

The Nature & Extent of Organized Crime in British Columbia



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Prepared by Criminal Analysis Section, RCMP "E" Division
Corrected version

UNCLASSIFIED

This assessment is based on current information from recent and ongoing criminal investigations, and as well, references source debriefings, other agency reports, media and open-source information; and where possible, has been corroborated through multiple and independent sources. Specific sourcing of information has been omitted on the basis of maintaining the confidentiality of operationally-sensitive information

Corrections

An earlier version of this document was prepared in May 2009 in response to a request for an immediately releasable summary of organized crime in British Columbia. It was released with the erroneous title *2009 "E" Division Integrated Threat Assessment on Organized Crime*. Please note that this document is not intended to replace the *2009 Integrated Provincial Threat Assessment*, published by the Criminal Intelligence Service of BC/Yukon Territory. We regret the error and accept responsibility for any resulting misinterpretation.

The previous version was inadvertently marked as PROTECTED A. As the material was and is written to a standard appropriate for public release, it has been re-marked as UNCLASSIFIED.

The Nature and Extent of Organized Crime in British Columbia¹

This document provides an overview of the nature and extent of organized crime in British Columbia, and highlights their primary criminal activities, which are dominated by the marihuana, illicit synthetic chemical drug and cocaine economies. Although tactical operational detail has been redacted, the text is based in its entirety on the contemporary internal intelligence reporting of the range of law enforcement agencies within the province, and reflects front-line information from the federal, provincial and municipal policing mandates. In particular, the report draws on the findings of the annual Integrated Provincial Threat Assessments (2003 - 2008).

Executive Summary

The activities of organized crime are diverse - their only common link is any product or service for which a profit can be made. The most common examples of organized crime activity include drug trafficking, money laundering, a variety of financial frauds, extortion, illegal gambling, trafficking in alcohol, tobacco and firearms, and people, as well as corruption of public officials to thwart apprehension and prosecution efforts.

On the whole, drug trafficking, specifically marihuana, cocaine and illicit synthetic chemical drugs, and money laundering are the economic mainstay of organized crime operating in British Columbia. There have been a large number investigations - several of them complex and long term - targeting organized crime and gang-related violence over the last several years. Many have resulted in significant seizures of illegal commodities, specifically marihuana, cocaine, illicit synthetic drugs and the chemical precursors used to manufacture them, heroin, and firearms. In addition, there have also been substantial seizures and restraint of cash and other monetary instruments, real property or other articles deemed to have been derived from the proceeds of crime.

Violence - including homicide, contract killings, kidnaping, vicious ordered assaults, extortion and arson - continues to be the hallmark of all levels of the drug economy, specifically as it relates to marihuana, cocaine and illicit synthetic chemical drugs. While many of these violent incidents appear to be how gang members and associates within the drug trade are retaliatory, and instill fear and intimidation, there exist compelling examples these are also challenges for control of turf, market, gang leadership and dominance

In the last few years, there have been a number of highly visible shootings, often occurring during daytime hours with little regard for public safety. This phenomenon is attributed to a small subset of mid-level gang members embroiled in internal and external disputes with their associates and rivals and is not indicative of rapidly rising numbers of organized crime groups. Most organized crime groups victimize their own members and associates, notwithstanding the immeasurable tragedy of the four (4) innocent people who have been shot and killed inadvertently to date.

A number of investigations have targeted organized crime / gang violence over the last several years, which have, at least in part, prevented many planned acts of violence (kidnapings, shootings, contract killings, etc.). This has occurred as a result of enhanced intelligence sharing, the development of specialized knowledge and expertise regarding the criminal activities and membership of specific organized crime groups.

¹ Questions or comments may be directed to Criminal Analysis Section, RCMP "E" Division Headquarters, Vancouver, which is solely responsible for the content of the document and thus for any errors or omissions.

The highlights reported in this document include:

