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## **SHEET - LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS OF THE DIA DURING THE SEMESTER**

### **INTRODUCTION**

*The analysis of the info-investigative extracts from the information assets of the DIA referring to the first half of 2023 shows a scenario of Italian organized crime that confirms how Mafia groups, which for quite some time now have been adapting to the ever-changing socio-economic contexts and the profitable penetration of business sectors, have implemented interpersonal skills by replacing the use of violence, increasingly residual but never fully abandoned, with strategies of silent infiltration and corruptive actions. This is evidenced, on one hand, by the numerous law enforcement investigations conducted on the Mafia associations' hoarding of public contracts and services and, on the other hand, by the murders committed in Mafia contexts, especially in the Campania<sup>1</sup> and Apulia<sup>2</sup> regions, as well as the seizures of weapons also carried out this semester.*

*Today, Mafia groups would rather turn their attention to business-entrepreneurial fields, taking advantage of the availability of large amounts of capital earned through traditional illicit activities. Criminal groups, moreover, show a special sensitivity in picking up certain signals from the territory, signals that they detect and satisfy by displaying empathy and proximity to the community of which they are a part, although in a distorted way that serves exclusively their own interests.*

*In this context, distancing themselves from the model of an old generation Mafia, and instead, adhering to a new and appealing entrepreneurial image, the use of technology takes on a decisive role in the illicit activity of criminal organizations. Indeed, with increasing frequency, the latter use encrypted communication systems for internal communications and multiple instant messaging applications, as well as social media for external communication. These aspects are effectively highlighted by the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor, Giovanni MELILLO, who at a hearing on **June 21, 2023** before the Congressional Commission of investigation into the phenomenon of Mafia groups and other criminal organizations, including foreign ones, stated how “many people think that Mafias are an expression of ... weak and backward economic fabric, a sort of reflection of the poverty of those realities. Instead, reality proves that criminal organizations are an expression and an instrument of the accumulation of economic wealth and refined processes of*

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<sup>1</sup> In particular, during the six months under review there were a number of murders and injuries that were attributable to Mafia dynamics, especially in the province of Naples.

<sup>2</sup> These are murders and attempted murders of top members of the factions, which occurred during the six months in question, particularly in the provinces of Bari, Foggia and Lecce.

*speculative expansion ... From this point of view, Matteo Messina Denaro's capture and the dissolution of a protection network based on the "pizzini" (small pieces of paper with indications) brings an epoch symbolically to a close ... these are still refined and deep-rooted systems that, together with the pizzini, have learned to control the markets that rely on digital networks". As the Prosecutor points out, digital technologies are "...the organizational fulcrum of criminal networks, not only of Mafia networks...". They represent "...an intensifier of the operational skill of the criminal network... Generally speaking, Mafia crime groups live in cyberspace... they shape it for different purposes".*

*The outcomes of the investigations carried out in the period under examination have highlighted how the main transnational source of proceeds for criminal cartels remains, to this day, drug trafficking. This criminal activity is sometimes managed through new organizational models exploiting the internet particularly for drug dealing. This dimension of "internationalization" affects all levels, even in the retail transaction, that is, sometimes, commissioned to foreign actors merely for "executive" tasks. This international projection of syndicates has the ability to create relationships with the most important foreign drug suppliers to set up new supply channels for the shipment of narcotics. Moreover, crime groups focus on the unlawful fulfillment of other criminal businesses, including the oil products market.*

*As previously mentioned, the signs of infiltration by groups in the control of public bodies altering the efficient running of public administration are also noteworthy. In this respect, in the period under examination, dissolution and extension measures for Mafia penetration within three municipalities in Sicily, two in Calabria and in Campania and one in Apulia were undertaken proving the southern regional context to be more vulnerable to this group<sup>3</sup>.*

*As is customary and with the usual attention to the evolution and transformation of Mafia groups, this Report offers a description of the framework of organized crime also through some illustrative maps, following a partially renewed structure<sup>4</sup>.*

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<sup>3</sup> In the first half of 2023 pursuant to art. 143 of the TUEL (Consolidated text of Law on Local Authorities) the Municipalities of Mojo Alcantara (ME) with Presidential Decree dating February 3, 2023, Scilla (RC) with Presidential Decree dating April 11, 2023, Castiglione di Sicilia (CT) with Presidential Decree dating May 25, 2023 and Rende (CS) with Presidential Decree dating June 28, 2023 have been dissolved and the dissolution has been prorogated for Calatabiano (CT) with Presidential Decree dating February 21, 2023, for Trinitapoli (BAT) with Presidential Decree dating July 18, 2023 and more recently in Campania for the Municipality of San Giuseppe Vesuviano (NA) with Presidential Decree dating August 9, 2023 and for Castellammare di Stabia (NA) with Presidential Decree dating June 28, 2023. It is remarkable how in the last few days of 2022 the dissolution of the Municipality of Foggia (FG) with the Presidential Decree of December 2, the dissolution of the Municipality of Simeri Crichi (CZ) with the Presidential Decree of December 23 and the one of Nocera Terinese (CZ) and Rosarno (RC) with the one of December 29 had been prorogated.

<sup>4</sup> Maps are merely indicative of the presence of the most important syndicates, inferred on the basis of investigations carried out by the DIA and by Police forces.

*In particular, stating that, overall, in each Mafia group no substantial change in the structure has been reported, the report on the first half of 2023 begins with some **general considerations** regarding the Mafia threat, particularly relating to risk scenarios linked to the ability of organized crime to infiltrate into the economic and financial sector of public procurements and of Public Administration. Furthermore, the **second chapter** focuses on each group ('Ndrangheta, Cosa Nostra, Camorra, Apulian Mafias and other Italian and foreign Mafias), describing the structure, geographical subsystems, internal power balance, international relations, goals, operational modalities, and any other domain of interest. In the **third chapter** the presence of Mafias in the territory and activities to tackle it are analyzed region by region, with a focus on the provinces and Mafia projections abroad. The **fourth chapter** illustrates international cooperation activities to tackle Mafias, upon which the DIA focuses, as they represent a vital device to confront modern syndicates with a growing international dimension. The **fifth chapter** delves into the monitoring activities of public contracts carried out by the DIA, as part of a complex prevention system that has recently been enhanced, adopted ahead of the placement of public funds linked not only to the PNRR but also to other important national projects. Furthermore, concerning the protection of the financial and economic system, the DIA's model to counter money laundering, created for this specific aim, is explained in the **sixth chapter**: a commitment that the DIA carries out even in establishing norms and coordinating with other relevant authorities.*

*Annexed to the report there is a **summary** of the outcomes and of the preventive and investigative activities carried out by the DIA in the period under examination.*

*This update of the report seeks to offer a better understanding of the document itself, maintaining all the detailed content that can be accessed with different levels of insight, on a territorial level or by topic. In this respect, in addition to the full text of the report, this updated edition contains a shorter version, titled “at a glance”, that still contains all the fundamental elements.*

## **1. GENERAL REMARKS**

Italian organized crime is constantly evolving and adapting itself to unstable market conditions in order to maximize illegal income. At the same time, these profound and unceasing transformations of organized crime are able to reduce the investigative groups' attention on their actions and to gain the maximum social consensus possible by introducing themselves as entities that provide services and opportunities for revenue. In a word: social well-being or at least the perception of it. However, it is not seen as a right of the citizen, but as a donation given by a larger entity in exchange for compliance - if not obedience.



As a consequence, businesspeople who may struggle to establish themselves in the complex world of productive activities and business costs are attracted by these organizations and provided with a copious amount of illegally acquired money. Hence, capital given with ostensible ease captivates SMEs owners who do not think about the negative consequences on their businesses. Giovanni MEILILLO<sup>5</sup>, Procuratore Nazionale Antimafia (National anti-Mafia Prosecutor), speaks in this respect when describing “...*the incredible silent expansion of business networks that are progressively attracted by organized crime...*”. He emphasizes how “*over time we have experienced the growth of a business network which meets the needs of the business expansion of organized crime. As a consequence, this growth makes it possible to increase revenue and development, to generate social consensus, new forms of representation and technical protection – as for the latter, not only in the hidden criminal interests. It is patently clear that the leadership of the Mafia cartels follows this description as it is understood that to exercise governance positions in the main criminal groups, they need to be able to manage those roles in extended and widespread business networks*”. Furthermore, regarding the capacity of the Mafia groups to transform themselves and their inclination to detect social change and adapt to it, the Procuratore Nazionale Antimafia stresses that “... *This entails important transformations for criminal organizations as well... market relations also change Mafia groups. An organization aiming at entering the financial services, insurance, labor market mediation, consulting, logistics and commercial distribution sectors knows that they are approaching complex systems. As a result, they need to attenuate the original profiles of structural rigidity and cultural homogeneity. They need to choose more flexible models – which are also safer from the risks of judicial repression. At the same time, the increasing use of more flexible and efficient organizational methods among crime groups involves: the multiplication of illegal revenue and the growth of collaboration patterns for reinvesting illicit profits – which are the fundamental needs of a Mafia organization*”. Finally, the Procuratore Nazionale Antimafia concludes by highlighting the proximity of organized crime to the business worlds. This relationship “*can be observed in different forms. However, they can only partially – if not marginally – be characterized as the scheme in which a company is victim of violent and threatening pressures by organized crime. On the contrary, this relationship is different: it is based on a win-win exchange*”.

Therefore, today more than ever the fight against Mafia organizations could not function without a concrete and effective collaboration among all the involved Institutions, since the Mafioso mentality still endures in the people’s imagination. For that reason, the world of politics, culture, information

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<sup>5</sup> Hearing at the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry on Mafia phenomenon on **June 21, 2023**.

and, last but not least, work should relieve citizens from the need of “*protection*” to satisfy their fundamental needs and from the fear of undergoing pressure and threats.

Speaking of which, it is important to stress the family background and accomplices that allegedly allowed the *boss* Matteo MESSINA DENARO’s active state of absconding. He was arrested on **January 16, 2023** by Carabinieri and deceased on September 25, 2023 during detention. His was an extended logistic network that ranged from his driver to his family doctor, from the person whose identity he acquired to his sister - arrested in **March 2023**. According to her precautionary measure, she is considered as “*loyal executor of the fugitive’s orders*”. Thanks to her, the *boss* was able to exercise his leading role in *Cosa Nostra*. As a matter of fact, she managed the Mafia organization’s capital, she sent and received messages, and she acted as “... *main reference for the confidential transmission chain of the so-called pizzini*[II](#)” on her brother’s behalf. Among other accomplices, there are the wife and daughter of a person serving a life sentence - they are also relatives of a deceased Mafia family leader in Campobello di Mazara. They reportedly took care of the *boss*’ needs and prevented law enforcement from detecting him by implementing every precaution needed. Besides, other participating people were responsible for collecting medical prescriptions and health documents from and for the complaisant doctor. As stated in another protective order, they were in charge of monitoring the “... *public road to verify the presence of law enforcement or other people* [...] *They provided MESSINA DENARO with long-lasting support aimed at satisfying his personal needs and maintaining his absconding state*”.

Generally speaking, in order to weaken these protection networks in favor of Mafia *bosses*, it is necessary to put the spotlight on the penitentiary context. It should not be considered only from the point of view of internal security, law and order, but also to limit and prevent these organizations from growing and widening their influence inside prisons. There is an impelling need to adopt every precaution possible to impede the entry of more technologically advanced and small telecommunication devices that could be able to elude ordinary controls of the appointed personnel. Indeed, mobile phones would allow detainees to be in contact with the outside world and would allow Mafia people to connect with their organizations. Consequently, they would still be able to exercise their leading roles and it would jeopardize the purpose of specific isolation measures. To make an example, this phenomenon is confirmed by the recovery of some mobile phones equipped with cables, chargers, and more than 400 grams of hashish. These items were found during some controls carried out by the prison administration police in Melfi prison (Potenza) in **March 2023**. Impressive to mention is the escape of a *Gargano area Mafia* leader, member of a *clan* in Vieste (Foggia). This

took place on **February 24, 2023** in Badu e' Carros prison (Nuoro) where he was being detained under a high security regime.

Referring to the crime trend in the first semester of 2023 and comparing it with the same time frame in the previous year, the following explanatory graphs are shown to contextualize the Mafia threat in the wider general framework of criminality.

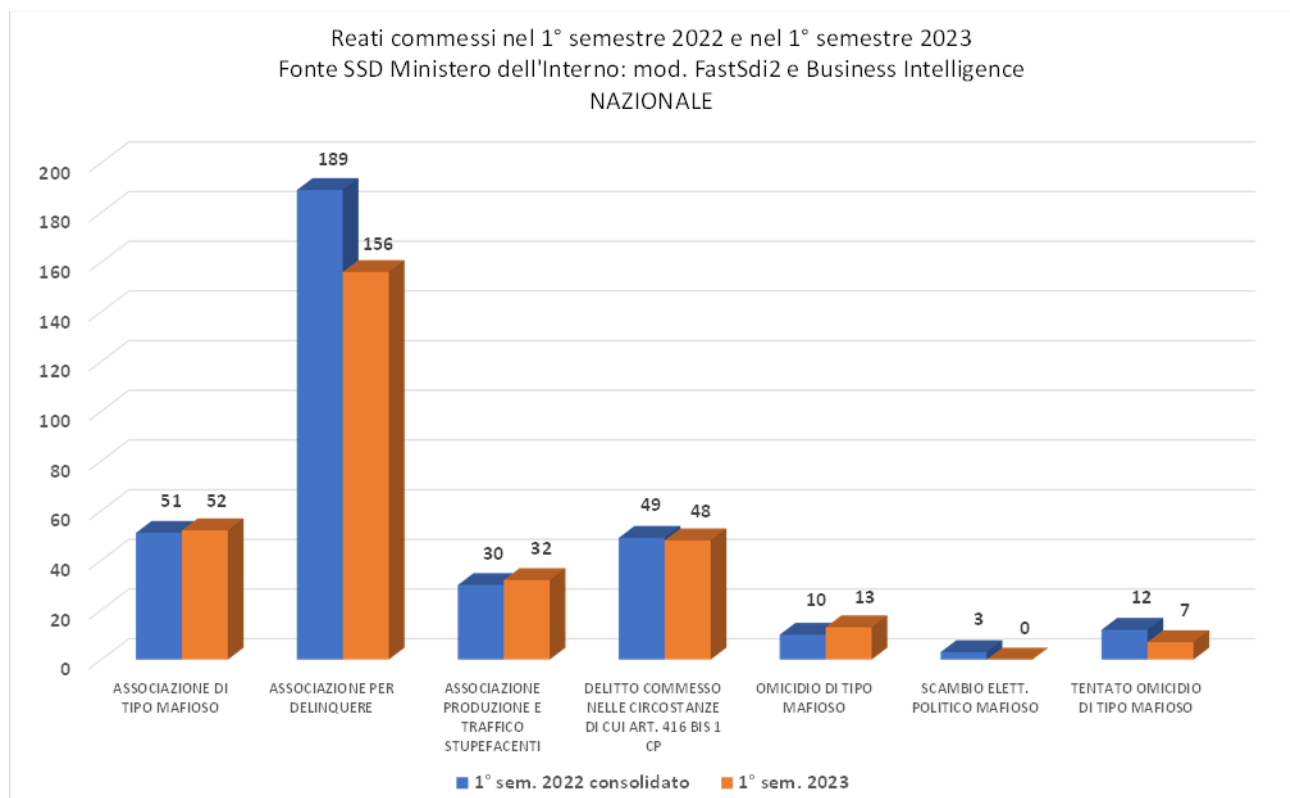
The first group of histograms refers to criminal conspiracy, Mafia-type organization, and other related crimes referred to in article 416a of the Italian Criminal Code (C.C.). Regarding the latter, a slight increase has been reported, limited to northern Italy. On a national scale, we can observe a downward trend of some examined criminal offences with the exception of “*Mafia-type organization*” and “*Mafia-style murder*” - whose increase is located in southern Italy. The previously mentioned area is also affected by a slight growth of the crime of “*association for the purpose of unlawful production and trafficking of narcotic drugs*”. It is important to emphasize that the last type of offence also regards contexts unrelated to Mafia. Specifically, it concerns the multitude of crime groups which are not organized, occasionally assembled and whose Mafia-relation is yet to be determined.

## FIRST GROUP

Crimes committed in the first semester of 2022 and in the first semester of 2023

Source: SSD Ministry of the Interior: mod. FastSdi2 and Business Intelligence

### NATIONAL LEVEL



- Mafia-type organization

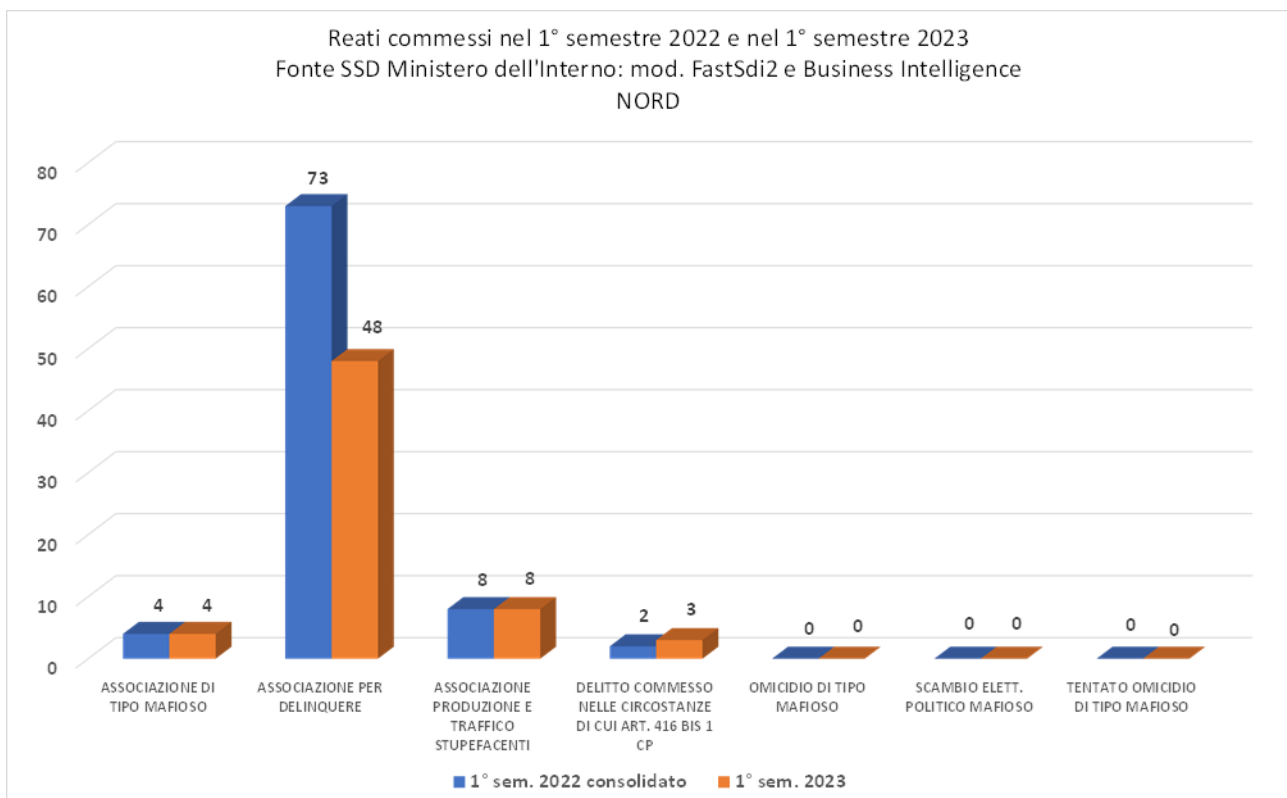
- Criminal conspiracy
- Association for the purpose of unlawful production and trafficking of narcotic drugs
- Crime committed in the circumstances referred to in article 416a 1 of the C.C.
- Mafia-style murder
- Political-Mafia exchange vote
- Mafia-style attempted murder

Consolidated first semester of 2022 - first semester of 2023

Crimes committed in the first semester of 2022 and in the first semester of 2023

Source: SSD Ministry of the Interior: mod. FastSdi2 and Business Intelligence

#### NORTHERN ITALY



- Mafia-type organization
- Criminal conspiracy
- Association for the purpose of unlawful production and trafficking of narcotic drugs

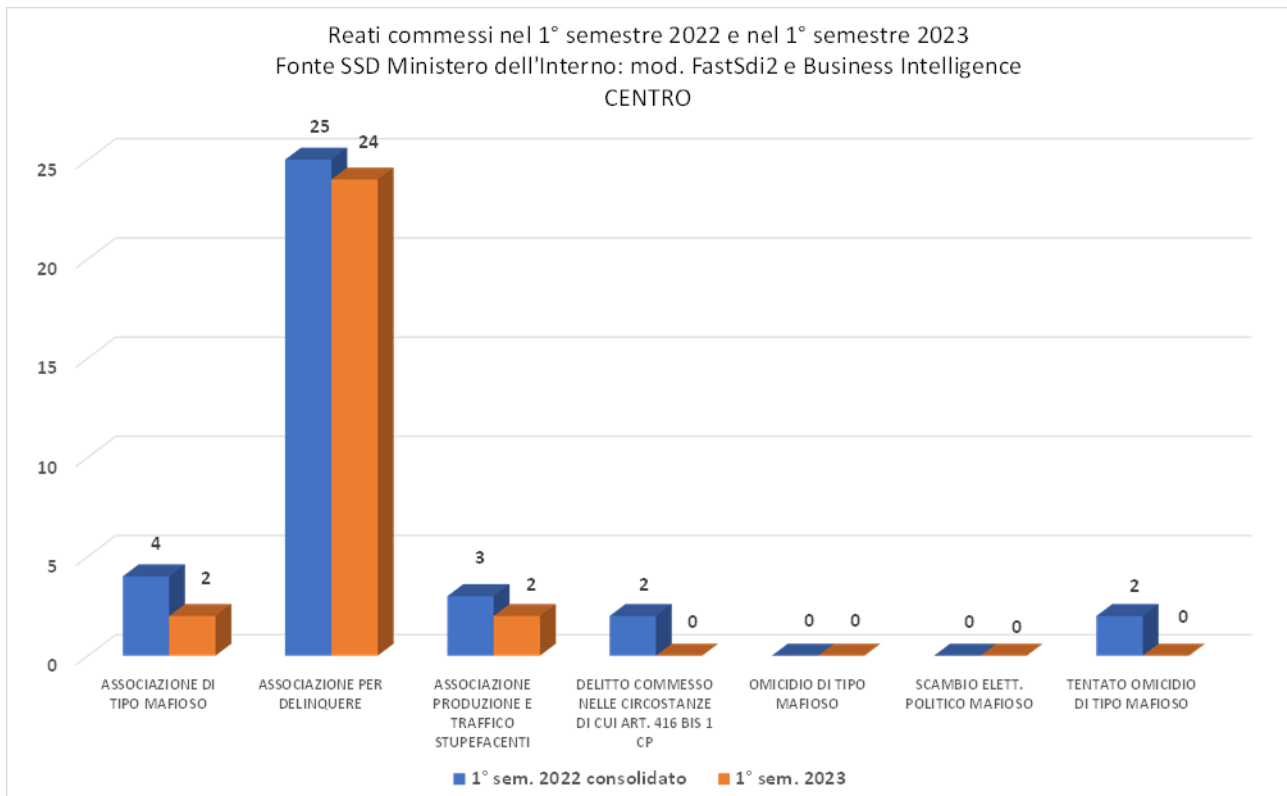
- Crime committed in the circumstances referred to in article 416a 1 of the C.C.
- Mafia-style murder
- Political-Mafia exchange vote
- Mafia-style attempted murder

Consolidated first semester of 2022 - first semester of 2023

Crimes committed in the first semester of 2022 and in the first semester of 2023

Source: SSD Ministry of the Interior: mod. FastSdi2 and Business Intelligence

### CENTRAL ITALY



- Mafia-type organization
- Criminal conspiracy
- Association for the purpose of unlawful production and trafficking of narcotic drugs
- Crime committed in the circumstances referred to in article 416a 1 of the C.C.
- Mafia-style murder

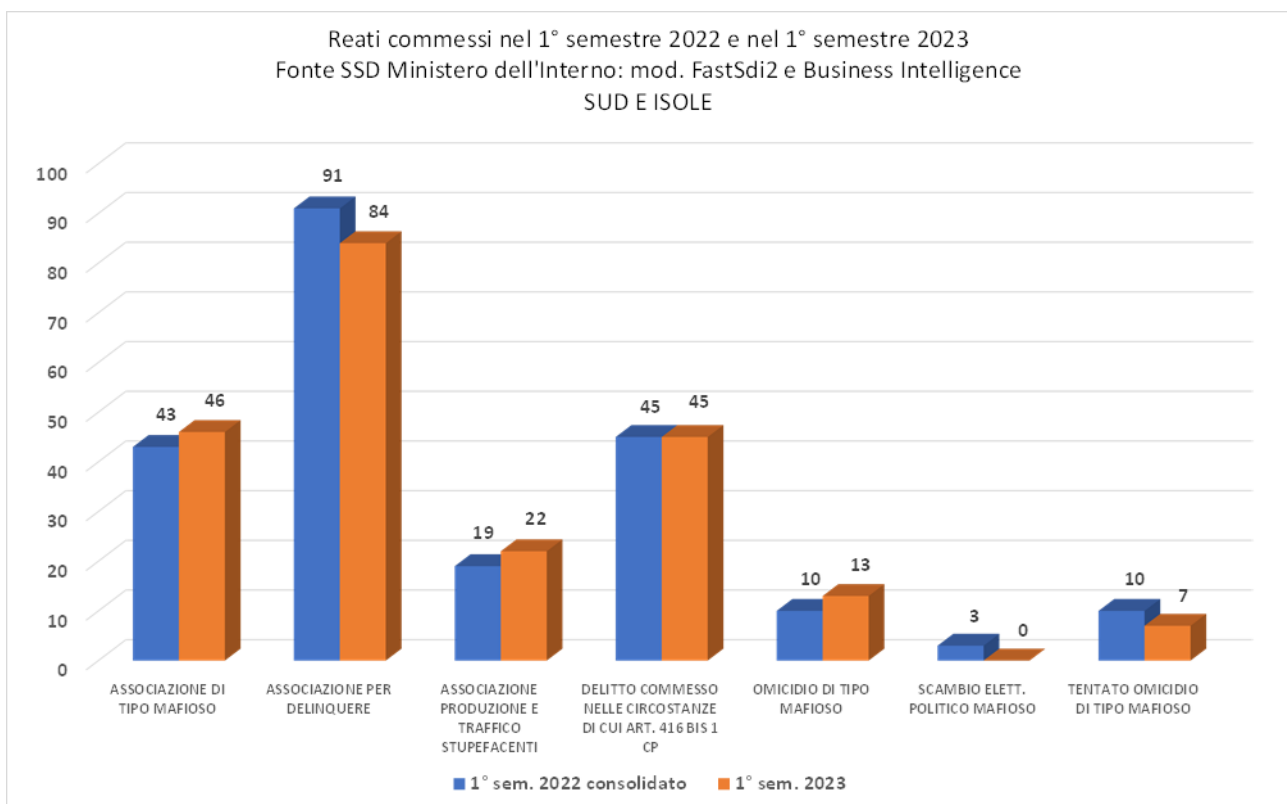
- Political-Mafia exchange vote
- Mafia-style attempted murder

Consolidated first semester of 2022 - First semester of 2023

Crimes committed in the first semester of 2022 and in the first semester of 2023

Source: SSD Ministry of the Interior: mod. FastSdi2 and Business Intelligence

### SOUTHERN ITALY AND ISLANDS



- Mafia-type organization
- Criminal conspiracy
- Association for the purpose of unlawful production and trafficking of narcotic drugs
- Crime committed in the circumstances referred to in article 416a 1 of the C.C.
- Mafia-style murder
- Political-Mafia exchange vote
- Mafia-style attempted murder





## SECOND GROUP

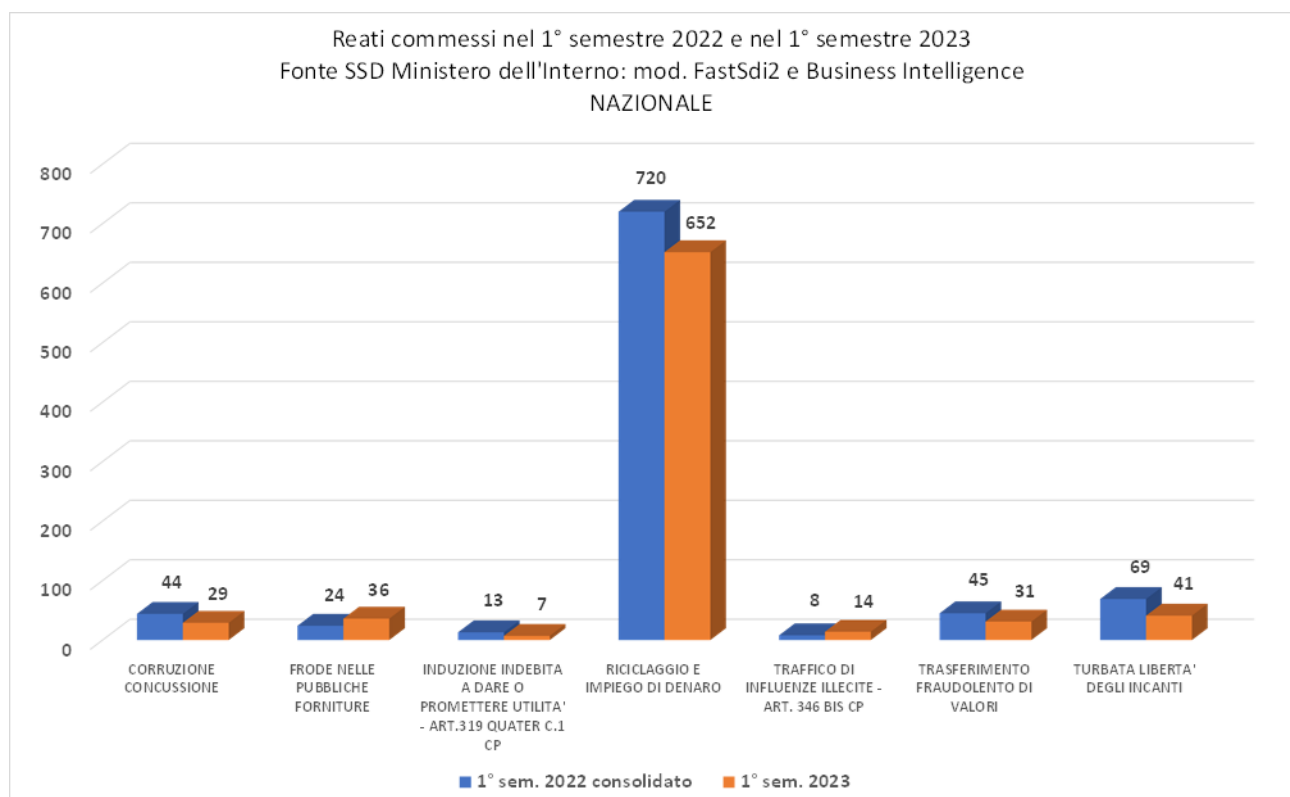
It appears that these types of offenses - which usually express the typical Mafia business activity and its penetration into the economic and financial sector - are generally decreasing. However, figures regarding “*fraud in the awarding of public procurement contracts*” and “*trading in influence*” show an increase throughout the Italian territory.

Although *laundering* is diminishing on a national scale, said diminution is less observable in central Italy. However, the data should not create any hasty optimism, considering that these types of offenses are mainly detected through large-scale and complex investigation activities - which for the most part are conducted during time frames that widely exceed the semester and imply an immeasurable, veiled number of unknown or undetectable behaviors.

Crimes committed in the first semester of 2022 and in the first semester of 2023

Source: SSD Ministry of the Interior: mod. FastSdi2 and Business Intelligence

### NATIONAL LEVEL



- Corruption, bribery
- Fraud in the awarding of public procurement contracts

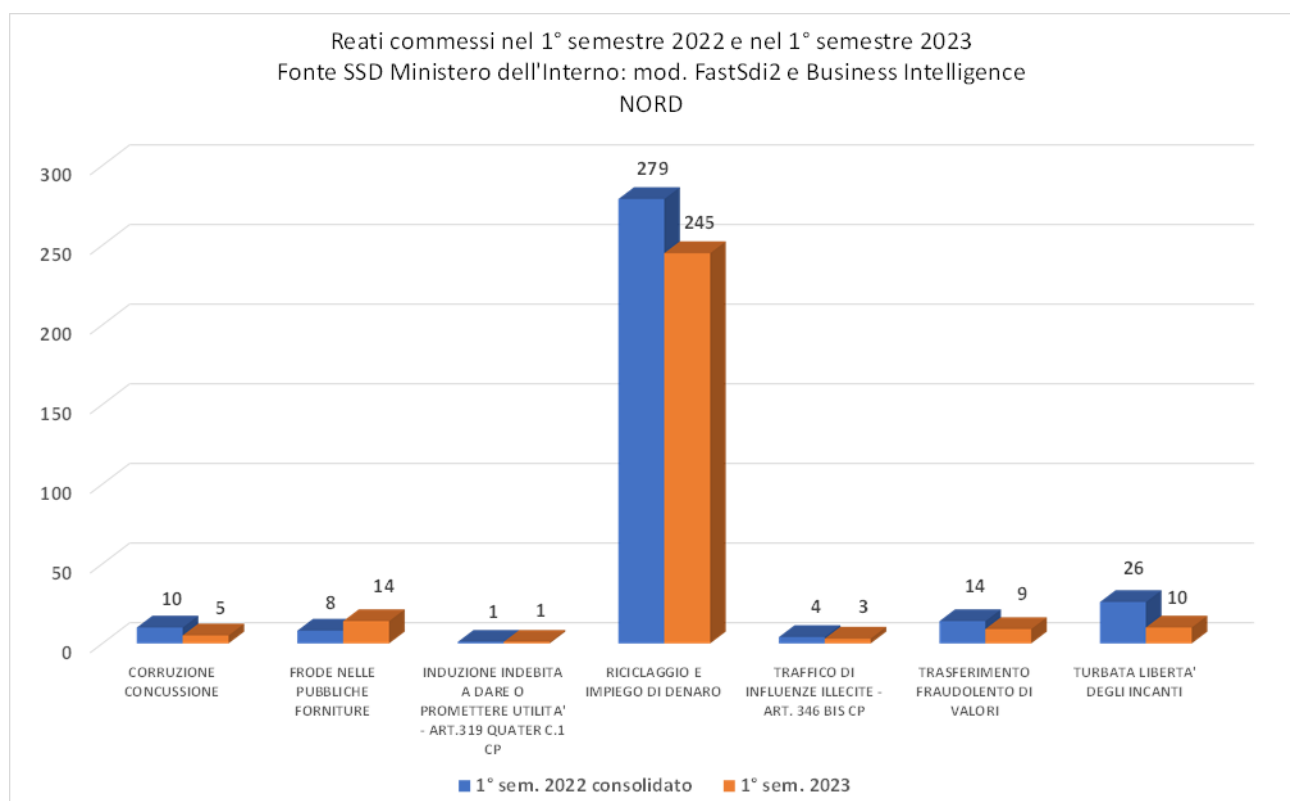
- Undue inducement to give or to promise advantages (article 319-quater subparagraph 1 of the C.C.)
- Money laundering
- Trading in influence (article 346a of the C.C.)
- Fraudulent transfer of valuables
- Obstruction of public tender procedures

Consolidated first semester of 2022 - first semester of 2023

Crimes committed in the first semester of 2022 and in the first semester of 2023

Source: SSD Ministry of the Interior: mod. FastSdi2 and Business Intelligence

#### NORTHERN ITALY



- Corruption, bribery
- Fraud in the awarding of public procurement contracts

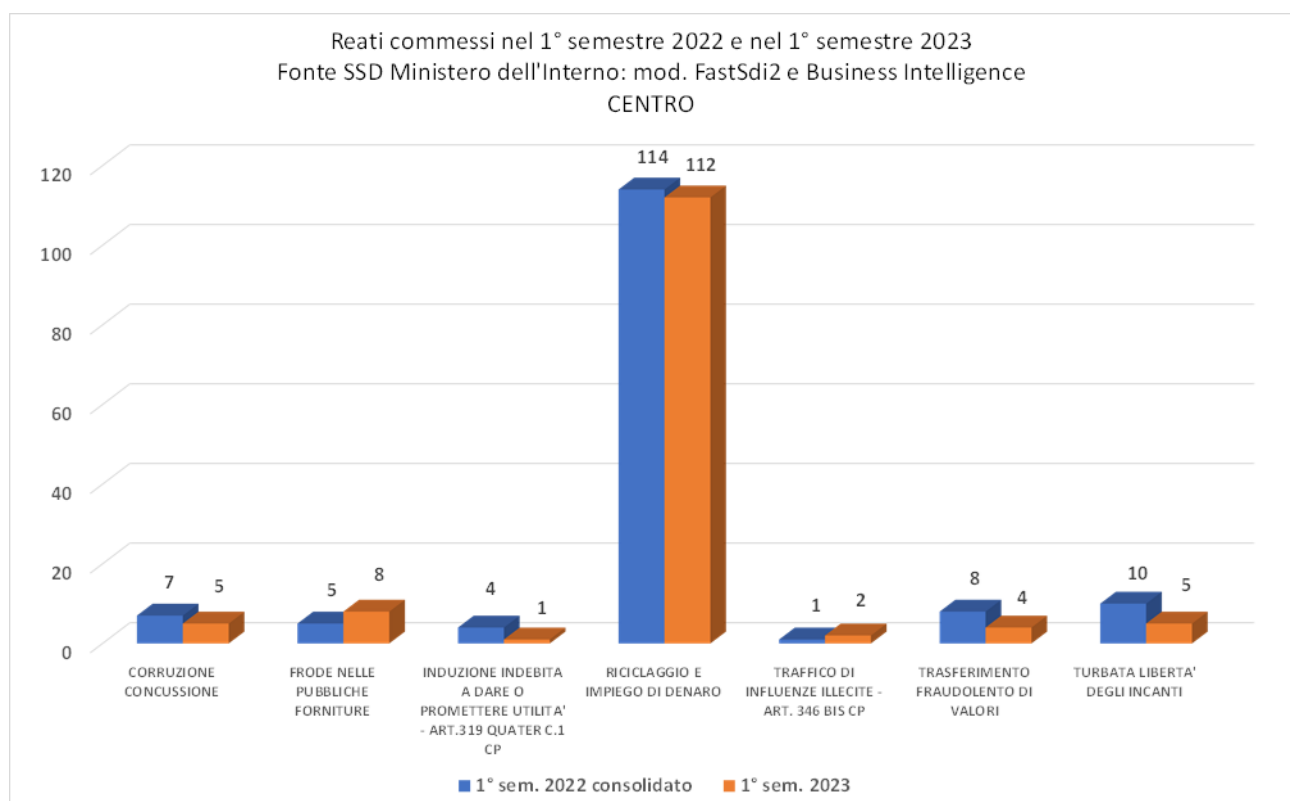
- Undue inducement to give or to promise advantages (article 319-quarter subparagraph 1 of the C.C.)
- Money laundering
- Trading in influence (article 346a of the C.C.)
- Fraudulent transfer of valuables
- Obstruction of public tender procedures

Consolidated first semester of 2022 - first semester of 2023

Crimes committed in the first semester of 2022 and in the first semester of 2023

Source: SSD Ministry of the Interior: mod. FastSdi2 and Business Intelligence

#### CENTRAL ITALY



- Corruption, bribery
- Fraud in the awarding of public procurement contracts

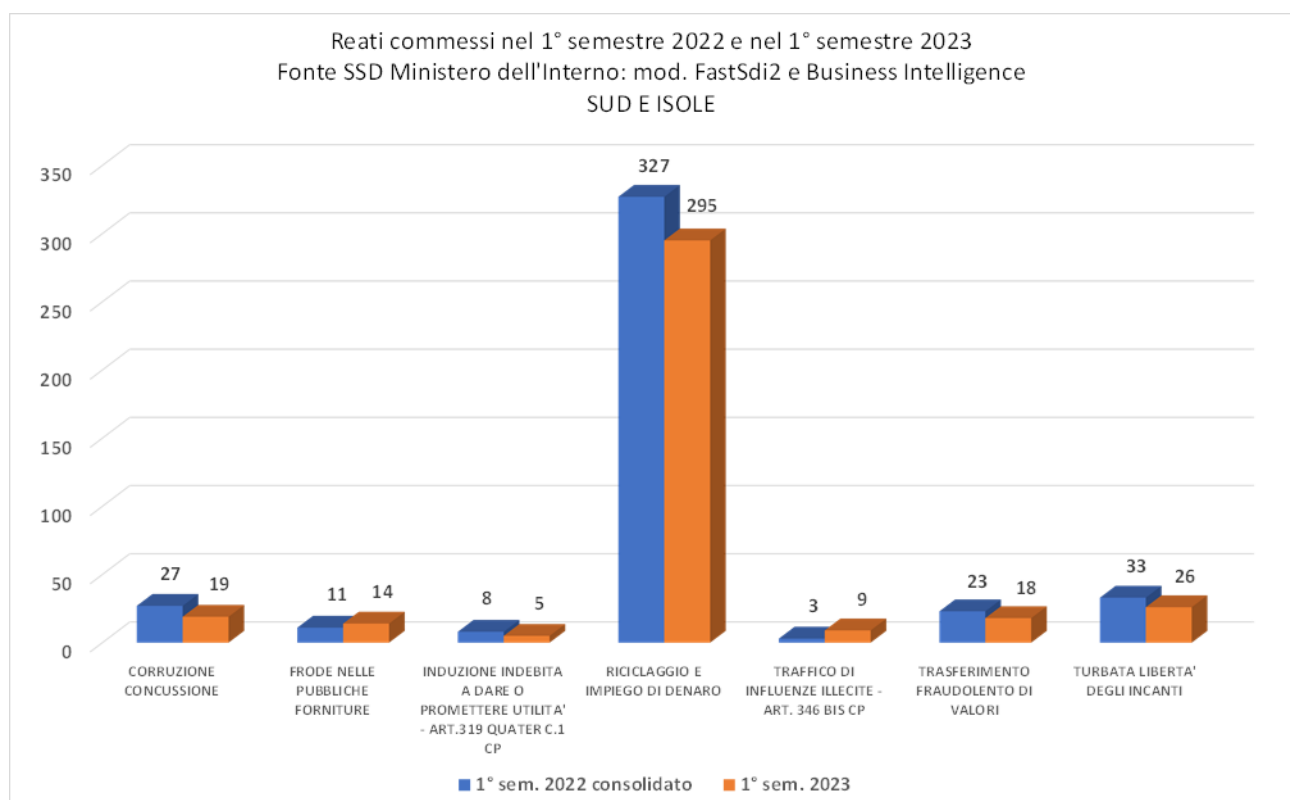
- Undue inducement to give or to promise advantages (article 319-quarter subparagraph 1 of the C.C.)
- Money laundering
- Trading in influence (article 346a of the C.C.)
- Fraudulent transfer of valuables
- Obstruction of public tender procedures

Consolidated first semester of 2022 - first semester of 2023

Crimes committed in the first semester of 2022 and in the first semester of 2023

Source: SSD Ministry of the Interior: mod. FastSdi2 and Business Intelligence

### SOUTHERN ITALY AND ISLANDS



- Corruption, bribery
- Fraud in the awarding of public procurement contracts
- Undue inducement to give or to promise advantages (article 319-quarter subparagraph 1 of the C.C.)

