

Organization Attributes Sheet: Sicilian Cosa Nostra (Operations in Latin America)

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A. When the organization was formed + brief history

- The Sicilian form of the organization known as Cosa Nostra has its origins in 19th century Sicily.ⁱ
- It is unclear exactly how long Sicilian Cosa Nostra groups have been operating in Central and Latin America; however there are a few key dates that indicate major cooperation between La Cosa Nostra and Latin American groups.
- In 1988, representatives from Cosa Nostra families from Palermo met with representatives from the Medellin cartel on the island of Aruba and coordinated a shipment of cocaine from Colombia to Sicily.ⁱⁱ
- In 2006, Iacomo Tomasso (AKA “Salvatore Cefariello”) was arrested in Northern Bogota, Colombia.ⁱⁱⁱ According to the source, Tomasso was a close associate of former leader of La Cosa Nostra, Bernardo Provenzano, and was a liaison between La Cosa Nostra and Colombian groups.^{iv}
- In 2009, Miceli Salvatore (AKA “Mafia’s Foreign Minister”) was arrested in Caracas, Venezuela.^v Marcelli was allegedly a liaison for families in La Cosa Nostra and ‘Ndrangheta and South American drug cartels.^{vi}

B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,

a. In general

- Drug trafficking, political corruption, military arms trafficking, arson, fraud, counterfeiting, racketeering.^{vii}

b. Specific detail: types of illicit trafficking activities engaged in

- Trafficking drugs via connections with Colombian DTOs.^{viii}
- Trafficking drugs via connections in Venezuela.^{ix}
- Some sources indicate possible trafficking operations in Argentina.^x

C. Scope and Size

a. Estimated size of network and membership

- At one point in time La Cosa Nostra was considered the most powerful organized crime group in Italy. However, since the arrests of Salvatore Riina (AKA ‘Toto, AKA Lo Piccolo) in 1993¹¹ and Bernardo Provenzano (AKA the Tractor) in 2006, the organization has not been as powerful or as prominent as it once was.¹²
- Its American offshoot is the largest Italian ethnic organized crime group operating in the U.S. with over 2,500 affiliates.¹³

b. Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group’s operating area)

- Major Cities in the United States
- Colombia.¹⁴
- Venezuela.¹⁵
- Brazil—Mostly hideouts and safe houses.¹⁶

D. Leader Characteristics

a. Who is/are the leader(s)

- Since the capture of Provenzano in 2006, the Cosa Nostra has lacked a clear leader.

b. Leadership timeline

- Salvatore Riina 1970s-1993¹⁷; Bernardo Provenzano 1993-2006;¹⁸

c. Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

- Both Riina and Provenzano controlled large portions of the Cosa Nostra with a very autocratic style, employing top down decrees over a large number of clans.

E. Organizational Structure

a. Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)

- Individual clans are often structured hierarchically with a boss at the top making decisions and decrees to the clan.¹⁹ At times, individual leaders such as Provenzano and Riina held large amounts of power and control over the Cosa Nostra, but no informant accounts mention a phenomenon known as the “boss of bosses.”²⁰

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?

- Formal membership is often tied to neighborhood and pledges to honor and silence or “omerta”.²¹

c. Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)

- Centralized command and control for individual clans with boss leading each individual clan, at times powerful bosses wield large amounts of control over multiple clans.²²

F. Resources

a. Financial

- At one point, the Cosa Nostra was considered Italy’s most powerful and wealthy organization.²³
- The Italian financial watchdog, SOS Impresa, released a report in 2010 stating that the Mafia made over \$135 billion from extortion and financial misconduct that year.²⁴

b. Human

- In trafficking from Latin America, the Cosa Nostra employs higher level bosses to coordinate shipments and broker deals with Latin American groups.²⁵
- Unclear if lower level players or Cosa Nostra associates participate in these activities.
- Venezuelan officials have been implicated in aiding the families launder money.²⁶

c. Logistical

i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc.

- High level bosses have used Latin American countries as hide-outs to avoid interdiction and detection.²⁷

ii. Key routes

- One source indicates a possible overland route south from Bolivia through Argentina and through the ports of Comana and Buenos Aires.²⁸

d. Transportation

i. Land

- Information not found

ii. Sea

- Information not found

iii. Air

- Information not found

iv. Intermodal container

- Information not found

G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities

a. Corruption

- Information not found

b. Concealment

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.
All research conducted according to the project manual.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found |
| c. | <p>Deception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found |
| d. | <p>Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found |
| H. Prior / Existing Relationships | |
| a. | <p>Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A tenuous peace exists between La Cosa Nostra and groups operating in Italy. Sources indicate the organization uses liaisons to communicate and broker deals with international groups including Colombian cartels.²⁹ |
| b. | <p>Corrupt politicians, law enforcement, political parties and other state entities, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informant testimony has implicated Marcello Dell'Utri, a member of the Berlusconi administration and co-founder of the Forza Italia party, "Come on Italy", as being complicit with the Sicilian Mafia.³⁰ |
| c. | <p><i>Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No sources indicate any connections with terrorist groups. |
| I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any) | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership into Cosa Nostra families is often limited to Sicilians. The names of the clans are often associated with an area or town that the leader or gang grew up in, such as Corleone. |
| J. Technical Sophistication | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found about the current technical sophistication of Cosa Nostra. |
| K. Penchant for Innovation | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found about the current penchant for innovation. However, Sicilian families were some of the first to broker deals with Medellin cartels.³¹ One of the first Italian organized crime groups to move away from cigarette smuggling into narcotics trafficking into the U.S. via the Pizza connection.³² |
| L. Activities in United States | |
| a. | <p>Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At one point, the Sicilian families of Cosa Nostra were closely linked to the American families via agreements like the pizza connection and brokers like Tomasso Buscetta.³³ However, that link has waned and American families operate independently of their Sicilian counterparts.³⁴ |
| b. | <p><i>Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found |
| c. | <p>Linkages with US groups</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Market/transaction links <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found Stable supplier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found Franchise arrangement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No information found HQ and Branch office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No information found |
| M. Evaluations | |
| a. | <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cosa Nostra is one of Italy's longest running and well known organized crime groups. At one time it was considered to be the peninsula's most powerful organized crime group. Information derived from several sources and searchable databases. <p style="text-align: center;">All research conducted according to the project manual.</p> |

organization. The hierarchical clan structure allows for clear leadership. Its political connections provided protection and allowed bosses to operate their criminal enterprises with impunity.

b. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities

- The hierarchical nature of the organization makes it an easy target for the Italian state. The structure also makes the organization as a whole prone to violent struggle and internal strife as individual factions seek to control more and more parts of the organization or to make bids for total control.

c. Additional insights

- Since the arrest of Bernardo Provenzano it has been unclear what direction Cosa Nostra is taking. It has been marginalized in recent year by both the activities of the Camorra and the growth of the 'Ndrangheta into two of the larger organized crime groups operating in Italy.
- The group has never been known to work with terrorist groups, and despite its currently weakened state it seems unlikely that the groups would actively aid a terrorist organization. Moreover, the ties to Latin American and U.S. groups are not as strong as they were in the 80s and 90s so it is unlikely that it maintains the capacity to move CBRN material undetected into the Americas.
- However, the bosses that once bound Cosa Nostra into a somewhat unified organization are now either dead or incarcerated and the natural order of things is in disarray. What individual families might do in order to stay solvent or gain a foothold on the island is anyone's guess at this point.

Other Notes

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ⁱ Dickie, John. *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004) p.35.

ⁱⁱ Jameison, Alison "Cooperation between organized crime groups around the World" *Jahrbuch für internationale Sicherheitspolitik* 1999, p.66. http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/03_jb99_04.pdf (May 23, 2011).

ⁱⁱⁱ "Highlights: Colombia Crime 30 Apr - 1 May 06" *Colombia—OSC Reports in Spanish* (WWW-Internet Version) in Spanish, April 30-May 6, 2010, OSC: LAP20060501004004. (Hereafter referred to as OSC: LAP20060501004004).

^{iv} Ibid.

^v "Highlights: Venezuela Crime, Narcotics Issues 15-21 Jun 09" *Venezuela—OSC Summary in Spanish* (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, June 15-20, 2009, OSC: LAP20090621039001. (Hereafter referred to as OSC: LAP20090621039001).

^{vi} "Salvatore Miceli, 'Mafia's Foreign Minister', Extradited from Venezuela to Italy" *The Huffington Post* June 30, 2009. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/06/30/salvatore-miceli-mafias-f_n_223421.html (May 25, 2011).

^{vii} "Italian Organized Crime" *Federal Bureau of Investigation*. http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/organizedcrime/italian_mafia (May 25, 2011).

^{viii} OSC: LAP20060501004004

^{ix} OSC: LAP20090621039001

^x "Highlights: Southern Cone Crime and Narcotics Issues 8 Nov 06" *Southern Cone—OSC Report in Spanish* (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, November 8, 2006, OSC: LAP20061108021005.

¹¹ "The Boss of All Bosses" *Time Magazine* January 15, 1993.

http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1683530_1683532_1683540,00.html (May 25, 2011).

¹² Paglia, Roberto "Mafioso Bernardo Provenzano Captured" *Best of Sicily Magazine*.

<http://www.bestofsicily.com/mag/art195.htm>.

¹³ "Italian Organized Crime" . http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/organizedcrime/italian_mafia (May 25, 2011).

¹⁴ OSC: LAP20060501004004

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- ¹⁵ OSC: LAP20090621039001
- ¹⁶ Dickie, p.289.
- ¹⁷ "The Boss of All Bosses"
http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1683530_1683532_1683540,00.html (May 26, 2011).
- ¹⁸ "Mafioso Bernardo Provenzano Caputured" <http://www.bestofsicily.com/mag/art195.htm> (May 26, 2011).
- ¹⁹ Dickie, p.18.
- ²⁰ Ibid, p.19.
- ²¹ Ibid, p.45.
- ²² Ibid, p.19.
- ²³ Dickie, p.5
- ²⁴ "Rapporto SOS Impresa: 'Le Mani Criminalita sulle imprese'" *SOS Impresa*.
http://www.sosimpresa.it/userFiles/File/Iniziative/XII_RAPPORTO_SOS_IMPRESA_-_SINTESI_PER_LA_STAMPA.pdf
(June 1, 2011).
- ²⁵ OSC: LAP20060501004004
- ²⁶ "Italian Daily Reports on Arrests in Tuscany Over Mafia Venezuelan Bonds Scam" *Corriere Della Sera* (Internet Version-WWW) in Italian, May 23, 2009, OSC: EUP20090525025002 (Hereafter referred to as OSC: EUP20090525025002).
- ²⁷ Dickie, p.289.
- ²⁸ OSC: LAP20090621039001
- ²⁹ OSC: LAP20060501004004
- ³⁰ "Witness: Senator Linked to Mob Boss" *Friends of Ours* February 2, 2010.
http://bitterqueen.typepad.com/friends_of_ours/2010/02/witness-senator-linked-to-mob-boss.html (May 26, 2011).
- ³¹ Jameison, p.66
- ³² Dickie, p.277
- ³³ Ibid, p.277
- ³⁴ "Italian Organized Crime" http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/organizedcrime/italian_mafia (May 26, 2011).