



Organized Crime Research Brief no. 8

Integrated Anti-OC Units

BUILDING A SAFE AND RESILIENT CANADA

As of 2009, there were 157 integrated organized crime units. Clarity and consistency on the roles and responsibilities of partners and team members is the key to their success.

The increasing sophistication of criminal organizations and the multi-jurisdictional nature of organized crime demand an equally sophisticated law enforcement and regulatory response. In Canada, a number of integrated units involving law enforcement and other stakeholder agencies, often at multiple levels (e.g., federal, provincial, territorial), have been created to more effectively combat organized crime. The purpose of this study was two-fold: (a) compilation of a current inventory of all integrated teams and units operating in Canada; and (b) a more detailed qualitative analysis of a subset of these units to better understand their operating procedures, challenges, and keys to success.

A snowball sampling approach was used to take a census of all Canadian integrated teams and units, in order to populate the inventory with basic background information (e.g., unit name, location, mandate, date of inception, targeted criminal groups and activities). In-depth, semi-structured interviews were then conducted with members of selected integrated units. The interview material was supplemented by written documentation provided by units, such as agreements, constitutions, and reviews.

The study developed a database of 157 units, with a wide variety of mandates, geographic areas, and governance structures. Interview participants spoke of the various strengths of their integrated units, as well as the best practices that contribute to these strengths and assist them in mitigating any challenges. Some of the key best practices identified were: having a strong Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which serves as a guide for unit managers to define the unit mandate and fully outline each partner's roles,

responsibilities, and contributions; assuring all team members are aware of and adhere to their roles and responsibilities; ensuring that positions are staffed with committed individuals willing to work as a team; working with partners to ensure that new members possess the required skills and qualities for working within the integrated unit; and maintaining flexibility in the face of differing policies and procedures of partner agencies.

An examination of the integrated units also revealed that gaining the trust and support of senior management of all partners, as well as from government, also contributes to the successes of these units. Supportive management provides leadership, commitment, buy-in, and participation, and assists with accountability and oversight. Strong management support can also help to resolve issues within the unit. Government support, whether municipal, provincial, or federal, can assist in providing continued (financial and human) resources to the unit.

Challenges noted by many participants included difficulties in obtaining human or fiscal resources, lack of a single, common system for information management and sharing, and difficulties in getting municipal agencies to accept letting their members work outside of jurisdictional boundaries. A few participants noted that lack of partner commitment can reduce the effectiveness of an integrated unit.

This report touched on a number of aspects of integrated units but could not probe extensively into any one specific area. The authors suggested that further research into some targeted areas should be considered. For example, funding and governance of integrated units could be one area worthy of additional study. There may be reluctance to fund initiatives that agencies perceive as operating outside of their jurisdiction and benefiting primarily other jurisdictions. But while organized crime may

be concentrated in one area, it has wide-ranging effects.

The authors noted that it would also be worthwhile to explore the area of information and data sharing in greater depth, looking at the systems already in place, how they differ, and the various processes that units use for entering and managing data and information.

The authors also suggested that future research could wish to consider looking into how to measure the success of integrated units. What effect do the integrated units have on their priority target crimes, and how do these initiatives benefit all partners? These potential avenues for research could further contribute to the justification for integrated units and partner contribution in these units.

Chorney, Brenda and Rick Linden, with Rita Gunn. (2010) *Organized Crime Integrated Units: Analysis Report*. Ottawa: Law Enforcement and Policing Branch, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Chorney, Brenda and Rick Linden, with Rita Gunn. (2010) *Organized Crime Integrated Units: Final Populated Inventory for Canada*. Ottawa: Law Enforcement and Policing Branch, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

For more information on organized crime research at Public Safety Canada, please contact the Organized Crime Research Unit at ocr-rco@ps-sp.gc.ca.

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