- Money laundering
- Trading in influence (article 346a of the C.C.)
- Fraudulent transfer of valuables
- Obstruction of public tender procedures

Consolidated first semester of 2022 - first semester of 2023

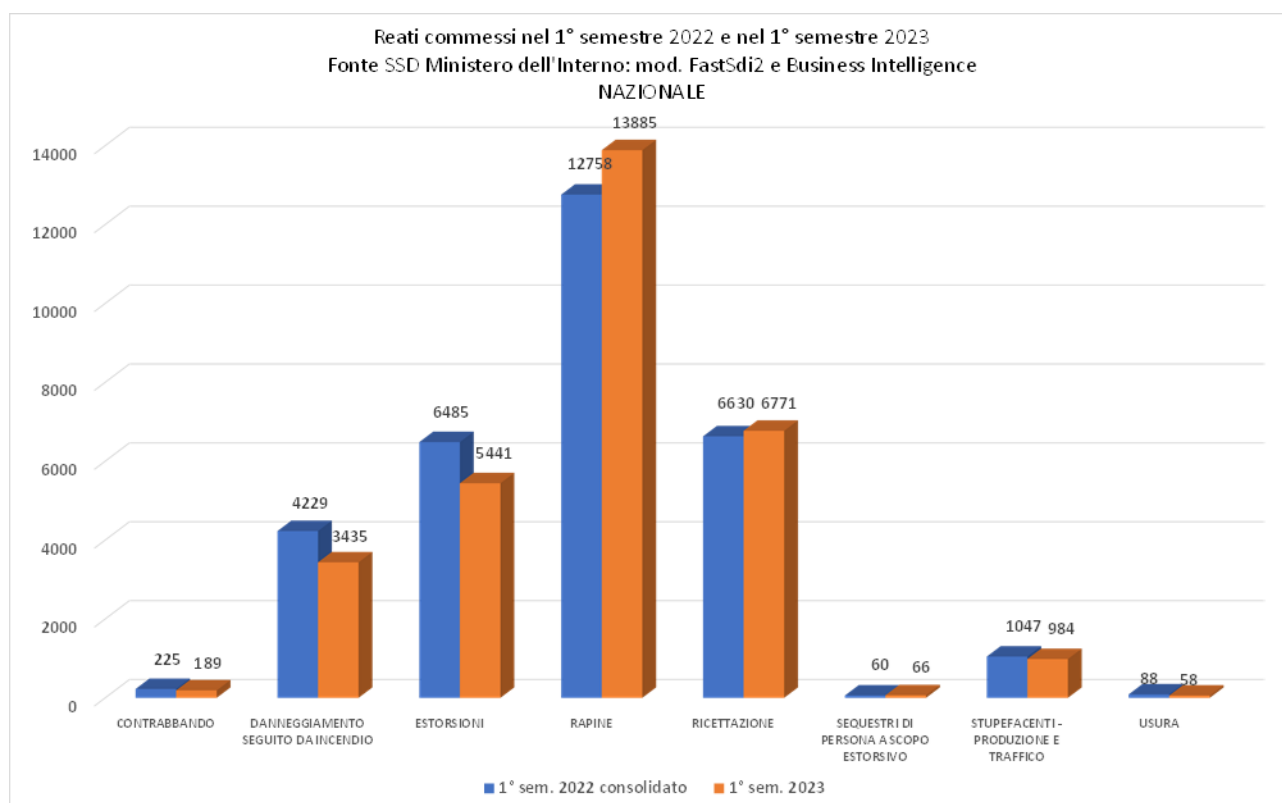
### THIRD GROUP

As regards offenses related to the most common methods organized crime groups put into practice for money collection - shown in the following third group of histograms -, it is possible to make some observations. On the one hand, a general decrease of “*damages*” and “*extortion*” is recorded, on the other hand, the occurrences of “*robbery*” and “*kidnapping for ransom*” are rising - with the exception of southern Italy. Moreover, the “*possession of stolen goods*” offense is slightly increasing throughout national territory. As a matter of fact, it corroborates the relevant availability of income streams. For the semester under review, a slow but progressive downward trend of offenses related to so-called “*drug trafficking*” in central-south regions can be confirmed. However, data should not create any optimistic previsions since industry surveys - even the most recent ones - highlight the Mafia groups’ persisting interest in this profitable area. There should be no optimism also in regard to a general decrease of “*usury*” - considering the difficulty in detecting that offense.

Crimes committed in the first semester of 2022 and in the first semester of 2023

Source: SSD Ministry of the Interior: mod. FastSdi2 and Business Intelligence

#### NATIONAL LEVEL



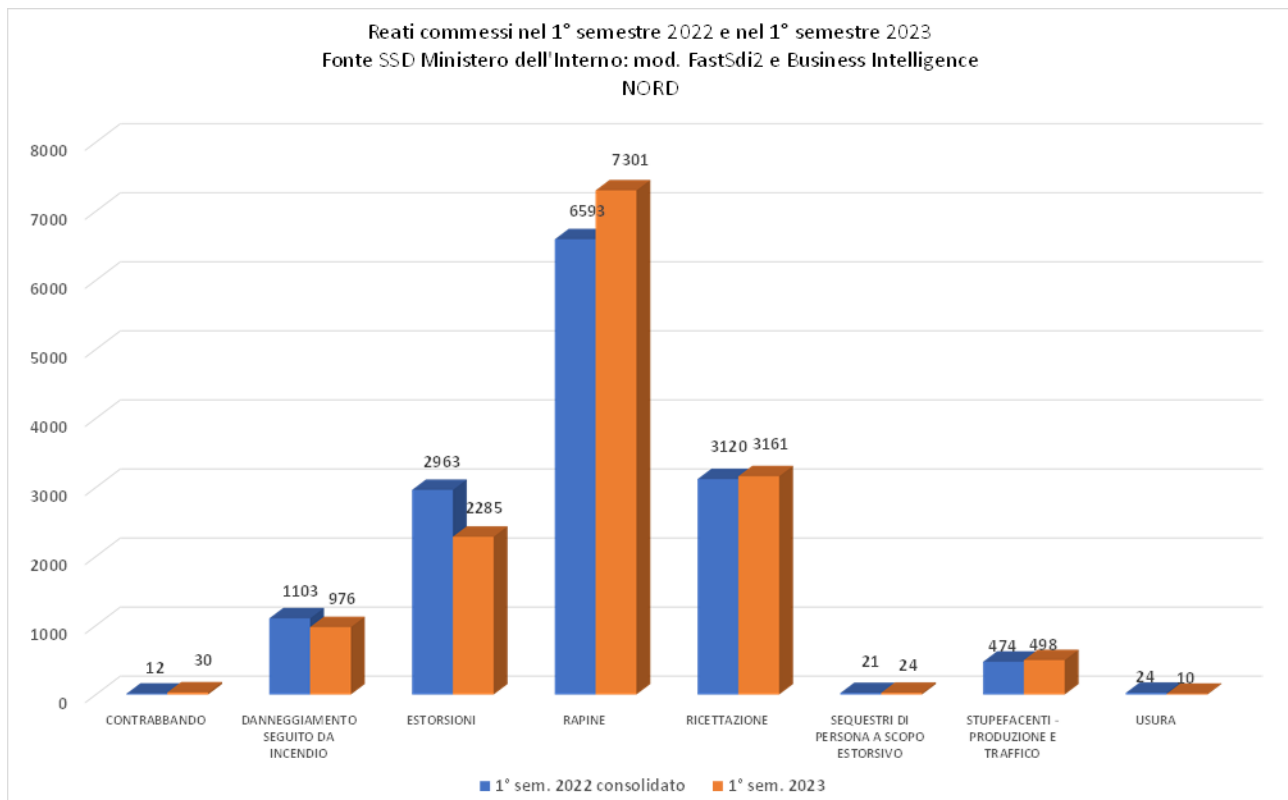
- Smuggling
- Damage followed by fire
- Extortion
- Robbery
- Possession of stolen goods
- Kidnapping for ransom
- Production and trafficking of narcotics
- Usury

Consolidated first semester of 2022 - first semester of 2023

Crimes committed in the first semester of 2022 and in the first semester of 2023

Source: SSD Ministry of the Interior: mod. FastSdi2 and Business Intelligence

### NORTHERN ITALY



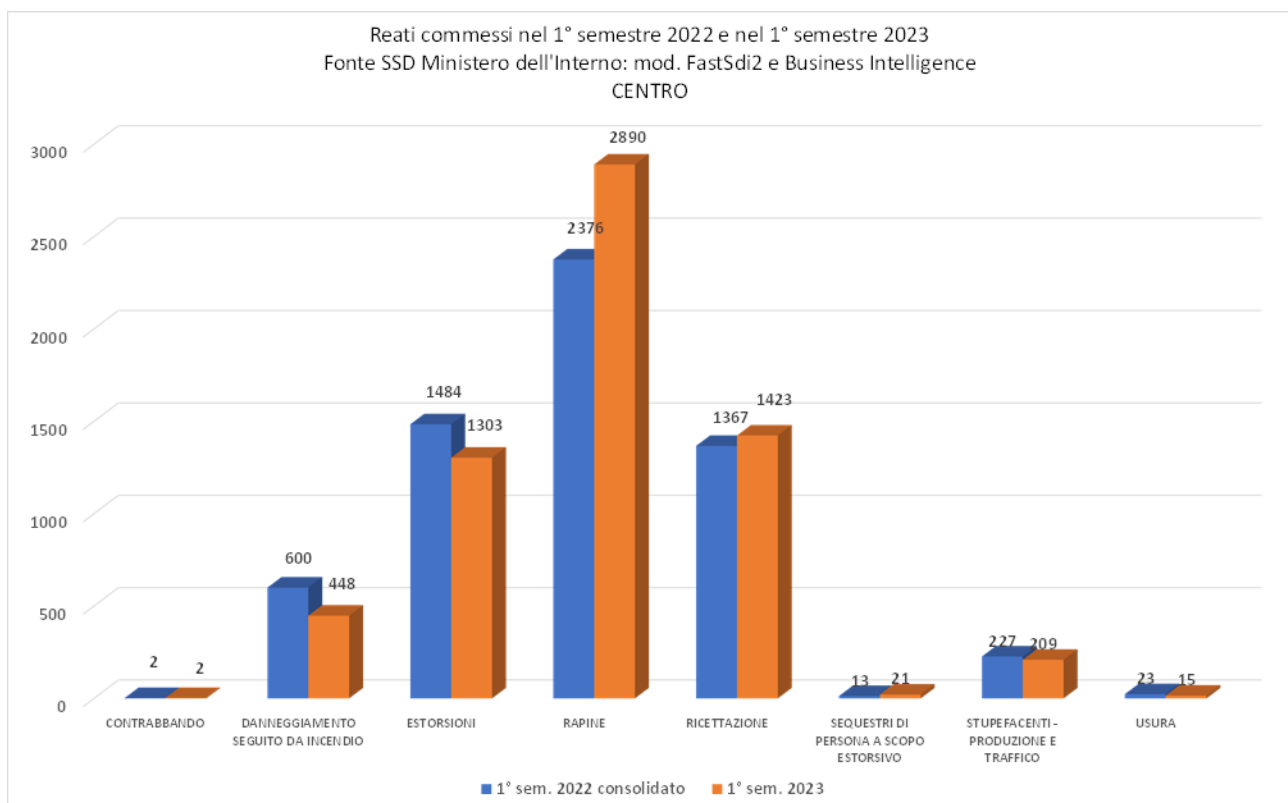
- Smuggling
- Damage followed by fire
- Extortion
- Robbery
- Possession of stolen goods
- Kidnapping for ransom
- Production and trafficking of narcotics
- Usury

Consolidated first semester of 2022 - first semester of 2023

## Crimes committed in the first semester of 2022 and in the first semester of 2023

Source: SSD Ministry of the Interior: mod. FastSdi2 and Business Intelligence

### CENTRAL ITALY



- Smuggling
- Damage followed by fire
- Extortion
- Robbery
- Possession of stolen goods
- Kidnapping for ransom



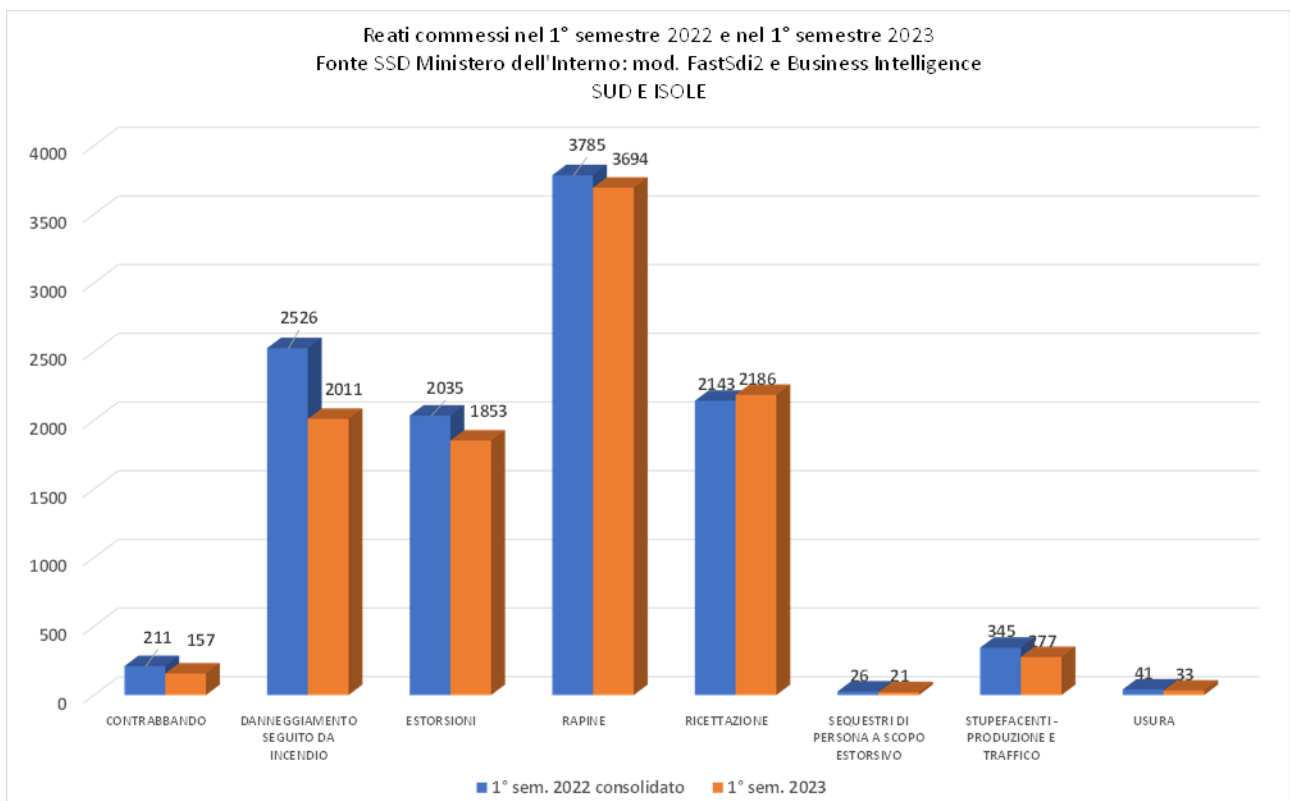
- Production and trafficking of narcotics
- Usury

Consolidated first semester of 2022 - first semester of 2023

Crimes committed in the first semester of 2022 and in the first semester of 2023

Source: SSD Ministry of the Interior: mod. FastSdi2 and Business Intelligence

### SOUTHERN ITALY AND ISLANDS



- Smuggling
- Damage followed by fire

- Extortion
- Robbery
- Possession of stolen goods
- Kidnapping for ransom
- Production and trafficking of narcotics
- Usury

Consolidated first semester of 2022 - first semester of 2023

Through the analysis of the previous data and of the results of police investigations, the persistence and complexity of Mafia groups which, from their Regions of origin, have entrenched and spread all around Italy and abroad, is evident. This indicates that said groups have expanded wherever they are able to pursue illegal activities, to penetrate the economic legal systems, as well as to earn rapid and profitable revenue by corrupting the economic and financial networks. Indeed, the main purpose of Mafia groups can be detected in their inclination to exercise economic power. They aim at prevailing over others and assuming control of civil and political life. On many occasions it has been proven how professionals may seek out the shortcut provided by the protection the Mafia offers. It implies the expectancy of obtaining alleged advantages and the hope of remaining unconnected to illegality. An effective awareness is crucial in tackling Mafia groups - whose keystone is citizenry enhancement. As a matter of fact, some important initiatives have been implemented to promote civil awareness among the population during the semester under review. They involve civil and local Authorities together with citizens to improve the security level of the territories - also through urban renewal. More specifically, on **February 6, 2023**, a protocol was signed in Foggia by the Prefect, the Commissario straordinario per la provvisoria gestione del Comune (delegate Commissioner for temporary administration of the Municipality) in the presence of the Minister of the Interior Matteo PIANTEDOSI. Said protocol implies the promotion and implementation of an endorsed and integrated security system in the territory for the following two-year period. The initiative is based on four guidelines: prevention of acquisitive and volume crime phenomena, measures of urban security, interventions in favor of inclusion and social solidarity, the promotion of legality and protection. On **June 7, 2023**, another protocol was signed in Palermo by the Procuratore Generale presso la Corte d'Appello (General Prosecutor at the Court of Appeal), Procuratore della Repubblica (Public Prosecutor) and Procuratore per i minorenni (Juvenile Prosecutor), for the protection of minors, children of serious crime suspects - including those of Mafia-type organizations. The agreement mostly aims at implementing the exchange of information in order to prevent the involved families from exposing young people to negative educational models which would influence their development.

Regarding the contrast against detrimental conducts of public economic and financial interests, it is highlighted how the activation of the investment package known as the Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza (PNRR, Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan) entailed the adoption of the Minister of the Interior's Decree on October 2, 2023. Said measure was aimed at strengthening presidia in preventing economic criminal infiltrations through "*enhancement measures of preliminary activities conducted by Gruppi Interforze Antimafia (GIA, Interagency provincial groups) established in prefectures (Central Government Office in the Province)...*". These groups are required to collaborate with

Prefects so as to implement an effective and efficient administration activity of anti-Mafia prevention. The Ministry's Decree aims at making the action of anti-Mafia prevention more efficient without undermining the needed rapidity in the implementation of PNRR and Piano nazionale degli investimenti complementari (National Plan for Complementary Investments) as well as recognizing and valorizing the aforesaid role of the GIA. Considering the relevance of the context, the Anti-Mafia Investigation Department (DIA) director promoted the adoption of specific organizational measures so as to ensure the qualified representation of DIA members who are to collaborate with the GIA. Said measures are carried out in view of the uninterrupted schedule of the GIA groups, who are to meet fortnightly or monthly for the accurate and prompt management of activities in line with the goals of the PNRR.

In this regard, it is important to consider that the DIA performs the functions of *Osservatorio centrale appalti pubblici* (Central Observatory of Public Procurements). It is designated to carry out monitoring activities to prevent and repress attempted Mafia infiltration in strategic public works. It combines the necessities of a "centralized" surveillance, the need of a targeted intervention in the territory, and it ensures a "virtuous cycle" among local entities and central organisms. This goal is achieved through the collection and analysis of data gathered by the prefectures - also due to the Sistema informatico rilevazione accesso ai cantieri (S.I.R.A.C., Computer System for Detecting Construction Sites Access) and communication pursuant to article 91 subparagraph 7-a, letter e of the Italian anti-Mafia Code. Later, the necessary integrated information is transmitted so as to implement any necessary inter-provincial intervention. Moreover, it provides investigative intelligence to the competent Authorities.

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[1] Translator's note: despite its generic meaning "small piece of paper", the word refers to small pieces of paper that the Sicilian Mafia uses for high-level communications.

## 2. MAFIA GROUPS

### a. Analysis of the *'Ndrangheta* criminal phenomenon

The *'Ndrangheta*, born as an exclusively Calabrian ritualistic criminal organization, has long since crossed regional borders, becoming a criminal network capable of acting nonchalantly in diversified contexts, with a strong orientation towards the economic, financial and business sectors. The exponential growth of transnational crime, which relies on drug trafficking as its most immediate source of illegal revenue, has given an added macro-criminal value to the *cosche* and *locali* in Italy and abroad.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, one of the most relevant approaches in Calabria was multi-actor crime, which, in spite of social underdevelopment, was able to secure power and resources, also thanks to the unlawful exploitation of substantial public funds for territorial support. In the past, the *'Ndrangheta* was able to take advantage of systematic underestimation of their potential to organize and develop in such a powerful way. The second half of the twentieth century brought about tectonic shifts for an organization that, up to that point, had thrived through intermediation, causing a change from the affirmed mediation to an unbridled search and accumulation of wealth and capital.

That was, ultimately, the moment when criminal structures in Calabria conquered new economic spaces, managing their proceeds in a variety of lawful and criminal activities, and devised the business formula of enterprise-politics-institutions-concealed agencies. This led to the abandonment of large agricultural estates that had once been the main resource for Calabrian Mafia *famiglie*.

The *'Ndrangheta* is hierarchically organized, with the "*provincia*" or "*crimine*" at the top, followed, in the Reggio Calabria province, by the "*mandamenti*" located in the three geographical macro-areas "*ionica*", "*tirrenica*" and "*centro*", where the so-called "*locali*" and "*'ndrine*" operate. The same system applies to other Calabrian provinces and other regions where the *'Ndrangheta* has expanded.

It is a Mafia group with a structure that finds strength in loyalty to its roots, traditions and a family-like fabric, which has prevented it from becoming an aseptic criminal multinational. At the same time, it is an organization centered around maximum flexibility, great operational capacity and remarkable financial and business intuition that has gradually become an entity of globalized competitiveness, also in illicit international markets.

A unitary structure with a governing core simultaneously modern and archaic that has turned traditional rules, ranks, practices, formulas, oaths and burnt holy cards drenched in blood into an element of strong cohesion, allowing each member to identify and be perceived as part of a whole.

Recent police operations have further confirmed the role of power taken on by women in business management when their husbands and fathers were in detention (“*Hybris*”<sup>6</sup> operation, “*Blu Notte*”<sup>7</sup> operation, “*Revolvo*”<sup>8</sup> operation).

Today, the *'Ndrangheta* operates at a fast-paced rhythm and is particularly threatening to the economic and democratic order. It presents itself as a well-equipped, modern, multipurpose and polycentric system that is able to seize and create any economic and/or financial impetus to facilitate money laundering and operations to reinvest illicit assets and other benefits of unlawful origin.

The availability of substantial capital, deriving from the *'Ndrangheta*'s relevant role in international drug trafficking, combined with a strong ability to manage traffic segments and hubs, has allowed this organization to consolidate relations with leading international criminal networks. The importance of the Gioia Tauro (RC) port in drug sector-related dynamics and the subsequent interest of the *cosche* in this port, due to its great potential for enrichment, have made the *'Ndrangheta* a highly reliable partner for corresponding criminal organizations in Central and South America that supply narcotic drugs. This was proven by several investigations, some of which are very recent. In the past few years, West Africa has also become an increasingly important spot for drug trafficking by the *cosche* of the *'Ndrangheta*. Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, and Ghana were the first countries to be targeted by Mafia groups, becoming crucial logistic bases for *narcos*. Libya<sup>9</sup> has recently joined the list.

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<sup>6</sup> Criminal Procedure 4194/2020 RGNR - 2586/2021 RG GIP DDA - 21/2022 ROCC DDA.

<sup>7</sup> Criminal Procedure 3302/2019 RGNR - 2848/21 RG GIP - 1/2022 ROCC DDA.

<sup>8</sup> Criminal Procedure 6754/2013 RGNR - 4424/2014 RG GIP - 34/2021 ROCC DDA.

<sup>9</sup> Regarding the importance of the Gioia Tauro (RC) port in the Mediterranean area, the Report issued by the DCSA in 2023 – on 2022 data, states, “*In the reconstruction of the operational scenario, the Gioia Tauro national port plays a crucial role, as it accounts for 80.35% of cocaine seizures carried out at sea borders, which is to say 61.73% of the national total seized amount. In this complex scenario, the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta strengthens its key role and*

Similar considerations apply to the United States and Canada<sup>10</sup>, where *'Ndrangheta* criminal infiltration appears to be consolidated in terms of international drug trafficking, as proven by police operations conducted in recent years.

In this respect, we report the outcomes of the “*'Ndrangheta Stragista*” trial, on appeal, at the end of which, on **March 25, 2023**, the Court of Assizes of Appeal of Reggio Calabria handed down a judgment confirming the judgment at the first instance against two defendants, already sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of two Carabinieri officers and the attempted murders carried out from the end of 1993 to the beginning of 1994 in the area of Reggio Calabria. These criminal acts were perpetrated in view of the *'Ndrangheta*’s participation in the “*Stragista Continentale*” project by *Cosa Nostra*.

The unitary criminal strategy of the *'Ndrangheta* is then effectively recreated in all local patterns through highly sophisticated illegal methodologies mainly aimed at reinvesting illegally obtained capital.

This confirms the *'Ndrangheta*’s determination to infiltrate business activities at an increasingly high level that was once unthinkable for a Mafia that was long considered rudimentary and severely limited. The strength of the *'Ndrangheta* is its ability to combine old and new, as proven by the acts of violence and intimidation still carried out by the group, even if as the last resort and only subsequently to other persuasion strategies.

The adaptability of the *cosche* to new theatres and times (and, as a consequence, to socio-economic contexts different from that of origin) has made the *'Ndrangheta* competitive in markets outside regional borders, where it stands out for its “authority and reliability” in illegal contexts. It has

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*continues to be the most insidious and pervasive Italian Mafia group and one of the most powerful and dangerous criminal organizations in the world, having a marked tendency for expansion both at a national and international level. Thanks to its representatives and operational brokers established in drug production and temporary storage areas, both on national and European territory, the 'Ndrangheta represents the most influential organization in the trafficking of South American cocaine. The availability of substantial capital of unlawful origin, combined with a strong ability to manage traffic segments and hubs, has allowed this organization to consolidate a predominant role in international drug trafficking and become a point of reference for other criminal networks, supplying drugs to place on consumer markets”.* The Report issued by the DCSA also highlights the role played by North African countries in recent years, including Libya and the route to Gioia Tauro: “*During the past 5 years, in Libya, hundreds of seizures of narcotic substances took place, including cannabis, cocaine, heroin and, most significantly, synthetic drugs and psychotropic drugs (specifically tramadol). The vast majority of seized drugs were heading to European ports and airports, mainly in Italy, like that of Gioia Tauro, considered by drug trafficking criminal groups as the gateway to Europe*”.

<sup>10</sup> The presence of local Mafia groups in Canada has been further confirmed by the “Canadian *'Ndrangheta* Connection” operation conducted on July 18, 2019. This operation targeted the members of the MUIÀ-FIGLIOMENI *'ndrina*, linked to the COMMISSO *cosca* in Siderno (RC) and provided insight into the association structure and operation in Canada.

succeeded in expanding into legal contexts as well, through a dense network of collusion. At the same time, the organization demonstrates a high ability to regenerate its ranks, periodically producing a new generation of criminals capable of taking over to create a more evolved view of the Mafia business.

Collected info-investigative evidence makes it possible to profile an expansion strategy, on the short to medium term, of Calabrian crime, which, despite remaining a major protagonist in international drug trafficking, could further multiply its criminal interests, as has happened in the past. This could be done by exploiting a series of sectors with strong social impact, including the third sector, that are vital for the economy and the administrative management of the country. The following are historically the most exposed sectors:

- structural fund administration procedures and allocations of public funding, obtaining grants by people with no real title;
- industrial recovery plans and negotiated programming for public purpose (area contracts and territorial pacts);
- unit implementation development plans for construction, including those for tourism residences, regeneration processes of Calabrian urban centers and rehabilitation of industrial wasteland, including remediating and reclaiming operations and disposal of solid urban waste and special waste;
- injection of capital into commercial companies, also through funding procedures of partners;
- agricultural and food supply chain-related sectors, that are at high risk of counterfeiting and adulteration;
- control of seized goods, also through possible attempts of intrusion upon administrative management;
- collective proceedings;
- renewable energy (green economy);
- public and private healthcare;
- sporting associations and management of electronic devices for entertainment and online betting (so-called gaming).

Elements close to or part of *'Ndrangheta* families are believed to be perfectly capable of infiltrating, with concealed capital (as has emerged numerous times), financial corporations operating in national and international markets in order to plan projects requiring substantial funding.



This relates to the fact that, in Northern and Central Italy, the *'Ndrangheta* is increasingly trying to infiltrate the economic and financial world.

In these areas, the *'Ndrangheta* was also a reference for the economic and business world, contributing to the stall of the legal economy while the *cosche*'s business flourished. Countering activities by law enforcement authorities and the judiciary are increasingly highlighting instances in which entrepreneurs who had initially received “protection” were then engulfed by criminal dynamics.

The number of reports of suspicious transactions is the main symptom of this transformation and reflects an operating strategy that aims at laundering and reinvesting substantial sums of money in the country's most productive areas. Specifically, the most economically flourishing areas in Italy that, therefore, best satisfy the laundering and reinvestment needs of Mafia groups.

In recent years, investigations have determined that constant cash flows deriving from the main criminal activities, including drug trafficking, extortions and usury, are increasingly being laundered and reinvested in specific areas of Central and Northern Italy (such as the following Italian regions: Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Veneto, Piedmont, Tuscany, etc.).

The *'Ndrangheta*'s ability to influence Institutions is no longer a local problem, but has instead become a critical issue in various areas, including Northern Italy, as proven by the dissolution of several municipal councils<sup>11</sup>. These dissolutions are very frequent in Calabria and showcase the scale of the vulnerability of local Institutions that, as proven by judicial investigation findings, often reveal the involvement of the bodies of election and management of public institutions, proving their permeability to criminal pressure.

For some time, the *'Ndrangheta* has proven its ability to identify opportunities and benefit from social problems by pursuing an approach to maximizing profits and directing investments toward struggling economic sectors. In the current economic recovery phase, Institutions are paying closer attention to the risk of the *'Ndrangheta* (and other actors) getting public funds mobilized for the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). The upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2026 in Milano – Cortina are also worthy of close attention. On the one hand, they are a further opportunity for economic recovery in the territory and, on the other, they represent a source of interest for organized crime groups. This is enhanced by the fact that the Games will take place in Lombardy, where the presence of traditional Mafia groups is particularly widespread and concerning and where

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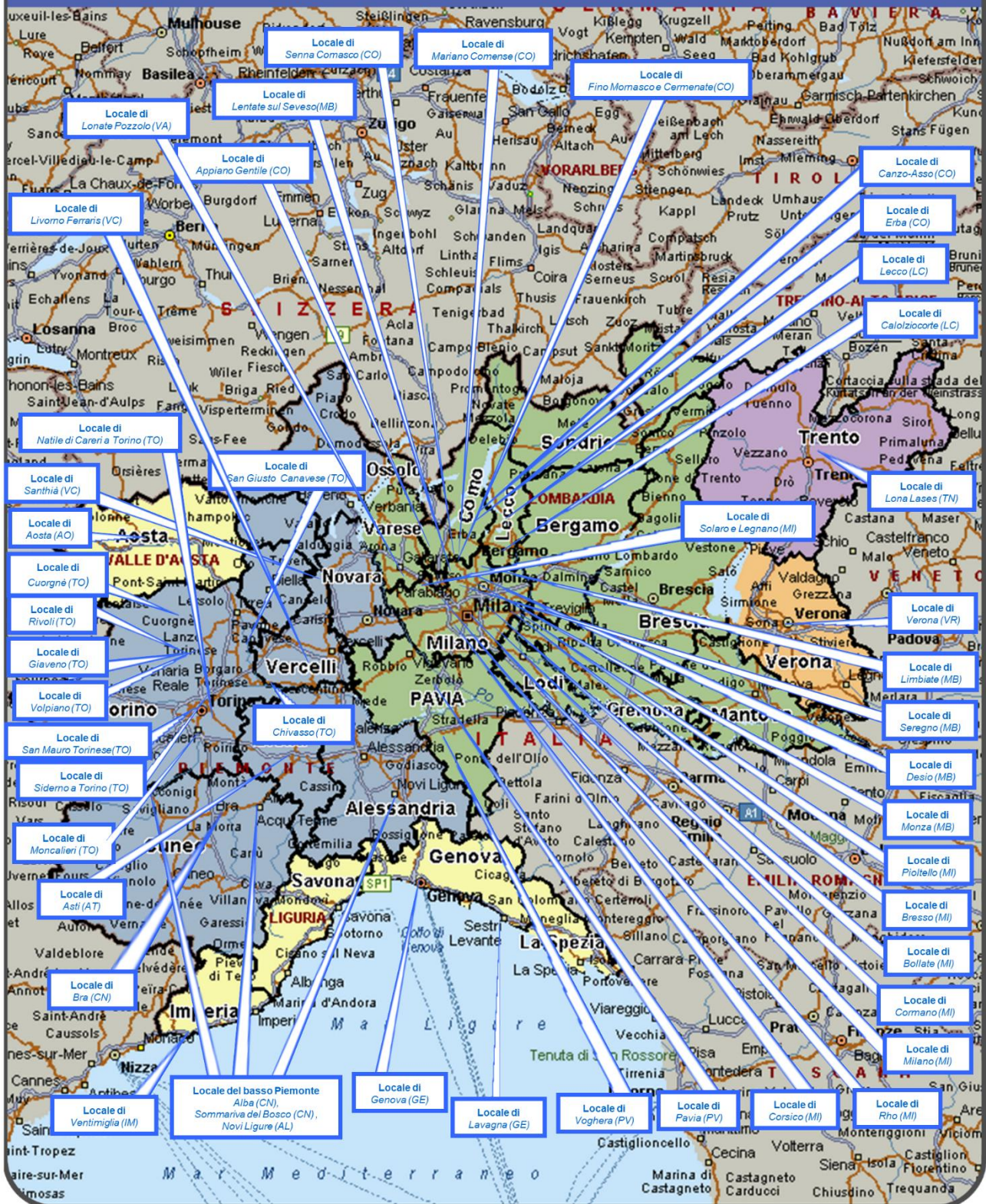
<sup>11</sup> In compliance with article 143 of Italian Legislative Decree no. 267/2000.

the *'Ndrangheta* has been operating for three years, through numerous “*locali*”, with a business vocation and strong abilities to identify conspicuous allocations.

