



**METROPOLITAN
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OPERATION GOLF

Results Analysis: Executive Summary



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Title: Operation GOLF Results Executive Summary		
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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Explanation
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
AWF Phoenix	Europol Analyst Work file related to Trafficking of Human Beings
CEOP	Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre
CO11	Metropolitan Police Service Public Order and Operational Support
DIICOT	Romanian Directorate for the Investigation of Organised Crime and Terrorism
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EC	European Commission
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
EU	European Union
EUROJUST	The EU's Judicial Cooperation Unit
EUROPA	Romanian National Police, RO JIT Partner
EUROPOL	The European Police Office
GOLF	Metropolitan Police Service Operation Golf, UK JIT Partner
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
JIT	Joint Investigation Team
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NINO	National Insurance Number
OCG	Organised Criminal Group
RNP	Romanian National Police
RO	Romania
SCD	MPS Specialist Crime Directorate
SCD5	Metropolitan Police Service Child Abuse Investigation Command
SCD9	Metropolitan Police Service Human Exploitation and Organised Crime Command
SOCA	UK Serious Organised Crime Agency
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TP	Metropolitan Police Service Territorial Policing Command
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency
UKHTC	United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre

1. Background

In 2004 it was identified that a considerable volume of crime was being committed by Romanian Roma groups in central London. This led to an operation conducted in co-operation with the UK Immigration Service and the removal from the UK of 407 individuals concerned in these crimes. As a result 'Other Theft' offences in Westminster were reduced by 29% and pick pocketing was reduced by 24%. This operation was code named 'Golf' and was conducted between October 2004 and July 2006.

Following this operation a significant amount of learning and intelligence was gained and it was identified that Romanian Roma Organised Criminal Groups (OCGs) were behind these crimes and that they were using children to commit the offences. Operation GIRDER, an operation executed by the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), had also identified that a Romanian Roma OCG had smuggled 21 children into the UK for an unknown purpose. This operation led to 8 adults convicted for illegal facilitation of children into the UK.

GIRDER led the Romanian Directorate for the Investigation of Organised Crime and Terrorism (D.I.I.C.O.T.) and Romanian National Police (RNP) to open an investigation into the Romanian Roma OCG involved. This identified that the OCG had moved 1087 identified children out of Romania for the believed purpose of forced criminality. The evidence gathered identified that the majority of these children have been, or are still currently being exploited by being made to beg and commit theft in a number of Western European countries¹. Fig 1 below indicates those countries, and where available specific cities:

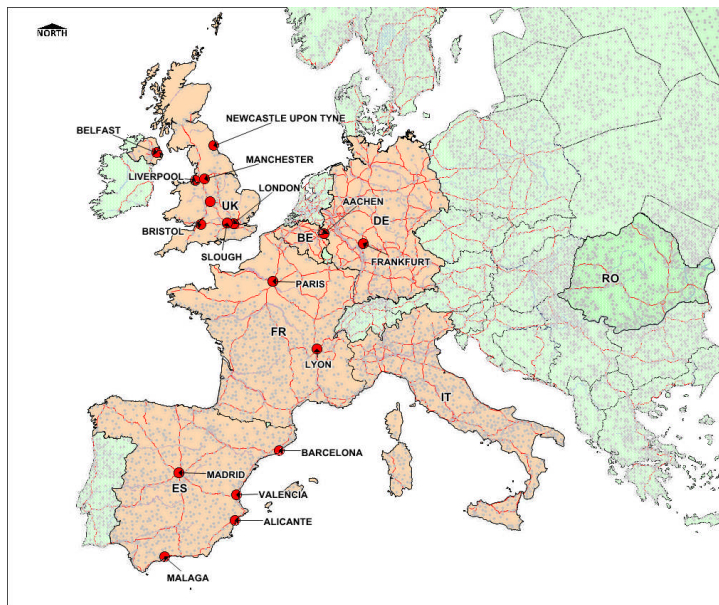


Fig 1 - Countries and Cities where OCG activity has been recorded

¹ It must be emphasised that this is a historical list of victims identified prior to EU enlargement on 1st January 2007; it does not include any individuals that have been trafficked by the OCG since this date.

The members of the OCG and the trafficked children all originate from the single town of Țândărei in South East Romania and are from within the Roma community. These children are then moved throughout Europe for the purposes of criminal exploitation.

