

Organization Attributes Sheet: Red Dragon Mafia

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A. When the organization was formed + brief history

- The Red Dragon mafia is a human-smuggling network operating out of Bolivia and Peru consisting of Chinese criminals and their Bolivian or Peruvian contacts used to transport illegal migrants, mostly Chinese, into the United States and Europe.
- Although information obtained from open sources does not indicate any exact date or year the group was formed, suspected leaders of the Bolivian section, Yi Yin Chen Wang and Zoe Neyfi Chavarria became fugitives after a busted human smuggling attempt of five Chinese nationals to the United States as early as 1994.¹
- The group uses a lottery system in the Fujian province of China to select the groups of migrants attempting to be smuggled out of the country.²
- The Red Dragon mafia is responsible for facilitating the arrival of thousands of Chinese nationals to Bolivia to obtain illicitly Bolivian passports.³
- The group consists of two possible sections, one in Bolivia, the other in Peru. Reports claim that these sections are part of groups dismantled in Peru, and one dismantled in Bolivia, in late 2006-early 2007.⁴

B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,

a. In general

- Human-smuggling, forged documents, corruption of government officials.⁵
- Extortion, murder.⁶

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

- In 2006, the Red Dragon group threatened the owner of a spa in Peru, in order to coerce him to pay a fee for "protection". The owner refused and attempted to flee, and the Red Dragons murdered his son, Joseph Siu Ming Wong on October 30. Ming Wong was shot, and officers arrested the gunman, Fu Feng Lin.⁷ Feng Lin was a member of the Red Dragon organization, according to authorities.⁸
- Costa Rican police intercepted five Peruvian nationals belonging to the Red Dragon's human smuggling operations on January 13, 2007.⁹
- In the San Miguel district of Lima, Peru, two Chinese nationals linked to the Red Dragon group were murdered in January, 2007. They were connected to the unsuccessful human-smuggling attempt thwarted by Costan Rican police earlier that month, and were believed to have tried to force the deportees to pay them to make another attempt. In their home were mattresses for 15 migrants, and the migrants are believed to have fled from the scene. One of the victims was supposed group leader, Xu Lu (AKA: Antonio Xu Lu or Lu Xu).¹⁰
- Possibly connected to counterfeited visas obtained for Chinese citizens from the Nicaraguan Embassy in Costa Rica in December 2006.¹¹
- Two Peruvians were arrested by Costa Rican Immigration Police for charges of human smuggling on January 15, 2007. The two were accused of leading Red Dragon operations, and were wanted by Interpol in 186 countries for illegally transporting Peruvian and Chinese nationals to the United States.¹²
- A boat named *Nalu* was rescued in Costa Rican waters on October 14, 2006. The ship contained 74 Chinese nationals and 54 Peruvian nationals bound for Guatemala, then to Mexico, and into the United States. The vessel was said to be using the "Red Dragon route". The human smugglers were Peruvian nationals who were later

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

detained.¹³

C. Scope and Size

- a. Estimated size of network and membership
- Network is international, but mostly contained to the South and Central American nations near Bolivia and Peru with contacts in China and other locations.
 - Membership size is relatively small, as most thwarted operations have only arrested or named a handful of individuals involved in each incident. (estimated size: less than 100)
- b. Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group's operating area)
- Bolivia (La Paz area), Argentina, Brazil, Europe.¹⁴ Peru.¹⁵ Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Suriname (as part of the human smuggling routes).¹⁶

D. Leader Characteristics

- a. Who is/are the leader(s)
- Bin Xing Zhang, Yi Yin Chen Wang, and his Bolivian wife Zoe Neyfi Chavarria.¹⁷
 - Xu Lu¹⁸
 - Pablo Cesar Moreno Silva and Aldo Cramer del Risco Manzanares.¹⁹
- b. Leadership timeline
- Chen Wang and Zoe Chavarria were wanted fugitives since a botched attempt at smuggling five Chinese nationals to the United States in 1994.²⁰ After fleeing from that incident and continuing to operate smuggling operations through Bolivia, Chen Wang was arrested in the United Kingdom, while Zoe Chavarria was captured in Jujuy, Argentina in 2004. They were arrested on human smuggling charges and were detained in La Paz, Bolivia as of September, 2006.²¹ Bin Xing Zhang was also detained as of September, 2006.²²
 - Xu Lu was in San Jorge prison on assault charges in November, 2003. He was suspected of kidnappings, but released in 2005. In January, 2007, he was found dead from gunshots in an apartment where he supposedly kept migrants he was attempting to smuggle out of the country.²³
 - Pablo Cesar Moreno Silva and Aldo Cramer del Risco Manzanares were two Peruvians arrested as leaders of certain Red Dragon operations in 2007. The two had been living in Costa Rica since 2002, and used the country as a platform for sending undocumented aliens to the United States. Del Risco Manzanares was allegedly an official from Peru's Attorney General's Office.²⁴
- c. Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)
- Leadership appears to be collaborative, involving a number of members throughout all levels of the trafficking operations.

