

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ON THE SCALE AND EXTENT OF SERIOUS ORGANISED CRIME IN SCOTLAND

Scottish Serious Organised Crime Group Mapping Project

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The Scottish Serious Organised Crime Group (SOCG) Mapping Project was established in April 2008 as a result of recommendations flowing from the ACPOS-led review of capacity and capability within the Scottish police service.

The project aims to contribute to a safer and stronger Scotland by identifying the scale and impact of serious organised crime (SOC) on Scotland, with a view to taking more effective action against this threat.

This document highlights some key findings on the scale and impact of serious organised crime in Scotland, based on the information gathered by the SOCG Mapping Project between November 2008 and April 2009.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

- 4,066 individuals representing 367 serious organised crime groups (SOCGs) were identified as impacting on Scotland.
- All Scottish Force areas were impacted by various SOCGs.
- Groups were found to be involved in a wide range of crime types, from drug importation and money laundering to counterfeiting and robbery.
- 241 individuals were identified as having 'specialist' links to SOCGs, the most common being financial specialists and money launderers.
- All Force areas were impacted on by the top 20 highest threat SOCGs, ranging from one each in Northern and Dumfries & Galloway to 19 in Strathclyde.

BACKGROUND

Law enforcement agencies and Government in Scotland face growing challenges from serious organised crime (SOC). These challenges include understanding and assessing the nature of this threat, and reviewing the capacity and capability of law enforcement partners and Government in Scotland to deliver an effective response - especially when crime crosses geographic or agency boundaries.

SOC is often invisible and misunderstood, yet its effects are far-reaching and devastating. It damages communities by undermining public confidence, contributing to fear and imposing a wide range of social and economic costs on society.

This report highlights some of the key findings of the project, based on information gathered between November 2008 and April 2009.

WHAT WE DID AND WHY?

The Scottish Serious Organised Crime Group (SOCG) Mapping Project was established in April 2008 as a result of recommendations from the ACPOS review of capacity and capability within the Scottish police service.

The project set out to develop a better understanding of the individuals and groups that contribute to SOC in Scotland, and to identify the level of threat these criminals pose to Scotland's communities. This will enable law enforcement to better protect communities from the threat, risk and harm caused by SOCGs and facilitate a greater impact against SOC.

This has involved making better use of existing information already captured by partner agencies and identifying and developing new information sources and processes.

A key output of the project is a process that more accurately than ever before assesses the threat level posed by criminal networks. This will result in a ranked list of organised crime groups, which can be used by Scottish law enforcement to more effectively target resources.

HOW DID WE DO IT?

Information on SOCGs impacting on Scotland and the individuals they comprise was gathered from Scotland's eight police forces, British Transport Police (BTP), UK Border Agency (UKBA) and the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency (SCDEA). Additional information was also provided by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC), Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). This data was based on definitions of serious and organised crime and organised crime groups agreed by the SOCG Mapping Project Board.

Police officers, intelligence analysts and criminologists worked together through the project to develop a new process for assessing the level of threat posed by these individuals and groups.

The work undertaken in the SOCG Mapping Project represents the most comprehensive study of its type in Scotland. However, it is important to recognise that the analysis is based on information provided by the Scottish law enforcement community, supported by a limited range of additional information sources. As SOCG Mapping evolves, more information sources will be identified and exploited, allowing us to continually improve our knowledge and understanding of the threat posed by SOC in Scotland.

WHAT WE FOUND OUT

Number of SOCGs and Individuals

The eight Scottish Forces, BTP, UKBA and SCDEA identified a total of 4,066 individuals involved in 367 SOCGs, as shown in Figure 1 below. All contributing Forces and agencies identified a number of SOCGs, ranging from three (BTP and UKBA) to 152 (Strathclyde).

While the majority of identified groups impacted on one area only (in most cases the submitting Force area), over a hundred also impacted on at least one other Force area.