An additional element of interest for the *'Ndrangheta* concerns the funds for Jubilee 2025. The conspicuous allocations of public money expected for the Holy Jubilee Year make the danger of infiltrations by Calabrian organized crime more tangible. The presence of said organized crime in the Capital and in neighboring areas has been recently confirmed. Police operations have revealed the presence of various *cosche* in the Lazio region, including the GALLICO, MOLÈ, PIROMALLI, MORABITO, ALVARO, and NITRA-ROMEO *cosche*, which originated in the province of Reggio-Calabria and the MANCUSO and BONAVOTA *cosche* of Vibo Valentia.

Throughout the years, the judicial police prevention activities have highlighted that the *'Ndrangheta*'s business and “military” operations were already present in the Capital, with investments of illicit proceeds in the acquisition of commercial activities, mainly in the tourism, hotel and catering sectors. Lastly, the direct interests of criminal organizations, first and foremost those of Calabrian origin, in the works for the building of the Strait of Messina Bridge should not be underestimated.

# Locali di 'ndrangheta nel Nord Italia



Locali of the 'Ndrangheta in Northern Italy.



## **b. Analysis of *Cosa Nostra*, *stidda* and other Sicilian Mafia groups**

The countless law enforcement activities carried out over the years, also through the capture of important fugitives, and the State's apprehension of the illicit assets accumulated over decades of criminal activity, have greatly reduced the power of *Cosa Nostra*, undermining its traditional top-down structure. *Cosa Nostra* continues to search for the leadership that couldn't be reestablished after Salvatore RIINA's death in 2017. Every attempt at reconstructing the so-called "Province's Commission" was frustrated by continuous investigation activities undermining the group's unity and strength. Furthermore, the ongoing attempt to build a new structure of *mandamenti* and families and identify new leaders, preferably young members with Mafia family origins, is clashing with the presence of old, elderly men of honor, freed from prison, who now expect to regain their high social rank in the group. Specifically, *Cosa Nostra*, constantly engaged in cyclic turnovers and attempts to stabilize new and old generations, has adopted a model of coordination based on the sharing of guidelines and a collective operational management involving various *mandamenti*. Investigation evidence has shown how traditional territorial division is now less rigid, with several recorded episodes of territorial overrunning by the various *mandamenti*, even from different provinces. However, despite these issues, *Cosa Nostra*'s intent to recreate organizational consistency in its territorial structures has never been extinguished. The group's aim would be achieved especially through the employment of traditional Mafia customs and rules to recover its ancient influence on local economic activities, reshaping decisional models according to horizontal schemes of cooperation and higher interaction between the various provincial branches.

In Sicily, *Cosa Nostra* coexists with other Mafia-like organized crime groups. One particularly relevant group is the *stidda*<sup>12</sup>, characterized by a horizontal structure of autonomous groups. It was originally created in opposition to *Cosa Nostra* but is now more inclined to non-aggression strategies and favors arrangements to share and divide unlawful business.

Eastern Sicily continues to be inhabited by a wider variety of *consorterie*, in particular in the city of Catania. In this context, proper branches of *Cosa Nostra* (that take inspiration from its structural, functional, and motivational model) coexist with other groups that are not derived from *Cosa Nostra* but have the same connotation. The criminal scenario outside *Cosa Nostra* partially has the same structural characteristics of the *famiglie* in Catania, but it also sometimes alternates banditry-like activities with adaptive and flexible formulas that are typical of the districts they operate in. A prominent characteristic is the attempt by the groups in Catania to expand their area of influence

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<sup>12</sup> Originally born in the coastal region of the Caltanissetta Province, it has subsequently expanded its presence in portions of the neighboring provinces of Agrigento and Ragusa.

beyond the province. The diversified criminal context in Central-Eastern Sicily is more visible in the coastal area around the settlement of Gela (Caltanissetta), wherein, in the second half of the 1880s, the *stidda* phenomenon emerged. The *stidda* is a criminal entity that has expanded its influence into portions of the neighboring provinces of Agrigento and Ragusa, with the ambition of opposing the historic *famiglie* of *Cosa Nostra*. It later drastically lowered its ambitions to currently allow forms of alliance and cohabitation between the two groups. Despite this, the *stidda* is still able to express a significant criminal potential, including involvement in the dynamics of management of the fruit and vegetable market. Due to the complex relations between the *famiglie* of *Cosa Nostra* and other *clans* operating in Eastern Sicily, the current criminal balance is characterized by a structure of “variable geometry” that is aimed at guaranteeing the higher flexibility of criminal leaderships and illicit businesses that are a source of dispute or alliances and truces between *clans*. In the provinces of Siracusa and Ragusa, influences by the *Cosa Nostra* in Catania and the *stidda* in Gela are apparent.

Regarding organized crime in Messina, the peculiarity of the local groups is, on the one hand, a *modus operandi* similar to *Cosa Nostra* in Palermo and, on the other hand, are influenced by criminal groups in the Etna region.

The now rare use of violence by organized crime in Sicily has strengthened the thesis of its inherent “chameleonic” ability to adapt seamlessly to new, evolving scenarios of regional, national and foreign economies. Judiciary activities highlight the preference of *Cosa Nostra* and other Mafia groups in Sicily of infiltrating business contexts, which are fertile ground for the employment of their substantial illicit capital. During the semester under review, in addition to traditional forms of subjugation and territorial control, a remarkable inclination for pervading the socio-economic fabric and infiltrating and controlling local political-administrative structures has continuously emerged.

Countering activities have also confirmed the “traditional” illicit interests in drug trafficking, extortion, gambling and online betting. The drug business still remains one of the most reliable sources of direct income for the Sicilian Mafia, as it ensures cooperation relations with other crime groups (such as the *'Ndrangheta* and *Camorra*) for the supply of substantial amounts on a large scale. In particular, investigation outcomes, even from the first half of 2023, have confirmed that *Cosa Nostra* keeps a preferential negotiation channel with the *'ndrine* in Calabria open, especially for the purchase of cocaine.

In this respect and considering the crucial importance of drug trafficking, *Cosa Nostra*’s aspiration of regaining a key leadership role in the drug supply chain is not to be excluded.

Extortion, a pivotal and ancient tool of territorial control for Sicilian Mafia groups, has now turned into persuasive actions that do not involve the use of violence, “merely” imposing goods, services and workforce, sometimes even demanding a payment slightly higher than average market prices. Furthermore, the outcomes of investigations carried out in recent years have highlighted how the perpetration of offenses signaling the occurrence of Mafia activities, the so-called “*reati spia*” (extortion, unfair competition through threats and violence, fraudulent transfer of assets, and obstructing public tender procedures), is actually a symptom of an attempt by Mafia groups at trying to ensure a dominant position in their sectors of interest.

In addition to the traditional request of “*pizzo*” (protection racket), new alternative *modi operandi* are emerging, with crime groups preferring more subtle and less apparent methods of extortion. Forced payments are being replaced by recruitment and the supply of goods and services, which are presented as “*an operating cost that is well-tolerated or even requested in exchange for protection*”<sup>13</sup> for the coerced economic operators.

Law enforcement activities, including those concerning assets, have highlighted how the main Mafia groups tend to claim direct or indirect management of concession-holders in the sectors of gaming and betting offices, even by simply imposing the installation of slot machines in bars and tobacco shops.

Furthermore, considering the agri-food and pastoral nature of the Sicilian territory, the unremitting activity of Police forces and the Judiciary has uncovered illicit proceeds deriving from agricultural land-grabbing by “Mafia” companies and companies infiltrated by people close to crime actors, aiming at obtaining contributions for rural development by the Agenzia per le Erogazioni in Agricoltura (the Italian Agency for Disbursements in Agriculture). Throughout Sicily, the agricultural-pastoral sector is the driving force of the local economy and, therefore, attracts the interest of local Mafia *consorterie* supported by frontmen and obliging professionals. This phenomenon is typical of agricultural pastoral areas in the heart of Sicily and represents a threat to the real development of productive activity in this sector.

In this respect, investigations have proven the involvement of actors who are not directly linked to criminal groups, trying to grab unlawful proceeds through false statements or fraudulent actions.

Like all other social and economic actors, Mafia members have evolved and adapted to social changes, readjusting their roles and operational methodologies over time. Their most relevant

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<sup>13</sup> As stated by Lia SAVA, Procuratore Generale presso la Corte d’Appello di Palermo (Prosecutor General at the Court of Appeal, Palermo, Italy), during her speech on the occasion of the Opening of the Legal Year 2023.

tendency is to promptly detect, understand and take advantage of any change in the economic order. It's no coincidence that Sicilian Mafia groups are centering their focus on the business-enterprise sectors, taking advantage of the substantial capital accumulated through traditional criminal activities. These criminal groups resort to the most advanced investment strategies and are able to seize opportunities provided by funds from the European Union.

The criminal strategies of Mafia groups essentially unfold through two different channels: the first one is centered on territorial control established through traditional criminal activities aimed at strengthening associative ties, and the second one focuses on controlling criminal activities and public procurements and ultimately influencing decision-making processes by local bodies in order to enhance consensus among the population.

A future interest by *Cosa Nostra* and other Sicilian criminal groups in PNRR-related investments is not to be ruled out. In consideration of this potential threat, a close eye is to be kept in order to avert any attempt of the Mafia to infiltrate Sicilian public tenders.

### **c. Analysis of the *Camorra* and other Mafia groups in Campania**

The Mafia phenomenon in Campania, uniquely identified as the *Camorra*, consists, in fact, of a number of criminal actors that have heterogeneous connotations due to many historical, economic and social factors influencing these territories.

Historical Mafia groups with solid organizational structures and diversified criminal and business objectives, often projected beyond the traditional borders of their areas of origin, coexist with minor criminal groups, mainly with a family-like structure, whose main identity element is the territory in which they attempt to affirm their criminal leadership, often recurring to the use of violence and arms.

The Naples and Caserta provinces remain the territories with the highest and most qualified Mafia presence. Indeed, the main well-structured *Camorra Cartels* and organized crime groups operate in this area. These groups have managed to control all illicit activities and have evolved into the so-called “*imprese mafiose*” (Mafia enterprises), becoming competitive and having a strong appeal, even in several sectors of the legal economy. As a consequence, the most evolved *clans* are increasingly inclined to relocate economic activities abroad for money laundering and reinvestment purposes, aiming to transfer wealth in safer and more profitable areas.

Smaller groups operate at lower levels. They often have an instrumental and functional nature for the larger groups, and they are mainly devoted to traditional illicit affairs that have a major impact on the perception of security in Campania, such as drug dealing, extortion and usury.

An additional insidious threat is posed by the most subtle and refined strategies adopted by consolidated *Camorra* groups oriented at economic and financial infiltration, including through collusion and corruption. Substantial illicit capital, mainly generated through drug trafficking and then reinvested in the legal economy, irretrievably jeopardizes the normal rules of the market and fair competition, allowing the aforementioned criminal groups to conquer dominant and monopolistic positions in entire sectors of the local economy and business.

Numerous cases of pervasive interference with local bodies in Campania have been reported, aimed at influencing regular decision-making processes concerning the awarding of public tenders, another priority sector for the *Camorra*. Thanks to their strong ability to negotiate complex relations with certain representatives of local authorities and businesses, *Camorra clans* succeed in winning important public procurements, both through direct contract awards to related companies and through subcontracting.

Law enforcement activities, including those in the semester under review, have been centered on administrative prevention, leading the prefectural Authorities in Campania to adopting **80** prohibitive measures<sup>14</sup> targeting as many companies where a number of symptomatic signals indicating Mafia influence had been identified.

The most recent outcomes of investigation have also highlighted a growing and widespread interest in high-profit, low-risk forms of criminal activity. Such as fuel smuggling and exploitation of fictitious companies (so-called *società cartiere*) to issue non-existing invoices for money laundering and to commit tax fraud, insurance fraud, and controlling of foreclosure auctions and real estate transaction procedures.

Drug dealing, extortion and usury pervade the main and most profitable crime sectors for *Camorra* groups, even minor ones, always ready to fight for territorial control without hesitating to resort to violence. In this respect, an upsurge of rivalry between *sodalizi*<sup>15</sup> has been reported in the main city

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<sup>14</sup> **61** of which were adopted by the Prefect of Napoli and **19** by the Prefect of Caserta.

<sup>15</sup> In the first half of 2023, in Naples alone, 8 homicides and 14 injuries attributed to the *Camorra* were counted, as well as 12 homicides and 20 gunshot injuries in the provincial territory. These figures confirm the conflicts already emerged in the second semester of 2022, during which 8 homicides and 23 injuries were counted in the whole province of Naples.



of Campania and the territories in the province. The peculiarity of this conflict is the involvement of extremely young criminals and the availability of arms and weapons<sup>16</sup>.

In Naples and in the surrounding territories, a web of crime phenomena was analyzed. This examination, based on copious judicial literature and numerous prevention and suppression activities by competent Institutions, reveals a context in which diverse criminal phenomena at various evolutionary levels coexist. At a higher level, two main antagonistic *Camorra cartelli* dominate, exerting their influence on the main town in the region and neighboring areas. These two groups are the ALLEANZA DI SECONDIGLIANO and the MAZZARELLA *clan*. The first group comprises three *famiglie*: MALLARDO, CONTINI-BOSTI, both bound by blood, and LICCIARDI. These groups are more insidious than others as they not only pursue traditional illicit interests, mainly through smaller federated *gruppi* with their own autonomy in limited territorial areas, but also resort to the most sophisticated strategies to infiltrate the Neapolitan economic and social fabric.

At a lower level, the activity of smaller criminal groups has been observed. They are the actual henchmen handling drug dealing, robberies and extortion, and they live in a perpetual state of conflict, constantly fighting over small urban areas. In the western hinterland territories of Naples, there are many other well-rooted *Camorra clans*. Some of them are historical groups with consolidated organizational structures, while others have been downsized by relentless repression activities and conflicts with rival *clans*. In this regard, it's worth mentioning the bloody feuds that arose from 2004 to 2012 in the neighborhoods of Scampia and Secondigliano. The fight witnessed the DI LAURO *clan*, former leader of drug trafficking, on one side and the detached *Camorra gruppi* called SCISSIONISTI (or SPAGNOLI) on the other. The SCISSIONISTI were guided by the AMATO-PAGANO *clan*, with participation by other *famiglie*, including ABETE, ABBINANTE, NOTTURNO, LEONARDI, MARINO, and APREA, and the VANELLA GRASSI *gruppo* (named after the street it originated in). The conflict famously ended with the SCISSIONISTI prevailing over the DI LAURO *clan*, which was subsequently confined to the Neapolitan Secondigliano neighborhood called *Terzo Mondo* (Third World). The area is still under the *clan's* control to this day,

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<sup>16</sup> During the semester under review, in the province of Naples, Law Enforcement agencies have seized numerous arms, some of which had high offensive potential. In particular, on March 2, 2023, at Giuliano in Campania (Naples), the Guardia di Finanza enforced a search warrant issued by the Public Prosecutor in Naples in a home belonging to a known drug broker of Neapolitan origins, arrested in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) in 2021. This led to the discovery and seizure of 3 Kalashnikov rifles, 4 sniper rifles, 1 shotgun, 1 hand grenade, 7 rifles, 38 guns and a substantial amount of ammunition of various caliber. On May 5th, at Pomigliano d'Arco (Naples), the State Police arrested *in flagrante delicto* an offender traveling in a stolen vehicle where 1 Kalashnikov rifle and 3 guns and related ammunition were found. The search was then extended to a warehouse belonging to the offender, located in the neighboring Municipality of Calanuovo (Naples), where 3 Kalashnikov rifles, 4 rifles, and a substantial amount of ammunition were found, as well as accessories with the symbols of the various Police forces.

despite some of its leaders being arrested or dying of natural causes, mainly due to its sound financial standing derived from years of managing illicit activities.

After internal rifts within the SCISSIONISTI, the AMATO-PAGANO *clan* was forced to withdraw from Scampia and Secondigliano, fleeing to the Municipality of Melito di Napoli (Naples), where it still controls local drug dealing. The AMATO-PAGANO *clan* is now a criminal group with a strong military structure and a remarkable ability to infiltrate the economic fabric and influence public administration. This was confirmed by the “*Playmaker*” operation, concluded by the DIA in Naples on **April 18, 2023**, with the execution of a preventive detention warrant<sup>17</sup> concerning members of the AMATO-PAGANO *clan* and of the elective group in the Municipality of Melito di Napoli (Naples). Afterward, the local Municipal Council was dissolved, with the Presidential Decree of **May 30, 2023**, and in compliance with art. 143 of the TUEL (Consolidated Text on Local Authorities).

According to judicial reconstructions, the AMATO-PAGANO rise in the Neapolitan drug market is closely linked to the criminal history of an international drug trafficking *broker* from Naples, arrested in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) in 2021, with which the *clan* had established a privileged relation for the supply of drugs. The role of the broker, already identified in other Mafia groups, is symptomatic of the level of danger reached by the *Camorra clans*, as it suggests the real magnitude of illicit traffic on a global scale and the deriving flows of capital managed by these groups.

To continue with the analysis of the Neapolitan crime groups that are more representative of the Campania Mafia phenomenon, it's impossible not to mention the MOCCIA *clan* from Afragola (Naples). The *clan* still operates to this day despite being the target of incessant repressive actions that have already led to the sentencing of several leaders and henchmen, some of whom have turned into cooperating witnesses. The MOCCIA *clan* is a large criminal group (both in terms of members and territories controlled) operating in the western hinterland of Naples (Afragola, Casoria, Crispano, Caivano, Frattamaggiore, Frattaminore, Cardito and Arzano) that has evolved into a confederation of smaller groups, each with its own autonomy and territorial competence. In 2018, the “*Leviathan*”<sup>18</sup>,

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<sup>17</sup> No. 13850/2021 RGNR, no. 7239/2022 RG GIP e no. 98/2023 ROCC issued on **March 27, 2023** by the Tribunale di Napoli (Court of Naples).

<sup>18</sup> On January 23, 2018, the DIA Operational Center in Naples, the State Police, the Carabinieri and the Guardia di Finanza (the Italian Customs and Excise Police), as part of the “*Leviathan*” operation, executed the preventive detention warrant no. 30350/13 RGNR - 18835/16 RG GIP - 5/18 RMC, issued on January 5, 2018 by the Tribunale di Napoli (Court of Naples) concerning 45 people, accused of Mafia association, illegal possession of common and military weapons, extortion and money laundering, with the aggravating circumstance of Mafia purposes and methods. The investigation was carried out on different leaders and members of the MOCCIA *clan*, operating in Afragola, in other municipalities in the western hinterland of Naples and in Rome, making it possible to outline its “pyramid-like” organizational structure and its main unlawful activities.

operation, concluded by the DIA in Naples, made it possible to outline the “pyramid-like” structure of the criminal group that was described as: “...an aggregate of multiple local criminal groups each led by a “*senatore*” (senator). Relations with members of the group are managed by “*luogotenenti*” (lieutenants), tied to the “*senatore*” by a trust relationship. The “*senatori*” are expected to report to their superior, who serves as a “*coordinatore*” (coordinator), is appointed by the *Moccia famiglia* and is their direct contact...”<sup>19</sup>. This stratification of roles aims at reducing the risks of possible involvement in investigation activities. It has helped the *clan* overcome issues relating to several judicial investigations and preserve a considerable operational ability, making it one of the most insidious *Camorra* groups in Italy. Despite being rooted in the north of Naples, the *MOCCIA famiglia* was able to extend its sphere of influence far beyond its territory of origin, as was proven by certain investigations highlighting the strong and functional relations with other *gruppi*, not necessarily related to the *Camorra*. Its huge financial availability has allowed the *clan* to acquire a true entrepreneurial dimension, thanks to diversified investments in multiple economic sectors and a remarkable propensity to create relations with qualified players in the economic world and in local politics. This has allowed the *clan* to make substantial asset investments also in the Lazio Region, particularly in Rome.

In the Municipality of Caivano (NA), sadly known in the news for the recent cases of rape involving two underage cousins, the criminal trends are particularly fluid due to a hyper-competitiveness among local *Camorra syndicates*, which try to assert supremacy over the territory, by flaunting their military capacity through *stese* and armed clashes, and a constant and incisive counteraction by the Authorities. In particular, the historical supremacy of the SAUTTO-CICCARELLI *clan*, which in December 2022 was the subject of a police operation<sup>20</sup> in which numerous leading elements and subordinates were arrested, would now seem to be challenged by the takeover attempt by the GALLO-ANGELINO *clan*, which, as documented by a precautionary measure<sup>21</sup> executed on **June 8, 2023**, would take advantage of the detention of the SAUTTO-CICCARELLI *clan*’s leading elements to take control of illicit activities in the territory. The latter is characterized by the presence of drug-pushing marketplaces, particularly in the tenements known as “Parco Verde” and “Bronx” (IACP neighborhood), an area defined in the judicial documents as “one of the main open-air drug

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<sup>19</sup> Extract from order provision (pp. 28 and 29) no. 30350/2013 RGNR, no. 18835/2016 RGGIP and no. 5/2018 RMC, issued on January 5, 2018, by the Tribunale di Napoli (Court of Naples).

<sup>20</sup> No. 30152/2016 RGNR - 5392/2018 RG GIP and no. 391/2022 ROC issued on November 14, 2022 by the Court of Naples.

<sup>21</sup> No. 20178/2019 RGNR - 25155/2022 RG GIP - 55/2023 OCC.

*markets in Western Europe*”<sup>22</sup>. The condition of the Parco Verde in Caivano, tenement built with state allocations in the 1980s in the aftermath of the Irpinia earthquake, is common to many suburban realities. Here, the absence of services and infrastructures feeds widespread social decay and a criminal subculture is established; a condition that allows *Camorra syndicates* to raise themselves to be alternative representatives to the State. On **October 17, 2023**, during the drafting of this document, in the Municipality of Caivano, the extraordinary commission for the provisional management of the Local Authority was installed, for the duration of 18 months. It was appointed by Presidential Decree pursuant to article 143 of the TUEL, after established Mafia infiltration that exposed the local authority to pressing constraints.

In the province of Caserta, the latest investigations have provided the persistent operation of the *Camorra cartel* of the *CASALESI clan*. The huge amount of judicial documentation on this matter has outlined the evolution of the structure of what has, in the past, been described by magistrates as “*without fear of contradiction, the most powerful Mafia group operating in Campania...with characteristics more similar to the Sicilian Mafia organizations than to the remaining Camorra organizations in Campania*”<sup>23</sup>. According to trial accounts, the coterie went through different phases. Until 1988, a single criminal group operated in the province of Caserta with the *BARDELLINO famiglia* at the head and the *SCHIAVONE, BIDOGETTI, IOVINE* and *DE FALCO gruppi* in subordinate positions. Subsequently, the latter, after sanctioning the murder of the charismatic boss of the *BARDELLINO famiglia* and his trusted men, took over the administration of the *CASALESI clan*, managing the related illicit trade also through a “common purse”. In time, there have been bloody clashes, arrests and cooperation with judicial authorities, which have led to incisive changes in power relations, until the current equilibrium was achieved with the emancipation of the individual factions identifiable in the *SCHIAVONE, BIDOGETTI, ZAGARIA* and *IOVINE famiglie*, which preserve their own management autonomy while maintaining articulated and changing collaborative relations among themselves.

Overall, Caserta’s geo-criminal mapping reveals the presence of organizations historically marked by a close family connection of their respective members and a solid propensity to control the economic and social fabric, not only local, often interfering in local political choices. Indeed, there are historically documented projections of the *CASALESI clan* in other regions of the peninsula (Lazio,

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<sup>22</sup> Extract of the injunction (p. 37) no. 30752/2016 RGNR - 5392/2018 RG GIP - 391/2022 OCC issued on November 14, 2022 by the Court of Naples.

<sup>23</sup> As stated by the GIP (p. 6) in the pretrial detention order no. 66575/2010 RGNR - 5114/2011 RG GIP - 660/2011 OCC issued on October 27, 2011 by the Court of Naples, in the foreword regarding the existence of the *CASALESI clan*.

Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna, Veneto) and even abroad, where this organization has shown itself especially through infiltration into the legal economy.

The evolution of the Caserta *Camorra* has been conditioned by the increasingly evolved and sophisticated forms of investment of illicit capital and the development of the local socio-economic context. So much so that it assumed the status of *holding* companies at the head of which highly professional figures are chosen, capable of communicating and interacting with entrepreneurs, local political figures, public and private administrators. The present interest of the Caserta *Camorra* organizations is to go through the decision-making mechanisms of the Public Administration. The ultimate goal, indeed, is to insert their own companies/enterprises into strategic sectors, such as those of large-scale organized distribution, funeral services, social-educational and welfare services (so called Third Sector). Often, entrepreneurs connected with organized crime interact directly with disloyal Public Administration Officials in a perspective of mutual benefit.

The territory of the province of Salerno is characterized by a marked geographical heterogeneity with socio-economic peculiarities that also condition the local criminal scenario. In the border areas, the territorial contiguity with the criminal environments in the province of Naples, Caserta and the nearby Calabria tends to favor the influence of the historic Mafia-type *syndicates* in Campania and Calabria with which *gruppi* from Salerno often establish criminal-business relations.

As in the other Campania areas, there is a multiplicity of *syndicates* of different origins, each with its own area of influence and with a high level of autonomy. Next to more structured organizations, there is the rise of new emerging *gruppi* dedicated, mainly, to drug-pushing and more traditional illicit activities such as extortion and acquisitive crimes sometimes resorting to violent actions. The historical and larger criminal organizations have developed more incisive penetration capabilities in the local socio-economic, political and entrepreneurial fabric. The aim is to take hold in certain crucial sectors of the economy of the province, such as the carrying out of public works, the management of public supplies and services for the environment also through the conditioning of local authorities.

Finally, the provinces of Benevento and Avellino are especially characterized by the presence of *Camorra*-type organizations with a strong sense of familistic cohesion, mainly dedicated to drug-pushing and extortion against local enterprises and commercial activities.

In particular, in the Valle Caudina, between the provinces of Avellino and Benevento, there persists the presence of the PAGNOZZI *clan* whose historical bosses are either deceased or detained and which, therefore, is thought to be currently administered by less charismatic individuals. Its illicit interests include extortion racketeering against builders and commercial activities, traffic in narcotic

drugs, laundering of its income and gaming and betting, particularly with the distribution of slot machines in cafés, arcades and betting shops. Previous investigations allegedly documented the presence of the *clan* outside the region as well and, above all, in Rome, where it is thought to have forged alliances with individuals affiliated to the criminal organizations rooted there. The PAGNOZZI *clan* also exerts its criminal influence in other areas in the province of Benevento by taking advantage of allied *gruppi* with a familistic structure.

The *Camorra clans* mentioned above do not cover the entirety of the criminal landscape in Campania, but represent the typical structural and organizational models to which the Mafia-type organizations present in the region can be referred, for details, refer to the reading of the individual provinces.

#### **d. Analysis of the criminal phenomenon of the Apulian and Lucanian Mafias**

The Apulian Mafia scenario is made up of a plurality of criminal organizations, mostly autonomous, characterized by an accentuated dynamism resulting from the fluctuating relations due to internal conflicts and alliances.

The Apulian criminal context is traditionally distinguished into three Mafia-type associations: *Camorra barese*, *mafie foggiane* and *Sacra Corona Unita*<sup>24</sup> (Mafias in the area of Foggia, *Camorra* in Bari and *Sacra Corona Unita*), which, however, when needed, synergistically carry out forms of strategic cooperation among themselves in order to pursue their profits and common illicit interests.

In an evolving Mafia scenario, strongly characterized by continuous conflicts within the *clans* themselves or between opposing criminal *gruppi*, the *Camorra barese* is marked by a plurality of *clans* that, as in the model of the *Camorra* in Naples, does not involve lead designations with coordinating functions but horizontal-type relations. This allows them to operate in complete autonomy although, where divergent interests exist, there are violent conflicts aimed at stating the supremacy of a particular *syndicate*.

Even in this semester, the traffic in narcotic drugs is confirmed to be the main interest of the Bari *coterie*, which in many cases, in order to control the territory, also directly manages the drug-pushing activities.

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<sup>24</sup> This is also confirmed in the data contained in the Reports on the Administration of Justice presented at the opening of the 2023 Judicial Year at the Bari and Lecce Courts of Appeal.

In Bari's criminal dynamics, there is no lack of episodes of prevarication through the use of intimidation and violence that *clans* employ in order to express their power of subjugation over the territory<sup>25</sup>.

The organized crime in the Capital city, which is also dedicated to smuggling, extortion, usury and illegal betting, through increasingly complex forms of money laundering, proves to be capable of penetrating the healthy economic fabric, even making use of acquiescent professionals and sometimes infiltrating the local administrative apparatuses.

The province of Barletta-Andria-Trani (BAT) is rapidly configuring itself as a strategic intersection between neighboring provinces both on the economic-productive and commercial level and in the criminal scope, representing a replication of the main groups of Bari and Foggia.

In international drug trafficking, the criminal organizations in the BAT province have been favored by the consolidated relations with Albanian *syndicates* established along the Adriatic route, which have enabled them to increase their criminal profile and also set up stable alliances with the *mafie garganica* and *cerignolana* (Mafia in Gargano and Cerignola). Consistently with the situation in other areas of the region, the indigenous Mafia is characterized by being less closed and vertically oriented, fragmented into a multiplicity of *syndicates* that coexist, wherever possible, with Mafia organizations from neighboring territories, employing violence whenever it is essential to assert supremacy.

Organized crime in Foggia continues to present itself as a phenomenon historically rooted in the territory in a heterogeneous way, involving different territorial quadrants (Foggia and its hinterland, the Gargano macro-area, upper and lower Tavoliere). The so-called *quarta mafia* (fourth Mafia), whose unitary definition hides a plurality of different Mafia identities (*società foggiana*, *mafia garganica*, *mafia dell'Alto Tavoliere* and *malavita cerignolana*) has been able, over time, to create a true *modus operandi*, reuniting criminal interests and strategies without necessarily sharing a common leadership. This is a "hybrid Mafia, derived from the *Camorra* and the *'Ndrangheta*, made up of criminal manifestations whose brutality and pervasiveness is in function of the social, political-administrative, economic and cultural fabric of the specific reference territory<sup>26</sup>. The most structured *clans* include in their orbit minor *gruppi*, sometimes composed of a few elements, characterized by very dangerous individuals, which manifest in their actions (sometimes unrelated to the main operational strategies of the *syndicates*) the Mafia canons of violence and prevarication. In this way,

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<sup>25</sup> However, episodes of threats against local administrators or tradesmen, also recorded in the Bari area this semester, should not be underestimated.

<sup>26</sup> It is in this sense that the multiple dissolutions of local authorities in recent years (Orta Nova, Monte Sant'Angelo, Mattinata, Cerignola, Manfredonia and Foggia) should be read.

the seizures of several weapons carried out in Foggia and San Severo during this semester, that also involved young criminals, are symbolic<sup>27</sup>. Also relevant is the central role assumed by the Mafias in the area of Foggia in the drug trafficking sector (also thanks to extra-regional connections with criminality from Campania and Calabria, as well as with groups of Albanian nationality), which also facilitates replications outside the region, especially in Molise (coastal road and hinterland in the Campobasso area) and in Abruzzo. Last but not least, it should be noted how the Alto Tavoliere area serves as an intersection between different Mafia phenomena in the province such as the *società foggiana* and the criminal groups in the Gargano promontory.

The *Sacra Corona Unita* has its origins in Salento, between the provinces of Lecce, Brindisi and Taranto. The name itself recalls typical aspects and connotations of the Mafia's identity: from the rites of affiliation with direct references to religious symbols to the characters of inner cohesion and bond among the affiliates, from which the criminal strength of the association derives.

The Mafia-type *gruppi* continue to express a criminal capacity in the name and on behalf of the detained leaders of the *Sacra Corona Unita* that, as also confirmed by investigative evidence, dictate the rules from prison for maintaining the Mafia order, making use of relatives and *luogotenenti* to manage illicit activities. The current organization's operation is based on consolidated ways of controlling the territory and supplying the resources, mainly through the drugs market and the continuing, although hidden, phenomenon of extortion.

The Basilicata Region is marked by a territory with two macro-areas: the hinterland of Potenza, characterized by urban realities that are less demographically and economically developed, and the coastal area in the province of Matera, on the border with Apulia and Calabria, with a strong agricultural and tourism vocation.

The evolution of the Mafia phenomenon is materialized differently between the provinces of Potenza and Matera. The criminality of the hinterland of Potenza, although subject to a primitive influence of the Campania *Camorra*, has over time gained criminal recognition from the 'Ndrangheta, operating in the sector of drugs, extortion, robbery and usury.

The coastal area in the province of Matera has been affected over time by the criminal influence of Taranto *gruppi*, which, along the Ionian coast, have formed a criminal axis with indigenous *gruppi* and Calabrian *clans*.

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<sup>27</sup> Which *coterie*s use to assign operational duties (custody of drugs, weapons, placement of explosive devices, fictitious registration of assets of illicit origin, etc.).



The prevailing criminal interests in this range are traffic in narcotic drugs, even with the participation of Albanian syndicates, extortion and money laundering, especially in commercial activities in the sector of tourism and hotels.

#### **e. Analysis of the other national Mafias**

Among the indigenous criminal groups that have over the years acquired more autonomy, influence and criminal depth in the Lazio scenario, and in Rome in particular, the notorious **CASAMONICA clan** certainly stands out, whose presence probably dates back to the 1960s, when *Rom* families from Abruzzo and Molise, including some belonging to the SPADA and DI SILVIO *famiglie*, established the main headquarters of their business and interests in the capital, over time on an increasingly stable basis. The illicit aspects of the conduct referable to various individuals gravitating in this context emerged in a particular way from the moment of the cooperation with the so-called *Banda della Magliana*, which in the 1970s had brought together a few specific and restricted delinquent circles operating in Rome into a true organization dedicated to gambling, robberies, drug trafficking and kidnapping. At the time, the main role attributed to some members of the CASAMONICA *clan* was related to the so called “debt collection” sector, meant in criminal jargon as a collection of serial and repeated threats as well as violent actions that ensure the profits of illicit activities of the organization of reference, in case of reluctance of the victims to surrender to the prevailing demands of the associates. Over time, a marked familism, the consequent strong bonds of solidarity, and the use of a language of their own that is difficult to understand (in particular, the mixing of the Abruzzo or Roman dialect with the traditional *romanì* hampers the understanding of communications and makes even the realization of any technical activities considerably difficult), are factors that have facilitated the criminal descent of numerous elements of these groups, which are therefore difficult to permeate from the outside, also due to the close mutual collaboration, often transversal with respect to the different cores to which they belong. At this time, the presence of the CASAMONICA *clan* appears to have long been rooted in the areas inserted in the southeastern quadrant of Rome, extended from Porta Furba to Tuscolana, from Romanina to Anagnina, as far as Spinaceto, Frascati, Grottaferrata, Monte Compatri and, through the relations with the SPADA *famiglia*, they have also been able to extend their influence to the Ostia coastline.

Extortion, usury, crimes against property, drug trafficking, fictitious registration of assets and money laundering, as well as opportunistic attempts to creep into some public apparatuses are among the most gainful illicit activities. In addition, threats, bodily harm and often the use of weapons in the resolution of conflicts are part of the *modus operandi* and the subculture of this criminal context.

Confirming their rootedness and increased influence in the Lazio territory, it has long been observed how traditional Mafia groups prefer to cooperate rather than fight these criminal realities, according to a logic of balance and division of interests, in search of profitable exchange and relations of collusion that allow the more structured criminal organizations to infiltrate silently, especially in the economic-financial fabric.

In this regard, the results of more than a decade of coexistence between various forms of criminality emerged significantly during the investigation called “*All’ombra del Cupolone*”<sup>28</sup>, which in February 2019 led to the confiscation of assets attributable to the CASAMONICA *famiglia*, after the recognition of bonds and alliances with *’ndrine* and *Camorra clans*.

The coterie’s tendency to take advantage of synergies and joint interests with various forms of criminality has been confirmed by the results of the “*Brasile low cost*”<sup>29</sup> operation as well, which proved the remarkable ability of the *clan* to form alliances with other criminal groups. In January 2019, during the aforementioned investigation, the Guardia di Finanza carried out a precautionary custody order against 5 suspects for different reasons for association aimed at international drug trafficking intended to foster drug-pushing marketplaces in Rome and Naples. In this regard, a well-known member of the CASAMONICA *clan* was given the delicate task of maintaining the direct contacts with South American *narcos* cartels, in this case Brazilian, for the imports in Italy of amounts of cocaine equal to their annual production, worth around 7 tons (however, there was no real criminal association due to his arrest for other crimes).

In fact, the independence and the criminal reputation gained throughout the years have inevitably led to intense bouts of enforcement, and the various court procedures, carried out from time to time, were closed not only with the frequent verification of the so-called Mafia methodology pursuant to article 416 bis 1 of the Criminal Code, but also in specific circumstances, with the judicially definitive confirmation of the existence of all the typically Mafia association requirements. Important in this sense is sentence no. 1785/2019 of the Supreme Court of Cassation, which stated that the CASAMONICA-SPADA-DI SILVIO *clan* is a Mafia-type association, by documenting conditions of subjugation, intimidation and code of silence resulting from the ability of using psychic or compulsive violence to achieve unlawful goals. The mentioned sentence was reached by retracing the results of the “*Gramigna*”<sup>30</sup> operation against the aforementioned *clans* for crimes, such as drug

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<sup>28</sup> Proc no. 46/2016 RG MP.

<sup>29</sup> OCC no. 8018/2017 RGNR and 1997/2018 RG GIP, issued by the Court of Rome on January 15, 2019.

<sup>30</sup> Criminal proc. no. 44106/15 RGNR and 3427/16 of the Court of Rome.

trading, extortion, and racketeering, carried out with the aggravating circumstance of the Mafia methodology, as well as illegal possession of weapons.

In July 2018, in Rome and its provinces, the Carabinieri executed a precautionary custody order against 37 individuals, considered responsible, for various reasons, of crimes such as drug trafficking and trading, extortion, racketeering, arbitrary exercise of financial activity and fake ownership of goods, with the aggravating circumstance of the so-called “Mafia methodology”, pursuant to art. 416 bis 1 of the Criminal Code.

Thirteen individuals among the suspects were notified of being part of a Mafia association called the CASAMONICA *clan* active in the territory of Appia-Tuscolana of Rome.

Such activity confirmed the presence of a local Mafia association divided into other criminal groups, mostly family-run, characterized by its own operational and economic decision-making independence, dedicated to many crimes, among which drug trading, racketeering, and extortion, which had established ties in time with other criminal organizations settled in Rome’s territory. The investigations indeed put together an intense trade activity in the south-eastern area of the Capital, with supply channels also from Calabria, as well as a number of episodes of extortion and racketeering involving tradesmen and entrepreneurs<sup>31</sup>.

On April 15, 2019, in the provinces of Rome, Taranto, Cosenza, Palermo, Caltanissetta, Nuoro, Sassari, Naples, Frosinone and L’Aquila, the Carabinieri, as a part of the “*Gramigna bis*” investigation, executed a pre-trial detention order (OCC) against 20 suspects<sup>32</sup> held to be responsible, in various roles, for extortion, usury, holding with the intent of drug-pushing, fraudulent transfer of assets, aiding and abetting, property damage and forgery of public documents, also committed with the aggravating circumstance of the Mafia-type method.