E. Organizational Structure

- a. Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)
- Cellular
 - The Peruvian National police claim the Red Dragon mafia is one of the mafias operating as "autonomous encapsulated mafias that work with machinery and personnel of their own".²⁵
- 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?
- Membership is informal, as many different people are involved in loose relations and contact with one another.
 - For the most part, the Peruvian wing is made up of Asian criminals who use Peruvian

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collaborators.²⁶

- Chen Wang was responsible for creating relationships with government officials in Bolivia, and was in charge of transporting Chinese nationals to Argentina, Brazil, and Europe using counterfeit documents.²⁷
- Zoe Chavarria also built relations with government officials, and she provided lodging for recently arrived Chinese migrants and helped in transporting them to other locations.²⁸
- Other members of the Bolivian wing included the government officials implicated: Rene Gallardo, Hernando Armaza, and Oscar de la Quintana; and Chinese members: Xiao Li, Weizheng Su Ji, Lu Guan Ping, Yi Xin Chen, Chen Guo Ping, Huang Jian Fang, Guang Lin, and An Min Ding Zhao.²⁹
- The operators of the October 2006 *Nalu* sea-vessel incident included Peruvian nationals; Eduardo Orozco Chiang coordinated the operation, Jose Rocca Gozzer was second in command, and six more Peruvians.³⁰

c. Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)

- Command and control is largely decentralized. The group is very cellular, and the different parts may not even be related at all (see “Other Notes” at the bottom).
- Additionally, almost every arrest report claims that at least some of the members arrested during that incident are the “leaders” of Red Dragon operations. In other words, the organization and operations appear to have many heads.

F. Resources

a. Financial

- The red Dragon smugglers are estimated to cover up to \$15,000 for the costs of each group of Chinese citizens expecting to be smuggled. This money is expected to be paid back, or mortgaged from the migrants using their left-behind relatives as collateral.³¹
- Another Red Dragon operation busted was said to move four undocumented aliens a week, charging up to \$10,000 each.³²

b. Human

- Human resources consist of Chinese smugglers, operators, and recruiters of Chinese migrants; corrupted Chinese, Peruvian, and Bolivian government officials; and street-level enforcers.
- If the *Nalu* sea-vessel operation was in fact connected to the Chinese Red Dragon mafia (see “Other Notes” below), then it appears Peruvian nationals may be the actual smugglers, while the Chinese members handle logistics, coordination, and setting up the deals. Another report suggests that the *Nalu* incident is in fact connected to the Red Dragon mafia, and that the group is comprised of Asian criminals who use Peruvian collaborators.³³

c. Logistical

i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc.

- Safe-houses are used in Bolivia to hold the Chinese migrants until they obtain nationalization papers and Bolivian passports.³⁴
- One apartment involved in the murder of a Red Dragon member was used as a safe house for 15 migrants attempting to be smuggled out of Peru for a second time.³⁵

ii. Key routes

- The human smuggling routes are the Southern Cone region of South America, or Central America, to the final destinations of Europe and the United States. More specifically, one route used is China, through Peru, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua, and