DIICOT directed RNP to investigate this OCG under the name Operation EUROPA. They identified the trafficking routes and method used and that the OCG operated in Italy, Spain, France and the UK.

Following Romania's accession to the European Union (EU) in January 2007 it was further identified that in the first 3 months of that year crime in London committed by Romanian Nationals increased by 786%. Analysis identified that these offences were predominantly Thefts committed by Romanian Roma children within the City of Westminster.

The borough commander at this time commissioned a small team of officers, again under the Operation GOLF name to examine the causes of this increase, with information identifying that the suspects of these theft offences were linked to the OCG identified by the Romanian investigation and were likely victims of trafficking.

This was further confirmed by 168 of the original 1087 children having criminal records in the UK and having been active in both the MPS and 32 other UK police areas. OCG members were also identified as either residing or previously residing in the UK and regularly attended police stations as "appropriate adults" for the children.

Therefore a direct link was established between the rise in offending in the MPS and the Romanian Roma OCG with which Operation EUROPA was concerned. The crimes linked to this OCG and the victims of trafficking included Begging, Theft, Pick-Pocketing, Distraction Theft, Cash point snatches, ATM Skimming. The OCG itself was known to run ATM skimming factories, be involved in benefit fraud, forgery and of course Human Trafficking. They were also known to use violence within their own community.

In addition to information related to the EU countries identified, Spanish information indicated that OCG members have identified that the criminal earning potential of each child based in the UK is in the region of €40,000 per quarter. Further information also indicates that the good child thieves can exchange hands between criminal groups for up to £20,000 each.

The money generated from the exploitation of children was not spent in the host country², with all indications that it was transferred either electronically or by trusted courier back to the OCG in Romania. Romanian intelligence further indicated that there are in excess of 100 large residential properties in Țândărei owned by members of the OCG with a total estimated building cost of £20,000,000, which is believed to have been earned through criminal enterprise. Europol analysis AWF Phoenix RE2008-0044 further supports this premise with the identification that transactions received in Romania between 2002 and 2007 related to members of the OCG and associates were predominantly received in Țândărei or Bucharest (fig 2)

² Analysis conducted by Europol of MoneyGram transactions attributed to the OCG from across Europe identified that Spain, Italy and UK were the most frequent countries for money to be sent from. 93% of all transactions had a destination country of Romania. Source: AWF07-38 Phoenix RE2008-0044

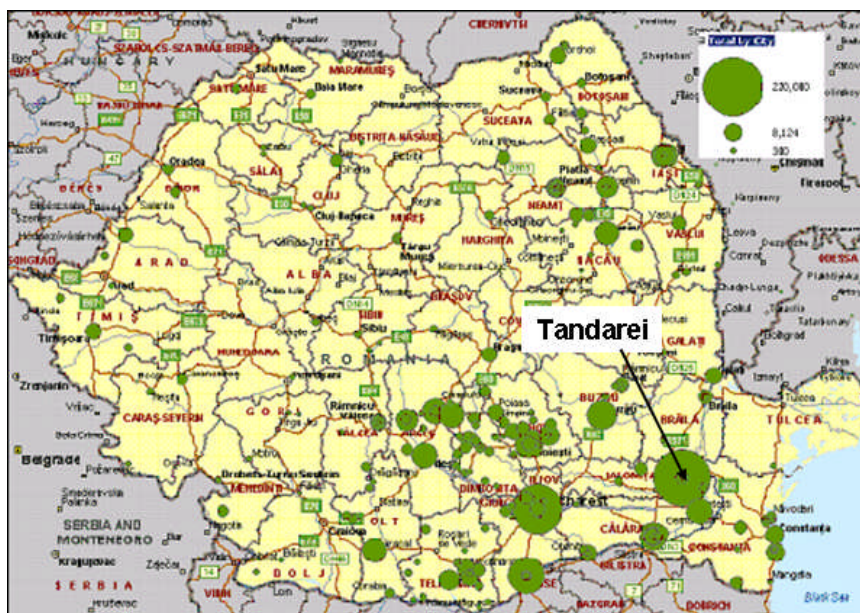


Fig 2 Destination³ cities of transactions 2002-2007

2. Framework

Due to the international nature of the OCG and the fact that the crime and exploitation was identified as occurring in the UK, with the profits realised in Romania, it was proposed that a Joint Investigation Team be set up. The JIT members were named as the MPS, RNP, DIICOT, UK Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), UKHTC, Europol and EuroJust.