The continuation of the investigation of the aforementioned “*Gramigna*”<sup>33</sup> operation, made it possible to document further illegal conduct carried out by both previously arrested individuals and other individuals, almost all belonging to the CASAMONICA *famiglie* (the SPADA and DI SILVIO *gruppi*

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<sup>31</sup> In fact, from the investigations the contacts between a top member of the CASAMONICA *clan* and a member of the STRANGIO *ndrina* STRANGIO of San Luca (RC) emerged, regarding the purchase of a significant amount of cocaine, proving the convergence of interests in the specific sector between the Calabrian criminality and the Roman coterie, as well as the main role of the CASAMONICA *clan* in the drug market in a wide territory of Rome.

<sup>32</sup> To which is added the residence order against two other individuals involved.

<sup>33</sup> During the drafting of this document, the Supreme Court of Cassation by its judgment on January 16, 2024 reaffirmed the accusation of Mafia association for the CASAMONICA *clan*, substantially confirming the previous levels of judgment (first degree sentence on September 20, 2021 and sentence of the Court of Rome on November 29, 2022), also recognizing the aggravating circumstance of armed association for some leading positions.

were also involved, although with a more limited number of individuals), and led to the preventive seizure of companies, immovable properties, cars, bank accounts and valuables<sup>34</sup>.

Also the “*Sagunto espugnata*”<sup>35</sup> operation, concluded in Rome in May 2019 by the Carabinieri, led to the execution of a preventive custody order executed by the Court of Rome against 22 suspects, all belonging to the CASAMONICA *clan*, held responsible for association for the purpose of traffic in narcotic drugs, mainly active in the Quadraro and Porta Furba neighborhoods, while the “*Fuel Discount*”<sup>36</sup> operation, conducted by the Guardia di Finanza, unveiled a massive VAT fraud of more than EUR 100 million, culminating in February 2020 in the application of precautionary measure against 13 individuals, among whom were members, with leading roles, of the CASAMONICA *famiglia* and the POLVERINO *Camorra clan*. In this criminal context, the judicial investigation called “*Noi proteggiamo Roma*”<sup>37</sup>, coordinated by the Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia (District Anti-Mafia Directorate) (DDA) in Rome played an essential part. It was concluded in June 2020 by the State Police with the execution of 20 precautionary measures against members of the CASAMONICA *famiglia* for the crimes of usury, extortion and abusive exercise of financial activity, all aggravated by the Mafia-type method<sup>38</sup>. The activities carried out had made it possible, specifically, to disarticulate two important factions referable to the CASAMONICA *clan*, which, on the strength of the capillary control exercised over vast neighborhoods of the city, even defined themselves as an organization capable of protecting Rome from the incursion and interests of other external criminal groups.

Another significant conviction sentence<sup>39</sup>, which provides a picture of the high level of intimidation and subjugation of the *clan*’s victims, is the one executed on **February 22, 2023** by the Court of Rome which imposed a total of 37 years of imprisonment against five individuals gravitating in this criminal context, for a series of extortions aggravated by the Mafia-type method, aimed at raising

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<sup>34</sup> For a total value of more than EUR 300,000

<sup>35</sup> In Rome, Trapani, Foggia, Voghera (PV), Paola (CS), Nuoro and Tornimparte (AQ) - Simultaneously, 3.74 lbs. of cocaine and a large amount of money were seized.

<sup>36</sup> OCC no. 1161/19 and 230/19 RG GIP issued by the Court of Pavia on January 29, 2020. A concurrent preventive seizure for the purpose of direct confiscation of the profit of the crimes up to the amount of approximately EUR 60 million was also ordered.

<sup>37</sup> OCC no. 9061/17 RGNR and 24116/18 RG GIP, issued by the Court of Rome on April 13, 2020. The court also ordered the simultaneous seizure of which no. 7 immovable units in Rome, including some villas in the Romanina neighborhood, shares in 5 corporations and one partnership, a sole proprietorship, a gas station, a shop, 140 financial dealings with various credit institutions and more, worth about EUR 20 million.

<sup>38</sup> About 20 years of events related to that criminal syndicate were reconstructed in the course of the investigation. What had emerged was a structure characterized by a horizontal set-up and the absence of a single summit, in favor instead of a kind of “family council” that met when needed, representing individual families, linked by opportunistic ties of kinship, which over time fed the common sense of belonging.

<sup>39</sup> Sentence no. 2679/2023 (RGNR 27283/2018 - RG DIB 9987/2021) issued by the Court of Rome on **February 22, 2023**.

money to cover legal fees incurred in the defense of members of the DI SILVIO *clan*, arrested in May 2018 as a result of damage, threats and injuries inside a bar in the suburban neighborhood “*La Romanina*”, considered a kind of “stronghold” of the CASAMONICA *famiglie*. The episode had also aroused high media attention even for the particularly violent manner of the assault and the resulting injuries to the victims, which has also led to charges of several aggravating factors, including the Mafia-type method<sup>40</sup> and taking advantage of circumstances to hamper private defense<sup>41</sup>.

In addition to the main illicit activities briefly described, this syndicate does not neglect, as mentioned above, attempts to infiltrate institutional apparatuses.

On **February 14, 2023** the Carabinieri in Roma executed a restrictive measure<sup>42</sup> against a lawyer, accused of bribing some officials of the judicial offices in order to obtain information and documents covered by secrecy, and on the following **February 17**, at the order of the Court of Rome, they also executed a second precautionary measure against a second person involved in the affair. The two individuals, since December 2021, on the commission of others involved, had allegedly been active in acquiring information about the possible initiation of technical activities against the persons involved. The investigation had also revealed co-interests with an individual with a criminal record for drug trafficking, as well as family ties with a member of the CASAMONICA *famiglia*.

In the coastline of Rome, the *modus operandi* of the traditional Mafia-type associations has long been emulated by the **FASCIANI**<sup>43</sup> and **SPADA** *syndicates*, whose influence in the territory has emerged through important and articulated judicial police operations. In particular, the investigation called “*Nuova alba*”<sup>44</sup> culminated in July 2013 in a pretrial detention order against 51 suspects believed to be responsible, for various reasons, for crimes relating to usury, international drug trafficking (aimed at the management of drug-pushing marketplaces located not only in the coastline of Ostia), extortion against retailers, control of the installation and the management of *slot machines*, as well as repeated attempts to condition the administrative apparatus for the assignment of tenements and the control of

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<sup>40</sup> OCC no. 16627/18 RGNR: “*Consisting in the violent and provocative display of conduct suitable for exerting on the passive individuals that particular coercion, and consequent intimidation, characteristic of Mafia-type organizations*” (p. 2).

<sup>41</sup> Criminal proc. 26993/2020. In fact, among the victims of the assault was a civilian disabled customer that was inside the shop. As a result of this episode, on September 10, 2020, the Court of Cassation rendered permanent the conviction sentence, in which a member of the CASAMONICA *famiglia*, among others, was sentenced to 6 years in prison.

<sup>42</sup> OCC no. 35243/22 RGNR and 3006/23 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome on February 10, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> The presence in the area dates back to the 1980s.

<sup>44</sup> Sentence no. 6846/15 of January 30, 2015 (filed on April 27, 2015) in Criminal Proc. 54911/12 RGNR and 19933/13/13/13 RG Dib.

beach activities. The illicit conduct was also deemed attributable to contexts of real Mafia-type association, resulting from a strategic division of business and interests, for more than twenty years, between the two hegemonic groups in that area, the FASCIANI and the TRIASSI *gruppi* (the latter established in the Lazio territory as a projection of the CUNTRERA-CARUANA *famiglia* in Agrigento)<sup>45</sup>.

Another 16 arrests in the same criminal framework were subsequently made by the Guardia di Finanza in March 2014 at the conclusion of the “*Tramonto*” operation, for the assumptions of, among other things, Mafia-type criminal conspiracy and fraudulent transfer of assets<sup>46</sup>.

At the end of a complicated process<sup>47</sup>, the Supreme Court in November 2019, in rejecting the appeals of 10 of the 12 defendants, had confirmed the sentence of Appeal *bis*, establishing the Mafia matrix of the FASCIANI *clan*. Moreover, within the close synergy between the latter *syndicate* and the SPADA *clan*, a series of intimidations, fires and property damage, particularly in the period 2011-2015, aimed at a reorganization of the criminal hierarchy in the coastline of Rome, are also to be contextualized.

In April 2016, the Carabinieri executed a pretrial detention order<sup>48</sup> issued by the Court of Rome against 10 suspects belonging to the Spada *clan*, as a result of the “*Sub urbe*” operation. This operation documented numerous episodes of extortion and threats in the territory of Ostia with the aggravating circumstance of the Mafia methodology, and thus confirming “*the criminal rise of the Spada famiglia, which, already rooted in the territory, is replacing the power already held by the Fasciani famiglia with which it was allied*”.

During the subsequent “*Eclissi*”<sup>49</sup> operation, the Carabinieri and the State Police, under the direction of the DDA of Rome, carried out a pretrial detention order against 32 individuals believed to be responsible, in various ways, for Mafia-type association, murder, aggravated bodily injury and illicit possession of a firearm, extortion aggravated by Mafia methods, destruction by fire, usury, fictitious registration of assets, trafficking and illicit possession of drugs. The investigative activity had significantly weakened the operational capacity of the *syndicate*, implicating its leaders, promoters and associates, and had also made it possible to trace the perpetrators and instigators of a double

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<sup>45</sup> Among the main individuals receiving convictions, there are a leading member of the FASCIANI *clan* (with more than 27 years of imprisonment) and some members of his family unit.

<sup>46</sup> The activity has also led to the seizure of ten commercial activities, revealing the *clan*’s interests in the local economic fabric and in the management of beach establishments.

<sup>47</sup> On October 26, 2017, the Court of Cassation set aside the judgment on appeal, which had found that the association case under article 416 *bis* had not been sufficiently proven.

<sup>48</sup> OCC no. 6087/16 RG PM and 550/15 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome on April 8, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> OCC no.47412/15 RGNR and 34761/2016 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome on January 25, 2018.

murder that took place in November 2011, aimed at asserting the territorial supremacy over a rival criminal group of the SPADA *clan*. As a result of the investigation, the conditioning, the management and the control of multiple commercial activities also emerged, and therefore the preventive seizure of several assets with a total value of about EUR 1.5 million had also been ordered. At the conclusion of the intricate trial proceedings, the Supreme Court on January 13, 2022, recognized Mafia-type association for the SPADA *clan* and issued severe convictions against leading individuals of the *syndicate*.

Also widely known are the threats and assaults on journalists in the regular course of their professional activities (the events in 2013 and 2017 stand out for their particular severity and consequent media prominence), which are as significant as ever for the widespread Mafia subculture in this criminal framework.

These connotations are also flanked by “entrepreneurial” profiles, projected to the control of economic activities, concessions, authorizations, contracts and public services, primarily related to beach activities on the coastline of Rome.

In fact, in terms of the aggregation of assets, it should be noted that, in January 2018, the DIA of Rome carried out a confiscation of assets, worth approximately EUR 30 million, from five individuals of Sinti origin belonging to a criminal syndicate dedicated to apartment burglaries and, for this reason, subject to special public security surveillance<sup>50</sup>.

In addition, as a result of the investigations on assets resulting precisely from the two complex investigations mentioned above, “*Sub urbe*” and “*Eclissi*”, in May 2020, the Guardia di Finanza in the operation called “*Apogeo*” confiscated real estate assets and corporate relations amounting to more than EUR 10 million attributable to the SPADA *syndicate*, whose financial availability was able to significantly alter the management of regular entrepreneurial activities in that area. The confiscation order, issued by the Court of Rome, originated from the manifest disproportion between the declared income and the significant investments in commercial activities, implemented also through the use of an acquiescent “figurehead” to disguise the actual ownership of the huge assets<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> Order no. 1/2018 (2/2017 MP) issued by the Court of Rome – Prevention Measures (MP) Section, at the request of the DIA Director carried out on January 8, 2018.

<sup>51</sup> That included, among others, 6 sports associations, 19 companies and 2 sole proprietorships, and commercial activities operating in various sectors (bakeries, cafés, arcades, fuel distributors, gyms and dance schools, builders and car dealerships), as well as vehicles and financial assets in bank and postal accounts.

The confiscation was executed as a result of the sentence of the Supreme Court of Cassation<sup>52</sup> on July 13, 2022.

Another major confiscation<sup>53</sup> carried out by the Guardia di Finanza, as part of the “*Ultima Spiaggia*” operation, involved companies and real estate assets worth more than EUR 400 million, as a result of co-interests that emerged between entrepreneurial activities referable to a person<sup>54</sup> and the FASCIANI and SPADA *clans* in Ostia.

One local group that is particularly active in the territory of Latina and lower Lazio is that of the notorious **DI SILVIO** *clan*, whose hegemony in that area is not infrequently implemented through opportunistic forms of collaboration both with individuals traceable to traditional Mafia coteries and with multi-ethnic organizations. In fact, the province of Latina, close to the Capital and not far from the provinces of Naples and Caserta, in addition to being characterized by extended areas that are logistically strategic for the various needs of the coteries, presents significant investment opportunities thanks to the multiple potentialities of the territory and profiles of strong economic expansion.

It is no coincidence that traditional Mafia organizations have paid particular attention to these areas over time, as demonstrated, for example, by the CASALESI *clan* purchase of land in Borgo Montello, dating back to the late 1980s. As of today, however, the time when criminality with a Campania matrix attempted to establish itself in order to expand its reach against local groups seems distant.

Indeed, the local coteries emulating the *modus operandi* of traditional Mafia associations, have for years acquired a marked autonomy in the management of illicit activities, and the relation with the extra-regional projections of the more structured organizations is now based on an almost equal level of mutual recognition. The most pronounced qualitative leap in terms of criminal depth can be seen precisely in the DI SILVIO *clan*.

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<sup>52</sup> The sentence of the Supreme Court executed the confiscation order no. 154/18 +others and 42/2020, issued by the Court of Rome – MP Section, confirmed by the local Court of Appeals, concerning assets traceable, directly or indirectly, to five leading members of the SPADA *clan* in Ostia. The aforementioned assets had already been subject to seizure in October 2018 and subject to confiscation of first instance and second instance in January 2020 and September 2021, respectively. The final confiscation targeted almost all of the assets previously “bound” to the leading members of the SPADA *clan*.

<sup>53</sup> Confiscation order of the Court of Rome - MP Section no.201/2018, executed on July 16, 2021 following a ruling of the Court of Cassation. Prevention proceedings no.145/16 issued by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Rome - DDA.

<sup>54</sup> Individual previously arrested for fraudulent bankruptcy, fictitious registration of assets and laundering.



In particular, judicial evidence has revealed how this *syndicate*, which has been established in the province since the 1950s, has managed to impose itself on the territory by operating a control comparable to that of traditional Mafias in their respective territories of origin. The DI SILVIO criminal group, whose leading individuals consisted of the head of the family and his close family members, showed a pyramidal structure hinged on kinship ties and cooperation with local convicts, who were sometimes also from rival groups.

Based on important investigative findings aimed at reconstructing the various illicit activities and recurrent intimidation methods of the **DI SILVIO-TRAVALI** *gruppo*, the “Alba Pontina” and “Alba Pontina 2” operations<sup>55</sup> had allowed the suspects to be charged with the typical methods of Mafia action.

As 2019 came to a close, other important law enforcement actions were completed in this criminal context. In October 2019, in fact, the Carabinieri, as part of the investigative activity called “*Cerbero*” had documented a series of extortionary conduct aggravated by the Mafia method, carried out by six individuals believed to be affiliated with the DI SILVIO *clan*, who had managed to enforce the use of intimidation even within the penitentiary institutions, forcing the victims, among other things, to repeated payments to protect their safety.

The investigation that immediately followed called “*Masterchef*”, in November, conducted by the Carabinieri in cooperation with the Penitentiary Police led to the identification of the supply channel through which narcotic drugs were introduced into the Latina prison; in the following December with the “*Scudo*” operation, the Carabinieri enforced an OCC issued by the Court of Latina against 8 individuals, investigated for various reasons of possession for the purpose of drug-pushing, extortion and usury<sup>56</sup>.

On January 29, 2020, the State Police dismantled a criminal organization composed of 5 people, including 3 linked to the DI SILVIO *clan* dedicated to extortion, with the aggravating circumstance of the Mafia methodology<sup>57</sup>.

These associations have, therefore, seen a considerable increase in their criminal reputation and intimidating potential over the years, as a direct result of numerous episodes of violence recurring over time and the control gained in various illicit activities in the Pontine province. Assaults, injuries,

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<sup>55</sup> OCC no. 27187/2016 RGNR and 14817/2017 RGGIP issued by the Court of Rome on October 31, 2018.

<sup>56</sup> In the course of activities, two criminal groups had been identified, one operating in Aprilia and dedicated to usury and recovery of debts, the other led by members of the DI SILVIO *clan*, interested in drug trafficking activities.

<sup>57</sup> OCC no. 43343/19 RGPM-26109/19 RG GIP, issued by the Court of Rome on January 28, 2020.

consummated and attempted homicides, even following internal feuds and complicated dynamics with prominent figures defecting from one group in favor of the rival faction, have marked this progressive rooting of criminal realities which, despite being opposed, commonly bear the name DI SILVIO. By way of example, reference is made to what emerged within the complex investigation conventionally named “*Don’t touch*”<sup>58</sup>, which led to the weakening of the DI SILVIO-TRAVALI *clan*. This was immediately followed by the attempt of another consortium to assert itself against the previous one (still revolving around members of a different branch of the DI SILVIO *clan*) in the relentless struggle for control of highly lucrative illicit activities. Among these, there are drug trafficking, usury, extortion, undue interference in contract assignments and money laundering, the latter facilitated by other financial crimes and systematic fictitious transfers of assets and companies.

In reviewing the main judicial outcomes based on the evidentiary framework gathered during Operation “*Alba pontina*”, the judgment issued by the Court of Rome on July 19, 2019, is particularly significant. Indeed, it defines the DI SILVIO *clan* as a “*newly formed Mafia-style association, territorially settled in Latina, mostly family-sized, whose intimidating strength derives from the criminal reputation achieved by the clan in southern Lazio, even though it manifests incessantly with traditional forms of violence and threat, thus subjecting the local population to the coercive rules of the cosca*”. The judgment’s rationale highlights that investigative activities have allowed for the reconstruction of the DI SILVIO *clan*’s organizational chart, and above all, to “*attribute the character of ‘mafiosità’ to it, thus recognizing the associative offense under article 416 bis of the Italian Penal Code. This is a clan structured on a territorial basis (Campo Boario in Latina), a protagonist in the broader criminal context of the well-known families - of Romani origins - DI SILVIO and CIARELLI, who have asserted their criminal prestige over time in the fields of usury, extortion, arms possession and drug trafficking in the territory of Latina*”<sup>59</sup>. In January 2021, the Rome Court of Appeal, in confirming the overall sentences to 50 years of imprisonment for the 9 defendants, reiterated “*the Mafia identity of the Di Silvio group*”, as a result of the criminal character acquired over time and the related conditions of subjugation and widespread *omertà* in the socio-economic context of the Pontine province.

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<sup>58</sup> Criminal proceeding no. 9053/14 of the Public Prosecutor’s Office at the Court of Latina. Operation “Don’t touch”, conducted by the State Police and concluded in October 2015. The two criminal organizations engaged in drug trafficking and operating in the Pontine province based on a peaceful division of territory subsequently moved into a phase of strong opposition.

<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the judicial overview encapsulated in the judgment “*becomes even more significant in the perspective of the criminal rise of the DI SILVIO clan, when shifting focus to the intimidating power actually perceived by the community of Latina (but also by the criminals themselves in the area) subjected to the hegemony of the association, which as decided in the context of this criminal proceeding, is undoubtedly of a Mafia nature*”.

Of particular importance is also the subsequent operation “*Reset*”<sup>60</sup>, carried out by the State Police, which concluded with the execution of a precautionary measure issued by the Court of Rome against 19 individuals, investigated for various offenses including criminal association aimed at drug trafficking, numerous episodes of extortion, and one murder, aggravated under article 416 bis 1 of the Criminal Code and with the purpose of Mafia facilitation. The complex activities carried out, which on the strictly investigative level represent the natural continuation of the aforementioned “*Don’t touch*” operation, allowed for tracing the operations of an organization with a predominantly familial structure. Over time, this had acquired increasing criminal prestige in the fields of usury, extortion and drug trafficking, leveraging the Mafia method and the intimidating force deriving from the associative bond. In particular, the TRAVALI group had acquired a sort of monopoly on drug trafficking and distribution activities, with specific task assignments and the ability to supply markets in the province, such as Cisterna di Latina, Sezze and Aprilia. In the course of new investigative inquiries, intimidating acts were found to be carried out using violent methods to oust some drug dealers from the drug market in Latina, as evidenced by the shooting of a drug dealer and several episodes of vandalism to gain control of local drug distribution activities. The victims’ silence was ensured by the criminal reputation derived from belonging to the association headed by the DI SILVIO and TRAVALI *famiglie* and by the rather widespread condition of subjugation in the territory of Latina<sup>61</sup>. Even in this criminal context, typical characteristics of Mafia behavior were identified, as reported in the order for precautionary measures<sup>62</sup>: “*It is now possible to affirm that said association, although disputed at the time as an ordinary association under article 416 of the Criminal Code, operated with the typical method of Mafia clans, leveraging the intimidating force derived from being the hegemonic clan of undisputed criminal fame in the Pontine territory, strong due to its composition by individuals of very high criminal caliber*”.

Among the indigenous criminal formations, others emerge that, although not having yet been confirmed by final judgments in terms of the legal qualification as Mafia associations, are

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<sup>60</sup> OCC 25807/20 RG MP and 13354/20 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome on February 4, 2021.

<sup>61</sup> Also, the support for a murder action dating back to 2014, matured in a different context, would have had the purpose of demonstrating the criminal strength of the reference group to the outside world. A member of the association would have indeed provided the weapons and participated in the abduction phase of the victim.

<sup>62</sup> OCC 25807/20 RG MP and 13354/20 RG GIP, issued by the Court of Rome - DDA on February 4, 2021 - operation “*Reset*”. It is also highlighted that extortions were carried out “*in a serial manner, almost on a daily basis, targeting citizens and entrepreneurs, who only needed to know the affiliation or proximity of the extortionists to the DI SILVIO-TRAVALI gruppo to submit to the intimidating demands*”, and that to demonstrate their intimidating power “*often it was not necessary to resort to violence since the social consciousness of the caliber of its members and the character of the criminal gruppo was now mature*” (page 31).

nevertheless able to exert an intimidating force comparable to that of more structured consortia. Within this context falls the **GAMBACURTA** *gruppo*, well-known in the Roman neighborhood of Montesapaccato, especially for the dealings related to the management of local drug markets and those in the neighboring districts of Boccea and Aurelia. On **July 19, 2022**, the Rome Court of Appeal confirmed many of the convictions handed down in the first instance in May 2021<sup>63</sup> to members and affiliates of the association, including three high-ranking figures or persons otherwise considered to be prominent elements, sentenced to 30 years, 18 years, and 13 years and 9 months of imprisonment, respectively. Extortion, drug trafficking, usury, money laundering and fictitious property ownership, with the recurrence of the aggravating factor of the Mafia method, are among the main illicit activities which emerged during the investigation, which also revealed a network of connections with top figures of the *'Ndrangheta*, *Camorra*, and other local groups.

The **SENESE** association is characterized, instead, by an original *Camorra* matrix combined with a consolidated organizational structure borrowed from indigenous groups, representing one of the clearest expressions of the fusion and balance reached in the Lazio region with the criminal models typical of the regions of origin.

The interests of the **SENESE** are mainly found in the Tuscolana, Cinecittà, Centocelle and Quadraro areas, as well as in some areas of the historic center. The group maintains its dangerousness despite being weakened by a coordinated counteraction by the Rome DDA<sup>64</sup> (District Anti-Mafia Directorate) and carried out by the State Police and Guardia di Finanza, culminating in 28 arrests in December 2020. The investigations had also allowed the reconstruction of investments and financial operations for laundering illicit proceeds in restaurants, cafés and clothing stores, as well as identifying further assets in other cities such as Frosinone, Milan and Verona. The Assize Court of Rome, at the end of the first instance trial<sup>65</sup> on October 20, 2021, pronounced a guilty verdict against numerous individuals belonging to this criminal context or otherwise connected to it. However, on February 9, 2023, in the second instance trial, the Appeals judges acquitted a high-ranking member of the association and significantly reduced other previously imposed sentences, dropping the aggravating factor of Mafia facilitation for all defendants.

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<sup>63</sup> More than 40 convictions. It is noted that 58 arrests had already been made during the “*Hampa-Malavita*” operation in June 2018 conducted by the Carabinieri and coordinated by the Rome DDA.

<sup>64</sup> Reference is made to the large-scale operation called “*Affari di famiglia*”. The charges formulated against the numerous individuals involved were related, in varying degrees, to drug trafficking, extortion, illegal possession and carrying of weapons, grievous bodily harm, attempted murder, fraudulent transfer of assets, for many of which the aggravating factor of the Mafia method was recognized.

<sup>65</sup> More than twenty convictions, totaling approximately 120 years of imprisonment.

## f. Analysis of foreign Mafias

Foreign criminal organizations represent a consolidated component in the overall national criminal scenario in Italy. Investigations conducted by law enforcement confirm, even in the referenced semester, the increasingly marked and recurrent existence of interactions between Italian Mafia clans and foreign organized crime groups.

For certain associations, the Court of Cassation has issued important rulings that have outlined and set off the typical Mafia characteristics both in structure<sup>66</sup> and in criminal operational methods<sup>67</sup>. Foreign criminal associations are the subject of particular investigative attention from all international<sup>68</sup>, European<sup>69</sup> and Italian institutions because they represent a concrete threat to the security of the individual member countries<sup>70</sup> and Italy.

Among the priorities listed by the European Council, those related to “*high-risk<sup>71</sup> criminal networks involved in human trafficking, migrant smuggling and drug trafficking*” are highlighted, areas in which foreign organized crime fits perfectly due to the transnational nature typical of these criminal matrices.

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<sup>66</sup> As in the case of organized Nigerian syndicates (so-called cults), which exhibit a high degree of internal structuring and replicate all the typical Mafia traits in managing the various controlled criminal assets.

<sup>67</sup> The Court of Cassation has long expressed itself in this regard towards Chinese, Nigerian, and Romanian criminal structures.

<sup>68</sup> The same objectives have also been identified by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) in the annual publication “2022 INTERPOL Global Crime Trend Summary Report” [An annual publication analyzing collected data on the trends of global crime, focused on 5 macro areas: Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa - <https://www.interpol.int/How-we-work/Criminal-intelligence-analysis2/Our-analysis-reports>].

<sup>69</sup> The Council of the European Union, on May 26, 2021, established: “[...] the EU’s priorities for combating organized crime and serious forms of crime through the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) for the period 2022-2025 ...(omitted)... Based on the EU assessment of the threat posed by organized crime and serious forms of crime in 2021 presented by Europol, Member States have identified 10 priorities for combating crime... (omitted) [...]”.

<sup>70</sup> EUROPOL has also embraced, among the objectives of its activity aimed at preventing and combating serious forms of international organized crime, the threats to community security arising from international drug trafficking, money laundering, and human trafficking [Source: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/about-europol:it>]. The “Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment” (SOCTA) is one of Europol’s flagship reports, as it updates the law enforcement community and decision-makers on developments in serious organized crime and the threats it poses to the EU. Based on analyses of prevailing threats, SOCTA identifies a series of high-priority crime areas on which operational response in the EU should focus [source: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-events/main-reports/socta-report>].

<sup>71</sup> “Identifying and dismantling high-risk criminal networks operating in the EU, with particular attention to those utilizing corruption, acts of violence, firearms, and laundering through parallel underground financial systems”.

On **May 23 and 24, 2023**, at the Europol Headquarters in The Hague, the “*High-Level Operational Conference-HLOC*” was held, organized by the “*Network @ON to tackle Top Level OCGs and Mafia-style structures*” on the theme “*The threat by High Risk OCGs in the UE: their transnational dimension, main features and the LEA approach*”. Also on this occasion, the need emerged concerning implementation of international cooperation (both police and judicial) with a proactive approach supporting activities of counteraction (from investigations to trials and beyond) with the synergistic involvement of all EU agencies and Member States engaged in combating organized and serious crime.

The dynamism and development, as well as the level of dangerousness, reached by the numerous and varied foreign syndicates present in the country require a comprehensive and systemic approach to counteraction and a consequent broader vision of the phenomenon. In this direction, the initiated path of international cooperation of the “*Anti-Mafia Operational Network @ON*”, of which the DIA is the creator and *Project Leader*, is to be understood. The Network is regarded internationally as a useful tool for promoting rapid and effective information exchange in the fight against Mafias in Europe and elsewhere. The main objective of this innovative project is to promote the operational exchange of information and *best practices*, with the aim of countering “*Mafia-style*” criminal organizations, which are considered a dangerous threat to the social and economic security of the EU. The various foreign criminal organizations active throughout the national territory often present different characteristics in terms of origins, composition, and *modus operandi*. Regarding their geographical allocation, in the northern regions, a higher level of independence and criminal autonomy is observed, sometimes almost in parity with local Mafias, with which they interact mainly in the narcotics sector. In the central-southern regions, however, there is an apparent reversal of the trend compared to the past. In fact, while until a few years ago there was a prevalent subordination of foreign syndicates to local Mafia organizations, more recently, judicial police activities have shown a gradual and constant strengthening of foreign criminal groups with a tendency to acquire a greater degree of autonomy compared to the undisputed dominance of local Mafias<sup>72</sup>. Investigative evidence would seem to confirm the recognition of a certain level of tolerance by the latter, limited to illicit sectors not occupied (or no longer occupied) by local Mafias, which are sometimes given “on lease<sup>73</sup>”. In some cases, alliances are recorded for the realization of specific illicit businesses, in order to deliberately avoid confrontations and achieve tacit balances based on territorial distribution and criminal sectors of interest.

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<sup>72</sup> Particularly in Sicily, but also in Lazio and Abruzzo.

<sup>73</sup> This is the case of Nigerian syndicates called “cults” and Albanian organized crime groups.

The prevailing interest of foreign criminal groups stationed in Italy continues to be focused on drug trafficking<sup>74</sup>, although the most active organizations are those of Albanian<sup>75</sup>, North African, and sub-Saharan African nationality (primarily Nigerian), with transnational projections in other European countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain as well as with South America. Albanian criminal organizations, in particular, increasingly play a subsidiary role with members of 'Ndrangheta-affiliated associations, relying on the presence of their own *referenti* (representatives) in the main merchant ports of Northern Europe and South America. Foreign criminal associations in Italy often constitute the outpost of more complex organizations rooted in their places of origin such as Africa, Eastern Europe, China and even South America. On an international level, these organizations are often dominant in managing entire illicit supply chains, controlling costs and making them more competitive in concluding agreements and functional alliances with Italian associations, including Mafia-type ones. The presence of foreigners in the drug sector has a transversal connotation regarding the management of the entire chain, from supply to street dealing, increasingly entrusted to individuals of different ethnicities often irregularly present in the territory<sup>76</sup>. An emerging phenomenon that arouses particular social alarm is that of *baby gangs*, organized gangs of minors and young adults composed of violent youths, mostly of *Salvadoran*<sup>77</sup> or Maghreb origin, who manage small criminal sectors mostly at the local level and are dedicated to predatory crimes such as street robberies, which constitute the most widespread phenomenon. Also gaining increasing significance, in terms of size and danger, are human trafficking (often related to the phenomenon of exploitation of the prostitution of others) and the facilitation of illegal immigration, both of which are among the most profitable businesses for foreign criminal organizations.

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<sup>74</sup> In particular, in the drug trafficking sector, it is primarily Albanians, Nigerians and North Africans who have confirmed a growing assertion of their criminal capabilities by acquiring important “*drug dealing spots*” in unoccupied areas, i.e., areas conceded by local criminality, even in major urban centers. Less structured compared to Albanian and Nigerian syndicates, Tunisian and Moroccan groups are mainly dedicated to trafficking hashish directly produced in Maghreb countries. Individuals of Maghreb origin also engage in the retail sale of various types of drugs as labor for other more structured organizations. Chinese, Filipino and Bangladeshi crime, on the other hand, are particularly active in the distribution of methamphetamines; in particular, Chinese and Filipino crime in the distribution of shaboo (a particular synthetic drug consisting of methamphetamine crystals). Bangladeshi crime is instead operational not only in the trafficking of marijuana and hashish, but also in that of yaba, a synthetic drug originating from the Asian market.

<sup>75</sup> Drug trafficking from the Balkans continues to be managed, mostly, directly by transnational criminal organizations - particularly Albanian ones - thanks to the logistical support of numerous individuals of Albanian origin now permanently residing or domiciled in Apulia, as highlighted by numerous judicial police activities often carried out in the region.

<sup>76</sup> This is the case in Lombardy but also in the Capital where Albanians now occupy drug dealing spots that have remained “unattended” and the same indigenous associations have learned to share the territory with criminals of different backgrounds, still controlling the supply flows of drugs intended for distribution.

<sup>77</sup> The so-called *Barrios*.

Foreign syndicates have also shown a strong interest in *cyber fraud*, demonstrating remarkable capabilities and expertise in the field of new technologies. Foreign criminal organizations constantly follow and exploit the digital evolution, updating their *know-how*, while maintaining a strong connection with tradition and places of origin (think of the affiliation rituals of “*Nigerian cults*” or the criminality of Albanian and Russian origin).

### **Albanian Organized Crime**

Albanian criminal organizations demonstrate high levels of danger and a strong presence in illegal activities, particularly in drug trafficking. These syndicates are well-structured and supported by a strong sense of solidarity, reinforced by familial ties. They are technically equipped and capable of organizing criminal activities into subgroups, with great mobility across the national territory. Specific tasks are assigned to these subgroups, overseen by leaders both in Italy and abroad. For these reasons, they are highly dangerous and formidable. Albanian organizations have proven to be particularly organized at the international level, capable of directly interacting with South American cartels for the importation of large quantities of cocaine from traditionally producing countries. This cocaine is destined to supplying the cells of compatriots operating in major Italian drug markets. Several anti-drug operations conducted in various Italian regions have uncovered operational synergies between Albanian organized crime and local criminality.

Albanian criminal groups, traditionally dedicated to marijuana trafficking through the so-called “*Balkan route*”, now also reinvest their proceeds in cocaine trafficking. They import cocaine into the national territory via land, through major European distribution routes, relying on individuals stationed in Northern Europe near key merchant ports (Antwerp, Rotterdam and Hamburg), where they have effectively infiltrated over time. These groups constitute a true criminal network, acting as both suppliers and distributors, having established roots in various European countries and forming stable relationships with drug traffickers worldwide. The favorable geographical position of Albanian coasts, close to those of Apulia, as well as the geographical conformation of the Gargano<sup>78</sup> region, provide a direct connection with Italy. For this reason, Italian organized crime shares numerous illicit activities with Albanian counterparts, as the Adriatic route serves as a hub for the passage of narcotics not only from Albania to Italy, but also to the rest of Europe. This is facilitated by air connections

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<sup>78</sup> As emerged, for example, in the “*Zemra*” operation carried out in June 2022 by the Operational Center of the DIA in Bari against 11 individuals, of Italian and Albanian nationality, dismantling an organization dedicated to drug trafficking, two of whom were residents in Cerignola (Foggia).



with Balkan countries bordering the Adriatic. From Albania not only towards Italy, but towards the rest of Europe as well, also because it is favored by air connections with Balkan countries bordering the Adriatic.

Albanian *syndicates* are the ones that, more than others, have managed to establish themselves in the territory, branch out into different regions, and interact, more than any other organization, with native ones in drug trafficking.

The close connection between Italy and Albania, also from the perspective of criminal interconnections, has highlighted the need to enhance the existing collaboration between the two countries, developed not only as a result of geographical proximity, but also and above all due to shared interests and the presence in our country of a large Albanian community. The “predominant” role of Albanian organized crime in the drug trafficking sector has emerged over time from numerous police operations, some of which were also conducted by the *DIA*<sup>79</sup>. The *modus operandi* used - now also judicially confirmed - sees these transnational criminal organizations transport numerous migrants of various ethnicities (predominantly Iranians, Pakistanis, Iraqis, Egyptians, Syrians and Afghans) from the Albanian coasts to Italian territory using powerful rubber dinghies and sailboats through the Otranto Channel. The most frequently used landing place by smugglers is the coast of lower Salento, with sporadic landings on the Ionian coasts.

Another sector of interest, exclusive to Albanian criminal groups, is that of illegal immigration and human trafficking.

### **Nigerian Organized Crime**

Nigerian organized crime has spread across Europe the associative models that originated in Nigeria following the criminal involution of university fraternities (so-called *cults*) with various names (EYE, BLACK AXE, VIKING, MAPHITE). This is an ethnic criminality present in almost the entire national territory, and in every Nigerian immigrant community settled in Italy, the presence of one of these groups is almost always detected, often with varying degrees of activity and impact. The criminal activities of these various groups are many and varied: exploitation of the prostitution of others, human trafficking, illegal immigration, drug trafficking, computer fraud and money laundering. As observed during investigations conducted by law enforcement agencies, the proceeds

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<sup>79</sup> For example, the “*Zemra*” operation in June 2022 and the “*Kulmi*” operation in June 2020.

of criminal activity are preferably sent back to Nigeria through various means<sup>80</sup>. There have been several clear indications of collaboration between Nigerian individuals and Italian criminal groups in order to launder illicit proceeds<sup>81</sup>. However, investigative findings seem to limit such contacts to occasional collaboration that, at least at the current state, does not seem to denote stable ties between the two groups.

Nigerian criminal organizations exhibit typical characteristics of indigenous organizations, such as meticulous control over portions of territory, *omertà* and strong associative bonds. The high level of organization and the danger posed by Nigerian syndicates are evidenced by the Mafia-like nature judicially recognized in such criminal activities. This is an ethnic crime equipped with a “*multilevel*” structure in which some members operate as mere manpower in retail drug trafficking. The Nigerian Mafia operates alongside local criminal groups that have a certain degree of autonomy but ultimately answer to the mother organization<sup>82</sup>. In terms of economic and social danger, the so-called *secret cults* are decisive, characterized by hierarchical organization, paramilitary structure, initiation rituals, codes of conduct and, more broadly, a *modus operandi* that the Court of Cassation has repeatedly qualified as a typical hallmark of “*mafiosità*”<sup>83</sup>. However, the Mafia connotation, contested against a structured Nigerian criminal group, does not always find confirmation in different degrees of judgment. In this regard, it is worth

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<sup>80</sup> For instance, the “Hello boss” operation by the Anti-Mafia District Prosecutor’s Office of the Abruzzo capital city (criminal proceeding no. 732/18 RGNR - 435/19 RG GIP of the Court of L’Aquila), conducted by the State Police, which unfolded across 14 Italian provinces. The investigations revealed the presence and activities in Abruzzo of a Nigerian Mafia-type syndicate led by one of them, affiliated with the BLACK AXE cult and engaged in computer fraud, scams, impersonation, and possession of credit cards. Cloned credit cards and fake passports, drug trafficking including tramadol, illegal immigration, violations of immigration laws and exploitation of the prostitution of others, as well as money laundering proceeds from committed crimes, involving accomplices residing in Italy and abroad. The suspects have committed numerous crimes, primarily in cybercrime, thus making significant profits, part of which they invested in Nigeria to purchase real estate. A particular form of cyber fraud involved purchasing bitcoins, which were then used in the darknet market to obtain numbers of cloned credit cards, subsequently used to buy various goods and services on e-commerce websites, such as mobile phones, TVs, computers, branded clothing and shoes, airline tickets, etc. The proceeds from various crimes were reinvested in a network of financial transactions, making it more difficult to trace the money, in an attempt to conceal its illicit origin.

