TRAK: Exploiting Human Traffickers' Links to Russian Criminals and Intelligence and Security Services

SUMMARY: Human traffickers' criminal activities are often linked in some manner to transnational criminal organizations. In Russia, criminal enterprises have long been used as instruments of state power and as platforms for Russian Intelligence and Security Services (RISS) to conduct and/or support a wide range of intelligence activities to further its domestic and foreign policies. Traffickers' business models require them to hide in plain sight and use forums, chats, advertisements, job postings, hidden services, etc on the surface web and marketplaces on the deep and dark webs for financial transactions, money laundering, etc. Traffickers generally maintain less than the optimum level of operational security and often operate across multiple criminal verticals (drugs, weapons, etc). Their online presence is vulnerable and can be exploited to provide insights into RISS and criminal activities, personnel, networks, and locations with the greatest return on investment.

BACKGROUND: The vory, the professional elite of Russian organized crime, have roots that go far back into the days of the tsars when professional criminals became entrenched in Russian life and society. During Soviet times the Kremlin's ruling elites demonstrated a willingness to turn to criminals as assets or recruits when needed. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, organized crime became part of the process of building the "new" Russia. With the post-EuroMaidan worsening of relations with the West and awareness of the West's greater economic, military and soft power, the Kremlin has increasingly adopted what has been called a "mobilization state" approach. Moscow sees the current geopolitical clash with the West as an existential political struggle analogous to war and is deploying all foreign policy levers, from nationalist oligarchs, disruptive media outlets, to organized-crime connections abroad.

Modern Russian organized crime is flexible, networked and entrepreneurial; individuals take on multiple identities and roles, they act opportunistically and exploit all available opportunities for making money. Criminal gangs play key roles in human trafficking, corporate raiding, environmental crime, transational money laundering, etc. The growing interest in and awareness of human trafficking results from the rapid and precipitous increase in Russian-speaking women forced into prostitution at home and around the world. Russian criminal activities are most prevalent in countries with a high concentration of ethnic Russians, including the US and Israel. It is no wonder the U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report ranks Russia as a Tier 3 country, or one where the government does not meet the standards to eliminate trafficking. Russian efforts to eradicate trafficking are token at best and officials continue to accept bribes to halt investigations, protect traffickers and return victims to their captors.

TRAK: TRAK is a software as a service (SaaS) tool to provide user-friendly intuitive web interface on top of a secure cloud based framework, domain-specific indexing, contextualized data mining, and custom spider software. TRAK is comprised of four primary modules:

    1. Content Scraper to scrape any data source of interest into an encrypted data store, scanning constantly to obtain any temporal data that may become unavailable in the future.
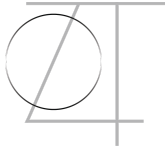
2. Evidence Cache to store ephemeral data and maintain chain of evidence and access logs to ensure that all scraped data is available for analysis and law enforcement prosecution, as appropriate..

3. Contextualized Profiling and Quantification Engine (core of the system) to provide predictive trend analytics; multiple data point context classification relying on keywords, linguistics, facial recognition, image analysis, geo-location and other attributes to generate profiles targeting macro domain activity & specific cases throughout multiple data sources; aggregate pre-classified relevant data sets.

4. Reverse Profiling Engine (proprietary provisional patent) to provide analyst-based machine learning to improve the effectiveness of qualifying processes.

ANALYTICAL SERVICES: Zero Trafficking's analytical services provide additional value-added results. In addition to TRAK, we employ a mix of open source link and pattern analysis tools and advanced analytical techniques to conduct investigations to produce analytical insights. We use a surface web-centered approach augmented with deep and dark web breach data to exploit vulnerabilities in the traffickers' online presence. For example, within the organized sex traffickers' business model is an implicit need to advertise--something they regularly do in online, open-access forums. These advertisements are easy to collect, aggregate and analyze. They also contain phone numbers, email addresses, IP addresses, and social media handles which can be used to direct targeting efforts. No other sector of transnational criminal networks freely publish such identifiers in large quantities. These advertisements are easy for us to collect, aggregate and analyze.

We track publicly available information (PAI) and personally identifiable information (PII) in Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Romania, the United States, and continue to expand our offerings. Zero Trafficking is currently tracking a large suspected Russian criminal network on the East Coast of the United States.

PRICING: Pricing will vary based on the scope of work, level of effort, deliverables, period of performance, etc. Consider a small scale, short duration, pilot project to test our capabilities and learn what works and what doesn't with the least level of risk and cost. Please contact us (see below footer) for a consultation.

PROPRIETARY AND CONFIDENTIAL

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Reducing the number of human traffickers, their profits, and freeing victims