1. there are 135 active organized crime groups known to police in British Columbia / Yukon Territory. The most significant categories of organized crime are Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs, Asian-based Organized Crime, Independent Organized Crime, Middle Eastern Organized Crime, and Indo-Canadian Organized Crime
2. increasing level of influence, interconnectivity and / or linkages between all organized crime groups identified in the province has provided new opportunities for some organized crime groups to expand
3. marihuana cultivation continues to be the most pervasive organized crime activity, although it does not appear to be as lucrative as in previous years, as signified by the relocation and proliferation of large scale growing operations from the Lower Mainland in to the rural areas of the province, as well as Alberta and Saskatchewan
4. over the last few years, there have been substantial increases in importation and diversion of precursor chemicals, as well as expansion of domestic production, trafficking and exporting of finished synthetic drug products, specifically methamphetamine and MDMA as well as significant increases in the availability and amounts of these drugs locally, strongly support the belief that British Columbia has become a major supplier of illicit synthetic drugs both nationally and internationally
5. the illicit synthetic chemical drug industry has emerged quickly and aggressively in recent years and rivals marihuana as the “currency” of choice as regards the return importation of cocaine
6. murder, vicious assaults, shootings, kidnapings, extortions and other acts of violence are largely committed by lower level associates and gang members, embroiled in internal and external disputes, mostly over drug trafficking territory and / or in retaliation for drug rips / debts. All have ready access to firearms and many have access to / are involved in the trafficking of weapons
7. the criminal operations of the upper echelon players has not been significantly affected by the spate of violence - which has often been carried out without regard for public safety - witnessed most markedly in Metro Vancouver over the last several years. Ironically, rivalry between upper echelon criminal organizations has not materialized and they continue to co-exist, overall, rather peaceably

Characteristics of Organized Crime in British Columbia (2009)

Following the definition of “criminal organization” found within the Criminal Code of Canada, such entities are said to possess the following basic characteristics:²

- A membership of three or more individuals
- The ongoing commission of serious crimes, punishable by five or more years in prison
- The expectation that such criminal activity will yield a material benefit

Using this definition, based on current-year intelligence reporting across all provincial law enforcement agencies, 135 active criminal organizations are currently known to police in British Columbia. Although the aggregate figure of active criminal organizations has more than doubled since 2003, the extent to which this increase is a function of actual growth as opposed to improved measurement is unknown, and perhaps unknowable. This increase is primarily due to significant and consistent improvement in the number and quality of criminal networks assessed since the Integrated Provincial Threat Assessment process began, largely as a result of increased analytical / intelligence capacity throughout the province as well as improvements made to data reporting and collection processes, research, corroboration, analysis and consistency in applying SLEIPNIR³ scoring methodology. However, it is likely that some portion of the increase is reflective of expansion in absolute levels of criminal activity over 2003-2008.⁴

Previous Integrated Provincial threat assessments have comprehensively profiled all identified organized crime groups that law enforcement is aware of. The composition of these groups are divided into commonly-applied categories, such as Asian, Hispanic, Eastern European, Indo-Canadian etc⁵. However the culturally diverse compositions of today’s organized crime landscape do not conveniently fit into these ethnic slots. Contemporary organized crime groups are interconnected, often coming together in loose, amorphous, transitory associations with other groups or networks to facilitate a successful criminal undertaking. Commonly, these collaborations are a one-time effort and fragile in composition. When successful, these individuals may regroup for another enterprise or simply disperse afterwards. The fluidity and speed at which these cells operate and morph make “intelligence led” law enforcement difficult.

Just as new organized crime groups have continued to be added to the existing inventory, the assessment methodology also accounts for those groups which have been dismantled, disrupted or dissolved (either through successful enforcement action, failure to thrive, or due to merging with another group) or have become dormant (there is no contemporary intelligence / information). Thus, a number of groups are dropped from year to year, to more accurately account for the most relevant existing organized crime groups. The total organized crime inventory now totals 172 groups.

² CCC467.1

³ Each of the groups are assessed using through the RCMP’s internationally-recognized methodology for assessing organized crime.

⁴ The reader will note this figure reflects criminal organizations whose existence has been *formally documented* by law enforcement agencies. It is not an estimate of the *actual* extent of organized crime in the province, an indeterminate figure but one which is likely significantly greater than the range of known organized crime.

⁵ Division of criminal organizations according to organizational or ethnic affiliation is inevitably problematic. In this report as in previous threat assessment processes, “independent” organized crime includes both “visible majority” and polyethnic groupings. Groups described by unique ethnic affiliation (e.g. AOC, EEOC) are so identified in cases where one particular ethnic or cultural context is a dominant group-bonding characteristic.

Criminal Organizations Identified by Category (2003 - 2009)

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| AOC | 8 | 14 | 10 | 17 | 21 | 24 | 24 |
| EEOC | 3 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| HOC | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| ICOC | 5 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| INDP | 11 | 11 | 35 | 42 | 49 | 49 | 51 |
| MEOC | 0 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| OMG | 10 | 26 | 29 | 36 | 33 | 33 | 33 |
| STREET | 0 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| TOC | 14 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 51 | 82 | 108 | 124 | 129 | 133 | 135 |

Overall, the growth between 2003 and 2009 is primarily due to the number of Asian-based, Outlaw Motorcycle Gang (OMG) and Outlaw Motorcycle Gang-associated⁶ and Independent organized crime groups identified. As collection processes improved, many of these groups were identified in regions of the province outside the Lower Mainland, and manifested in the number of mid-to-low level criminal organizations identified. Changes in most other groups were moderate in terms of absolute numbers.