The specific purposes of this JIT in relation to this OCG were agreed by all parties to be⁴:

- to investigate and prosecute individuals within the OCG, and disrupt its activities in England and Wales, Romania and elsewhere;
- to identify, restrain and confiscate criminal assets in criminal or civil proceedings;
- to facilitate the gathering, timely exchange and enhanced use of intelligence, information and evidence;
- to facilitate the co-ordination of the national investigations and any subsequent proceedings, with the support of EuroJust where appropriate;
- To agree an investigation and prosecution strategy, and the appropriate jurisdiction for any proceedings, with the support of EuroJust where appropriate.

The operation action plan⁵ also identified the following specific points regarding how these objectives would be achieved:

- Romania: to identify and prosecute, where appropriate, the principals/organisers of the OCG
- UK: to identify and prosecute, where appropriate, other members of the OCG operating in the UK
- Parties of the JIT to share intelligence and information and, where appropriate, to provide evidence to support prosecutions in either jurisdiction
- When operating in either country the JIT members will follow the relevant intelligence and operational procedures of that country

³ Source: AWF Phoenix RE2008-0044

⁴ Source: "JIT-UK-RO AGREEMENT - FINAL 1 9 08"

⁵ Source: "Op Action Plan FINAL AGREED"

- In terms of investigatory powers; any necessary authority for the application of these powers shall be obtained in accordance with UK/Romanian national laws

The JIT was unique in that it was the first to be led by a British Police Service and also within the EU focusing on Human Trafficking.

The JIT was initially funded by a 70% grant⁶ successfully obtained from the European Commission (EC) ISEC fund with the remaining costs borne by MPS Territorial Policing Crime Command (TP).

The UK team included Senior Management (Supt, Chief Insp and Det Insp), 2 Operational Teams and a small Intelligence Unit. In addition the JIT was supported by a dedicated team of analysts at Europol delivering pan-EU Analyst Work File reports (AWF Phoenix) and the MPS TP Financial Investigation Unit.

Other key partners in the execution of the responsibilities of the JIT included MPS Child abuse investigation (SCD5), Human Exploitation and Organised Crime (SCD9), Non Governmental Organisations and Child safeguarding specialists within the public sector.

As part of GOLF's aims it was necessary to focus efforts on 2 strands related to the OCG with which the JIT was concerned:

- OCG members and associates: disrupt and prosecute members of the OCG in any criminality undertaken, particularly the continued exploitation and trafficking of children
- Identification and Safeguarding of victims: to identify, locate and actively seek to safeguard those potential victims of trafficking within the UK⁷

In total GOLF mounted 24 proactive and intelligence led operations within the UK to tackle both of these specific strands.

⁶ €1.52 million with a total project cost of €2.2 million

⁷ As per Section 5: "Op Action Plan FINAL AGREED" Whilst the purpose of the JIT is to identify and prosecute members of the OCG, the duty of care owed to victims of trafficking is recognised, and their rights will be paramount throughout the investigation.

3. Key Findings

Arrests and Convictions

- 120 Arrests have been conducted by the UK partner over the course of the JIT related to 104 individuals
- 71 convictions were gained in total. 52 individuals gained custodial sentences equating to a total custodial time of 59 years. This varied from 2 to 56 months imprisonment.
- Arrests and convictions were obtained for numerous offences (including Trafficking, Money Laundering, Fraud and False Documents)
- 4 individuals have been deported by UKBA with a further 9 currently being assessed for deportation

OCG Members and associates: Case Study 1 - Op CADDY

- CADDY was a pre-JIT operation that set the framework for future large scale operations
- Joint partnership working between Police and local authorities was tested for the first time in this context
- Tangible results were achieved in regards to a reduction in crime and the identification and safeguarding of victims
- 4 subjects convicted of Human Trafficking into and around the UK and child neglect
- Identified that parents were complicit in the trafficking and exploitation of their own children

