



2023 Counter-Terrorism Week SIDE EVENTS

19-23 JUNE 2023

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS • NEW YORK

Transnational linkages between violence-oriented right-wing extremism/REMVE/terrorism and organized crime: challenges and opportunities for multilateral and institutional cooperation

Introduction

Mitigating the risks emanating from the financing of violence oriented-right wing extremism and terrorism, also referred to as violent extremism and terrorism based on xenophobia, racism, and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion and belief (XRIRB)¹, presents a challenge for Member States. Many of these groups have not yet been designated as terrorism related yet present a growing challenge to domestic security and develop increasing transnational links.

Tackling the income streams and disrupting the methods through which they can raise finances is a key strategy to hinder their operations. As outlined by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)² and the Counter Extremism Project (CEP),³ transnational XRIRB networks deploy six general funding strategies:

- a) donations and payment for online content, including in cryptocurrencies,
- b) income from music production, sale and music events, including large-scale festivals,
- c) assets generated through combat sport competition, gyms and related fan wear,
- d) the online and offline sale of merchandise,
- e) income generated through real estate and

¹ U.S. Department of State refers to this threat as racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism (REMVE)

² Financial Action Task Force (FATF), "Ethnically or Racially Motivated Terrorism Financing", FATF Report, June 2021, <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/en/publications/Methodsand Trends/Ethnically-racially-motivated-terrorism-financing.html>

³ Counter Extremism Project, Financing patterns and networks of violence-oriented right-wing extremist actors in Germany", CEP Report, September 2021, https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/2021-09/CEP%20Report_Financing%20patterns%20and%20networks%20of%20violence-oriented%20right-wing%20extremist%20actors%20in%20Germany_Sept%202021.pdf

2023 COUNTER-TERRORISM WEEK

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f) finances generated through the use of criminal methods, including in cooperation with organized crime networks.

Cooperation of such individuals and entities with organized crime presents an opportunity for Member States to utilize provisions of criminal law to disrupt their financial activities. However, this requires both awareness of the relevant authorities concerning these links as well as the combination of expertise on organized crime with expertise focused on violent extremism and terrorism both at the investigative as well as the judicial level. As such linkages regularly span jurisdictions, increased cooperation across borders is needed. Therefore, reinvigorated multilateral and institutional cooperation is key to exploiting this weakness in the financial activities of such violent extremist and terrorist individuals and entities and will enable better mitigation of the related risks.

During 2022 and early 2023, CEP, commissioned by the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, undertook a comparative research project, mapping and analyzing the transnational linkages between XRIRB and organized crime networks in seven countries: Austria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Poland, Sweden, and the United States of America. The study⁴ demonstrated that the cooperation ranges between a simple interaction based on mutual interests, such as the trade in illegal weapons, and hybrid formats in which XRIRB and organized crime networks transform XRIRB networks into ideologically bound fully fledged organized crime organizations.

⁴ Counter Extremism Project, “Transnational linkages between violent right-wing extremism, terrorism and organized crime”, CEP Report, March 2023, <https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/2023-03/CEP%20Report%20Transnational%20linkages%20between%20violent%20right-wing%20extremism%20and%20terrorism%20and%20organized%20crime%20March%202023.pdf>

Focus of Side Event

Centrality of multilateral cooperation

During this side event, which is co-hosted by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, the Department of State of the United States of America and CEP, the major findings of this research will be presented and the incidents and patterns of cooperation of XRIRB networks with organized crime in Austria and the United States of America will be highlighted to illustrate these findings. Given the increasingly transnational nature of both XRIRB as well as organized crime, awareness of the challenges and opportunities for disruption emanating from such cooperation is crucial and requires increased multilateral cooperation.

The event will discuss these challenges and opportunities and aims to:

- 1. Increase awareness of the transnational linkages between XRIRB individuals and entities and organized crime among Member States, the relevant international organizations and civil society:** This should enable all stakeholders aiming to disrupt the operations of transnational XRIRB networks to better coordinate their efforts.
- 2. Increased awareness of administrative approaches that could be adopted to mitigate these risks more effectively:** Governments and law enforcement agencies have long standing experience in combating organized crime as well as in countering XRIRB-structures, including on a transnational level. Therefore, deploying investigative and prosecutorial methods, approaches, and administrative instruments developed to fight organized crime could be deployed to take advantage that the vulnerability of such a cooperation presents for XRIRB networks.
- 3. Stimulate multilateral cooperation and information exchange as well as institutional cooperation within and between Member States to mitigate the associated risks:** Increased cooperation and information exchange between various stakeholders within Member States as well as multilaterally is key in mitigating the risks presented by such transnational linkages. Regularly such XRIRB-related criminal activities span international borders and therefore require multilateral investigative formats.

Agenda

Venue: UN Secretariat Conference Room 11

Timing: 20 June 2023, 17.15 - 18.30

17:15 **Welcome and opening remarks**

Gabriele Scheel

Head of Division “International Cooperation against Terrorism, Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and Corruption”, Federal Foreign Office of Germany

Ian Moss

Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State

David Ibsen

Executive Director, Counter Extremism Project

Moderator:

Dr. Hans-Jakob Schindler

Senior Director Counter Extremism Project

17:30 **Presentation patterns of transnational linkages between XRIRB and organized crime**

Alexander Ritzmann (virtual presentation)

Senior Advisor, Counter Extremism Project

17:45 **Linkages in Austria and the United States**

Dr. Daniela Pisoiu (virtual presentation)

Senior Researcher at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs and lecturer at the Universities of Vienna and Krems, Austria

Joshua Fisher-Birch

Researcher and content review specialist, Counter Extremism Project, USA

18:05 **Moderated panel discussion with participants**

18:30 **End of Side Event**