



Tool 5.6 Parallel financial investigation

Overview

This tool discusses the financial aspects of the crime of trafficking in persons.

Financial investigation plays a crucial role in successful investigation of trafficking in persons. Early liaison should be established with the office that carries out financial investigation, to make it a part of counter-trafficking response.



Follow the money and you will find the trafficker.

The financial aspects of the crime of human trafficking present themselves in at least two important ways:

- The crime itself is all about money. In addition to the initial investment to create the infrastructure and deliver the personnel for exploitation, the ongoing management of the proceeds of the exploitation and, finally, the laundering and movement of the profits have to become part of the activities of the traffickers.
- Trafficking is a crime that takes time to establish and develop. Therefore, it becomes a lifestyle crime. Such lifestyle pursuits as travel, expenditure on luxury items like cars and jewellery, and leisure activities, for example frequenting restaurants and casinos, all require means and methods of purchase.

It is advisable to conduct proactive financial investigation both during the pre-arrest investigative phase and in the post-arrest phase.

Financial investigation in the pre-arrest phase

Use of parallel financial investigation is considered against the risk of disclosing the law enforcement operation. However, asset confiscation legislation often contains punitive provisions for any individual or institution that discloses the fact of a financial enquiry to an account holder. This reduces the security risks that are always attached to proactive enquiries in the pre-arrest phase.

In the pre-arrest phase, financial investigation is particularly valuable for various reasons:

- The investigation of financial transactions and the analysis of the results will often provide important information that can be used to ensure that the operation progresses more efficiently (e.g. investigation of the purchase of travel tickets may reveal details of travel arrangements, and analysis of credit card expenditure can reveal airlines, hotels, restaurants or other venues regularly used by traffickers. This information can be the basis for the allocation of surveillance resources).

- Pre-arrest financial investigation is designed to identify the amount and location of criminal assets derived from the crime.
- It is possible to coordinate the arrest phase with the financial sequestration procedures in order to arrive at the optimal situation of synchronized arrest of traffickers and sequestration of their assets.
- Investigators get double value from the same evidence: evidence of large-scale financial gain and expenditure supports prosecution and that same evidence forms the basis for post-conviction assets confiscation proceedings.
- The ability of law enforcement agencies to identify, investigate, sequester and confiscate assets derived from trafficking sends a message to criminals that trafficking is not high profit/low risk.



Source: UNODC training manual on the implementation on the ECOWAS Initial Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons (2002-2003), available at:

www.unodc.org/pdf/ecowas_training_manual_2006.pdf