<sup>81</sup> An emblematic case in this regard is that of Villa Literno, in the province of Caserta, which historically has been the epicenter of the power of the BIDOINETTI clan, although, especially in recent years, foreign crime – particularly Central African – has imposed its presence in numerous criminal sectors. In the area, Nigerian groups continue to stand out for the particularly aggressive methods they employ in drug trafficking and human trafficking, aimed at prostitution.

<sup>82</sup> Significant, in this context, are the findings of Operation “Voodoo,” (OCC no. 11714/16 RGNR - 85681/2017 RG GIP of October 20, 2021) coordinated by the DDA of Cagliari and concluded by the Guardia di Finanza on November 22, 2021, against a Nigerian criminal association aimed at international money laundering, aiding and abetting illegal immigration and exploiting the prostitution of others, with the aggravating factor of transnationality.

<sup>83</sup> Reference is made to judgments 24803/2010, 4188/2012, 16353/2015, and 49462/2019 issued by the Court of Cassation in the years 2010, 2012, 2015, and 2019 (the first two judgments by the First Section, the third by the Second Section, and the fourth by the Fifth Section).

noting the recent verdict in which the Court of Appeals in Palermo<sup>84</sup> acquitted four out of the five Nigerians belonging to the criminal association *Black Axe* of the offense under article 416 *bis* of the Criminal Code, deeming the evidence of the alleged Mafia association contested in the first-instance trial insufficient and contradictory. The operational scope of Nigerian crime, while extending to multiple criminal phenomena, is now consolidated in the financing and management of international drug trafficking.

Nigerian syndicates often rely on the use of informal payment systems completely detached from legal financial circuits, making them difficult to intercept. For this reason, it is particularly challenging for law enforcement agencies to trace the origin, circulation, and even the final destination of the financial flows generated from illicit activities.

### Chinese Crime

Chinese syndicates in Italy are structured in essentially hierarchical ways, primarily centered on family and solidarity relationships. These are organizations characterized by strong impermeability, making them impervious to external contaminations or collaborations. Rarely do we observe functional agreements with Italian criminal organizations or the formation of multi-ethnic syndicates. Chinese crime is dedicated to committing extortions and robberies almost exclusively against their fellow nationals, as well as to the exploitation of the prostitution of others, the commission of financial crimes and the possession and trafficking of *methamphetamine*, which is almost monopolized by Chinese *pushers*. This peculiar form of criminal conduct, directed primarily within the Chinese community, is exercised silently, without giving rise to overt manifestations. Due to this specific connotation, Chinese crime can be considered a highly insidious form of ethnic crime, proving extremely difficult to suppress also because of its impermeability to the outside, the extreme mobility of criminal subjects within the territory, and the difficulties in finding reliable interpreters of the multiple languages spoken by the affiliates.

Some regions<sup>85</sup> host particularly active Chinese settlements which, alongside the management of traditional restaurants, are also engaged in numerous and diverse commercial activities integrated into the local production context. Crime of Chinese origin is also very active in the counterfeit brand sector. In this regard, it confirms a primary role in many economic activities, especially in the most important industrial districts in the textile and clothing sectors. The most common forms of illegality,

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<sup>84</sup> Judgment no. 10/2022 R. Sent., no. 24/2020 RGAA, and no. 1696/14 RGNR of the Court of Palermo of March 15, 2022.

<sup>85</sup> Like Piedmont and Tuscany, the latter, notably with the textile district of Prato.

in addition to the production and marketing of counterfeit goods or goods not compliant with community regulations, also concern further aspects related to tax evasion and contribution perpetrated through the establishment of so-called “*apri e chiudi*” (“open and close”) companies. Other sectors of interest include the facilitation of illegal immigration and the exploitation of irregular labor. Illegitimate activities towards the outside are found in the illicit trafficking of waste, in the management of illegal gambling and betting and in the lucrative operation of massage centers, a typical cover activity.

### **Romanian Crime**

Romanian crime manifests itself in Italy in two distinct forms. On the one hand, there are loosely structured groups whose members typically engage in predatory crimes, thus creating pockets of micro-criminality that contribute to a sense of insecurity in the population. On the other hand, there are more complex and articulated associations similar to native Mafia organizations. Romanian criminal organizations are also purportedly active in the illicit intermediation and exploitation of labor (known as “*caporalato*”), sometimes in collaboration with Italian entities. Investigative findings have highlighted the presence of this criminal matrix in multi-ethnic groups involved in drug trafficking and distribution, with the active participation of some members in secondary roles.

### **South American Crime**

South American organized crime operates mainly in various regions of northern Italy and, to a lesser extent, in Lazio. These are associations that, in addition to being involved in property crimes and the exploitation of the prostitution of others, collaborate with other foreign or Italian consortia in the management of drug trafficking from Latin America. Regarding cocaine trafficking, importation occurs through air and sea routes using intermediate stops to evade police and customs checks. A phenomenon at the center of law enforcement action concerns South American gangs, known as “*pandillas*”, whose vitality has confirmed a strong identity due to the deep ethnic and cultural bond that unites members, young peers living in the same neighborhood, driven by the pursuit of social affirmation, and prone to using violence even just for demonstration purposes.

*Pandillas* are characterized by the commission of predatory street crimes and offenses related to drug trafficking, often marked by acts of violence, as emerged in the operation of the Milan Mobile Squad

on **April 19, 2023**, which executed a pre-trial detention order issued by the GIP of the Milan<sup>86</sup> Court against 9 suspects, one Italian and 8 individuals of Latin American origin. They were charged with criminal association, suspected of belonging to the aforementioned criminal group engaged in property and personal crimes, also through the carrying of weapons or objects intended to offend.

### **Criminality from the Balkans and the former USSR Countries**

Balkan and former Soviet Union criminal groups have shown a propensity over time for property crimes, drug and arms trafficking, facilitating illegal immigration, exploiting the prostitution of others, smuggling and copper theft.

### **North and Central African Crime**

Even North African criminal syndicates, mainly from the Maghreb region, are now predominantly settled and rooted in various areas of the national territory. Due to their strong integration into the urban socio-criminal fabric, they sometimes manage segments of transnational drug trafficking as well.

### **Crime from the Middle East and Southeast Asia**

Criminal organizations formed by individuals from the Middle East and Southeast Asian countries are mainly involved in facilitating illegal immigration, exploiting undocumented labor and trafficking drugs, often combined with prostitution. It has been found that they are sometimes multi-ethnic syndicates (those from Southeast Asia predominantly of Indian and Pakistani ethnicity) that would cooperate with criminal groups from the Balkans, as well as those from Turkey and Greece.

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<sup>86</sup> OCC no. 9408/2022 RGNR mod. 21 - 6550/2022 RG GIP issued on **April 3, 2023**.

### 3. PRESENCE OF ORGANIZED CRIME ON NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TERRITORY AND ANTI-MAFIA INTELLIGENCE-LED POLICING

#### a. National territory

##### - ABRUZZO

The Abruzzo region is one of the territories in which there is not any autochthonous Mafia activity. However, its peculiar geographic position exposes it to the criminal influence of organizations from neighboring regions, particularly from Campania and Apulia, to which are added - according to recent investigations - criminal groups from Calabria.

Investigations from past years have furthermore documented the presence of criminal groups, mainly comprised of individuals from Albania and Maghreb, as well as *Romani* individuals.

The latter, in particular, are represented by family units that over time became residents in the coastline as well as the hinterland. They appear to be the object of previous investigations in the field of narcotics, usury, etc. They are the only local criminal phenomenon that could potentially evolve in more complex forms of organized crime.

In order to better analyze the criminal phenomena that have taken place in the Abruzzo region, it is useful to divide the territory into two macro-areas: the first, in the coastline, where the presence of leaders from Apulian, Calabrian, Campanian, *Romani* and also foreign (in particular Albanian) crime groups has been found; the second encompasses the internal Apennine area, which is more exposed to acts of infiltration in the economic system by criminal organizations from the Lazio and Campania regions<sup>87</sup>. In the internal areas of the Abruzzo region there seems to be criminals from North Africa, and also *Romani* people. The former, mainly involved in the supply of narcotics; the latter, mainly involved in usury acts.

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<sup>87</sup> The Campania *gruppi*, particularly those from the *casalese* area, over time have manifested their activity (other than in the traffic of narcotics) in the infiltration of public contracts, a particularly sensitive sector because of the post-earthquake reconstructions, and in money laundering activities.

The whole territory of Abruzzo maintains a high level of institutional attention, also regarding the terms of surveillance and preliminary verification made by the Prefectures through the effort of the Interforce Provincial Unit, for the monitoring of the businesses involved in the custody and the implementation of contracts (in view of the resident funds for the public and private reconstructions as a result of the earthquakes that occurred in 2009 and in 2016/2017) as well as the disbursement of public funds in other sectors that are just as viable, like zootechnics and tourism, which are particularly important for the Region.

### **Province of L'Aquila**

In the province of L'Aquila, with a particular regard of some areas in Marsica, there seems to be a significant number of people from North Africa that are particularly involved in the supply of narcotics.

In the provincial capital city of Abruzzo there is an ongoing work of surveillance and preventative verification made by the Prefecture on businesses that are involved with the reconstruction work following the earthquakes, with the implementation - when needed - of administrative measures with a preventative nature against those businesses that are at greater risk of Mafia infiltration. Said activity also extends to other sectors such as agriculture and zootechnics, which in the past have already been the object of fraudulent and speculative practices aimed at the improper acquisition of public funds and financings.

On this matter, in the semester under review, the Prefecture of L'Aquila has issued 7 “administrative measures of collaborative prevention”, pursuant to article 94a of the Anti-Mafia Code, against the same amount of businesses that have a registered office in the province and that are involved in the concession of state-owned lands, meant for agricultural purposes or the pasture of livestock<sup>88</sup>, *“for the existence - on the basis of an overall indicative framework - of suitable and specific elements, that objectively show concrete connections with organized crime, capable of influencing choices and directions”*.

### **Province of Chieti**

In Chieti, an investigation closed at the beginning of 2022, has ascertained a significant presence of criminal *gruppi* (groups), made of individuals from Albania<sup>89</sup> particularly active in the sector of

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<sup>88</sup> Sectors that are particularly exposed to criminal interference, especially in territories where there is a strong agro-pastoral vocation. The beneficiaries of these concessions can avail themselves of public financings and grants, in the field of support systems that are expected by the common agricultural policy.

<sup>89</sup> Often with contacts with the *Sinti* community on the coastline.

narcotics<sup>90</sup>. The province stays exposed to attempts of infiltration, made by criminal groups from Foggia, particularly from Gargano and San Severo (Foggia). On this matter, in the semester under review the local Prefecture has issued a ban against an individual firm within the agricultural sector, involved in the concession of State-owned lands for the acquisition of European grants. Its owner - originally from the province of Foggia - is deemed to be adjacent to the CURSIO *famiglia* (family), which operates in the Gargano area.

### Province of Pescara

In the city of Pescara, operation “*Planning*”<sup>91</sup>, carried out in July 2022 by the DIA and the Guardia di Finanza of Reggio Calabria, has ascertained the presence - particularly along the coastline - of a criminal association from the Calabria region that has infiltrated the construction sector and the large-scale retail trade for the purpose of money laundering. The investigation has also documented the role of some entrepreneurs of Reggio Calabria that are adjacent to the DE STEFANO *cosca* (gang) and made some arrangements that allowed the *'Ndrangheta* association to silently infiltrate in some of the most important economic initiatives in the city of Pescara.

At last, the presence of Albanian and *Romani*<sup>92</sup> associations is confirmed also in the city of Pescara. Their main illegal interests are narcotics. The *Romani* criminal groups, during the semester under review, were the object of a complex narcotics investigation that confirmed that the suspects were part of a Mafia-type organization. On **April 13, 2023** the Carabinieri carried out operation “*Kirvò*” with the implementation of a pretrial detention order<sup>93</sup> against 20 people that either belonged or were adjacent to the *Romani* community in the Rancitelli working-class area. Investigations have shown that the association used intimidation tactics - and the silence that followed as a result of those tactics

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<sup>90</sup> It is recalled the operation carried out last semester by the Carabinieri and the Guardia di Finanza, that ascertained in the Vasto territory (Chieti) the presence of a criminal group mainly made of Albanians, involved in drug trafficking and extortion, led also by the use of violence and weapons. The association appeared to be involved in the traffic of substantial quantities of cocaine and heroin. The “*privileged channels of narcotics procurement appeared to be from the Calabria region, through established relationships with leaders of the working 'ndrine in the area of Vibo Valentia, as well as the Emilia-Romagna, Apulia and Abruzzo regions*” (OCC (Ordinance of Precautionary Detention) no. 2177/2019 DDA and 1797/2020 RG GIP (Judicial Register of the Preliminary Investigating judge) issued by the Court of L’Aquila on January 7, 2022 following operation “*Evelin*” in 2018).

<sup>91</sup> OCC no. 4670/2019 RGNR-3266/2020 RG GIP and 52/2021 ROCC issued on July 6, 2022 by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>92</sup> It is recalled, on this matter, the implementation in the first semester of 2022 of the pretrial detention order no. 2678/20 RGNR (Register of Acknowledged Crimes) and no. 1814/21 RG GIP issued on March 1, 2022, by the Court of Pescara, borne by 10 people - the majority of which being *Romani* - charged with participation in the supply of narcotics, such as heroin and cocaine. Investigations have uncovered a turnover of dozens of thousands of euros with consistent quantities of narcotics, destined to the open-air drug markets of the Rancitelli and Fontanelle districts of the city of Pescara. These areas are notoriously attended by many substance users from various places in the Abruzzo region.

<sup>93</sup> No. 703/2020 RGNR and no. 700/2021 RG GIP issued on **March 20, 2023** by the Court of L’Aquila.



- in order to take control of the area. They established a sort of drug-trafficking *cartel* with an operating base in the so-called “horseshoe”<sup>94</sup>.

Another police operation, carried out in the same semester, has also ascertained illegal interests in Foggia’s organized crime in the city of Pescara. In particular, on **March 14, 2023** the Guardia di Finanza implemented a pretrial detention order<sup>95</sup> against 11 people that were traced back to the MORETTI-PELLEGRINO-LANZA Mafia association. They were charged with fraudulent transfer of valuables, extortion, usury, robbery, possession of stolen goods and assault, aggravated by the Mafia method and the use of weapons. The investigation has uncovered the activity of leaders of the Mafia of Foggia in the Pescara territory. They used Mafia methods and their notoriety to disburse money loans at usury rates, at times followed by extortions. This damaged local business owners that worked in the hospitality sector and in the luxury vehicles market.

### **Province of Teramo**

In the province of Teramo, previous investigations have ascertained the presence of leaders from the organized crime groups of Campania and Calabria. The territory, - particularly along the coastline - is involved in the supply of narcotics. This phenomenon can be traced back mainly to criminal *gruppi*, mostly Albanian and *Romani*. The latter appear to be mainly in Silvi Marina (Teramo), Giulianova (Teramo), Alba Adriatica (Teramo), Martinsicuro (Teramo) and Roseto degli Abruzzi (Teramo). Meanwhile, there seems to be a prerogative of Albanian - and more recently, North African - criminal groups in Sant’Egidio alla Vibrata (Teramo).

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<sup>94</sup> Referring to the building complex where many criminal activities take place, shaped like a horseshoe.

<sup>95</sup> No. 1599/2020 RGNR and no. 69/2022 RMC issued on **March 6, 2023** by the Court of L’Aquila.

## - BASILICATA<sup>1</sup>

Organized crime in the Basilicata region has historically been influenced by other Mafias from neighboring regions. In the province of Matera there are *clans* tied to Calabrian, Apulian and Albanian Mafias, that are interested in the control of the territory, essential for the narcotraffic between Apulia and Calabria.

In the province of Potenza there are autochthonous *clans* that are also closely tied to criminal *cosche* from the Calabria and Campania regions.

### Province of Potenza

In the province of Potenza, on **January 24, 2023** the DIA of Potenza, together with the State Police of Matera, implemented a pretrial detention order in a prison<sup>2</sup> towards a person deemed responsible for participating - with other people that are still to be identified - in extortion, arson, threat to a public official - all of these aggravated by the Mafia method. The suspect set on fire 2 seaside resorts, one shed and a mill, using a procedure typical of the Mafia method.

### Province of Matera

On **March 21, 2023** the Guardia di Finanza of Policoro (Matera), implemented a restraining order<sup>3</sup> towards 9 people who were deemed responsible - in various capacities - for embezzlement, fraudulent transfer of valuables, aggravated theft, money laundering, self-laundering and conspiracy. They implemented a preventive seizure of an entire company's profile in the horticultural sector. The crimes were being committed in order to support a local criminal association and in order to secure the product and the profits of the offenses of: money laundering, narcotraffic and re-utilization of illegal assets.

On **March 21, 2023** the Carabinieri of Matera implemented a pretrial detention order<sup>4</sup> towards 5 people deemed responsible - in various capacities - of bribery, corruption and false testimony to a public official. The investigation involved some businesses that worked in the quarry sector, which benefited from administrative authorizations acquired through false testimonies. They also made systematic omissions regarding - in particular- the environmental rehabilitation and final settling of said quarries, to the detriment of the safeguarding of the environment.

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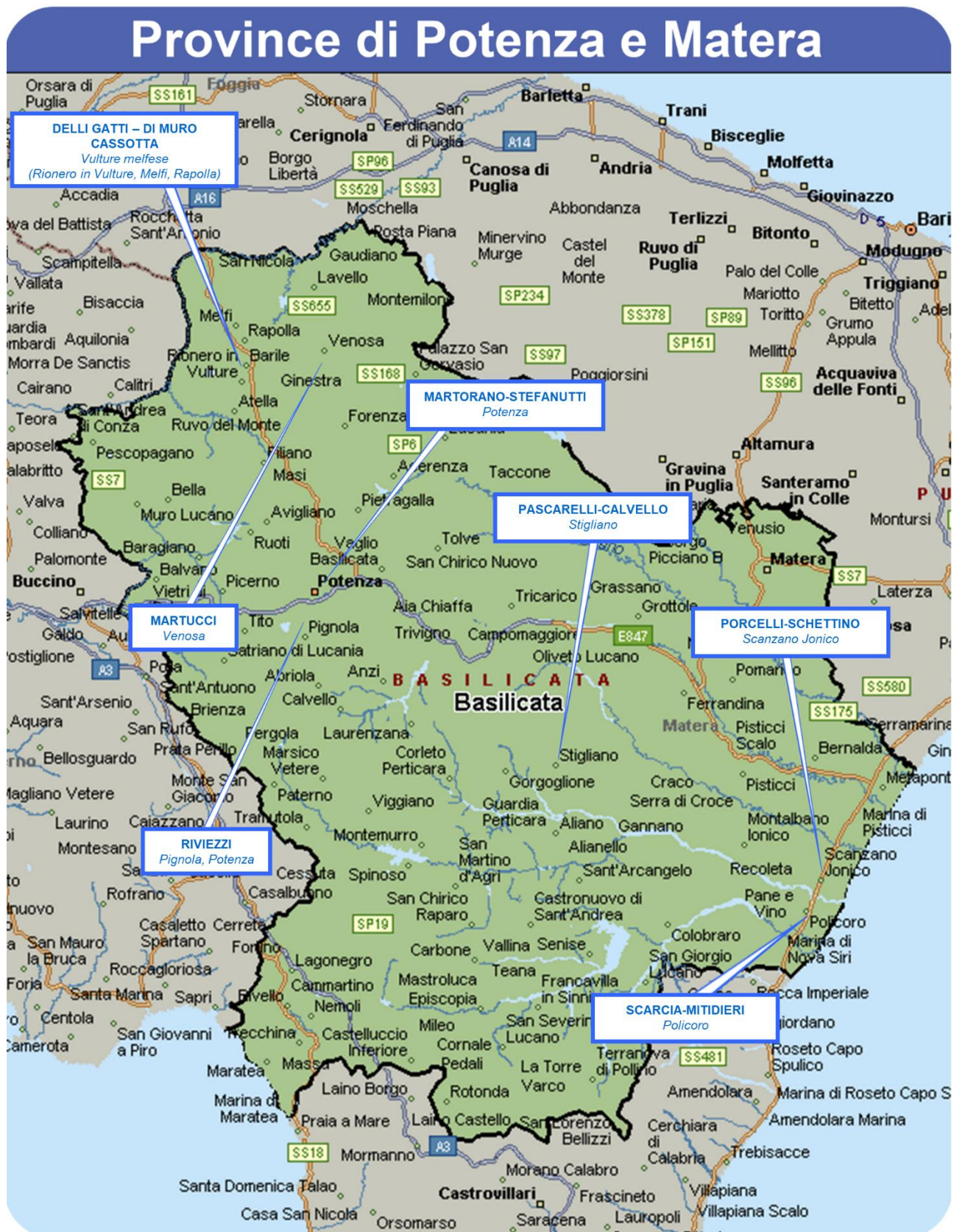
<sup>1</sup> The position on the map and the graphic illustration of the main parts of the organized crime of the Basilicata region are the result of a recent investigation analysis, and they are to be considered purely approximate.

<sup>2</sup> Criminal procedure 4132/2022 - RGNR 21 DDA and 3551/2022 RG GIP - 2/2023 RMC.

<sup>3</sup> No. 3451/22 RGNR Mod. 21 DDA - 3232/2022 RG GIP - 27/2023 Reg. Mis. GIP by the Court of Potenza.

<sup>4</sup> Criminal procedure 4627/2021 RGNR - OCC no. 1774/2022 RG GIP - RMC 35/23 by the Court of Potenza.

\*PROVINCES OF POTENZA AND MATERA



On **May 31, 2023** the Guardia di Finanza of Policoro (Matera) and Potenza took in custody 15 murder<sup>5</sup> suspects, 11 of which were Albanian. They were deemed responsible for association aimed at the purpose of narcotrafficking, aggravated by transnationality, along the Metapontino area (between the municipalities of Scanzano and Nova Siri). They also had connections with various partners that reside in other municipalities in national and international territory (Albania). The criminal group, operative since 2019, was able to supply various open-air drug markets in many Italian regions. The alleged Albanian bosses kept constant “business” relationships with the motherland from their operating base. The motherland supplied them with large quantities of narcotics (heroin, cocaine, cannabis and hashish), which were stored in the Scanzano Jonico and Grottaglie (Taranto) storage rooms. They then transferred those narcotics through drug mules to various distribution hubs, located in the provinces of Bari, Taranto and Lecce. Two Albanian individuals dealt with the re-utilization of the narcotraffic’s illegal proceeds through brokers that were placed in international money laundering channels, using *cryptophones* through the “SKYECC” platform.

Significant results have been achieved, even on the matter of preventative financial measures.

On **April 7, 2023** the DIA of Milan implemented a preventive seizure for the equivalent<sup>6</sup> of the profits of the ascribed offenses, amounting to about EUR 250 thousand, against a *de facto* administrator of a company that works in the transport sector. Said administrator was the suspect<sup>7</sup> of illegal waste trafficking in the Basilicata territory. The assessments showed that the end goal was to support the *CASALESE Camorra gruppo*; so much so that the company in question would have been traceable - directly or indirectly - to the *SCHIAVONE-ZAGARIA gruppo* from the outset.

Regarding the aspect of administrative prevention - including the stockpiles of intelligence activities made by the DIA of Potenza - 13 anti-Mafia bans have been issued by the Prefecture of Potenza and 4 have been issued by the Prefecture of Matera.

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<sup>5</sup> Criminal procedure no. 4064/2020 RGNR Mod. 21 by the Court of Potenza.

<sup>6</sup> Issued on **April 3, 2023**, by the Court of Potenza.

<sup>7</sup> Within the framework of Criminal procedure 2589/19 RGNR Mod. 21.

## - CALABRIA<sup>1</sup>

During the first semester of 2023 there were no significant changes in the general framework of the criminal groups' situation in the Calabria region.

The rest of this dissertation will better show that the investigations in the semester under review have

- to summarize - highlighted the corroboration of an international narcotraffic made by the *'Ndrangheta*. The criminal group had relationships with cocaine suppliers from Central and South America (Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador and Panama) and with paramilitary organizations that are operative in the sector, such as the *clan del Golfo* in Colombia (operations “*Sunset*”<sup>2</sup>, “*Eureka*”<sup>3</sup> and “*Gentleman2*”<sup>4</sup>). Moreover, the activity of money laundering made by the *'Ndrangheta* in various European countries (France, Germany and Portugal) is confirmed. They kept the activity through the acquisition of luxury goods and the opening of businesses in the hospitality and car-wash sectors (operation “*Eureka*”). They also had been helped by Chinese individuals (operation “*Aspromonte Emiliano*”<sup>5</sup>). An ultra-regional activity (in particular in Milan and the Lombardy region) made by the BELLOCCO *cosca* (operation “*Crypto*”<sup>6</sup>) has also been confirmed, as it was already reported in the previous semester (operation “*Ritorno*”<sup>7</sup>). The same considerations apply to the Emilia-Romagna region, with the presence of *cosche* from Crotone and Reggio Calabria (operation “*Aspromonte Emiliano*”). Another element of significant interest has been revealed by the motivations of the judgment of the trial “*Mandamento Jonico*” - an ordinary procedure - filed on **March 14, 2023** by the Court of Appeal of Reggio Calabria<sup>8</sup>. It illustrated the existence of a “federal” system which - articulated by competences - ascribes the subjects of the order and the staff<sup>9</sup> on a provincial level. As already mentioned, the role of power played by women of the PIROMALLI *cosca* is confirmed. They ran the businesses during the absence of their husbands and fathers that were incarcerated (operation “*Hybris*”), in continuation of what had been revealed last semester for the BELLOCCO *cosca* (operation “*Blu notte*”) and the ROSMINI-SERRAINO *cosca* (operation “*Revolvo*”).

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<sup>1</sup> The extreme fragmentation of the Calabrian criminal groups leads to the graphic illustration of only the main components of the *'Ndrangheta*. Its position on the map is to be considered purely approximate.

<sup>2</sup> No. 6267/2021 RGNR and no. 1555/2022 RG GIP by the Court of Genoa.

<sup>3</sup> Criminal procedure 4612/2022 RGNR DDA - 28571/2022 RG GIP - 37/2022 OCC DDA by the Court of Reggio Calabria; Criminal procedure 5886/2022 RGNR DDA - 2520/2022 RG LP DDA - SS/2022 ROCC - 44/2022 ROCC - 4/2022 ROCC by the Court of Reggio Calabria; Criminal procedure 5208/2022 RGNR DDA - 3223/2022 RG GIP DDA - 42/2022 ROCC.

<sup>4</sup> OCC no. 3836/2019 RGNR -3306/2019 RG GIP - no. 67/2023 RMC issued by the Court of Catanzaro.

<sup>5</sup> No. 2192/21 RGNR DDA - 9630/21 RG GIP by the Court of Bologna.

<sup>6</sup> No. 21745/17 RGNR - 20856/19 RG GIP by the Court of Milan.

<sup>7</sup> No. 3899/18 RGNR - 6952/21 RG GIP by the Court of Brescia.

<sup>8</sup> Judgment no. 840/22 R. Judgment - 325/21 RG APP - 5194/17 RGNR with which have been ruled 34 convictions, 32 acquittals, 9 negatives for limitation, 2 declarations of place of non-prosecution and 2 extinguishments of offense due to death of the offender, for a total of 445 years of imprisonment.

<sup>9</sup> Page 321 and the following pages of said judgment.

Relationships in the sector of narcotraffic with extra regional criminal groups have also been revealed (operation “*Cagnolino*”<sup>10</sup> made by the Prosecution office of Palermo, operation “*Primavera Fredda*”<sup>11</sup>). The arrest of some fugitives - one in Portugal and the other in Indonesia - has also been registered, during the I-CAN project.

During the semester under review, a significant number of judicial rulings have been reported. They were carried out during many trials, often with the imposition of severe convictions against exponents of organized crime, that were under the jurisdiction of the Court of the district of Reggio Calabria.

The judgment issued on **March 25, 2023** during the appeal trial “*Ndrangheta stagista*” (already mentioned in Chapter 2) has confirmed the ruling of a life sentence conviction against two people accused of murdering two Carabinieri and for the attempted murders between the end of 1993 and the beginning of 1994 in the provincial capital city of Reggio Calabria. They joined - on behalf of the ‘*Ndrangheta*’ - the continental intern project developed by *Cosa Nostra*. In this regard, it is highlighted what was revealed following operation “*Hybris*”, carried out by the Carabinieri on **March 9, 2023**. The operation concerned the will expressed by some leaders of the PIROMALLI and PESCE *cosche* to adhere to a project aimed at attacking the Carabinieri, as well as a politician<sup>12</sup>. In the same investigation, instead, the opposing view of the MANCUSO *cosca* of Limbaldi (Vibo Valentia) was revealed, regarding the sharing of the Sicilian project.

The narcotics sector is confirmed to be the driving force of the criminal economy. This is shown by the high quantities of drugs that are the object of the *cosche*’s international traffic. The gates of the harbor of Gioia Tauro (Reggio Calabria) are their logistical focus and privileged spot. In particular, the Guardia di Finanza has seized almost 3.5 tons of cocaine during 10 operations carried out in the harbor of Gioia Tauro (Reggio Calabria).

## Province of Reggio Calabria

During the first semester of 2023, there were not any significant changes on a structural level of organized crime in the province of Reggio Calabria. The ‘*Ndrangheta*’ is confirmed to be an organization with a uniformed structure. It is ruled by an executive committee<sup>13</sup>, the so-called

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<sup>10</sup> No. 4276/20 RGNR - 2906/20 RG GIP by the Court of Palermo.

<sup>11</sup> Cagliari DDA and Criminal procedure 1833/21 RGNR/DDA Messina.

<sup>12</sup> Pages 296-299 of the OCC Criminal procedure 4194/2020 RGNR DDA – 2586/2021 RGGIP DDA – 21/2022 ROCC DDA (operation “*Hybris*”). The conversations date back to January 2021.

<sup>13</sup> On this matter, it is recalled the judgment made by the Supreme Court of Cassation on May 18, 2017 (no. 29850 year 2017 - Second Section), with which, during the *Crimine* trial (ordinary procedure) severe convictions borne by 27 people have been imposed, 23 of the accused received a total sentence of about 2 centuries of imprisonment. The remaining 4 were discharged. The judgment essentially confirmed the one issued by the Court of Appeal of Reggio Calabria. It fully showed the validity of the prosecution of the DDA of Reggio Calabria, according to which “the ‘*Ndrangheta*’ is one and one only” and therefore, all the ‘*ndrine*’ must answer to the overriding body “*crimine*”.

“*provincia*” (province) or “*crimine*” (crime). The committee overrides those that are referred to as “*mandamenti*”. They insist on 3 geographical macro areas: the *mandamento centro* (in the center), the *mandamento jonico* (in Scanzano Jonico) and the *mandamento tirrenico* (in the Tirreno Sea area). Inside these *mandamenti* work the *locali* and the *'ndrine*. This structure was reiterated by the final rulings issued by the outcome of the notorious trial “*Crimine*”<sup>14</sup>.

The distinctive ability of infiltration of the *'Ndrangheta* has caused the contamination of the judicial economy, influencing the development and the growth of the territory (which for some time was at the last place regarding economic growth), the quality of services and the quality of life in general. It also developed a growing and strong inclination to the conditioning of the local Institutions, mainly in order to gain control of the public and European funds.

### **Mandamento centro**

The position of supremacy of the DE STEFANO, CONDELLO, LIBRI and TEGANO *cosche*, historically hegemonic houses of the *'Ndrangheta* is confirmed in the city of Reggio Calabria. This was revealed during investigations that were carried out in recent years - first among them, the “*Meta*”<sup>15</sup> operation - and because of the result of the “*Epicentro*” trial that was recalled in the previous semester.

On **February 2, 2023** in Reggio Calabria, Messina, Bari and Florida (United States), the State Police implemented a banning order of goods<sup>16</sup> against two entrepreneurs that work in the construction sector and in real estate brokerage, which in 2019 were under a pretrial detention order in prison, within the framework of the “*Libro nero*”<sup>17</sup> procedure, because they were found to be “reference entrepreneurs” of the LIBRI *cosca*, operative in the provincial capital city. Further financial investigations demonstrated how the above-mentioned entrepreneurs, even though they had low-level income, ran successful businesses since the early '90s, through the support of the LIBRI *cosca*. These businesses allowed them to gain control of a significant portion of the construction sector of Reggio Calabria and to project their interests - both in Italy and in the United States - in also the real estate, publishing, hospitality and insurance sectors and in *online* games and betting. With the above-mentioned ablative

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<sup>14</sup> Final judgments: operations “*Olimpia*”, “*Olimpia 2*” and “*Olimpia 3*”, as well as those of the trials known as “*Primavera*”, “*Armonia*”, “*Porto*”, “*Tirreno*”, “*Stilaro*”, “*Testamento*”, “*Ramo spezzato*”, “*Isola felice*”. Moreover, during the trial held in Palmi “*Cent'anni di storia*”, borne by individuals that were deemed to be adjacent to the historical factions of Gioia Tauro of the PIROMALLI AND MOLÈ *famiglie*, it was revealed, once again, the subdivision of the *'Ndrangheta* organized crime in 3 macro areas: the area of the city of Reggio Calabria, the Ionian Sea area and the Tyrrhenian Sea area.

<sup>15</sup> Criminal procedure 2701/21 - RGNR- 1961/21 RG GIP - 35/21 ROCC.

<sup>16</sup> Procedure 87/2022 RG MP - 5/2023 Seizure Order issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>17</sup> Criminal procedure 5288/2016 RGNR - 70/2019 RG GIP - 64/2018 ROCC DDA by the Court of Reggio Calabria.



order, a complex of goods was obtained, with a total estimated value of about EUR 45 million. In the following weeks an additional seizure of a total value of EUR 4.5 million was implemented.

On **March 4, 2023** in Reggio Calabria, the Guardia di Finanza implemented a precautionary<sup>18</sup> confiscation order issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria towards the goods of a construction entrepreneur that was already operative in the public contract sector. He was suspected to be adjacent to the 'Ndrangheta. The suspect received on February 2021 a pretrial detention order, issued within the framework of the “Nuovo Corso”<sup>19</sup> operation, that made it possible to expose the extortion made by members and individuals adjacent to the DE STEFANO *cosca*, at the expense of an entrepreneur of Reggio Calabria and his partner, who had been awarded public contracts for the reconstruction of Corso Garibaldi, and one of them was also assigned the reconstruction work of Piazza Duomo in the city of Reggio Calabria. It was revealed from the investigations how the entrepreneurial ascent of the subject was supported by the organized crime of Reggio Calabria. The equivalent of a complex of goods with a total estimated value of about EUR 1.4 million was targeted by the confiscation order.

On **March 16, 2023**, the order of implementation of judicial administrative measures of goods related to economic activities and companies took action - for one year - against a company operative within major food retailers, with over 100 sales locations between Sicily and Calabria. This happened within the framework of an operation that was coordinated by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Reggio Calabria. The review of the elements of investigation, amongst which the results of operation “Planning”<sup>20</sup>, have uncovered the existence of a stable relationship of objective support between the economic activities of the business and the leaders of the 'Ndrangheta - or of people adjacent to them - referring particularly to the DE STEFANO *cosca*. The next **May 8, 2023** the measure of the *judicial administration* of goods towards the same company has been replaced with that of *judicial control* for a year<sup>21</sup>.

On **April 12, 2023** the Court of Reggio Calabria, during the “Full speed”<sup>22</sup> trial - an ordinary procedure - convicted the son of a high-ranking leader of the DE STEFANO *cosca* to 15 years in prison for the attempted murder of a man, in the Archi area in the provincial capital city, for trying to hit him with a car in May 2021.

In the provincial capital city of Reggio Calabria, in addition to the major four *cosche*, there is also the SERRAINO *cosca*, operative in the San Sperato area and in the fractions of Cataforio, Mosorrofa and

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<sup>18</sup> Procedure 197/20 RG MP - 60/20 Seizure Order - 17/23 Order.

<sup>19</sup> No. 5700/20 RGNR DDA - 306/21 RG GIP - 3/21 ROCC DDA by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>20</sup> No. 4670/2019 RGNR - 3266/2020 RG GIP - 52/2021 ROCC DDA by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>21</sup> Order no. 10/23 R dated **May 8, 2023** by the Court of Reggio Calabria, regarding judicial control.

<sup>22</sup> Criminal procedure 2701/2021 RGNR - 1961/2021 RG GIP - 35/2021 OCC by the Court of Reggio Calabria.



Sala di Mosorrofa<sup>23</sup>, as well as the Municipality of Cardeto. The FICARA-LATELLA *cosca* is operative in the southern area of the city<sup>24</sup> while the BARRECA *cosca* is operative in the fraction of Pellaro. The LO GIUDICE *cosca* seems to be operative in the Santa Caterina area. They are mainly interested in the local horticultural market, and they are the object of a State Police's investigation. The BORGHETTO-CARIDI-ZINDATO<sup>25</sup> and ROSMINI<sup>26</sup> *cosche* seem to be operative in the Modena and Ciccarello *rioni*.

On **March 15, 2023**, in Reggio Calabria, the Court of Appeal during the abbreviated trial procedure “*Cemetery boss*”<sup>27</sup> ruled a conviction against 2 accused people, imposing a total of 17 years of imprisonment. They were leaders of the ROSMINI *cosca*. Moreover, 5 acquittals were issued for not having committed the offense. The ruling of first degree was revised and the Mafia aggravation towards the latter accused people removed.

The LABATE *cosca* was recently targeted by the “*Heliantus*”<sup>28</sup> and “*Cassa continua*”<sup>29</sup> operations. They seem to be operative in the Gebbione area, in the southern part of the city. In particular, on **April 28 2023** the Court of Reggio Calabria, within the framework of the “*Cassa continua*” trial - an ordinary procedure - convicted for extortion (that damaged a funeral home) a member of the LABATE *cosca* to 22 years of imprisonment.

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<sup>23</sup> The association was heavily hit by the results of the “*Epilogo*” trial, held in Reggio Calabria. The trial was closed in first instance in 2013 with the conviction of 7 leaders of the *cosca*, amongst which the most prominent members of the association, for a total of over 100 years of imprisonment. In 2016, during an appeal trial, 7 people belonging to the *cosca* were convicted for a total of over 80 years of imprisonment.

<sup>24</sup> Said *cosca* was targeted by operations “*Reggio Sud*” (2011) and “*Affari di famiglia*” (2012).