OCG Members and associates: Case Study 2 - Op FIELDING

- Reinforced earlier findings that parents were complicit in the trafficking and exploitation of their own children
- Identified children also being used in order to fraudulently obtain UK benefits
- Tangible evidence of Pan-EU offending by suspects and that numerous police interventions in Spain and the UK had failed to stem this activity
- Both defendants received custodial sentences with deportation procedures to proceed following their completion

OCG Members and associates: Case Study 3 - Op HORWARD

- HORWARD was a multi agency investigation into a large scale benefit fraud
- OCG activities were proven to involve the exploitation of victims to obtain benefits and therefore the procurement of funds
- The scale of the fraud was increasing year on year with HMRC figures estimating that successful claims for benefit culminating from this fraud would be over £2m in total
- HORWARD set the standard in terms of the method with which to disrupt OCG members who were in receipt of benefit
- Links between OCG and associates and other areas of the UK
- If all claims related to this case had progressed to payment, the annual loss to the UK would have been in excess of £5m

OCG Members and associates: Case Study 4 - Op AMAT

- UK authorities identified a wanted subject of RNP/DIICOT investigation as living in the UK under an assumed identity
- Subject identified as having cash and material wealth in Romania and the UK yet without any discernible legitimate income
- Investigations led to the subject being convicted of False representation and obtaining property by deception and a 3 year custodial sentence
- Upon completion subject to be extradited to Romania to stand trial for crimes related to the trafficking of minors for exploitation

OCG Members and associates: Case Study 5 - Op HOBKIRK

- HOBKIRK identified a previously unknown and high level member of the OCG as operating within the UK
- The subject was involved in forgery and fraud for a number of years with connections to the RADU family
- The arrest and trial of main subject and associates has caused the OCG to lose crucial links to the UK activities
- 9 suspects were convicted with a total custodial time of 13.5 years

Identification and Safeguarding of victims

- Of the 272 victims originally highlighted by the Romanian authorities as forming part of their case, 80 were identified as being known to UK Authorities
- To date 25 have been located and assessed by police and partner agencies across the UK
- Operation LONGSHIP tested EU JIT legislation by allowing juridical powers to Romanian Officers and prosecutors on UK soil
- Interviews of victims under Op LONGSHIP were therefore useable in the case against known OCG members in Romania
- Operation NORMAN was a successful operation to safeguard potential victims in Ilford. 15 of the 17 individuals were located and assessed
- The partnership approach of NORMAN was hugely beneficial in the timely assessment of the victims and community reassurance
- A supportive media response was received for safeguarding activities and highlighted Human Trafficking to the general public

Operation EUROPA: 08 April 2010

- EUROPA showed that JIT practices could work under either jurisdiction
- UK officers were able to gather evidence from properties in Tandarei, Romania
- The use of a joint intelligence cell, as used in previous operations, was effective allowing real time information sharing between MPS, RNP and Europol staff

4. Conclusions

4.1 Areas for improvement/Alteration

The lengthy and quite often bureaucratic process of information sharing at the inception of the JIT caused problems in the timely transfer of data between partner agencies. The introduction of the direct liaison with Europol UK International Desk that was later introduced would have been beneficial from the outset. A recommendation would be that any specific JIT regarding OCGs should have this streamlined process in place upon inception to minimise delays and ultimately assist with timely investigation and intelligence gathering.

Another area of improvement could be a dedicated intelligence team from the inception of the JIT, fully staffed with officers and staff with the relevant competencies for the roles⁸. Although the UK team had this model in the latter half of the JIT period, the introduction of this at a much earlier stage would have enabled the investigation teams to follow pre-developed lines of enquiry and to be fully compliant with NIM standards much earlier than was the case. This would also have negated the possibility of investigations being mounted without sufficient intelligence gathering and therefore a much better use of resources in the long run.

4.2 Effective and Poor practice

Due to the nature of the JIT there were elements of processes being tried and tested for the first time, with both positive and negative outcomes. The nature of the OCG and the hidden nature of trafficking methods and practices were a particular problem, with officers and staff required to find new ways of identifying activities and the perceived hierarchy within the OCG.

