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Trends. Necessity as the Mother of Invention: International Crime in an Era of Globalization

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The increasing reach and efficiency of telecommunications and mass transport in an era of globalization pose new opportunity for international crime. (1) The various oldest professions and underground economies--e.g., prostitution, gambling, extortion, contract murders, boosting, embezzlement--can more easily function internationally as well as locally, regionally, and nationally. (2) Illicit trafficking in otherwise legal products, e.g., cigarettes, can more easily exploit tax differentials across international borders. (3) Counterfeiting of currency and the introduction of bogus currency can more easily occur outside a national border and distal from that nation's concentration of law enforcement representatives. (4) A specific target's vulnerability to terrorism increases as representations and representatives of that target become further scattered throughout the world and terrorist techniques that wouldn't work on the target's home territory may well work elsewhere. (5) The wealth of information now globally available can be considered a sea in which criminals can swim--especially when different international jurisdictions have different approaches to information management including political and technical constraints for encryption and counterencryption. (6) The introduction of new, strong currencies in large denominations, e.g., the Euro, will increase the ease of illicit money transfers and of money laundering. (7) The facilitation of border crossings in various international unions, e.g., the European Union, also facilitates opportunities for criminals and criminal enterprises. In contrast, the increasing ease of international transport allows criminals and criminal enterprises to take advantage of differences in criminal justice systems among countries. (8) The covert and deceptive exporting of imports is being facilitated. This increases the opportunity for proscribed weapons and weapons materiel and technology and for so-called dual use materiel and technology to end up in criminal hands. Also, there is greater criminal opportunity to exploit legitimate business practices--e.g., wherein products are legally exported at a marked-down price and then illegally exported back to the country of origin at slightly under the original price. (9) Trafficking organizations continue to become more and more sophisticated and can take almost instantaneous advantage of the flux of products becoming prescribed and proscribed--from endangered fish, CDs, to works of art. (10) Supply, demand, and differential constraints are more often putting international criminals ahead of law enforcement and security authorities as to the sophistication of weapons, transport, and monitoring technologies.