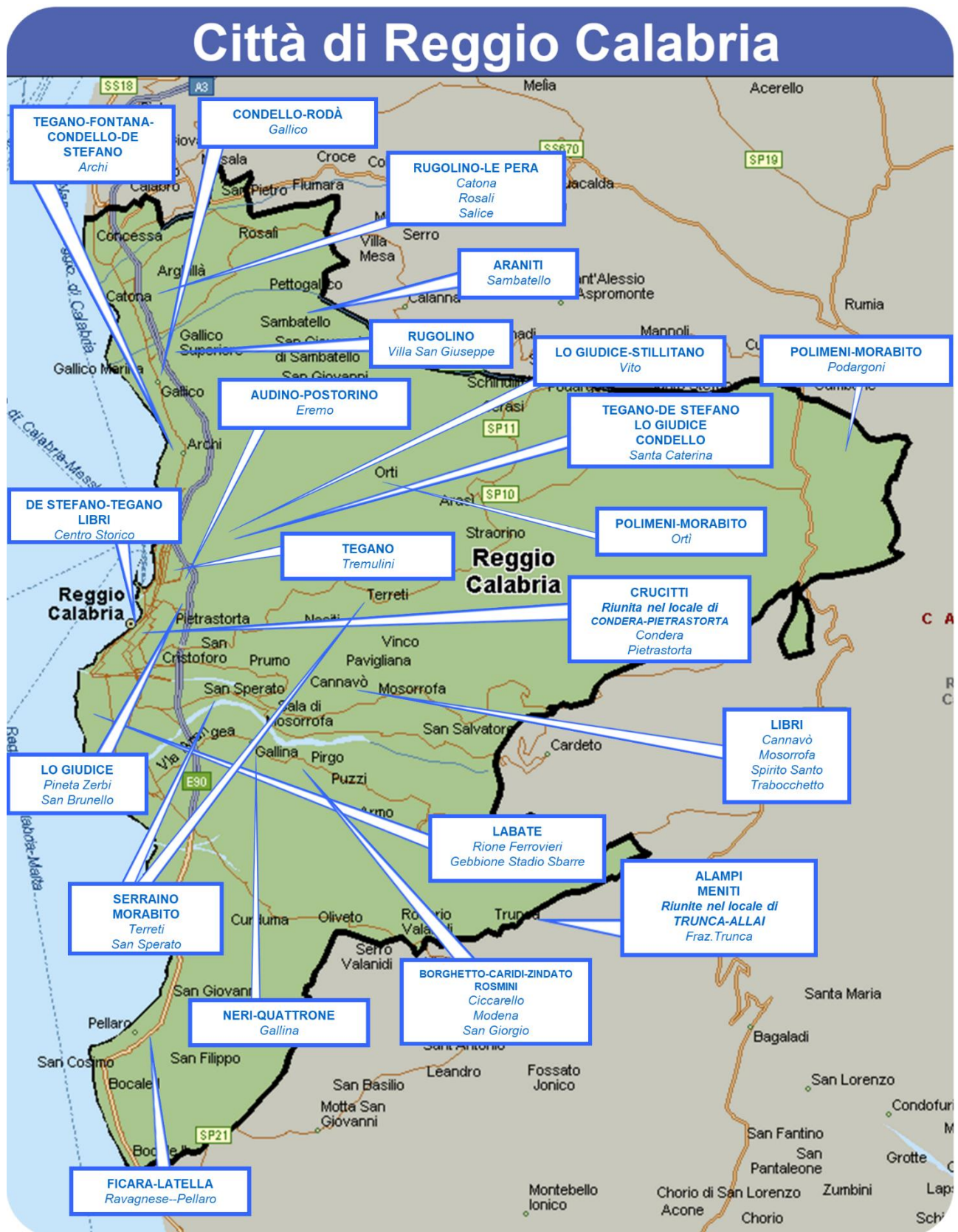
<sup>25</sup> On April 14, 2014, 32 people belonging to the *cosca* were convicted for a total of over 300 years of imprisonment. Moreover, on October 2, 2016, during the “*Alta Tensione*” trial (an ordinary appeal procedure) 18 convictions and 9 acquittals were ruled for a total of over 150 years of imprisonment. On November 22, 2016, during the “*Alta Tensione 2*” trial (an appeal trial) 11 convictions and 3 acquittals were ruled for a total of over 100 years of imprisonment.

<sup>26</sup> Operation “*Cartaruga*” carried out in 2012 by the State Police.

<sup>27</sup> Criminal procedure 7824/2012 RGNR - 1744/2013 RG GIP - 33/2018 ROCC DDA by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>28</sup> No. 4639/16 RGNR - 970/19 RG GIP - 12/19 and 46/19 OCC DDA by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>29</sup> No. 2760/17 RGNR - 1775/17 RG GIP - 45/19 ROCC by the Court of Reggio Calabria.



[IMAGE: CITY OF REGGIO CALABRIA]

On **June 30, 2023**, in Reggio Calabria, an asset seizure order<sup>30</sup> was implemented by the Guardia di Finanza towards a contractor active in the petroleum products distribution field, with contextual

<sup>30</sup> Proc. 80/2022 RG MP - 42/2022 Seizure Order - 75/2023 Order made by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

imposition of special surveillance and a residency requirement in his municipality for a period of 3 years and 6 months. The individual, recognized as near to the LABATE *cosca*, was involved in the operation “*Andrea Doria*”<sup>31</sup>, led by Guardia di Finanza in April 2021. The operation revealed an articulated tax fraud system in the petroleum products trade field, centered on dummy corporate trilaterations, focused on VAT and excise fraud, as well as the use of false declarations of intent, enabling the acquisition of properties under a non-taxability regime. In particular, the association which the individual involved formed part of, with the role of chief promoter, managed the entire petroleum product distribution supply chain, from the tax deposit to the end distributor stations. They interposed a series of economic operators between these two ends of the chain – “paper mill” companies of fuel trading, commercial deposits and local brokers – aimed at evading paying taxes in a fraudulent and systematic way through emission and usage of declarations of intent thereof. Ultimately, the receipts cleanup system took place through the *cosche* of the *'Ndrangheta* with their interest in the petroleum products distribution field. With the ablative measure, the asset forfeiture decree is ordered with a total estimated value of EUR 3.5 million.

The ARANITI *cosca* is active in the Sambatello-Gallico area, whereas in Vito district and neighboring Santa Caterina and San Brunello districts the STILLITTANO *cosca* is active, federated with the CONDELLO *cosca*. In the district of Santa Caterina the FRANCO *cosca* operates, federated with the DE STEFANO *cosca*, as emerged from the “*Sistema Reggio*” operation (2016).

The ALAMPI *cosca*, federated with the LIBRI *cosca*, is active in the township of Trunca. Recent sentences have consistently hit and reduced the alliance<sup>32</sup>.

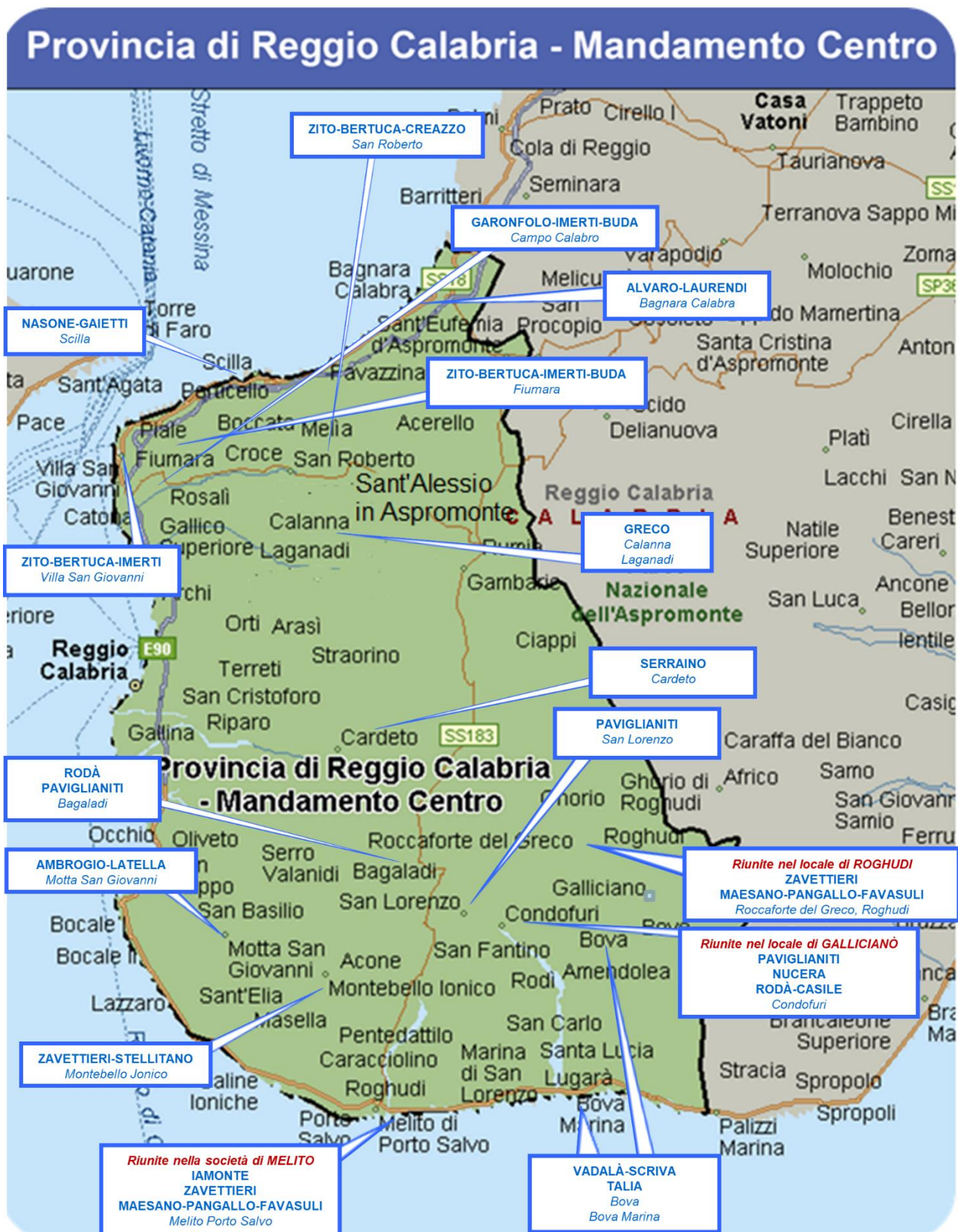
In the Catona hamlet, the RUGOLINO *cosca* operates, and, in the neighboring Gallico, it is the RODÀ-CONDELLO *cosca*.

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<sup>31</sup> No. 1936/2017 RGNR - 1266/2018 RG GIP - 2 and 8/2021 ROCC.

<sup>32</sup> On July 7, 2016, the ALAMPI *cosca* was affected by the “*Rifiuti Spa 2*” trial outcome, an abridged proceeding, during which 14 sentences were given, for a total of more than 125 years of imprisonment.





[IMAGE: PROVINCE OF REGGIO CALABRIA – MANDAMENTO CENTRO]

On **March 18, 2023**, in Reggio Calabria, an asset seizure decree<sup>33</sup> was implemented by the Carabinieri towards a contractor active in the cleaning and maintenance of collecting systems.

On February 16, 2021 the individual involved was charged with a precautionary detention order in prison as part of the “*Metameria*” operation<sup>34</sup>, later merged in the more extensive “*Epicentro*” proceeding, with reference to the accusation of fraudulent transfer of values, aggravated by Mafia-style support, and sentenced to 2 years and 8 months of reclusion at first instance. The preventive in-depth investigations enabled to prove his danger to society and his illegal wealth accumulation, as well as the false registration of shares of a company in the provincial capital city of Reggio Calabria, functional to conceal CONDELLO, RUGOLINO and other *cosche* infiltration. With that ablative order, a complex of assets was obtained, with a total estimated value of EUR 3 million.

On **May 20, 2023**, in Reggio Calabria, during the “All in 2” trial, an abridged proceeding, two sentences were issued against accused persons belonging to the CONDELLO and RUGOLINO *cosche* and Oppido Mamertina *locale*, with a total of 18 years of reclusion and one acquittal. The trial stemmed from insights on a murder that took place in 2011 in Gallico Superiore, a hamlet of the provincial capital, and was related to events of criminal control in that territory.

In the Municipality of Scilla (Reggio Calabria) a *locale* is confirmed to be active, in which the NASONE-GAIETTI *cosca* allegedly operates (operationally interlinked with the ALVARO *cosca*). The latter was recently hit by the outcome of the “Nuova linea” operation<sup>35</sup>, which confirmed also the existence of a *locale* operating in the Municipality of Bagnara Calabra (Reggio Calabria).

The ZITO-BERTUCA and BUDA-IMERTI *cosche* are active in Villa San Giovanni, while the Melito Porto Salvo area is under the criminal influence of the IAMONTE *cosca*.

In the municipalities of Roghudi and Roccaforte del Greco, the PANGALLO-MAESANO-FAVASULI and ZAVETTIERI coteries are active, federated after the years of the bloody “*faida di Roghudi*” dating back to the '90s.

In the territory of S. Lorenzo, Bagaladi and Condofuri the PAVIGLIANITI *cosca* is present<sup>36</sup>, which claims strong bonds with the ones of FLACHI, TROVATO, SERGI and PAPALIA, characterized by significant Lombard projections and stable bonds with the LATELLA and TEGANO *cosche* of Reggio Calabria, as well as the TRIMBOLI *cosca* of Platì and the IAMONTE *cosca* of Melito Porto Salvo. In the territory of Condofuri the NUCERA and RODÀ-CASILE *cosche* are present, where

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<sup>33</sup> Proc. 17/2023 RG MP - 17/2023 Seizure Order issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>34</sup> No. 5547/17 RGNR - 3326/18 RG GIP - 28-66/20 ROCC DDA of the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>35</sup> Already hit by the “*Cyrano*”, “*Alba di Scilla*” and “*Lampetra*” operations over the past years.

<sup>36</sup> On November 30, 2016, the PAVIGLIANITI *cosca*, during the “*Ultima spiaggia*” trial, an abridged proceeding, was heavily affected by a convicting judgment towards 49 of its members (with 3 acquittals) with a total estimated at 6 centuries of reclusion.

the 'Ndrangheta territorial articulation, denominated *locale di Galliciano*, persists, as documented in the “*El Dorado*” operation.

During the semester under test, in the *Mandamento Centro*, the “*Parepidemos*” operation<sup>37</sup> should also be noted, led by the Carabinieri to combat illegal immigration and human smuggling. On **June 6, 2023**, in France and Germany, military personnel carried out a detention order towards 4 Afghan citizens, recognized responsible of the aggravated facilitation of illegal immigration and abusive use of financial intermediation on various grounds. The investigation was developed using, as for judicial aspects, international cooperation channels through Eurojust and Europol, which coordinated the German *Bundespolizei* and the French *Police Nationale*. Among the further investigative acquisitions, it should also be noted the identification of the financial channel used to make economic transactions, based on the *hawala* method, based on an oral/informal brokering and on non-contractual relations<sup>38</sup> in order to make flows of money non-traceable.

### **Mandamento TIRRENICO**

In the Plain of Gioia Tauro, the consolidated hegemonic position of the by now historical PIROMALLI *cosca* is allegedly confirmed, flanked by the presence the MOLÈ *cosca*. On **March 9, 2023**, in Gioia Tauro, the Carabinieri, in the “*Hybris*” operation<sup>39</sup>, implemented a restrictive measure issued by the GIP of Reggio Calabria towards 49 individuals recognized responsible of Mafia association, carrying and possession of firearms, drug trafficking, extortion, damaging and obstructing of public tender procedures. Among the different elements of investigative interest, a phase of rapprochement between the PIROMALLI *cosca* and the MOLÈ *cosca* has been registered. The two *famiglie* were interconnected until 2008, when the murder of a person of the latter *cosca* occurred. The operation also made it possible to focus on the primary role of the PIROMALLI *cosca* in the management of extortion, applied systematically towards Gioia Tauro’s economic assets. The usage of a widespread racket with the imposition of illicit guarding of agricultural land enabled the *cosca* to reaffirm a much more pervasive control of the territory. In particular, the important role of a prisoner’s wife emerged, an apical exponent of the *cosca*, voicing her husband’s dispositions and

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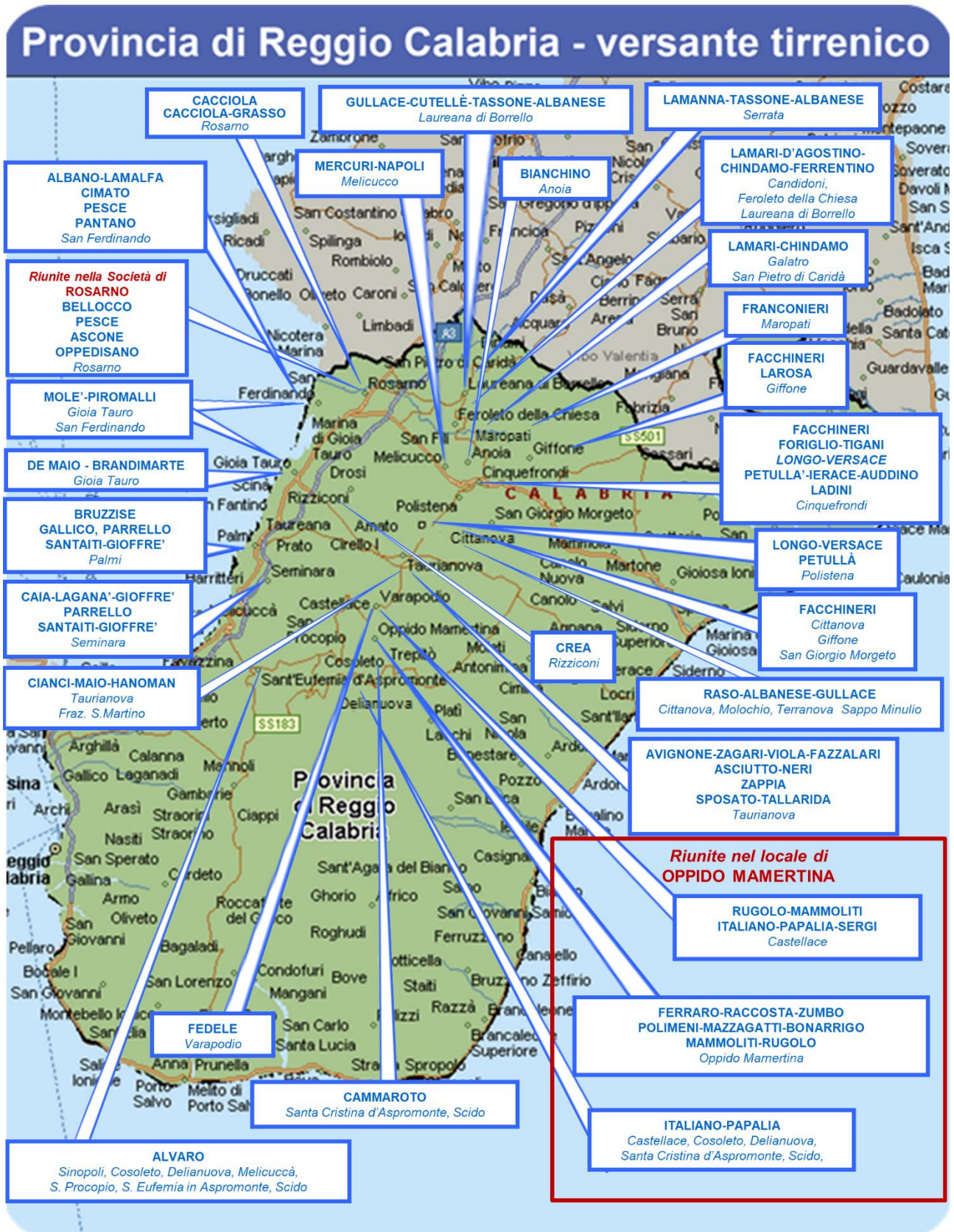
<sup>37</sup> Criminal procedure 4945/2020 RGNR.

<sup>38</sup> In more detail, such system provides that the subject who intends to transfer money to another, normally resident in another country, has to contact an intermediary *broker* (so-called *hawaladar*) and has to pay him/her the sum to be sent. The local intermediary has to contact, for his/her part, a counterpart in the receiving country, instructing him/her to pay the sum indicated to the recipient person, deducting a commission. The sum paid to the recipient would be subsequently refunded by the former to the latter intermediary, with varying timeframes and means, depending on the circumstances.

<sup>39</sup> Criminal procedure 4194/2020 RGNR - 2586/2021 RG GIP - 21/2022 ROCC DDA.



“directing” extorsive operations, representing a reference point of the requests for “environment protection” coming from the territory.



[IMAGE: PROVINCE OF REGGIO CALABRIA - TYRRHENIAN SIDE]

In the same operation, it was also proved the availability of firearms, the imposition of manpower to hire benefiting people belonging to the *cosca* towards local contractors, as well as the conditioning of judicial real estate auctions, with particular focus on real estate in the Gioia Tauro port area. Another element of interest that has emerged from the Carabinieri activity is the usage of a “common” purchase (from different criminal groups) of large quantities of cocaine imported from South America. Another considerable element related to the operational capacities of the *cosca* emerged from the rooted relationships between itself and other Italian Mafia organizations, in particular the Sicilian and the Apulian ones, from which it gained support out of the Region, also invoking intimidation capacities of the coteries who operated there. Contextually to the arrests, a preventive seizure of assets worth an estimated EUR 1 million was carried out.

On **March 21, 2023**, the GUP of Reggio Calabria, during the “*Mala pigna*” trial, an abridged proceeding, issued a convicting judgment towards 6 accused persons, exponents and/or linked to the PIROMALLI *cosca*, with a total of more than 30 years of reclusion for the accusations, among other things, of Mafia association and the offences of environmental disaster, illegal traffic of waste, fictitious registration of assets, extortion and receiving stolen goods.

On **May 18, 2023**, in Gioia Tauro, the Guardia di Finanza implemented a seizure order<sup>40</sup> towards a contractor and his counterpart who also operated mainly in the online gaming and betting field. In June, 2021, the individuals involved, linked to the TEGANO, FRANCO, PIROMALLI, PESCE and BELLOCCO *cosche*, were already recipients of a restraint order. The value of the confiscated assets amounts to more than EUR 3 million.

Again, in the Plain of Gioia Tauro, the DE MAIO-BRANDIMARTE *gruppo* still operates. They are active in different fields, with the main one being drugs, as reflected by different investigation activities closed in the last few years.

In the territory of Rosarno-San Ferdinando, the PESCE and BELLOCCO *cosche* operate, managing illegal activities by controlling port activities, infiltrating the local economy, trafficking drugs and firearms, extorting and carrying of firearms.

On **April 19, 2023**, in San Ferdinando, the Guardia di Finanza of Reggio Calabria and Florence implemented an asset seizure decree<sup>41</sup> towards a contractor recognized as close to the BELLOCCO *cosca* of Rosarno. The criminal figure of the individual involved already emerged in the “*Magma*” operation, led in 2019 against the *cosca* of Rosarno and whose trial outcomes, at first instance, under abridged proceeding, convicted him to 20 years of reclusion for, among other things, Mafia association and association finalized to international drug trafficking aggravated by Mafia facilitation.

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<sup>40</sup> Proc. 198/2020 RG MP - 20/2021 Seizure Order - 64/2023 issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>41</sup> Proc. 10/2023 RG MP - 23/2023 Seizure Order issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria.



Asset investigations emphasized the disproportion between the wealth directly and indirectly available to the individual involved and his earnings capacity. The value of the confiscated assets is estimated at more than EUR 400 thousand.

On **May 10, 2023**, in Rosarno, the Guardia di Finanza implemented an asset seizure decree<sup>42</sup> towards an independent professional. The criminal figure of the individual involved emerged in operation “*Pecunia olet*” (2021), led towards the PESCE *cosca*, as recipient of a detention order in prison. Such investigative activity uncovered his advisory activity aimed at promoting the *cosca* in the arbitrary monopolistic management of the large-scale food distribution sector and road freight transport. The asset investigation, besides documenting the individual’s danger to society, proved the disproportion between the wealth related to him and his earnings capacity. Also in this case, the value of confiscated assets is estimated at EUR 400 thousand.

In the Rosarno area the CACCIOLA-GRASSO *gruppo* operates, born from the division of the original CACCIOLA *cosca*, today still active and opposed to the former *gruppo*<sup>43</sup>, as well as the PISANO *cosca*, also called “devils of Rosarno”, mainly active in the drug-trafficking field.

On **March 15, 2023**, the GUP of Reggio Calabria, during the “*Crypto*” trial, an abridged proceeding, issued a convicting judgment towards 50 accused persons, who were responsible for drug and firearms trafficking. They were members of the CACCIOLA-CERTO-PRONESTI *cosca*, a branch of the PESCE-BELLOCCO *gruppo*, and were sentenced to a total of more than 5 centuries of reclusion.

On **March 21, 2023**, the Court of Palmi during the “*Magma*” trial, under ordinary procedure, issued a convicting judgment towards 5 accused persons, members of the BELLOCCO *cosca*, for international drug trafficking, with a total of more than 24 years of reclusion.

In the Municipality of Palmi the GALLICO and PARRELLO-BRUZZISE *cosche* operate, recipients of many judicial inquiries in the last few years.

In the Municipality of Seminara the SANTAITI, GIOFFRÈ (the so-called ‘*Ndoli- Siberia-Geniazzi*’) and CAIA-LAGANÀ-GIOFFRÈ (the so-called ‘*Ngrisi*’) *cosche* are active. Contrasts between the GIOFFRÈ and CAIA *famiglie* appear to have ceased since August 2009 when the last murder occurred, most likely due to the detention of the members involved in the feud. In the hamlet of Barritteri di Seminara the BRUZZISE *cosca* is active.

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<sup>42</sup> Proc. 29/2023 RG MP -27/2023 Seizure Order issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>43</sup> On October 7, 2022, the Court of Appeal of Reggio Calabria, after the outcome of the “*Ares*” trial under abridged proceeding, sentenced 46 members of the CACCIOLA-GRASSO *cosca* already mentioned for Mafia association, international drug trafficking, extortion, attempted murder, damage to property and possession of firearms.

The CREA Mafia *famiglia* is stable in the Rizziconi area, with branches also in regions of central and north Italy<sup>44</sup>.

In Castellace in Oppido Mamertina the RUGOLO-MAMMOLITI criminal *consorteria* is active. In the Oppido Mamertina area also the POLIMENI-MAZZAGATTI-BONARRIGO and the FERRARO-RACCOSTA *cosche* are operative.<sup>45</sup>

In the municipalities of Sinopoli, Sant'Eufemia d'Aspromonte and Cosoleto the ALVARO *famiglia* influence persists. The *famiglia* was recently hit by the outcome of the “*Propaggine*” operation, closed by the DIA, which has also led to the detriment of their extra-regional projections<sup>46</sup>.

On **February 17, 2023**, in Palmi, during the “*Eyphemos*” trial, the Court issued, under ordinary procedure, a convicting judgment towards 21 accused persons, recognized members of the ALVARO *cosca*, for a total of more than 175 years of reclusion. Other 34 accused persons were acquitted and a political-Mafia exchange vote crime has been amended.

In the Municipality of Cittanova the historic FACCHINERI and ALBANESE-RASO-GULLACE *famiglie* are operative. As for the latter coterie, already hit by a confiscation order in August 2022<sup>47</sup>, the DIA, on **March 20, 2023**, in Albenga (Savona), carried out a patrimonial forfeiture decree, issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria<sup>48</sup>, against a subject deemed to be close to the RASO-GULLACE-ALBANESE *cosca* of Cittanova and longtime settled in Liguria. The value of confiscated assets amounts to more than EUR 400 thousand.

The AVIGNONE-ZAGARI-VIOLA-FAZZALARI *famiglie* operate in the territory of Taurianova with the alliances of the SPOSATO-TALLARIDA<sup>49</sup>, LONGO-VERSACE of Polistena, POLIMENI-GUGLIOTTA of Oppido Mamertina, PETULLÀ-IERACE-AUDDINO, LADINI and FORIGLIO-TIGANI of Cinquefrondi. In the territory of Anioia operates the BIANCHINO *'ndrina*.

On **March 25, 2023**, during the “*'Ndrangheta stragista*” trial, the Court of Assizes of Appeal of Reggio Calabria issued a sentence by which it confirmed the pronouncement at first instance against 2 accused persons, one of them recognized as the head of the *cosca* operating in Anioia, already convicted to a life sentence for the murder of two Carabinieri and for the attempted murders by the end of 1993 and the beginning of 1994 in the provincial capital of Reggio Calabria. The trial refers

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<sup>44</sup> On November 9, 2022, the Supreme Court of Cassation, dismissing the appeals of the defence, confirmed the detention term of 22 years and 8 months of reclusion issued by the Court of Appeal of Reggio Calabria towards a member of the Rizziconi *cosca* for Mafia association and extortion to the detriment of a contractor.

<sup>45</sup> That territory has been the scene of a bloody feud between the BONARRIGO and ZUMBO *famiglie* in the '80s.

<sup>46</sup> Moreover, on November 9, 2022, the DIA, as part of the “*Propaggine 2*” operation, carried out an OCC in Rome (4114/16 RGNR and 1994/17 RG GIP issued by the Ordinary Court of Rome) towards 26 members of the *locale* that was active there, led by the ALVARO *famiglia*, that had long been rooted in the Capital as well.

<sup>47</sup> Decree no. 117/22 Order - 38/21 Seizure Order - 88/21 RG MP of April 27, 2022, filed at the Court Registry on July 26, 2022 - Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>48</sup> Proc. 89/2021 RG MP - 31/2021 Seizure Order - 38/2023 Order - MP section.

<sup>49</sup> On the subject, the “*Terramara-Closed*” operation of 2017.

to the participation of some *cosche* of the 'Ndrangheta to the mass murder project of *Cosa Nostra* dating back to the first years of the '90s.

In the Municipality of Giffone the LAROSA *cosca* is active, whereas in the Municipality of Laureana di Borrello the FERRENTINO-CHINDAMO and LAMARI alliances<sup>50</sup> appear to be operating. In the San Martino hamlet in the Municipality of Taurianova the ZAPPIA and CIANCI-MAIO-HANOMAN *cosche* are also present. This last was hit before by the “*Tutto in famiglia*”<sup>51</sup> (2011), the “*Vecchia guardia*” (2014) and the “*Quieto vivere*” (2018) operations.

## Mandamento JONICO

In the *mandamento jonico* of the Reggio Calabria province, the one of San Luca is considered, among all the *locali* of 'Ndrangheta, to be the “*mamma*” repository of the tradition, the “wisdom” and the establishing rules that constitute the wealth “values” of all the *cosche*. The *locale* of San Luca has always been considered the criminal heart of the 'Ndrangheta because in its territory stands the symbolic place of the Santuario della Madonna di Polsi, historic headquarter of Mafia *summits*<sup>52</sup> in the past.

In San Luca<sup>53</sup> the PELLE-VOTTARI-ROMEO<sup>54</sup> and NIRTA-STRANGIO<sup>55</sup> *cosche* are active, whose historical conflict reached a climax in the well-known Duisburg mass murder (Germany) on August 15, 2007.

On **February 11, 2023**, in Reggio Calabria, during the “*Edera*” trial, the Court of Appeal issued a convicting judgment against 11 accused persons, members of the NIRTA “*Scalzone*”, GIORGI “*Ciceri*”, BARBARO “*Castanu*” and PELLE “*Gambazza*” *cosche* for international drug trafficking imposing a total of more than 130 years of reclusion.

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<sup>50</sup> On November 3, 2016, operation “*Lex*” led to the arrest of 41 affiliates of the two criminal organizations.

<sup>51</sup> On December 13, 2011, the Carabinieri of Gioia Tauro executed 21 indictment orders issued by the Reggio Calabria DDA and 5 OCCs issued by the Palmi Public Prosecutor’s Office for Mafia association, extortion, threatening, usury, damage to property, cultivation and drug dealing, with the simultaneous seizure of assets.

<sup>52</sup> Which were attended by exponents of all the *locali*, during festivities honoring the Virgin Mary each year in early September, and where decisions about business were made, Mafia wars planned, and disputes were settled.

<sup>53</sup> In the territory of San Luca other *famiglie* are also present, variously tied to the two main sides, in particular: PELLE alias “*Vanchelli*”, GIAMPAOLO alias “*Ciccopeppe*”, GIAMPAOLO alias “*Nardo*”, GIORGI alias “*Suppera*”, MAMMOLITI alias “*Piantuni*”, NIRTA alias “*Terribile*”, ROMEO alias “*Terrajanca*”, STRANGIO alias “*Fracascia*”, STRANGIO alias “*Iancu 2*”, PELLE alias “*Focu*”, PIZZATA alias “*Mbrugliuni*”, MANGLAVITI alias “*Curaggiusi*”.

<sup>54</sup> Members of this association are the PELLE ‘*ndrina* “*Vancheddu*”, the ROMEO ‘*ndrina* alias “*Staccu*”, the VOTTARI ‘*ndrina* alias “*Frunzu*”, the GIAMPAOLO ‘*ndrina* alias “*Russello*” and the PELLE ‘*ndrina* alias “*Gambazza*”, all interconnected through kinship and/or bribery.

<sup>55</sup> Members of this association are the NIRTA ‘*ndrina* alias “*Scalzone*”, the GIORGI ‘*ndrina* alias “*Ciceri*”; the STRANGIO ‘*ndrina* alias “*Jancu*”, the NIRTA ‘*ndrina* alias “*Versu*”, the MAMMOLITI ‘*ndrina* alias “*Fischiante*”, the GIORGI ‘*ndrina* alias “*Boviciano*” and the STRANGIO ‘*ndrina* alias “*Barbaro*”, all interconnected through kinship and/or bribery.

On **May 3, 2023**, in San Luca and in the provinces of Milan, Catanzaro, Vibo Valentia, Pescara, Salerno, Catania, Savona and Bologna, the Carabinieri, as part of the “*Eureka*” operation, carried out 3 detention orders<sup>56</sup> against 106 individuals, members of the PELLE, STRANGIO alias “*Fracascia*”, Nirta “*Versu*”, GIAMPAOLO, MAMMOLITI alias “*Fischiante*” and GIORGI *cosche*, held responsible, in various capacities, for Mafia association, externally participating in Mafia association, association aimed at international drug trafficking, possession and trafficking of firearms and assault weapons, laundering, facilitation, fraudulent transfer of values and other crimes on various grounds. Some measures, converted in European arrest warrants, were carried out in Germany, Belgium, France, Portugal, Romania and Spain. Linked to the investigation of Reggio Calabria are the ones of the DDA of Milan (“*Money Delivery*” operation - 38 detention orders) and of the DDA of Genoa (“*Sunset*” operation - 15 detention orders). The investigation was the result of the judicial and police cooperation, guaranteed at a European level by Eurojust, Europol and the @On network, as well as the Interpol I-Can project. It started in June 2019 after merging investigations between the Carabinieri activity and that of the Belgian Federal Police, which was investigating some members of the NIRTA *cosca* of San Luca, active in Genk (Belgium), dedicated, among other things, to international drug trafficking. During its evolution, the investigations made it possible to focus on the business of the STRANGIO “*Fracascia*” *famiglia* in San Luca, up to the *locale* of the ‘*Ndrangheta* of Bianco. The “*Eureka*” investigation has the merit of defining, once again, the global dimension of the ‘*Ndrangheta* business, examining the activity of 3 associations that are close to the main *cosche* of the *mandamento jonico* of Reggio Calabria, with operational bases in Calabria and branches in various Italian regions and abroad. The 3 associations, also synergistically, were directly supplied by Colombian, Ecuadorian, Panamanian and Brazilian organizations, resulting in being able to manage a drug importation channel from South America to Australia. Indeed, some contacts with members of the *clan del Golfo* (*Gulf clan*) have been registered, a prominent Colombian paramilitary organization involved in international drug trafficking. In more detail, the investigations made it possible to establish the movement of more than 6 tons of cocaine between May 2020 and January 2022, of which more than half was subject to confiscation: the money flows related to drug trading were managed by organizations composed of individuals of foreign nationality, specialized in “*money pick-up*”, or by mules, who moved cash throughout the European territory. The money movements have affected also Panama, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Belgium and the Netherlands. Of the sums illegally collected, a large part was reinvested in the purchase of cars and luxury goods, as well as used to fund

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<sup>56</sup> Criminal procedure 4612/22 RGNR DDA - 2857/22RG GIP DDA - 37/22 ROCC DDA; Criminal procedure 3886/22 RGNR DDA - 2520/22 RG GIP DDA - 34/22 ROCC/44/22 ROCC/4/22 ROCC; Criminal procedure 5208/22 RGNR DDA - 3223/22 RG GIP DDA - 42/22 ROCC; Criminal procedure 4837/22 RGNR DDA - 3044/22 RGGIP DDA - 39 and 45/2022 ROCC.

commercial activities in France, Portugal and Germany, where they were also laundered exploiting car washing activities. In Germany, the Calabrian organization invested mainly in gelaterias, meanwhile in Portugal, in restaurants. In other cases, it emerged how the MORABITO *consorteria* had offered a military weapons container through not identified Pakistani individuals to a Brazilian paramilitary organization which, in exchange, dispatched vast quantities of drugs at the port of Gioia Tauro. The investigations also made it possible to establish the activity, in Italy and Portugal, of an association with its decision-making basis in San Luca and Benestare (Reggio Calabria), aimed at the realization of a series of fictitious registrations of companies operating mainly in the restaurant business, as well as committing tax crimes and self-laundering operations, reiterating the criminal dynamics of the so-called “*gruppo di Erfurt*”, active in two federal States of Germany, in the provincial capital of Thuringia and also in Saxony, formed in the ‘90s by a Calabrian *gruppo* connected by family relationships to the PELLE “*Gambazza*” *famiglia*, that moved to Germany. In the same operation, the preventive seizure of assets located in Italy, Germany, France and Portugal, for a total amount estimated at EUR 25 million, was carried out.

In the *locale* of Platì, the BARBARO-TRIMBOLI-MARANDO *cosca* is still active, meanwhile, in the *locale* of Africo, the MORABITO-PALAMARA-BRUZZANITI *cosca* operates. In the Ionian side, the *locale* of Siderno is settled with the COMMISSO *cosca*, opposed to the COSTA one.

