</sup> "400 Bulgarian Drug-Traffickers Captured Every Year," *Novinite* Sofia News.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> "JIATF-South Weekly Counternarcotics Report: 13-23 Nov 07," OSC: FBS20071123740644.

<sup>18</sup> "Report Describes How International Rings Use Bulgarians as Drug Couriers," OSC: EUP20100531065004.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> "JIATF-South Weekly Counternarcotics Report: 13-23 Nov 07," OSC: FBS20071123740644.

<sup>21</sup> "Report Describes How International Rings Use Bulgarians as Drug Couriers," OSC: EUP20100531065004.