



ILLICIT DRUGS & THE IMPACT OF CANADIAN ORGANIZED CRIME GROUPS

Date: November 22, 2019

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KEY EVENTS

On November 22, 2019, the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies hosted its second annual West Coast Security Conference titled: Guns, Drugs, and the Weaponization of Identity. Chief Constable Mike Serr of the Abbotsford Police, presented on “Illicit Drugs & the Impact of Canadian Organized Crime Groups.” The presentation touched upon the nexus between organized crime, and the use of illicit drugs to fund their agendas. Furthermore, the presentation finished with a quick coverage of each drug that is popularly distributed currently in Canada.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

Chief Constable Serr highlighted how the nexus between drugs and organized crime is much stronger than many know. Currently, the buying and selling of drugs is the number one source of income for these groups; this was further amplified when organized crime groups started using the dark web to create new, discreet transactions of drugs. Furthermore, to showcase how complex these organized crime groups are, Serr highlighted how, currently, in 2019, Canada Post is the number one method to export and import drugs. The complexity of these organizations has gone beyond anything traditional policing methods could handle since these operations often happen on a transnational basis. Currently in 2019, Serr commented on how the top countries linked to organized crime groups in Canada are United States, Mexico, Colombia, and China. Despite these groups being so complex, trends have been found within Canada.

While organized crime groups have fashioned themselves in ways which surpass traditional policing methods, law enforcement agencies have still found trends among these groups. The first trend that was found according to Serr, is the infiltration of the public and private sector. It has been discovered that these groups infiltrate entities such as Canadian Boarder Service Agency, corrections, and law enforcement combined with extensive money laundering through private sectors. The second trend found within Canada is the high amount of firearm related incidents. It has been found according to Serr, that somewhere around 50% of murders in Canada are within the organized crime nexus. Lastly, the final trend found is the make-up of drugs that are now being manufactured to come in and out of Canada.

Chief Constable Serr's presentation focused on the change of drugs that are entering Canadian markets. He commented on four main drugs that dominate the market currently: cocaine, methamphetamine, cannabis, and now fentanyl. While cocaine has always dominated the market, it has seen little increase over the last few years, seeing only a 5% increase from 2015-2018. Rather, fentanyl has become one of the most dominant drugs in the market. With China and Mexico being the primary suppliers, this drug has seen a 1500% increase from 2015-2018. While methamphetamines are still popular, and have seen a 28% increase from 2015-2018, the Canadian meth market is mostly supplied by domestic labs, a trend not seen by other manufactured drugs. Lastly, Serr finished his presentation by discussing how even though cannabis has been legalized in Canada, there has been no decrease in the production or distribution of illegal cannabis. Chief Constable Serr mentioned how Canada will most likely not see a decrease for another three years.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

- Organized crime groups are much more complex than most people know, often getting ahead of traditional policing methods
- New ways of transacting illicit drugs have made it harder for police to track where they are coming and going
- While cocaine has been a popular commodity within organized crime groups, trends have changed to where drugs such as fentanyl have become dominant in the sphere of crime
- While legalization is a useful tactic to decrease the supply organized crime groups have, they will often take years to see any meaningful results as illegal drugs are often cheaper.



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