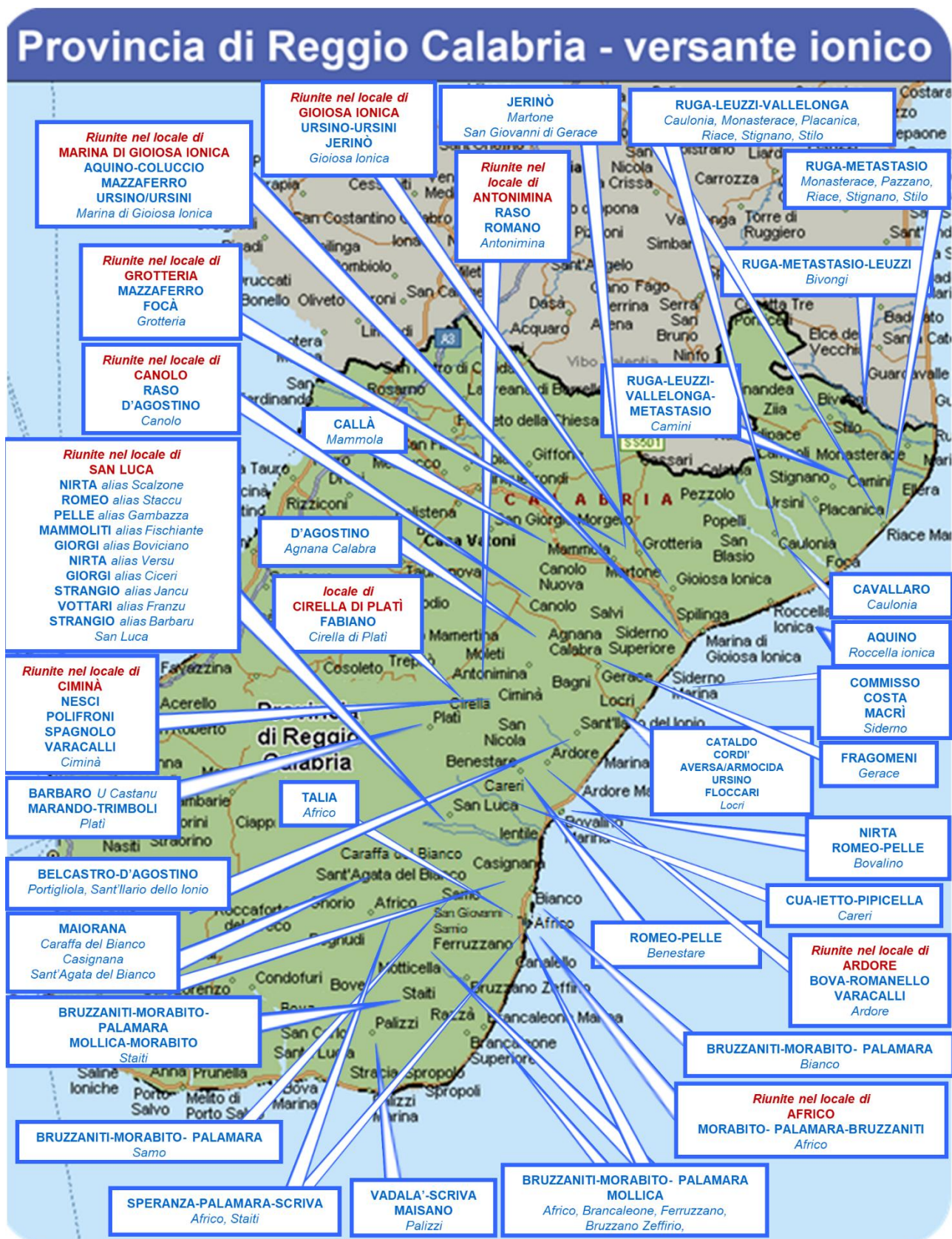
On this matter, in Bovalino and Platì, on **January 24, 2023** the seizure<sup>57</sup> of 4 properties worth a total amount of EUR 120 thousand was carried out against a top member of the BARBARO *cosca* of Platì. He was particularly active in the public procurement sector, in which he participated with his company, dedicated to the interests of the *cosca*. The order, integrating the seizure<sup>58</sup> carried out to the detriment of the same individual in August 2022, stems from the proposal for the application of preventive measures put forward by the DIA, together with the Public Prosecutor of Reggio Calabria in May 2022.

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<sup>57</sup> Decree no. 2/23 Seizure Order (50/22 RG MP) of December 23, 2022, of the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>58</sup> Decree no. 43/22 Seizure Order (50/22 RG MP) of July 4, 2022, of the Court of Reggio Calabria.





Judicially, on **January 4, 2023**, the Court of Cassation, in the “Acero-Krupy” trial, confirmed the sentence of 15 years of reclusion imposed in 2021 by the Court of Appeal of Reggio Calabria against

a member of the MACRÌ *famiglia* of Siderno, operating in that territory, whose leading role was recognized not only in Siderno but also in Canada.

In the Municipality of Marina di Gioiosa Ionica there is an active *locale di 'Ndrangheta* according to which the following *cosche* would operate: AQUINO-COLUCCIO and MAZZAFERRO. These are committed to drug trafficking, which is expanding, through illegal connections, to central and northern regions, and abroad, especially in Northern Europe, South America and Australia.

On **March 30, 2023**, the Court of Appeal of Reggio Calabria, during the trial “*Acero-Krupy*” (abbreviated bis appeal) delivered a judgment on 8 accused persons, exponents of the COMMISSO-CRUPI *cosca*, by imposing a total of 84 years of imprisonment.

In the area of Gioiosa Ionica, the JERINÒ and SCALI-URSINO-URSINI *cosche* would operate, federated with COSTA of Siderno, whose core business is weapons and drug trafficking.

On **February 27, 2023**, during the “*Green day*” trial held in Reggio Calabria, the Court of Appeal, delivered a conviction against 8 accused persons, exponents of the URSINO *cosca* of Gioiosa Ionica, by imposing a total of 40 years of imprisonment for criminal association for the purpose of drug trafficking.

In Monasterace and in the neighboring municipalities of Stilo, Riace, Stignano, Caulonia and Camini, the RUGA-METASTASIO-LEUZZI *cosca* would operate, linked to the GALLACE *cosca*, which is operating in Guardavalle (Cosenza).

In the Municipality of Stilo, the activity of a new *locale di 'Ndrangheta*, federated with the *locale di Gerocarne* (Vibo Valentia)<sup>59</sup> has been documented.

In Caulonia, the VALLELONGA *cosca*<sup>60</sup> would be operating. Also, the MAIOLO and MANNO *famiglie* come from Caulonia. In December 2022, these two *famiglie* were hit by the “*Caino*”<sup>61</sup> operation on drug trafficking, extortion, usury, as well as threats to encourage the election of a specific candidate to be mayor.

In Locri the active *cosche* are two: CORDÌ and CATALDO. These two *cosche*, after 40 years of bloody feuds, have reached a steady agreement on the division of illegal business.

On **May 29, 2023**, in the province of Reggio Calabria, the Guardia di Finanza was implementing a decree on seizure of assets<sup>62</sup> against two businessmen dealing with the trade of petroleum products, and considered the entrepreneurial expression of the CATALDO *cosca di 'Ndrangheta* operating in

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<sup>59</sup> Outcomes of the operation “*Doppio sgarro*” referring to the Criminal procedure 4442/14 RGNR DDA (to which Criminal Proc. 2094/18 RGNR DDA is related) - 2791/15 RG GIP DDA - 9/21 ROCC.

<sup>60</sup> Those coterie in 2012 were the focus of the operation “*Confine*” (*faida dei boschi*). In 2014, the trial outcomes led to the conviction of 8 accused persons, for a total of 42 years of imprisonment. The conviction recognized the presence of a Mafia association operating in Caulonia (Reggio Calabria) and the Stilaro Valley.

<sup>61</sup> No. 13979/19 and 10106/20 RGNR RG GIP promulgated by the Court of Milan on November 22, 2022.

<sup>62</sup> Proc. 83/2022 RG MP - 28/2023 Seizure Order, promulgated by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

the ionic district of the province of Reggio Calabria, and, especially in the *locale* of Locri. These two individuals came to light during the “*Andrea Doria*” operation, which is part of a larger operation, that is “*Petrol mafie spa*”, carried out by the Guardia di Finanza in April 2021, against the infiltration of the *'Ndrangheta* in the legal economy.

Moreover, during the trial “*New generation-Riscatto 2*” (abbreviated proceeding) the Judge for Preliminary Hearings (GUP) of Locri, on **May 31, 2023**, delivered a conviction judgment against 23 accused persons for drug, weapons, and counterfeit banknotes trafficking, belonging to the CORDÌ *cosca*, by imposing a total of 284 years of imprisonment.

Despite the lack of evidence of a direct bond with criminal organizations regarding the territory of Locri, it is necessary to highlight the outcomes of the investigation “*Sua sanità*” which was carried out by the Guardia di Finanza on **May 5, 2023**, delivering a pretrial detention order against 7 individuals. The investigation showed the established practice of using fake medical certifications to postpone hearings, but also for people to use them to obtain care benefits they are not entitled to, namely, to get insurance refunds, short-term incapacity benefits and relocation.

On **June 14, 2023**, the Court of Cassation, during the trial “*Mandamento jonico*”, confirmed 14 convictions for Mafia association, illegal possession of weapons, including assault weapons, bid-rigging, as well as money laundering and aggravated fraud to obtain public funds, annulling 12 with referral, against the most important exponent of the *cosche* active in the Jonica-Reggina area.

In the Municipality of Sant’Ilario dello Jonio the BELCASTRO-ROMEO *cosca* would be active, while in the Municipality of Careri, the active *famiglie* would be CUA-RIZIERO, IETTO and PIPICELLA, linked to the neighboring *cosche* of San Luca and Platì. In the Municipality of Bruzzano Zeffirio the active *cosca* would be TALIA-RODÀ.

On **February 17, 2023**, the Court of Cassation after the outcomes of the trial “*Cumps-banco nuovo*”, confirmed the judgment against 9 accused persons belonging to an active organization between Africo, Motticella, Bruzzano Zeffirio and Brancaleone, by imposing a total of 65 years of imprisonment. The trial arose from the investigation results on the presence of a Mafia *association* operating in the territories of Africo, Motticella, Bruzzano Zeffirio and Brancaleone, which would be obstructing public tendering procedures and dealing with some individuals related to drug trafficking.

In the Municipality of Antonimina the ROMANO *cosca* would be operating, in Ardone the VARCALLI *cosca*, in Canolo the RASO *cosca*, in Ciminà the NESCI and SPAGNOLO *cosche*, and in Cirella Platì the FABIANO *cosca* <sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> The presence of such coterie emerged as part of the operation “*Saggezza*” (2012) which demonstrated how these coterie created a new level of the *'Ndrangheta*, called “*corona*”.



## Province of Catanzaro

The territory of the province of Catanzaro is characterized by a well-established *clan*. Namely, the clan connected to *famiglie* such as GAGLIANESI, GRANDE ARACRI of Cutro and the so-called ZINGARI (the COSTANZO-DI BONA, ABBRUZZESE-BEVILACQUA, PASSALACQUA and BERLINGERI *famiglie*).

The criminal police operations carried out by the District Anti-Mafia Prosecutor's Office of Catanzaro and the ban measures adopted by the local prefecture, represent the picture of a territory divided into 4 geo-criminal areas, where the operativeness of the historical *'Ndrangheta cosche* is documented, each one exercising its power while avoiding any conflict between them.

Lamezia Terme is the most unstable area, where the operating *famiglie* are IANNAZZO, GIAMPÀ alternatively, CERRA-TORCASIO-GUALTIERI.

In this given territory, on **February 21, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza delivered a pretrial detention order in prison against 59 individuals, in operation “*Svevia*”<sup>64</sup> for criminal organization for the purpose of drug trafficking. The individuals involved counted on a steady supply of drugs from Lamezia and from outside the Region, exploiting their family relations also with *famiglie* living in Rome.

In the Jonio-Presila Catanzarese area, the *cosche* spreading their influences are TRAPASSO of San Leonardo di Cutro (KR) and ARENA of Isola Capo Rizzuto (KR). They are especially active in the timber and wood product trade to be used in thermoelectric energy plants.

In the territory of Soverato the GALLACE *famiglia* is operating, connected to the powerful *cosche* of the province of Reggio Calabria and with other deeply rooted groups both in Italy and abroad. To the GALLACE, the IOZZO-CHIEFERI, PROCOPIO-LENTINI, GALLELI and MONGIARDO *cosche* are connected.

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<sup>64</sup> OCC no. 5474/18 RGNR - 1760/19 RG GIP - 47/22 RMC by the Court of Catanzaro.

# Provincia di Catanzaro



From right to left: BRUNO - BABBINI Vallefiorita and neighboring areas; CARPINO BUBBO SCUAMACI Northeast ionic area Presila of the Province of Catanzaro; GALLAE/GALLELLI/PROCOPIO/MANGIARDO-TRIPODI surrounding areas of Soverato; GALLACE NOVELLA Guardavalle Southern ionic area (surrounding areas of Soverato).

Regarding the territory of the city of Catanzaro, some local *cosche* would operate (GAGLIANESI and ZINGARI) along with the *cosche* of the province of Crotona, namely GRANDE ARACRI and

ARENA. In the neighboring municipalities of the city, namely, those on the coastline (Nocera Terinese and Falerna) the BAGALÀ *clan* would be operating allied with the IANNAZZO *famiglia*, while around Monte Reventino the SCALISE *famiglia* would be active and pitted against the MEZZATESTA *famiglia*.

In the neighborhood of Aranceto (Catanzaro), in southern part of the city and stronghold of *Romani famiglie*, the active *famiglie* are BEVILACQUA and PASSALACQUA, focused on drug dealing and car theft, but they have been hit by recent operations that downsized their range of action.<sup>65</sup>

In the neighborhoods of Santa Maria and Lido, the presence of *Romani famiglie*, BERLINGIERI, PASSALACQUA and ABBRUZZESE, has been confirmed. These deal with drugs and rackets.

On **April 18, 2023**, the State Police of Catanzaro, during the “*Sporca alleanza*”<sup>66</sup> operation, arrested 62 individuals connected to the so-called ZINGARI and to *famiglie* connected to those of BEVILACQUA-PASSALACQUA for association for the purpose of drug and weapons trafficking and extortion. The investigation highlighted how those belonging to PASSALACQUA could negotiate cocaine and heroin supply with international dealers, especially for batches coming from Spain and the Netherlands.

On **June 15, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Catanzaro, during the “*Fangopoli*”<sup>67</sup> operation, arrested 26 individuals for waste trafficking. The investigation revealed the waste derived from a complex and articulated trafficking related to three businesses coming from the province of Catanzaro and Crotone. The waste to be processed was transported and then stocked in the plants belonging to these businesses.

### **Province of Vibo Valentia**

The territory of Vibo Valentia is characterized by the presence of many *cosche di 'Ndrangheta*; all of them, dependent, in different ways, on the MANCUSO *famiglia*, which is the most active in the Municipalities of Nicotera and Limbadi.

The MANCUSO *famiglia* perpetuates its criminal power through managing drug trafficking, gambling and extortion. Another sector in which MANCUSO and other criminal groups of the province of Vibo Valentia are interested in is the hospitality sector, especially the one developed through many resorts and hotels on the Tyrrhenian Sea coastline.

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<sup>65</sup> These include the following: operation “*Aesontium*” concluded on October 12, 2021, by the Carabinieri of Catanzaro who arrested 21 individuals charged of drug trafficking and possession of stolen goods; operation “*Drug family*” (October 26, 2021) concluded by Carabinieri and State Police of Catanzaro who arrested 31 individuals who run drug dealing in the neighborhood of Aranceto in Catanzaro.

<sup>66</sup> OCC no. 676/2016 RGNR of the Preliminary Investigation Judge (GIP) of the Court of Catanzaro.

<sup>67</sup> OCC no.3341/2020 RGNR - 643/2021 RG GIP - 264/2022 RMR - 263/2022 RMC of the Court of Catanzaro.

In this semester the action against criminal groups from Vibo Valentia has continued. On **January 25, 2023**, the Carabinieri di Vibo Valentia, coordinated by DDA of Catanzaro, during operation “*Rinascita Scott 3-Assocompari*” arrested 25 individuals of the *locale* of Sant’Onofrio, depending on the BONAVOTA *cosca* <sup>68</sup>. The operation comes from the well-known investigation “*Rinascita Scott*” aimed at disrupting the most important Mafia structures active in the territory of the Province of Vibo Valentia. Such investigation documented the action of *locale* of Sant’Onofrio depending on the BONAVOTA *cosca* and active in Sant’Onofrio, Filogaso, Maierato, Pizzo Calabro and with branches in Lazio, Liguria and Piedmont.

In the Municipality of Vibo Valentia the presence of the LO BIANCO-BARBA, the CAMILLÒ-PARDEA and the PUGLIESE *cosche* has been documented, while on the coastline of Vibo Valentia the MANTINO-TRIPODI *cosca* would be operating, also outside the Region. The *locale* of Piscopio is still active in suburban areas.

In the area between the Municipality of Maierato, Stefanaceni and Sant’Onofrio the active *famiglie* are PETROLO, PATANIA and BONAVOTA, respectively.

On **January, 26, 2023**, the State Police of Vibo Valentia, during the operation “Olimpo”<sup>69</sup> arrested 56 people suspected of belonging to the *locale clans* of MANCUSO, LA ROSA and ACCORINTI. These individuals were charged at different levels, of criminal association, of external participation in a Mafia syndicate, extortion, carrying and possession of weapons, kidnapping, fraudulent transfer of values, illegal competition involving threats or violence, disclosing professional secrecy, influence peddling, and criminal association aimed at possession of stolen goods and agricultural machinery laundering. During the activity a total value of EUR 250 million of mobile and immobile assets has been preventively seized. Investigative evidence has documented the presence of the LA ROSA *‘ndrina*, in the territory of Tropea and the Coast of the Gods. Such *‘ndrina* is committed to extortion against tourist facilities in the area.

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<sup>68</sup> OCC no. 4191/2020 RGNR - 1727/2020 RG GIP - 111/2021 RMC - 112/2021 RMR of the Preliminary Investigation Judge (GIP) of the Court of Catanzaro.

<sup>69</sup> OCC no. 6633/2016 RGNR - 5934/2016 RG GIP, of the Court of Catanzaro.



# Provincia di Vibo Valentia



On **May 10, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Vibo Valentia, during the operation “*Maestrale-Cartagho*”<sup>70</sup>, delivered an order of pretrial detention against 61 individuals – in the provinces of Vibo Valentia, Rome, Milan, Turin, Venice, and Monza-Brianza – belonging to *'Ndrangheta* structures of the province of Vibo Valentia. The suspects are 167 and were charged with criminal association, political and criminal exchange, violation of gun control rules, illegal drug trafficking, extortion, illegal competition involving threats or violence, disruption of public auctions, aggravated fraud to attain public funds, and all of this aggravated by the so-called Mafia method. Starting from 2015, the operation made it possible to verify the activity of the *'Ndrangheta* structure<sup>71</sup> in the province of Vibo Valentia, in the *locale* of Zungri with *'ndrine* Cessaniti and Briatico, and the *locale* of Mileto with *'ndrine* PARAVATI, COMPARNI, CALABRÒ and SANGIOVANNI, all of them linked to the PESCE and BELLOCCO *cosche* of Rosarno (Reggio Calabria) and MOLÈ of Gioia Tauro (Reggio Calabria). In Vibo Valentia, the conditioning of local Authority tender procedures, such as canteen management, has been documented, as well as the work of some practitioners who delivered reports that appeased associated detainees. Moreover, Mafia interference has been documented in public exam procedures for hiring administrative staff in a municipality of that territory, and, also, verifying irregular procedures in the reception of migrants in other municipalities of the area.

In the Serra San Bruno area, the active *famiglia* is VALLELUNGA and in the Municipality of Soriano Calabro the active *famiglia* is EMANUELE, opposed to the LOIELO.

In the area of Zungri and Briatico the active *famiglie* would be ACCORINTI-FIAMMINGO-BARBIERI-BONAVENA, the one active in Tropea is LA ROSA, while in the Municipalities of Pizzo Calabro, Francavilla Angitola, Filogaso and Maierato the *famiglie* who would be operating are FIUMARA, MANCO and CRACOLICI.

## Province of Crotone

The territory of the province of Crotone would be influenced by the presence of the GRANDE ARACRI *cosca* of Cutro (Crotone), which has been for many years the anchor of many other criminal coterie of the territory, with relevant branches also in the North of Italy.

<sup>70</sup> Criminal procedure 9601/15 RGNR DDA of the Court of Catanzaro.

<sup>71</sup> MANCUSO – *locale* of Limbadi; LA ROSA *cosca* – *'ndrina* of Tropea; FIARÈ-RAZIONALE-GASPARRO *cosca* – *locale* of San Gregorio d'Ippona; LO BIANCO-BARBA *cosca* and CAMILLÒ-PARDEA *cosca* – *locale* of the city of Vibo Valentia; ACCORINTI *cosca* – *locale* of Zungri; BARBIERI *cosca* – *'ndrina* of Cessaniti; ACCORINTI, BONAVITA and MELLUSO *cosche* – *'ndrina* of Briatico; PISCOPISANI *cosca* – *locale* of Piscopio; BONAVOTA *cosca* – *locale* of Sant'Onofrio; CRACOLICI *cosca* – *'ndrine* of Filogaso and Maierato; SORIANO *cosca* – *'ndrine* of Filandari, Ionadi and San Costantino; PITITTO-PROSTAMO-IANNELLO, TAVELLA, GALATI, MESIANO *cosche* – of Mileto; PATANIA *cosca* – *locale* of Stefanaceni; ANELLO *cosca* – *locale* of Filadelfia and other connected *gruppi* (groups) – *'ndrine*.



# Provincia di Crotone



In Crotone, the active *famiglie* would be VRENNIA-CORIGLIANO-BONAVENTURA and BARILARI-FOSCHINI.

The TORNICCHIO-MANETTA *famiglia* would be still operating in the district of Cantorato, while MEGNA and RUSSELLI would be operating in the south of Crotone, in the district of Papanice.

In the area of the Municipality of Isola di Capo Rizzuto (Crotone), the ARENA-NICOSCIA-MANFREDI would be operating.

On **January 19, 2023**, during operation “*Krimata*”<sup>72</sup>, the Guardia di Finanza of Crotone, coordinated by DDA of Catanzaro, delivered a pretrial detention order against 7 individuals charged with Mafia association, laundering, tax crimes, use of money, assets, or benefits of unlawful origin and more. The investigation focused on one of the exponents at the head of the ARENA-NICOSCIA *cosca* of Isola Capo Rizzuto (Crotone) who after the truce between the two *cosche*, “stepped away” and organized his own illegal activities while keeping strong connections with the coterie. Evidence has demonstrated that this individual, with his brother, moved their business to northern Italian regions, especially in Tuscany, undertaking business activity in the building industry, all aiming at committing offences.

On **February 16, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Vibo Valentia, during operation “*Ultimo atto*”<sup>73</sup> arrested 13 individuals, while documenting the activity of the *locale* of Cirò and of the related ‘*ndrina* of Strongoli (Crotone)<sup>74</sup>. Investigations, besides defining criminal setups of the area, in the way they were immediately amended by judicial operation in the area of Crotone, have demonstrated how such criminal activities involve weapons and extortion.

On **June 27, 2023**, in the whole territory of the province, the Carabinieri of Crotone implemented a pretrial detention delivered by the GIP of Catanzaro against 43 individuals during the operation “*Glicine-Akeronte*”<sup>75</sup>. The investigations, supported by complex technical activity, focused on individuals who were near or belonged to Calabrian ‘*ndrine* active in districts of the provinces of Catanzaro and Crotone, especially *famiglie* such as BONAVENTURA, ARACRI, ARENA, GRANDE ARACRI, TRAPASSO and FERRAZZO. From the start of the investigations some commingling between the above-mentioned fellowship, businessmen and politicians have come to light.

## Province of Cosenza

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<sup>72</sup> OCC no. 6213/14 RGNR - 5705/14 RG GIP - 20/2022 RMC delivered on **January 17, 2023**, by the Court of Catanzaro.

<sup>73</sup> OCC no. 2490/2022 RGNR DDA - 3328/2022 RG GIP - 9/2023 RMC delivered on **February 7, 2023**, by the Court of Catanzaro.

<sup>74</sup> GIGLIO *cosca* of Strangoli.

<sup>75</sup> OCC no. 5768/2016 RGNR DDA - 5040/16 RG GIP - 237/22 RMC of the Court of Catanzaro



In Cosenza and its hinterland (especially in Rende and Roggiano Gravina) the presence of more than one *cosca*, mainly committed to extortion, drug trafficking, as well as usury and robbery, has been documented. These depend on a “*confederazione*” (confederation) made up of 7 different *'Ndrangheta* branches characterized by a united and significant structure. These *gruppi* are the PATITUCCI, PORCARO, D’AMBROSIO, ZINGARI-BRUZZESE, and “*gli altri ZINGARI*” (the other Zingari), all of them operating in the territory of the city. Instead, the PRESTA *gruppo* is operating in the areas of the Municipality of Roggiano Gravina, while the DI PUPPO *gruppo* in Rende.

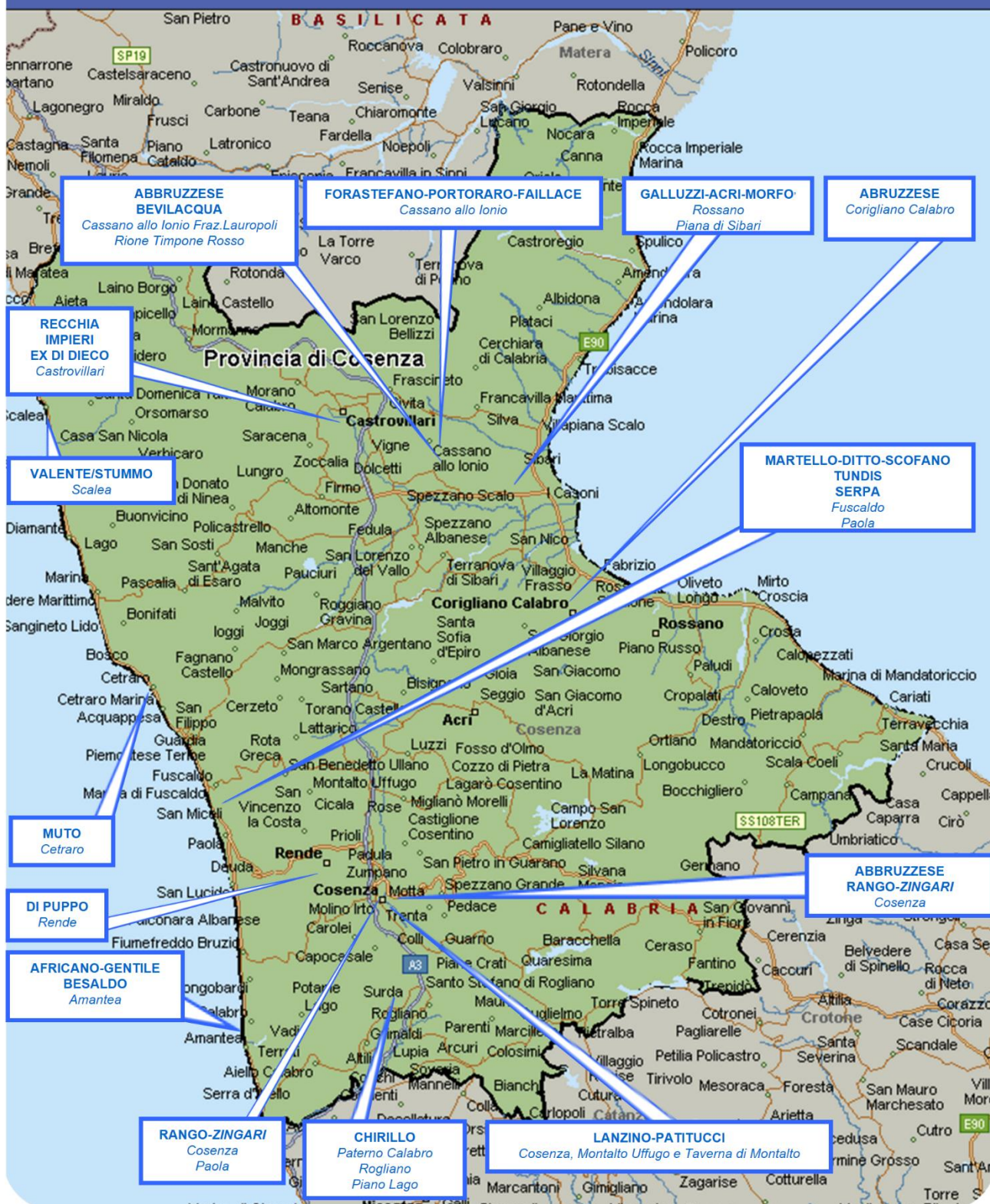
In Fuscaldo, the TUNDIS *gruppo* would be operating, which is against the SCOFANO-MARTELLO-DITTO-LA ROSA *cosca*.

In Amantea there would be the presence of two different criminal groups: on the one hand, GENTILE-GUIDO-AFRICANO and on the other, BESALDO, who would be adopting a non-belligerency approach only for the mutual purpose of pursuing their illegal interests.

In San Lucido the active *cosche* would be CARBONE and TUNDIS, while in Paola the SERPA *cosca* would be operating, against the SCOFANO-MARTELLO-DITTO-LA ROSA *cosca*.

The Municipality of Corigliano-Rossano has become the third most populated Municipality of Calabria. It would continue to be the center of numerous criminal activities even before these two urban areas became a municipality. Corigliano would be under the influence of two opposing *famiglie*, namely the BARILARI *famiglia* and the CONOCCHIA *famiglia*. The BARILARI would have allied with the ACRI *famiglia* of Rossano and the ZINGARI-ABBRUZZESE *cosca*, active in Cassano allo Jonio. While CONOCCHIA, which is already affiliated with the old CARELLI *famiglia*, has connections with *cosche* from Reggio Calabria. While in Rossano, the ACRI-MORFO *cosca* would be operating. Its activities are mainly extortion, drug trafficking and dealing, public tendering procedures managing and controlling, and laundering through reinvesting in roastery and by-products, security services, bakery products and food distribution, videogame renting and even illegal videogames.

# Provincia di Cosenza



In the area of the Municipalities of Campana and Mandatoriccio, as operation “Stige”<sup>76</sup>, carried out in January 2018, has already demonstrated, there would be a criminal group led by the SANTORO

<sup>76</sup> Criminal procedure 3382/15 RGNR and RG GIP no. 2600/15 of the Court di Catanzaro.

*famiglia* (subjected to the FARAO-MARINCOLA *cosca* of Cirò Marina) mainly committed to extortion, drug dealing, illegal grazing, illegal tree felling, theft of livestock and illegal occupation of farmland with reinvestments in agriculture and trade.

In Altomonte, *sodalizio* MAGLIARI would be operating, committed to extortion against local retailers and entrepreneurs and drug trafficking. The *gruppo* has connections with *locale* FARAO-MARINCOLA of Cirò (Crotone), as well as FORASTEFANO of Cassano All’Ionio. In Cassano All’Ionio there would be two main criminal coteries, the fiercest of the province of Cosenza: the so-called ZINGARI, attributable to the ABBRUZZESE *famiglia* active between Cassano All’Ionio and Cosenza, and the above-mentioned FORASTEFANO. These *clans*, after a conflicting period, have reconciled and now, they are allies in drug trafficking and extortion.

Even in these six months taken into consideration, the *cosche* of the area of Cosenza were undermined by the judicial investigation carried out by the DDA of Catanzaro

On **May 9, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Cosenza delivered an order for pretrial detention against 29 individuals, related to operation “*Affari di famiglia*”<sup>77</sup>. Investigations have demonstrated the activity of CALABRIA-TUNDIS Mafia association, active in the territory among the municipalities of San Lucido, Falconara Albanese and Longobardi. The investigated individuals are responsible for offences against the person, property, drugs, directly and indirectly acquiring the management and control of local businesses, administrative concessions and authorizations, and public tendering and services. The organization was operating by adding and legitimizing other Mafia organizations of Cosenza and the surrounding area of the coastline of the province, through recruiting and initiation rituals, achieving ranks and agreements on the division of the influences on territories and distribution of the illegal profit.

On **June 5, 2023**, the investigation “*Gentleman 2*”<sup>78</sup> is to be reported. It was carried out by the DDA of Catanzaro along with the German and Belgian judicial authorities and with the participation of the respective representatives of Eurjust, against the FORASTEFANO-ABBRUZZESE *ndrine*, operating in the north ionic area of Cosenza. The pretrial order, delivered by the Guardia di Finanza of Cosenza, involved 26 individuals charged with Mafia association aimed at drug and arms trafficking. The investigations were carried out with the collaboration of French and Dutch counterparts, by decoding crypto phone conversations.

Another important operation, called “*Athena*”<sup>79</sup>, undermined the ABBRUZZESE *clan* of Cassano Allo Ionio and the FORESTEFANO *clan*, which operate in the plain of Sibari (Sibaritide). The

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<sup>77</sup> OCC no. 3995/18 RGNR DDA - 31/2021 RMCC.

<sup>78</sup> OCC no. 3836/2019 RGNR - 3306/2019 RG GIP - 67/2023 RMC delivered by the Court of Catanzaro.

<sup>79</sup> OCC no. 4168/16 RGNR - 3688/16 RG GIP - 3/22 RMC of the Court of Catanzaro.

operation was carried out on **June 30, 2023**, by the Carabinieri of Cosenza and was coordinated by the DDA of Catanzaro. The investigation deals with illegal activities carried out by ABBRUZZESE in Lauropoli, district of Cassano All'Jonio. The 68 arrested individuals have been charged with Mafia association, drug trafficking, extortion and threats. The investigation proved the illegal business of such a coterie, defining each member's role with evidence.

## - CAMPANIA<sup>1</sup>

The *Camorra*'s phenomenon in Campania manifests itself in various forms in relation to the geographical contexts where it originated and evolved. The provinces of Naples and Caserta remain the territories with the highest and the most qualified concentration of crime, where the presence of major *cartels* of the *Camorra* (THE SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE, MAZZARELLA and CASALESI) can be registered or rather more structured Mafia organizations. Their illicit interests also concern some sectors of the legal economic system and in a great deal of cases, they have evolved into real "*Mafia enterprises*". It also pointed out that such organizations have the ability to permeate local administrations and alter decisional processes to increase illicit profits and social consensus, a practice that even in the semester taken into consideration has led to the dissolution of some Municipal councils in Campania<sup>2</sup> for criminal infiltration pursuant to article 143 of the Consolidated Text of the Laws on the structure of Local Authorities (TUEL). Close to these and their sphere of influence, in a more pretextual and functional position, various criminal groups coexist, whose illicit interests concern more traditional sectors such as narcotics, extortion and usury. For the purpose of the analysis of the criminal phenomena that concern the aforementioned geographical areas, in particular Naples and its province, it is considered appropriate to subdivide the territory in a consistent framework according to criminal phenomena. A similar approach has been adopted for the province of Salerno: it has been subdivided in four consistent geo-criminal frameworks. These are characterized by the presence of *gruppi* of the *Camorra* with a strong family-oriented connotation in relation to the territorial contiguity with the criminal environment of Naples, provinces of Caserta and the nearby Calabria, but also by the interference, the historical criminal *fellowship* originated in those areas with the criminal groups of Salerno, not seldom, establish criminal and business relationships.

The geographical context of Campania completes itself, at last, with the provinces of Benevento and Avellino, these too characterized by the presence of organizations of the *Camorra* group, with a strong family-oriented connotation, active mainly in the trafficking of drugs and extortion, harming enterprises and local commercial activities.

Below, the cited criminal phenomena will be analyzed, subdivided by province.

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<sup>1</sup> The extreme fragmentation of the criminal reality of Campania entails the graphic depiction of only the principal components, whose positioning on the map is to be considered merely approximate.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of writing, in Campania, the local councils of the Municipalities of Villaricca (Naples), Castellammare di Stabia (Naples), Torre Annunziata (Naples), San Giuseppe Vesuviano (Naples), Caivano and Sparanise (Caserta), result dissolved for verified Mafia infiltrations. Whereas, in the Municipalities of Quindici (Avellino) and Monteforte Irpino (Avellino), on Tuesday, May 16, 2023, the prefect of Avellino has appointed a commission of inquiry to verify the subsistence of elements of criminal conditioning.

## Province of Naples

### City of Naples

The City of Naples is divided in 30 districts, gathered under the administration of 10 municipalities<sup>3</sup>. However, for the sake of this analysis, regarding the survey of the criminal groups operating on the territory, reference will be made to zones, neighborhoods or areas, more or less extended and differently denominated, that could correspond to an urban built-up area or, sometimes, to single residential buildings located in multiple districts.

Concerning the criminal phenomena, the analysis operated by the Institutions that safeguard the respect of law of the copious judicial literacy and the numerous contrast activities, gives back a picture where heterogeneous criminal realities and different evolutionary stages coexist. At a higher level, 2 principal *cartels* of the *Camorra* can be designated: as the historic antagonists that dominate the territory, often defined by themselves with the term “*Sistema*” (“System”): on one hand the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE, composed of the MALLARDO, CONTINI-BOSTI and LICCIARDI *famiglie*, the first two are also related by family ties<sup>4</sup>, on the other hand the MAZZARELLA *clan*. These organizations, as immanent in the city, in the past years, have been adopting more subtle and less evident strategies turning out to be less transparent and obvious, therefore more dangerous and more insidious. In particular, their illicit interests appear foremost oriented to meddling with the sectors of the legal economic system and with the procedures for the obtaining of public funding, reaching a sort of economic oligopoly and, in the meantime, also a social entitlement. This is precisely what makes their presence much more alarming: they are capable of controlling not only large territorial areas and economic sectors according to a consolidated *Camorra* “system”, but they are especially capable of imposing a criminal subculture, where the social degradation is more widespread, and it allows them to elevate themselves as alternative representatives for the public security.

Around the sphere of influence of the two *cartels* of the *Camorra*, revolves a structurally smaller and less evolved galaxy of criminal *fellowships*. These are equipped with their own operational

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<sup>3</sup> Municipalities I / districts: Chiaia, Posillipo, San Ferdinando  
Municipality II / districts: Avvocata, Montecalvario, Pendino, Porto, Mercato, San Giuseppe.  
Municipalities III / districts: Stella, San Carlo all’ Arena.  
Municipalities IV / districts: San Lorenzo, Vicaria, Poggioreale, zona Industriale.  
Municipalities V / districts: Vomero, Arenella.  
Municipalities VI / districts: Ponticelli, Barra, San Giovanni a Teduccio.  
Municipalities VII / districts: Miano, Secondigliano, San Pietro a Patierno.  
Municipalities VIII / districts: Piscinola, Marianella, Scampia, Chiaiano.  
Municipalities IX / districts: Soccavo, Pianura.  
Municipalities X / districts: Bagnoli, Fuorigrotta.

<sup>4</sup> The respective historic bosses married three sisters.

autonomy although delimited to their area of competence, and it is important to point them out as they provide a more evident and a bigger impact on the perception of civil security.

At a lower level, eventually, there is a criminal underworld, devoted mainly to the trafficking of drugs, to robberies and small extortions, that compete for small shares of the territory through violent means in a permanent status of conflict. The incidents registered during the first semester of 2023<sup>5</sup> could be traced back within this framework.