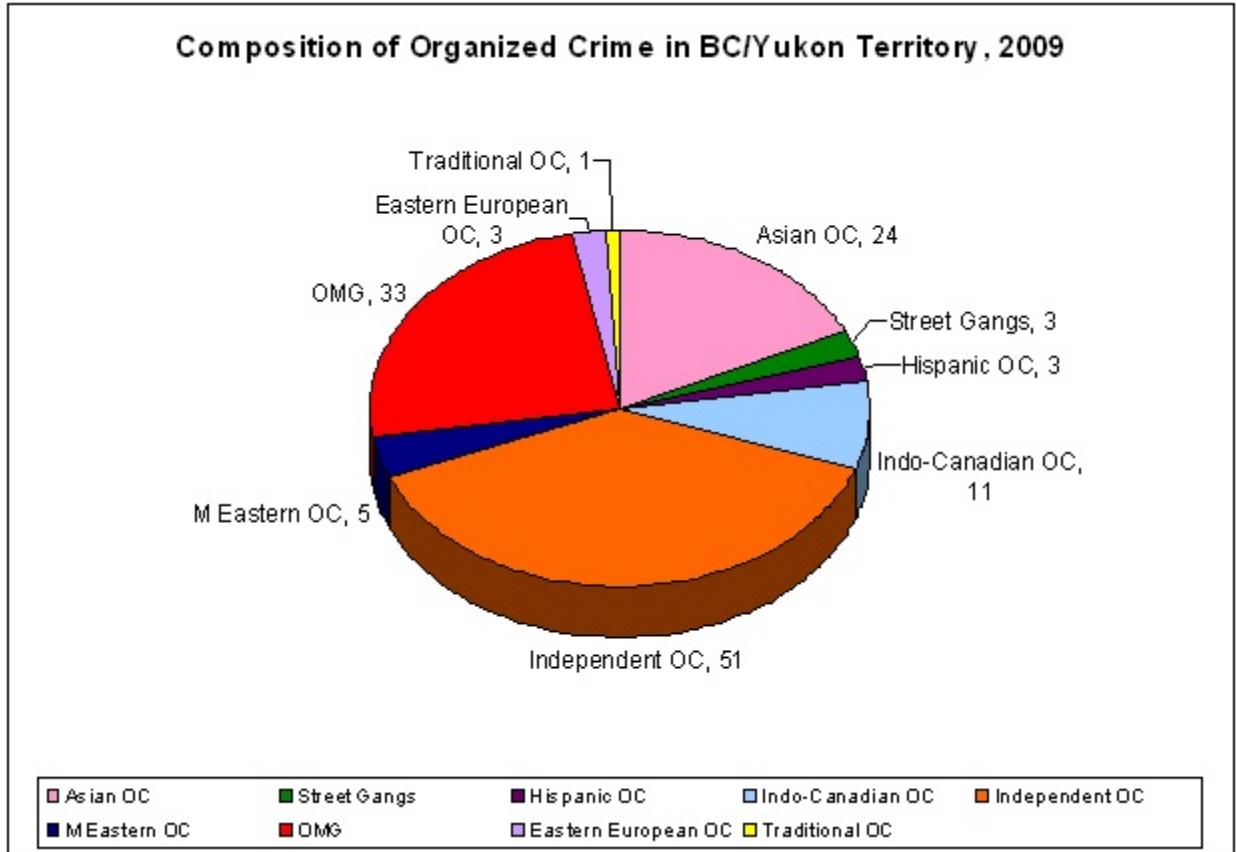
In addition, the number of groups in the Independent Organized Crime category has increased as a result of some migration from “traditional” organized crime genre, reflecting those groups which are now comprised of a more poly-ethnic membership. Specifically, although new Indo-Canadian crime networks have increased in absolute numbers, several groups from that category are now better represented in the Independent Organized Crime category.

Although many Independent Organized Crime groups are truly independent, numerous others cooperate to varying degrees with other organized crime groups, most typically Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs, and thus the dividing line between Independent organizations and Outlaw Motorcycle Gang as an analytical judgement is occasionally very fine. It is also worthwhile to note many of the Independent Organized Crime groups have substantial links and provide criminal support to other and typically higher-ranking Outlaw Motorcycle Gang and Independent criminal organizations.

