

Series Editor's Introduction

This book provides a discussion about an area of policing that has suffered from a lack of research; surprisingly little is known about the characteristics of transnational organized crime (TOC) and corruption and the links between them. Mitchell Congram, Peter Bell and Mark Lauchs provide a scholarly overview of the circumstances and contexts in which these activities flourish, and the different ways offences are planned and conducted, and the different ways offenders organize themselves. It does not shy away from considering definitional issues, nor does it let these get in the way of progressing discussion about how best to respond. Indeed, this aspect, how to tackle TOC and corruption, has, in particular, received far less attention than it merits.

The authors argue that tackling these offences will always require a variety of approaches, not least because they manifest themselves in different ways; different causes and patterns of offending will inevitably call upon the need for different prevention approaches. The skill rests in pinpointing these thereby affording the opportunity for focused responses that have the potential to work.

They argue that a key element of organized crime groups is the need for communication; they need to engage with each other speedily and reliably. This is a key way in which communication interception technology (CIT) comes in, and is the focus of much of the book. Although it has received limited discussion, the authors highlight its potential. Similarly, with regards to corruption, they discuss the merits of accessing 'dark networks' via intelligence

gathering with the help of CIT; that is both to identify offenders and to disrupt networks. CIT is presented as more than just an investigative technique but as an investigative tool in its own right.

The use of technology typically poses a range of challenges. This includes 'human factors' relating to usability issues that receive less coverage to the advantage of a discussion of another main challenge, and perhaps the main one, the balance between providing security and ensuring respect for civil liberty issues. Legal complications and the broader intelligence gathering culture pose further hurdles to the integration of CIT. Yet through case study examples you will read about the opportunities.

This book proposes a theoretical model for integrating CIT into investigations and intelligence operations. The theory has to be tested but is presented in order to generate discussion about how to better tackle both TOC and corruption. For that reason alone we must hope its merits and drawbacks are debated rigorously.

Martin Gill