Examples of good and effective practice conducted by the JIT include:

- Partnership working, not exclusively between the JIT partners but also with other agencies⁹ in both intelligence and investigation functions. A healthy dialogue and building of an effective working relationship being paramount
- Information sharing and the development of intelligence products both internally (within the UK team) and externally (through AWF Phoenix) to help focus intelligence gathering and investigation
- The use of financial investigators to identify proceeds of crime and avenues for confiscation and restraint of assets

Conversely, and understandably, there are also areas that could be considered of a poorer quality:

- Reactive rather than pro-active operations, which arose more within the early stages of the operation when the Intelligence team was not as well defined. This practice led to operations that were mounted without the full information being known, and only being effective in the gathering of information
- Earlier small operations in other force areas where GOLF officers were assisted by other force personnel and the repercussions of the operations were fully left with the host force. An example of this would be Operation LEATHAN a joint OCG targeting and victim safeguarding operation based in BRISTOL, whereby Avon and Somerset police were left to deal with prisoners and children of

⁸ Analyst, researchers, Field intelligence officers

⁹ These included UKHTC, CEOP, Avon and Somerset Police, Thames Valley Police, Northumbria Police (incl Special Branch), HMRC, DWP, ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes), WIZZAIR, Thames Valley Social Services, Redbridge Social Services and Health, MPS SCD9, SCD5 and SCD6 et al

concern. This was rectified in later operations with GOLF staff providing a more thorough support function and “after-care”

4.3 Repeatability

It is clear that Operation GOLF had a number of operational successes and it is envisaged that the methods employed by the JIT should be replicated in future operations of this type. It is clear that when targeting a transnational OCG that the JIT legislation enables the investigation into their activities to be timelier and with clear juridical benefits for the parties involved.

In terms of safeguarding activities it is clear that Operation NORMAN of 12 October 2010 was a success due to the prior planning and clear intelligence led approach. The scale of the operation, inclusion of partners from the early stages and the processes engaged in should be repeated if another similar operation is to be mounted.

Also, as earlier identified, if further operations of any kind are instigated against Roma OCGs (not only Romanian Roma) that a translator be sought at the earliest opportunity, although this may be extremely problematic.

4.4 Success of the operation

It is possible to state that GOLF has been successful in achieving the objectives as set at the inception of JIT. Through the pursuance of the “best evidence of worst offence” in line with the SCD Standard Operating Procedure and partnership working with other agencies, GOLF have arrested and disrupted prominent and peripheral members of the OCG and their associates for a number of crimes. This method has been previously recommended by SOCA in tackling trafficking OCGs; “(SOCA Investigations) were unable to establish evidence of trafficking as this is a hard offence to prove. Partner agencies therefore had to use alternative strategies to disrupt the group”. In the case of GOLF this method proved effective in both the immediate disruption of activities of these members, but also impacting on the ability, and indeed workings of the OCG within the UK and Romania.

However, as a note of caution, it is also possible that the activities of the Tandarei Roma OCG may continue in other EU countries where a more targeted approach has not been implemented against this group, and with the closure of the UK/RO JIT (and the inherent lack of continued targeting of this group) these activities may reoccur unhindered within the UK.

5. General Recommendations

Intelligence

- A more streamlined information sharing procedure between JIT members and Europol would be advantageous in enabling timely creation of knowledge products
- A robust intelligence team should be in place from the outset to reduce mission creep and keep activities pro-active as much as possible
- Data sources from numerous providers should be used in the location of potentially trafficked individuals due to the hidden nature of human trafficking

Prevention

- MPS to consider monitoring of Roma Romanian OCG activity following the closure of GOLF and running up to the Olympics to ensure that the activities of this specific OCG does not re-emerge and go unhindered
- Continued training and presentations to practitioners regarding the exploitation of minors by Romanian Roma OCGs

Enforcement

- Focused investigation of both Trafficking and other offences to ensure “best evidence of worst offence” and to disrupt OCGs

5. Links

The following are selected articles and web links related to media coverage of Operation Golf:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/jul/30/romanians-jailed-children-beg-steal>

<http://content.met.police.uk/News/Operation-Golf-team-named-Childrens-Champions-2010/1260267435861/1257246842383>

<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23822728-police-smash-romanian-trafficking-ring-that-smuggles-children-to-london.do>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/police-smash-romanian-child-trafficking-ring-2104694.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1327788/Gipsy-campaigner-Lavinia-Olmazu-jailed-multi-million-pound-benefits-scam.html>

<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/3237545/9-bed-home-of-benefits-gipsy.html>