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to the United States.³⁶

- The Southern Cone route is reported to travel from Bolivia, through Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina.³⁷
- A third route travels through Venezuela and Suriname, where Chinese nationals are then auctioned off to go to the United States.³⁸
- Peru to Guatemala, through Mexico, to California.³⁹

d. Transportation

i. Land

- A report on illegal smuggling of Chinese migrants, which lists the Red Dragon mafia as one of the main actors, describes travel across deserts by land cargo as one method used.⁴⁰
- Land travel through Mexico into California was the projected route for the human cargo of the *Nalu* vessel.⁴¹

ii. Sea

- This is a common mode of transport used to move the migrants from China to the countries in South and Central America, and then for the final leg of the journey to the United States or Europe.
- A report on illegal smuggling of Chinese migrants, which lists the Red Dragon mafia as one of the main actors, describes travel by shipping cargo as one method used.⁴²
- One fishing boat, named the *Nalu*, was used to transport illegal Chinese and Peruvian immigrants from Peru and Costa Rica to the United States. In October 2006, it wrecked in Costa Rican seas; it was believed the crew was tied to the Red Dragon mafia.⁴³

iii. Air

- A report on illegal smuggling of Chinese migrants, which lists the Red Dragon mafia as one of the main actors, describes travel by air as being one method. The risks of landing at an airport are to some degree offset by forged documents.⁴⁴

iv. Intermodal container

- A report on illegal smuggling of Chinese migrants, which lists the Red Dragon mafia as one of the main actors, describes travel by shipping cargo as one method.⁴⁵

G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities

a. Corruption

- Chen Wang was responsible for relationships with officials at the Bolivian Foreign Ministry, the Immigration Service, and the Deputy and Senator Chambers.⁴⁶
- Zoe Chavarria also built relations with government officials.⁴⁷
- Peruvian National Police members were suspected of being advisors and protectors to the Red Dragon mafia.⁴⁸

b. Concealment

- One operation concealed migrants by using a large fishing vessel named the *Nalu*.⁴⁹

c. Deception

- Chen Wang was in charge of transporting Chinese nationals to Argentina, Brazil, and Europe using counterfeit documents.⁵⁰
- Possibly connected to counterfeited visas obtained for Chinese citizens from the Nicaraguan Embassy in Costa Rica in December of 2006.⁵¹
- After paying the smugglers to enter Bolivia, migrants would stage a marriage with a

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Bolivian to help expedite the process of becoming a Bolivian citizen before attempting to leave for the United States or Europe.⁵²

- In the October 2006 fishing vessel wreck in Costa Rica, the crew mingled with their passengers in order to evade arrest.⁵³
- One arrested Red Dragon leader, Yi Xin Chen Huan, set up an association in Bolivia, to help newly arrived Chinese migrants adjust, that authorities believed was used a front, along with other similar associations, for the organizations involved in human smuggling.⁵⁴

d. Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)

- Using contacts in Bolivia, the Red Dragon smugglers obtained approved documents from the Foreign Ministry, where the visas are retrieved from a consulate employee in Beijing. After the migrants arrive in Bolivia, they are kept in safe houses until they receive nationalization documents, which from then are used to request a passport to leave the country for Argentina, Brazil, or Europe.⁵⁵

H. Prior / Existing Relationships

a. Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)

- Information obtained from open sources does not indicate any prior/existing dealings or relationships with other organized crime groups.

b. Corrupt politicians, law enforcement, political parties and other state entities, etc.

- Bolivian Foreign Ministry and National Immigration Service employees have been implicated as being involved in the trafficking ring. These included: Rene Gallardo the former director of the Foreign Ministry's Consulate Regime; Hernando Armaza, the Culture director; and Oscar de la Quintana, a former employee at the Bolivian consulate in Peking, China.⁵⁶
- Quintana, the former Bolivian consul to China, was arrested for his connection to the Red Dragon group, and he faced charges of inappropriate use of influence, failure to fulfill duties, illegal appointments, human smuggling, and organized crime for his authorization of the "irregular" release of over 1,800 visas for Chinese nationals, in 2006.⁵⁷ This investigation revealed that about 30 legislators and former legislators from various Bolivian political parties were involved in helping Chinese nationals enter Bolivia illegally.⁵⁸
- A Peruvian Attorney General's Office official, Aldo Cramer del Risco Manzanares, was accused of leading some trafficking operations for the Red Dragon organization.⁵⁹
- A Bolivian Government Ministry Advisor, Julkar Zeballos Lizarraga, was also arrested with division leader, Bin Xing Zhang, of the Red Dragon organization in 2006.⁶⁰
- An active-duty general of the Peruvian National Police was implicated in assisting Red Dragon operations in 2003.⁶¹

c. *Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.*

- Information obtained from open sources does not indicate any prior/existing dealings or relationships with terrorist groups.