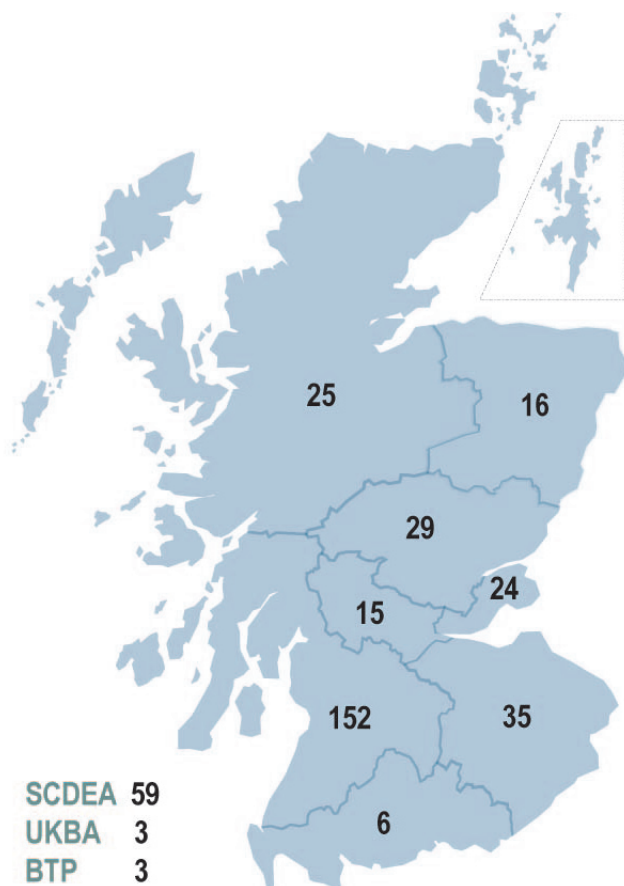


Figure 1 – Number of SOCGs identified by each Force/Agency

Nature of Criminality

Groups were found to be involved in a wide range of crime types, from drug importation and money laundering to counterfeiting and robbery. Just over half of all SOCGs were involved in multiple crime types.

Some other key findings include:

- 92% involved in drug crimes (95% are Class A, e.g. heroin and cocaine).
- 48% involved in drug importation and/or distribution.
- 53 and 20 SOCGs, respectively, known to source cocaine and heroin outside the UK.
- 125 groups (34%) involved in dealing cannabis.
- 81 (22%) involved in money laundering. Business and/or property investment were the most common methods used.
- 161 SOCGs involved in serious violence or murder.
- 77% of groups involved in violence were from the Strathclyde area.
- 42 SOCGs involved in theft (mainly motor vehicle and plant), and 40 in fraud.
- 19 involved in sexual offences, mainly prostitution (17).
- 15 involved in immigration crime, 10 of these involving human trafficking.
- 202 SOCGs have access to firearms.

Individual Characteristics

Demographics

The individuals involved in SOC in Scotland identified through the project were primarily male (89%), the predominant age range being within mid to late 20s.

Eighty-two per cent of individuals were identified as White European. Three hundred and eighty-three (383) individuals (9.4%) were recorded as being from a range of BME backgrounds. Of these, almost half were foreign nationals.

Group links

Two hundred and forty-one (241) individuals were identified as having 'specialist' links to SOCGs, as opposed to just being 'members' or 'associates'. The largest categories of specialists were financial specialists and money launderers.

The vast majority of individuals (80%) were connected to one group only. However, a smaller number have multiple links, making these individuals the most 'connected' in the mapping project.

Assessing the Threat

A National Threat Assessment process was applied to SOCGs submitted by Scottish law enforcement partners, which resulted in a ranked list of SOCGs ranging from the highest to the lowest threat. This involved further checking and quality assurance of local threat assessment scores, and establishing scores for groups that had been assessed by multiple Forces/agencies or affected by external data.

FORCE	Number of highest threat (Top 20) SOCGs impacting on each Force area
Strathclyde	19
L&B	6
CSP	5
Tayside	4
Fife	2
Grampian	2
D&G	1
Northern	1

Table 1 – Force breakdown of highest ranked SOCGs impacting on Forces

As shown in Table 1, all Force areas were impacted on by the top 20 highest threat SOCGs, ranging from one each in Northern and Dumfries & Galloway to 19 in Strathclyde.

NEXT STEPS

The findings of the mapping project have helped develop the best picture of SOC in Scotland ever available, and the information and intelligence compiled will lead to genuine, practical changes to the way in which Scottish law enforcement tackles SOC.

Our knowledge and understanding of SOC in Scotland is now greater than ever before. The network of criminals, specialist facilitators and opportunists we have begun to map provides a better understanding of their behaviours, habits and haunts.

Law enforcement is committed to turning this collective knowledge into action to better protect Scotland's communities. Already, the project findings have been used to initiate new approaches and to implement activity against specific groups and individuals.

Underlining this commitment, the SCDEA, with the support of the Serious Organised Crime Taskforce, has made it a strategic priority for the year 2009/2010 to integrate the mapping initiative into mainstream policing.

In addition, mapping will become a permanent feature of a new central intelligence and co-ordination hub that will enhance information sharing and collaboration, and improve the ability of the Scottish police forces, SCDEA and other partners to fight serious organised crime.

It takes a network to defeat a network, and this ground-breaking exercise has placed law enforcement in a stronger position to protect the communities it serves.