Persistent intelligence gaps and diminishing infrastructure in any agency to develop and retain corporate knowledge in the Eastern European and Traditional Organized Crime portfolios have resulted in a substantial decline in the number of these groups reported over the same time period.

⁶ defined as groups involving at least one patched member of a 1% club, doing business in the name of such a club, or primarily dependent on patched members for the continuation of substantive criminal activity

Street gangs, Middle Eastern organized crime, and Hispanic organized crime account for the balance of known groups. The absolute numbers of these groups may be understated as the collection process, particularly for Street Gangs and Hispanic organizations is likely incomplete and information is restricted to only a portion of known activity.

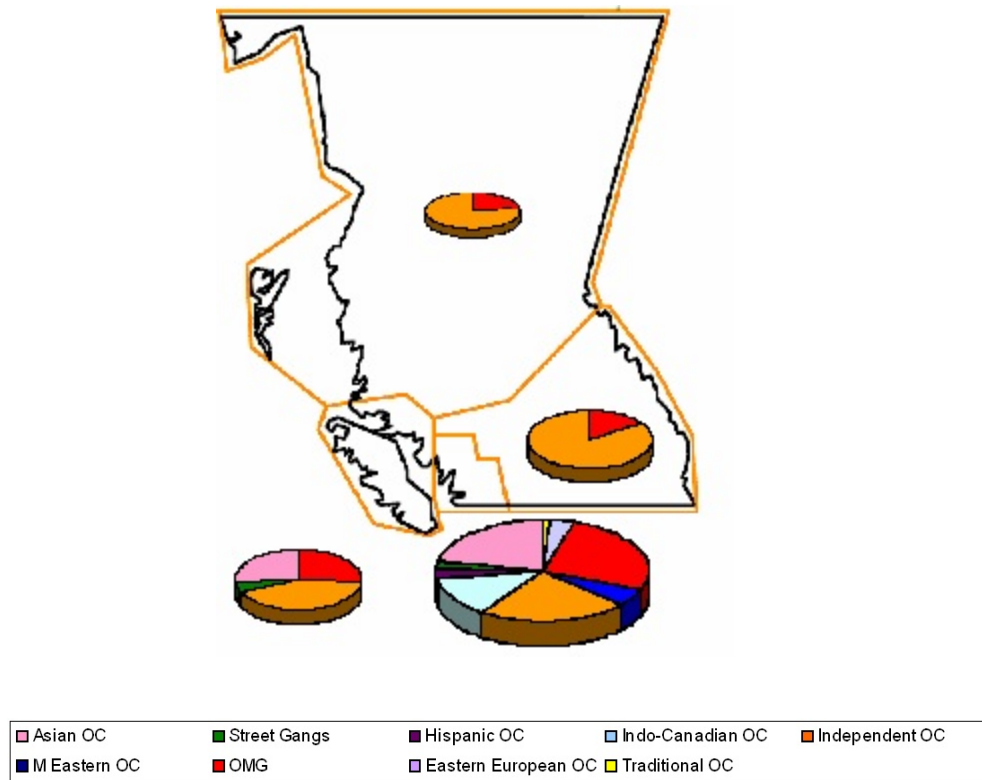


Geographic Distribution of Organized Crime Groups (2009)

Organized crime groups exist or operate throughout the province of British Columbia and Yukon Territory. Although majority of the criminal groups identified exist or operate within the Lower Mainland District, there is a substantial presence - approximately 1/3 - of criminal groups which operate in the Island, Southeast and North Districts, many of which are heavily influenced and / or controlled by those operating in the Lower Mainland. However, the regional numbers are likely still artificially low, due to geographic challenges of areas such as the Peace River, the North Coast, the Kootenay - Caribou, and rural Vancouver Island. Anecdotally, there is believed to be substantial economic and criminal activity. However, current deployment of dedicated intelligence and analytical personnel only partly addresses these gaps.

Consequently, most of the organized crime groups which operate in Districts outside the Lower Mainland are categorized as being comprised of Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMG) and Independent criminal groups. Most of these groups are associated to larger drug networks run from Greater Vancouver area.

In addition, there are several groups which operate in more than one geographic region of British Columbia.



| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Lower Mainland District: | 101 / 135 | (75%) |
| Island District: | 19 / 135 | (14%) |
| North District (incl YT): | 9 / 135 | (7%) |
| Southeast District: | 19 / 135 | (14%) |

Totals exceed 100% as several groups operate in more than one (1) geographic area of the province.