I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any)

- While Red Dragon members may be citizens or dual-citizens of other nations, they are mostly made up of ethnic Chinese and assist Chinese nationals attempting to be smuggled to other nations.

J. Technical Sophistication

- The Red Dragons were mentioned as one of the 20 mafias operating in Peru that use high-technology falsification methods to produce forged documents.⁶²

K. Penchant for Innovation

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- The process of having the migrants obtain naturalized citizenship (either legally or illegally) from one of the mid-route countries (usually Bolivia or Peru) seems to have been used as a safe-guard to prevent deportation back to China, as intercepted migrants would be deported back to the South American countries, from where they could make further moves.

L. Activities in United States

- a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities
 - Illegal importation and trafficking of foreign citizens into the United States.
- b. *Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities*
 - While the above highlights cases and incidents where traffickers were arrested attempting to transport illegal migrants into the United States, it is assumed that most cases of successful attempts are not reported.
- c. Linkages with US groups
 - i. Market/transaction links
 - Information not found.
 - ii. Stable supplier
 - Information not found.
 - iii. Franchise arrangement
 - Information not found.
 - iv. HQ and Branch office
 - Information not found.

M. Evaluations

- a. Strengths
 - The group is largely decentralized and loosely connected. The group functions as a series of barely-related and individually moving parts. When operations fail or are intercepted, this structure allows for only a small section of the group immediately involved with the activity to be apprehended.
 - The group also operated with a wide and entrenched level of corruption from government officials, which allowed for assistance and protection, as well as the procurement of necessary or forged documents, to facilitate illegally transporting the migrants.
 - The Red Dragon mafia seemed good at covering its tracks and hiding its activities for a while, up until the series of arrests and failed attempts in late 2006-early 2007.
- b. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities
 - The largely decentralized nature of the group does not allow for the sophistication and protection that only a large more centralized criminal network can provide. This makes small mishaps and slip-ups very vulnerable to police interception, and sometimes complete cells are dismantled by law enforcement.
 - In fact, reports suggest the major cells in Bolivia and Peru have already been dismantled (see "brief history" at the top).
- c. Additional insights
 - Demonstrates the advantages a loosely connected network has over smuggling activities.
 - Demonstrates the pervasiveness of corruption in human-smuggling activities with complicit government officials in Asia and Central and South America. Also highlights the advantages such corruption provides for clandestine activity.

Other Notes

- In addition to reports indicating the group might have been dismantled by law enforcement in

both Bolivia and Peru, a lack of recent activity from the Red Dragon Mafia, suggests these reports might be true. Certainly, many leaders and cells have been intercepted and captured, and corrupted officials exposed.

- It is possible that the Bolivian and Peruvian sections of the group might actually not be related at all, and might just be operating under the same name. While the timing of similar activities and the shared group name may make this seem unlikely, none of the reports used in this profile mentioned any actual specific links between the Bolivian Red Dragons apprehended and the Peruvian ones.
- There is also the possibility that the name might just be what is used to describe this smuggling route used for the Chinese migrants, and that the "Red Dragon" is only a moniker thrown around by operatives. The famous *Nalu* boat incident was run only by Peruvian operators, and they only referred to their operation as traveling along the "Red Dragon route".⁶³

¹ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 9-11 Sep 06," Andean – *OSC Report* (in Spanish), September 11, 2006, OSC: LAP20060911028001.

² "Bolivian Daily Reports on Chinese People-Trafficking Network," *BBC Worldwide Monitoring* (Source: *La Razon*, La Paz, in Spanish), December 19, 2006.

³ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 9-11 Sep 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.

⁴ "Chinese Criminal Organization Uses At Least 3 Human-Trafficking Routes," La Paz *La Razon* (Internet Version-WWW in Spanish), December 20, 2006, OSC: LAP20061218028002; and Peruvian Human-Trafficking Group under Arrest in Costa Rica," Lima *El Comercio* (Internet-Version-WWW in Spanish), January 18, 2007, OSC: LAP20070118028002.

⁵ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 29 Sep 06," Andean – *OSC Report* (in Spanish), September 29, 2006, OSC: LAP20060929028001.

⁶ "Highlights Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 2 Nov 06," Andean – *OSC Report* (In Spanish), November 2, 2006, OSC: LAP20061102028001.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 1 Nov 06," Andean – *OSC Report* (in Spanish), November 2, 2006, OSC: LAP20061101028001.

⁹ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 18 Jan 07," Andean – *OSC Report* (in Spanish), January 18, 2007, OSC: LAP20070118028001.

¹⁰ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 27-29 Jan 07," Andean – *OSC Report* (in Spanish), January 29, 2007, OSC: LAP20070129028001.

¹¹ *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 2006.

¹² "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 13-15 Jan 07," Andean – *OSC Report* (in Spanish), January 15, 2007, OSC: LAP20070116028001.

¹³ Peruvian Organization Smuggles Chinese Nationals to United States," Lima *La Republica* (Internet Version-WWW in Spanish), December 16, 2006, OSC: LAP20061217028001.

¹⁴ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 29 Sep 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.

¹⁵ "Highlights Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 2 Nov 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.

¹⁶ *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 2006.

¹⁷ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 29 Sep 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.

¹⁸ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 27-29 Jan 07," *OSC Report*, 2007.

¹⁹ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 13-15 Jan 07," *OSC Report*, 2007.

²⁰ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 9-11 Sep 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.

²¹ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 29 Sep 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.

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- ²² "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 9-11 Sep 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.
- ²³ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 27-29 Jan 07," *OSC Report*, 2007.
- ²⁴ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 13-15 Jan 07," *OSC Report*, 2007.
- ²⁵ "Peru: Twenty Gang Said to Smuggle Illegal Aliens Into US, Europe," *OSC Feature*, May 18, 2005, OSC: FEA20050518003318.
- ²⁶ *El Comercio*, 2007.
- ²⁷ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 29 Sep 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ *La Razon*, 2006.
- ³⁰ *La Republica*, 2006.
- ³¹ *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 2006.
- ³² "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 13-15 Jan 07," *OSC Report*, 2007.
- ³³ *El Comercio*, 2007.
- ³⁴ *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 2006.
- ³⁵ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 27-29 Jan 07," *OSC Report*, 2007.
- ³⁶ *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 2006.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ *La Republica*, 2006.
- ⁴⁰ "Peru: Report on Illegal Traffic of Chinese Immigrants," Peru – *OSC Report*, February 4, 2007, OSC: FEA20070207089112.
- ⁴¹ *La Republica*, 2006.
- ⁴² "Peru: Report on Illegal Traffic of Chinese Immigrants," *OSC Report*, 2007.
- ⁴³ "Highlights: Peru Press 23 Oct 06," Peru – *OSC Report* (in Spanish) October 23, 2006, OSC: LAP20061023029001.
- ⁴⁴ "Peru: Report on Illegal Traffic of Chinese Immigrants," *OSC Report*, 2007.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 29 Sep 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ "Peru: Twenty Gang Said to Smuggle Illegal Aliens Into US, Europe," *OSC Feature*, 2005.
- ⁴⁹ "Highlights: Peru Press 23 Oct 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.
- ⁵⁰ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 29 Sep 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.
- ⁵¹ *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 2006.
- ⁵² "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 1 Nov 06," Andean – *OSC Report* (in Spanish), November 2, 2006, OSC: LAP20061101028001.
- ⁵³ "Highlights: Peru Press 23 Oct 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.
- ⁵⁴ "Program Summary: La Paz Bolivision Television Network Spanish 0110 GMT 12 Sep 06 [Bol]," *La Paz Bolivision Television Network* (in Spanish), September 12, 2006, OSC: LAP20060912033001.
- ⁵⁵ *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 2006.
- ⁵⁶ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 29 Sep 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.
- ⁵⁷ "Highlights Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 2 Nov 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.
- ⁵⁸ *La Republica*, 2006.
- ⁵⁹ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 13-15 Jan 07," *OSC Report*, 2007.
- ⁶⁰ "Highlights: Andean Crime and Narcotics Issues 9-11 Sep 06," *OSC Report*, 2006.
- ⁶¹ "Peru: Twenty Gang Said to Smuggle Illegal Aliens Into US, Europe," *OSC Feature*, 2005.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *La Repubblica*, 2006.