Concerning the relationships between the *cartels* of the MAZZARELLA and the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE, noteworthy and meritorious of further analytical investigation is what emerged from a recent investigation ended on **May 29, 2023** by the National Police and the Carabinieri<sup>6</sup> in the charge of a criminal coterie of new formation denominated PARANZA DEI QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI (or SISTEMA DEI QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI<sup>7</sup>) operating in the area of The *Quartieri Spagnoli* (between the district San Ferdinando and Montecalvario) and revolving around the sphere of influence of the above-mentioned macro-*cartels*. The latter, in particular, are defined by the GIP of Naples “*criminal cartels [MAZZARELLA and SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE] ...ruling the metropolitan area, ...they have counterposed each other in the past but, for the last few years, they have been maintaining relationships of co-existence, cooperation and integration in their respective illicit activities...*”. This shows joint interests between the two criminal groups of the *Camorra* that have prevailed, in the last few years, on their historic antagonisms though remaining in the exercise of their respective autonomy, suggesting an actual status of criminal *pax* between the two groups.

The detailed representation of the assets of the active coterie of the *Camorra* in the city of Naples will be illustrated below, where the metropolitan area is divided in homogeneous territorial areas in geo-criminal terms: *Central Area*, *Northern Area*, *Eastern Area* and *Western Area*.

**Naples - Central Area** (neighborhoods *San Ferdinando*, *Chiaia*, *San Giuseppe*, *Montecalvario*, *Avvocata*, *Stella*, *San Carlo all’Arena*, *Vicaria*, *San Lorenzo*, *Mercato*, *Pendino*, *Porto*, *Poggioreale*, *Posillipo* and *Zona industriale*).

In the historic center of the city, one of the most active criminal organizations is the

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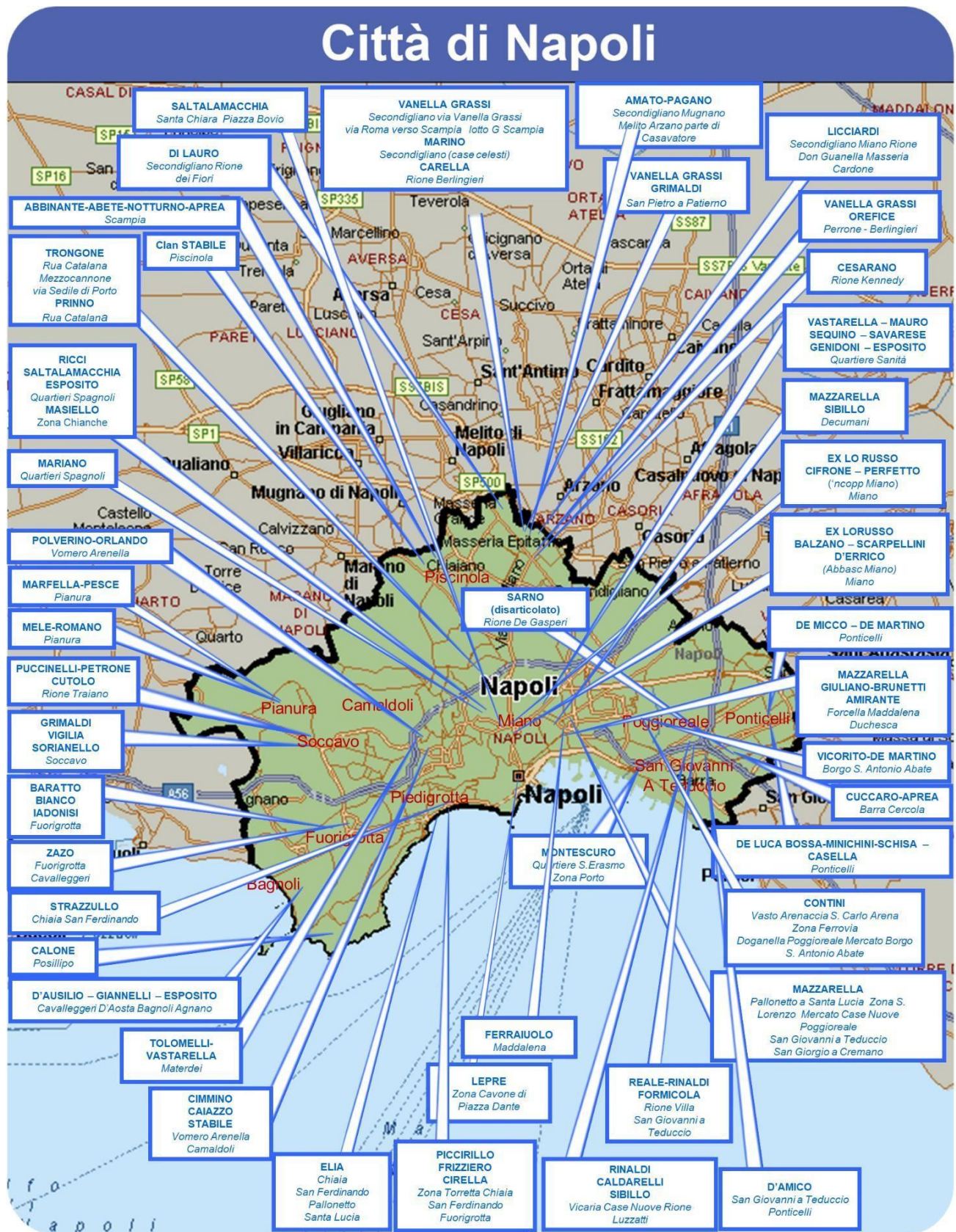
<sup>5</sup> Period in which in the sole city of Naples there have been 8 homicides (2 in the western area, 2 in the eastern area, 3 in the central area and 1 in the northern area) and 14 woundings (6 in the neighborhoods and the districts of the central areas, 3 in the eastern area, 2 in the western area and 3 in the northern area) attributable to criminal frameworks, out of a total of 12 homicides and 20 woundings with a firearm of analogous matrix, which took place on the whole territory of the province.

<sup>6</sup> OCC no. 14383/19 RGNR, no. 8672/22 RG GIP and no. 125/23 RMC, issued **April 22, 2023** by the Court of Naples.

<sup>7</sup> Composed of the three historical *families* of the *Camorra* ESPOSITO, MASIELLO and SALTALAMACCHIA.



SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE, represented by the CONTINI *clan* that, as mentioned, constitute one of the main cornerstones.



City of Naples



The criminal influence of the CONTINI *clan* in Naples allegedly affects the Vicaria neighborhoods (in the Vasto-Arenaccia<sup>8</sup> and Ferrovia areas), San Carlo all'Arena (in the strongholds of San Giovanniello<sup>9</sup> and Rione Amicizia), San Lorenzo (in the Borgo Sant'Antonio Abate) and a large part of the Poggioreale neighborhood where, in the Sant'Alfonso and Luzzatti districts, it would coexist with the MAZZARELLA *clan* while maintaining a consolidated hegemony in Via Stadera. During the six-month period under review, the CONTINI *clan* was the subject of major law enforcement activities that involved numerous affiliates. On **June 27, 2023**, the Carabinieri executed a pretrial detention order<sup>10</sup> against 16 individuals associated with the aforementioned clan. They were accused of Mafia association, money laundering and self-laundering, extortion, usury, abusive exercise of financial activity, fraudulent transfer of values and false invoicing for non-existent transactions, all aggravated by the Mafia method. The investigation has allegedly revealed, among other things, the CONTINI's monopoly, at least until 2020, over the control of the gaming and betting sector in the Vasto-Arenaccia area through the ATTARDO *famiglia*, its offshoot. A member of the latter, as part of other investigative activity concluded on the same date by the State Police, was the recipient of a decree of arrest on suspicion of conspiracy<sup>11</sup> to commit an attempted double murder, aggravated by the Mafia method. The measure refers to an assault the suspect allegedly committed on September 29, 2022 against two of his cousins over family disagreements. On the same day, the Carabinieri executed another pretrial detention order<sup>12</sup> against 3 individuals accused of having been involved in the Mafia association known as the CONTINI *clan*. One of the 3, in particular, is said to have played the role of referent of the aforementioned clan in the San Giovanniello district (San Carlo all'Arena neighborhood) during the detention of several top members and at least until 2020 (the date of his arrest). The investigation has also allegedly revealed the *clan*'s infiltration into some companies operating in the car rental sector in the area of Capodichino airport.

Due to the aforementioned kinship ties among the top members of the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE, the CONTINI *clan*'s influence would spread far beyond the city center with a

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<sup>8</sup> Through the RULLO *famiglia* whose *leader* returned to freedom on July 3, 2023, to serve out his sentence.

<sup>9</sup> Encompassed between Piazza Carlo III and Piazza Ottocalli where, as of 2016, the CONTINI *clan* is represented by the DE FEO *famiglia*.

<sup>10</sup> OCC no. 27584/19 RGNR, no. 18069/22 RG GIP and no. 158/23 ROCC issued on **May 31, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>11</sup> No. 33552/2022 RGNR, issued on **June 26, 2023**, by the DDA of Naples.

<sup>12</sup> No. 30045/18 RGDDA, no. 8534/19 RGGIP and no. 135/23 ROCC issued on **May 10, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

consolidated leadership in the management of all kinds of criminal activities, particularly through the diversification of reinvestments of illicit capital in various sectors of the legal economy. Given the detention of the historical leaders and, in general, of the most charismatic personalities, in the area of reference the *sodality* is currently represented by trusted associates, some of whom have recently returned to freedom<sup>13</sup>.

The MAZZARELLA *clan* represents the other major criminal entity operating in this city area where it holds control of the narcotics sector and extortion activities at the expense of street traders and city markets. It draws into its sphere of influence numerous satellite *Camorra* groups together with which it assumes a confederative dimension. Through the latter, indeed, the MAZZARELLA *famiglia* has implemented an expansionist strategy in other areas of the city and province of Naples despite last year's incisive law enforcement activity that led to the arrest of some of its leading figures and numerous exponents<sup>14</sup>. Most recently, in fact, a pretrial detention order<sup>15</sup> was executed on **March 6, 2023**, by the Carabinieri against 3 top exponents accused of the 2002 murder of a former affiliate who had arbitrarily embezzled a substantial sum of money from the coffers of the criminal organization to which he belonged.

The influence of the MAZZARELLA *clan* and the groups federated to it is recorded, in particular, in the Forcella area (San Lorenzo district), the historical stronghold of the GIULIANO *famiglia*<sup>16</sup> (with which the MAZZARELLA have kinship ties), in the Decumani, Maddalena<sup>17</sup>, Porta Capuana and Porta Nolana areas, in the Porto and Mercato<sup>18</sup> neighborhoods, in the Case Nuove<sup>19</sup> area, in the area between Via Oronzio Costa, Via Carbonara, Largo Donnaregina<sup>20</sup> and in the Poggioreale neighborhood (in particular, in the area of Rione Sant'Alfonso and Rione Luzzatti where it coexists with the CONTINI *clan* of the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE). Other groups linked to the

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<sup>13</sup> On **March 27, 2023**, after a detention of more than 25 years, a person of high criminal standing believed to be a trusted man of the CONTINI *clan*'s upper echelons returned to freedom.

<sup>14</sup> OCC no. 28398/19 RGNR, no. 5003/2021 RG GIP and no. 405/2022 ROC issued on November 24, 2022, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>15</sup> OCC no. 19618/20 RGNR, no. 19162/21 RG GIP and no. 66/23 ROCC issued on **February 28, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>16</sup> In this regard, it should be noted the release on April 14, 2022, of a former head of the GIULIANO *clan* who, after a long detention, returned to Forcella.

<sup>17</sup> Area under the control of the FERRAIUOLO *gruppo*, federated with the MAZZARELLA *clan*, whose apex exponent was convicted by OCC no. 28398/2019 and no. 5003/2021 RG GIP and 405/2022 RMC issued by the Court of Naples and executed by the State Police on December 5, 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Area under the direct control of members of the MAZZARELLA *famiglia*.

<sup>19</sup> The CALDARELLI *gruppo*, an ally of the MAZZARELLA *clan*, is present in the area. In this regard, it should be noted that in July 2022 a member of the CALDARELLI *gruppo* was inspected in Forio d'Ischia in the company of an apex member of the MAZZARELLA *clan* before the latter's arrest in December 2022.

<sup>20</sup> With the BUONERBA *gruppo*.

MAZZARELLA<sup>21</sup> are reportedly active in the areas of Università, Santa Chiara, Piazza Bovio and Rua Catalana, as well as in the Pallonetto area of Santa Lucia<sup>22</sup>.

Finally, the control of illegal activities in Rione Sanità<sup>23</sup> (Stella neighborhood), as also found in other areas, would be divided between criminal groups alternately headed by the MAZZARELLA *clan* or the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE.

The area of S. Erasmo (in the district of Zona industriale) remains under the influence of the MONTESCURO *famiglia*, whose historical leader died in January 2023. In the area of the Quartieri Spagnoli (between the San Ferdinando district and Montecalvario), that in the past was under the hegemony of the MARIANO *clan*<sup>24</sup> (so-called “*Picuozzì*”). A recent investigation<sup>25</sup>, concluded on **May 29, 2023** by the National Police and the Carabinieri, has revealed a new formation of a criminal cluster with a hierarchical structure called PARANZA DEI QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI (or SISTEMA DEI QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI), composed of the ESPOSITO, MASIELLO and SALTALAMACCHIA *famiglie*. This new formation has been described by the GIP as a “... *criminal association operating in the city area called the Quartieri Spagnoli...that revolves around the sphere of influence, the direction and the control of the criminal cartels denominated SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE and MAZZARELLA, hegemonic in the metropolitan areas of Naples*”<sup>26</sup>.

The operation led to the arrest of 53 people, accused not only of criminal association, trafficking and narcotics’ dealing, attempted homicide, extortion, receiving of stolen goods, illicit carrying and possession of a firearm, damaging and other crimes, aggravated by the Mafia method, as well as the requisition of cash and valuables worth thousands of euros. The narcotics’ dealing happened via home delivery, especially in the *lockdown* period, usually employing underaged *pushers*. The investigation, based also on the declarations of numerous informants, has equally concerned the FURGHIERO *gruppo* who was in charge of the management of the open-air drug market “*Della sposa*”, considered the most profitable of the area. The *gruppo* had to pay a quota of the profit to

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<sup>21</sup> TRONGONE *gruppo*, a historical antagonist of the PRINNO.

<sup>22</sup> Some direct members of the MAZZARELLA *famiglia*, who recently returned to freedom, are allegedly domiciled here.

<sup>23</sup> With the SEQUINO and SAVARESE criminal groups. Other criminal gangs are also present in Rione Sanità: the VASTARELLA and the MAURO gravitating, however, in the sphere of influence of the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE.

<sup>24</sup> Until the arrest, which happened in September 2015 and the decision to collaborate with justice of the last significant member of the *clan*.

<sup>25</sup> No. 14383/2019 RGNR, no. 8672/2022 RG GIP and no. 125/2023 RMC, issued on **April 22, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>26</sup> Provisional law (on page 5) no. 14383/2019 RGNR, no. 8672/2022 RG GIP and no. 125/2023 RMC, issued on **April 22, 2023** by the Court of Naples.

the PARANZA DEI QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI.

Moreover, from the investigation it resulted the attempt made by the PARANZA DEI QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI to infiltrate into the cleaning enterprises' sector operating in the Ospedale dei Pellegrini (hospital site), that falls within its sphere of influence, for the buying and selling of job roles.

Another circumstance resulted from the investigation concerns the mediation exercised by the SALTALAMACCHIA *famiglia* to control the reactions of the RUSSO *famiglia* after the death of one of its members, killed by an off-duty member of the National Police who was trying to defend himself from an attempted robbery. Some persons close to the victim carried out a “*stesa*” (violent act of intimidation consisting of speeding through the streets of certain city areas on scooters, shooting all around, forcing people to lie on the ground) in front of the Comando Provinciale dei Carabinieri site. Following the “*stesa*”, an apical exponent of the SALTALAMACCHIA *gruppo*, fearing the intensification of the Law enforcement defense units that would have caused repercussions on the illicit affairs, has allegedly pressured the perpetrators so that they would turn themselves in.

The investigation illustrated above has implicated the reshaping of the mentioned new formation of the *Camorra*, creating a power vacuum that, in an already fragmented criminal context, could evolve into tensions and collisions in search of a new equilibrium for the control of the illicit activities in the concerned territory. As a matter of fact, here, other criminal groups persist, the majority of which has a familial dimension, that can count on numerous free exponents like RICCI-D'AMICO, alias “*e Fraulella*”, the ROMANO *famiglia* (allied with the VASTARELLA della Sanità) and the *fellowship* of the MAZZANTI. Each of them is active in the management of their illicit trafficking, even if only in an area of a few hundred meters, consisting of small portions of roads.

In the neighboring zone denominated Cavone di Piazza Dante (in the vicinity of Via Francesco Saverio Correrà) the LEPRE *famiglia*, a solidarity with a predominantly family composition active in drug dealing and extortions, continues to operate. In June, 2022 the *famiglia* was the subject of important intelligence-led policing activities that caused its downsizing with the arrest of numerous apical exponents.

Concerning the districts of Chiaia and San Ferdinando, no substantial news emerges in comparison with the past. The area is characterized by the presence of numerous commercial, accommodation and logistics activities and by the influx of tourists: all factors that make it attractive to criminal groups (devoted mainly to extortion activities).

In the semester under review, the coastline of Chiaia, which is a famous nightlife area, has been

the scene of some serious incidents, including two homicides of a Mafia matrix. The first happened on **March 12, 2023** to the detriment of a young person with a criminal record believed to be “close” to groups operating in the Pianura district (western area of Naples). The victim, who had already survived a Mafia ambush in August, 2022, was shot by numerous gunshots while driving in his car in via Mergellina and died after a few days in the hospital for the serious injuries sustained. The second episode happened during the night of **March, 20, 2023** in the vicinity of a beach establishment on the same seafront and it held a wide media appeal for the young age of the protagonists, just barely of age, for the modalities and for the causing circumstances of the argument whence the homicide originated: the designer shoes that the perpetrator of the homicide was wearing, were trampled on, perhaps unintentionally, by another subject. According to the investigative reconstruction made by the National Police – that led on the following day to the execution of an arrest warrant<sup>27</sup> for the individual allegedly responsible for the accusation of homicide aggravated by trivial reasons and by the Mafia method, as well as illicit carrying and possession of a firearm –, the initial episode would have provoked the clash between the two groups of young people. During the clash one youth, the one whose shoes were trampled on, pulled out a gun and fired various gunshots at the rivals, heedless of the crowd in attendance, fatally striking a third young person totally unrelated to the affair.

Actually, the mentioned homicide is read by the Judicial Authority in a far more complex way. In particular, in the provisional law, the Italian Public Prosecutor’s Office includes what happened in that night in the scope of *“a long trail of incidents of violence that are repeated with almost daily frequency and show how there is an alarming transposition of oppositions between criminal groups, to which the protagonists belong, from the home territories to the city center. Young people belonging to the Camorra famiglie meet, armed, in a neutral territory and assume swaggering and prevaricating attitudes toward other groups ready to take up the challenge issued even for futile reasons... carrying out their bloody conduct in contexts where the risk of involving innocent people is placed second to the criminal intentions of the same organizations...the initial quarrel, which occurred for trivial reasons, was nothing more than a pretext to retaliate by demonstrating one’s strength stemming from membership in a Camorra organization”*<sup>28</sup>. The protagonists of the initial quarrel, are linked, in fact, to notorious criminal contexts: the author of the homicide has kinship ties with the CUCCARO-APREA *clan*, operating in the Barra district, in the eastern zone of the

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<sup>27</sup> Arrest warrant order no. 7454/23 RGNR issued on **March 21, 2023** by the Naples-based Public Prosecutor of the Italian Republic and performed on the same day by the National Police against a boy having kinship ties with exponents of the CUCCARO-APREA *clan*, operating in the Barra district.

<sup>28</sup> Provisional law (on page 20) no.14383/2023 RGNR, issued on **March 21, 2023** by the Naples-based Public Prosecutor of the Italian Republic.

city, whereas the rival group is linked to the CALONE-MARSICANO-ESPOSITO *fellowship* operating in the western district of Pianura.

Still in the Chiaia district, the zone of the so-called Torretta di Mergellina continues to stay under the criminal control of the PICCIRILLO, FRIZZIERO and STRAZZULLO *fellowships*, historically “close” to the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE that extends its influence in the residential district of Posillipo via the CALONE *famiglia*<sup>29</sup>. On **June 14, 2023**, the area was concerned by a petitioned order<sup>30</sup> issued by the Carabinieri against an exponent of the PICCIRILLO *gruppo*, accused of personal injuries and tempted extortion, compounded by the criminal method, to the detriment of the owner of an apartment in the Mergellina zone. They would have imposed on the owner to meet a demand for money and the duty to rent his apartment to the son of a leader exponent of the *clan*. From the provisional law, it results that the PICCIRILLO *clan* is used to making extortionary demands “to all of Torretta di Mergellina, both those who own commercial activities like restaurants and moorings, and the residents, entering any business in the area...”<sup>31</sup>.

**Naples - Northern Area** (*Scampia, Secondigliano, Miano, Piscinola, San Pietro a Patierno, Chiaiano, Vomero and Arenella districts*).

At this point, it is known that in the past the northern districts have been the stage of bloody fights (*faide di Scampia*) between different *fellowships* of the *Camorra* united under the hegemony of the DI LAURO *clan* first, then they became autonomous after different scissions. The juxtaposition initially emerged inside the mentioned *clan* and then, between the same *gruppi* that together constituted the so-called “*Cartello Scissionista*” (or “*Spagnoli*”), composed by the AMATO-PAGANO, VANELLA GRASSI, LEONARDI, MARINO, ABETE, ABBINANTE and NOTTURNO *famiglie*. Because of the equilibria of today, in the Secondigliano district the efficiency of the LICCIARDI *clan*<sup>32</sup> persists, despite the imprisonment of the top brass of the *famiglia*, whose last free exponent was arrested<sup>33</sup> by the Carabinieri in August 2021 at the Ciampino airport (Rome). The mentioned *fellowship* exerts its criminal influence in the historic stronghold of the so-called Masseria Cardone, in Rione Berlingieri, in Rione Kennedy (zones of the Secondigliano district) and in Rione Don Guanella (district of Scampia) where the control of the illicit activities is bestowed to trusted referents. The illicit interests of the LICCIARDI *clan*, indeed,

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<sup>29</sup> Historically linked to the LICCIARDI clan of Secondigliano.

<sup>30</sup> No. 11026/2023 RGNR, no. 11030/2023 RGGIP and no. 167/2023 ROCC issued on **June 6, 2023** by the Court of Naples.

<sup>31</sup> Provisional law (on page 4) no. 11026/2023 RGNR, no. 11030/2023 RGGIP and no. 167/2023 ROCC, issued on **June 6, 2023** by the Court of Naples.

<sup>32</sup> One of the three *clans* that compose the *cartel* of the *Camorra* called SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE.

<sup>33</sup> Arrest warrant for a suspect of crime no. 26550/2021 RGNR, issued on August 7, 2021 by the DDA of Naples.

extend to other areas of the regional capital of Campania, and other regions of Italy (mainly Lazio and Lombardy) and abroad (Spain, the former Czech Republic, Germany and Canada) due to its affinity to the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE. In the semester under review, it is important to highlight the arrest of a high standing exponent of the LICCIARDI *clan*, who had taken over the regency of the *fellowship* following the arrest, in 2021, of the last free representative of the mentioned *famiglia*. The restrictive order<sup>34</sup> was executed on **May 17, 2023** by the Carabinieri and it involved other affiliates, who were involved in the 2013 homicide of a member of the *clan*, who was punished for having had an affair with the daughter-in-law of the historical leader and to have disclosed another extramarital relationship of the woman with a third subject, creating a scandal and embarrassment for the *famiglia*. However, the clan can still count on other remarkable exponents, three of whom recently were freed after the atonement for their crimes.

During the night of **May 19, 2023**, in Rione Berlingieri of Secondigliano, a sequence of bloody incidents occurred that could imply in an alteration of the criminal equilibria in the area. In particular, two individuals, one of whom is believed to be close to the CARELLA *gruppo* (a referent of the LICCIARDI *clan* in Rione Berlingieri) were victims of an assault with a stabbing weapon. One of the two individuals died in the hospital a few days later because of the serious injuries sustained. On the same day, in a street of Rione Berlingieri, another individual suffered mild injuries by three people with a blade. On May, 19, 2023, the National Police intervened at the ER of the Cardarelli hospital site for a person who was shot in the leg. The habitual offender reported that he was the victim of an attempted robbery perpetrated by six unknown people, while he was in Casavatore (Municipality adjacent to Rione Berlingieri). It cannot be excluded that the three episodes, for which the investigation is still ongoing, are correlated.

Another historical *clan* of Secondigliano (which is active in the so-called *Terzo Mondo* area), with interests in the trafficking and dealing of and narcotics, is the mentioned DI LAURO *clan* which, even if it has been deeply downsized after the detention and the death of some of its apical exponents, can still count on, among the numerous children of the historical leader and some liable people, the presence of numerous free exponents<sup>35</sup>.

In the district of San Pietro a Patierno and in some residential lots in the district of Scampia (in particular in the “G” lot) the VANELLA-GRASSI *clan* (named after the street where it comes from) is operative. The latter has originated from the PETRICCIONE *famiglia* and it gradually assumed a confederate structure with the adhesion of the ANGRISANO, MAGNETTI and

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<sup>34</sup> No. 26550/20 RGNR, no. 19498/21 RGGIP and no. 127/23 OCC, issued on **April 27, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>35</sup> The historical leader of the clan and two of his numerous children are imprisoned. Another son, believed to be the most violent, died in prison due to natural causes in June, 2022, while the other 4 children are, at present, free.

MENNETTA *gruppi*. Its illicit interests concern extortion and the narcotics sector. Over the past few years, the *clan* has been the subject of important intelligence-led policing activities that have led to the apprehension of the majority of its apical exponents. In the current state of affairs, the *fellowship* relies on an exponent of the ANGRISANO *gruppo*, fugitive at present, as he escaped the execution of an arrest warrant<sup>36</sup> issued on July 5, 2022 by the Public Prosecutor of the Italian Republic based in the Naples' Court of Appeal.

The zone of the so-called *Case Celesti* (the “Light blue houses” in the district of Secondigliano) persist under the influence of the MARINO *clan*<sup>37</sup>, even though in the past few years the latter has been greatly weakened by different restricting measures that have led to the arrest of many of its significant members.

In the district of Scampia numerous criminal groups coexist, whose illicit interests mainly concern the narcotics sector (the management of the numerous open-air drug markets of the territory). Even though the groups have gone through periods of heated dispute, they currently appear to be in peaceful coexistence. The most active *fellowships*, although subject of constant enforcement actions, still appear to be the ABBINATE (in the so-called Vele, in various lots and in Rione Monterosa), the NOTTURNO, the VANELLA-GRASSI *gruppo*, the SACCO *famiglia* (in the “T” Lot of Scampia) and the AMATO-PAGANO *clan*. The latter is represented by the RAIA *famiglia*, whose apical exponent was freed on **February 17, 2023**.

In the districts of Miano, Chiaiano, Piscinola and in the zone of Marianella, that have been in the past the scene of some serious incidents and homicides<sup>38</sup>, the current criminal arrangements remain highly fragmented. The constant intelligence-led policing activities and the decision of some high-standing exponents of local crime to cooperate have led to the unraveling of the historical LO RUSSO (*Capitoni*) *clan* first, and then of the subgroups ABBASC' MIANO<sup>39</sup> and 'NCOPP MIANO<sup>40</sup> that had tried to impose a new leadership for the management of the illicit activities in the territory.

The recent release from prison of an apical exponent of the LO RUSSO *clan* could, however, affect the current criminal underworld dynamics that are still characterized by a heated dispute<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> No. 1088/22 SIEP of July 5, 2022

<sup>37</sup> Whose leader is still imprisoned.

<sup>38</sup> The most resounding was that of the brother-in-law of the historical leader of the LO RUSSO *clan*, which happened in Milan on November 11, 2022.

<sup>39</sup> That report to the BALZANO, D'ERRICO and SCARPELLINI *famiglie*, whose apical figures have been arrested by the Operative Center of DIA on February 7, 2020, in execution of the provisional law no. 5797/2018 RGNR, 12203/2019 RGGIP and OCC no. 58/2020, issued on **February 2, 2020**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>40</sup> Attributable to the CIFRONE *famiglia*, whose leading exponents are still imprisoned.

<sup>41</sup> On May 28, 2023, in the Miano district, unknown people committed a *stesa*, firing numerous gunshots against a building where the relatives of a person with a criminal record now imprisoned for being guilty by association reside. On May



In the district of Chiaiano and in Marianella, the current climate of instability is further fueled by the expansionist aims of other criminal *fellowships*, like the ROSELLI one, articulation of the AMATO-PAGANO *clan* (active in the district of Scampia), that is interested in the control of Marianella<sup>42</sup>. In the same territory, it is important to notice the presence of the SCOGNAMIGLIO *famiglia*, that has always been an ally of the LO RUSSO *clan*, whose apical elements are at present restricted to their own house and compound in the same Rione.

Regarding the LO RUSSO *clan*, on **March, 13, 2023**, the Carabinieri executed an arrest warrant<sup>43</sup> to two brothers, believed to be historical affiliates of the *clan*, accused of homicide compounded by the criminal method, which took place in Chiaiano, during the celebration for the Italian national soccer team's victory in July, 2006. The victim, the brother of a prominent exponent of a rival *clan* of the *Camorra*, would have been murdered because he was responsible for having hit the younger brother of the two apprehended with a flagpole.

In the hilly districts of the Vomero, of the Arenella and of the **hospital site zone**, already under the influence of the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE by means of the CIMMINO *gruppo*, the arrest of the leader of the latter *fellowship*<sup>44</sup> took place in October 2021, and his decision to collaborate with justice **would suggest a reshaping of the assets and the configuration of new criminal scenarios**.

**Naples - Eastern Area** (*S. Giovanni a Teduccio, Barra and Ponticelli districts*).

The eastern districts of the city are characterized by the presence of a multitude of criminal groups that are part of the sphere of influence of two *Camorra* macro-*cartels* of the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE, that is the MAZZARELLA *clan*, that coexist in a state of heated dispute, even with particularly violent demonstrations. The illicit interests pursued by these Criminal *gruppi* mainly concern the extortion and the narcotics' sector, as well as the reuse of money of illicit origin in the sector of the trade and the distribution of hydrocarbons.

In the **San Giovanni a Teduccio** district, in particular, on **February, 7, 2023**, the Carabinieri executed another custody warrant<sup>45</sup> from which the continued operation of the D'AMICO *clan*, traceable back to the sphere of influence of the MAZZARELLA *clan*, would emerge. The investigation led to the arrest of 24 individuals attributable to the mentioned *Camorra gruppo*,

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28, 2023, in the Chiaiano district, following up on an unknown report, the National Police executed a search of an abandoned building where numerous firearms and their ammunition were found.

<sup>42</sup> As highlighted in the outcome of the criminal proceeding no. 15586/20 RGNR.

<sup>43</sup> No. 29520/21 RGNR, no. 1670/22 RGGIP and no. 77/23 RMC, issued on **March 8, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>44</sup> OCC no. 26182/18 RGNR, no. 24127/18 RGGIP and no. 331/2021 ROC, issued **November 24, 2022**, by the Court of Naples and executed by the National Police on **October, 22, 2023**.

<sup>45</sup> No. 10891/2019 RGNR - 9684/2022 RG GIP - 20/2023 ROCC.

accused of Mafia association, extortion, use of money, goods or utilities of illicit origin, possession and traffic of narcotics. Apart from the direct members of the D'AMICO *famiglia*, among the addressees of the measure there are other particularly unscrupulous affiliates to the *fellowships* who allegedly engaged in a number of shootings against members of the rival RINALDI, REALE and FORMICOLA *gruppi*, that report to the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE and operating in the same territory. On the same territory the SILENZIO *clan* is also present. This *clan* belonged to the FORMICOLA *clan*, which later became antagonistic to it, and against whom a number of intimidating acts were allegedly carried out during the six-month period under review. In particular, some individuals attributable to the MAZZARELLA *clan*, threw some Molotov cocktails that destroyed some parked vehicles in via Alveo Artificiale, the zone under the control of the SILENZIO *clan*.

In the **Barra district** it is confirmed the operativeness of the *Camorra fellowship* composed of the CUCCARO and APREA *famiglie*, connected also by kinship ties. These *famiglie* are characterized by their high military capability and considerable availability of weapons, as well as by their illicit interests in extortion and the control of the local open-air drug markets. In the semester under review, a renewed criminal activism by young scions belonging to the aforementioned *fellowship* emerged. To the latter would, in fact, be attributable the author of the homicide which took place during the night of **March, 20, 2023**, near a beach establishment on the seafront of Mergellina, arisen by a dispute over stepping on a shoe and culminating with the killing of a young person totally unrelated to the sequence of events. On the same seafront, on **February 19**, the Carabinieri had caught *in flagrante delicto* 4 young people with criminal records attributable to the APREA *gruppo*, among whom was present the son of a prominent exponent of the latter, responsible for possession of weapons, use of force or threats against a public official and receiving stolen goods. The episode that took place on **June 23, 2023**, the wounding of the son of the *boss* of the APREA *clan*, now imprisoned, is indicative of internal friction and could have repercussions on the criminal balance in the neighborhood. The victim, who at the time entertained himself in a social club of the zone, would have been injured on a hand and a shoulder by gunshots fired by unknown people on a scooter.

The **Ponticelli district** is characterized by the historical rivalry between the *Camorra* DE MICCO-DE MARTINO and DE LUCA BOSSA-MINICHINI-CASELLA *associations*, that in the past has already caused violent conflicts for the dispute of the control of extortions and local open-air drug markets. The DE LUCA BOSSA-MINICHINI-CASELLA *clan* was the recipient of a pretrial

detention order<sup>46</sup> implemented on **January 16, 2023** by the Carabinieri that has considerably undermined its structure with the arrest of several apical members and affiliates, charged with illicit possession of firearms and explosives, receiving, possession and distribution of narcotics, all aggravated by Mafia methods and purposes. The investigation, in particular, has shed light on some acts of intimidation<sup>47</sup> implemented by members of the DE LUCA BOSSA *clan* against members of the DE MICCO *clan* in July 2022. Among the recipients of this measure is an heir of the boss of the MARFELLA *clan*, active in the western Pianura district. This circumstance has led to the existence of a joint interest between the latter *gruppo* of the criminal organization and the Ponticelli district's DE LUCA BOSSA *clan*.

The DE LUCA BOSSA-MINICHINI *clan* appears to be going through a difficult time also due to the attacks from the DE MICCO-DE MARTINO *clan*, which has more members and has restored its strength thanks to the recent release of some of its prominent figures. This context can be attributed to 3 murders and 1 “*stesa*”<sup>48</sup> executed during the semester under review in the Ponticelli territory, where the evident instability of the criminal balance could induce the *clans* to look for a reconfiguration.

This assumption has been confirmed in the operation concluded by the State Police and Carabinieri on August 9, 2023 with the implementation of a pretrial detention order<sup>49</sup> against 9 people, charged with attempted extortion and illicit possession of firearms, aggravated by Mafia methods and purposes. From the investigation, in particular, the existence of a cooperation pact between some *gruppi* of the criminal organization has emerged. The Judge in charge of preliminary investigations (GIP) described the situation as “...*what appears to be the embryo of a new criminal “cartel” - composed, at present, of members of the APREA, DE MARTINO-DE MICCO and MAZZARELLA*

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<sup>46</sup> No. 25410/2022 RGNR - 21997/2022 RG GIP - 11/2023 OCC issued on **January 10, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>47</sup> On July 23, 2022, a device blew up the vehicle owned by the wife of a leading figure of the DE MICCO *clan*. The explosion damaged the windows of several houses and other vehicles parked nearby. On the same date, another device blew up in a street inside the area of influence of the DE MICCO *clan*, causing other parked vehicles to be damaged.

<sup>48</sup> On **February 6, 2023**, in the Ponticelli district, a person with a criminal record, related to an individual believed to be close to the DE MICCO *clan*, was fatally shot with multiple gunshots while he was driving his own vehicle. On **April 3, 2023**, in the Ponticelli district, unknown people shot to death a historical member of the DE LUCA BOSSA *clan* while he was riding a scooter. On **May 4, 2023**, during the celebration of Naples' victory of the football championship, unknown people shot to death an affiliate of the D'AMICO *clan* while he was celebrating with some friends close to a bar in Volturmo Square. In that circumstance, 3 other customers were injured in a non-serious way. On **May 6, 2023**, in the same Volturmo Square, 4 individuals riding 2 scooters fired multiple gunshots for intimidation purposes. The State Police was able to intercept and arrest 2 of the perpetrators of the “*stesa*” after a long chase.

<sup>49</sup> No. 13507/2023 RGNR, no. 14294/2023 RGGIP and no.240/2023 ROCC issued on **July 27, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

clan” without ruling out that the same “...could impose itself on the territory triggering additional acts of violence...”<sup>50</sup>.

#### **Naples - Western Area** (*Bagnoli, Fuorigrotta, Soccavo and Pianura* districts).

The districts of the western area of Naples are also characterized by the presence of multiple *gruppi* of the *Camorra* criminal organization with a predominantly family-based composition, whose main sources of profit are represented by extortion and selling of narcotic drugs. These *associations* compete for the control of the territory and do not hesitate to take advantage of difficult times of rival *clans*, made objects of the law enforcement activities of the Police forces, in order to expand their sphere of criminal influence, even using violence.

In the Bagnoli district, the ESPOSITO *clan*, whose promoter was recently released, appears to be prominent compared to the D'AUSILIO *clan*, that was significantly weakened by the ongoing detention of its most charismatic exponents. On **April 8, 2023**, the State Police arrested *in flagrante delicto* the son of ESPOSITO *clan*'s boss on charges of receiving, resisting and attacking a law enforcement officer.

In the Pianura district, the ESPOSITO-CALONE-MARSICANO *clan* and the CARILLO-PERFETTO<sup>51</sup> *clan* coexist in relationships of heated conflict, and the latter one is the direct expression and heir of the old MARFELLA-PESCE *clan*. The two *clans* present at the moment, both under the sphere of influence of the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE, compete, even violently, for the management of lucrative local open-air drug markets. The ongoing hostility between the two factions, that has already caused multiple injuries and acts of violence in the past, could be the cause of the homicide carried out on **March 12, 2023** of an individual considered to be close to the CALONE-MARSICANO-ESPOSITO *clan*. The person was shot by unknown people with multiple gunshots while he was driving his own vehicle on the Mergellina seaside. However, investigations are still ongoing and there are no elements to support that hypothesis.

The TRONCONE and BARATTO-VOLPE-IADONISI *clans* that are in a conflicting relationship appear to be operative in the Fuorigrotta district. The TRONCONE *gruppo*, however, in the last few years has taken a dominant role by taking advantage of the detention of the leading members of the

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<sup>50</sup> Excerpt of the provision (page 5) no. 13507/2023 RGNR, no. 14294/2023 RGGIP and no. 240/2023 ROCC issued on **July 27, 2023** by the Court of Naples.

<sup>51</sup> On **February 17, 2023**, a leading member of the CARILLO-PERFETTO *clan* was released with the replacement of the pretrial detention measure by house arrest.

rival *association*. The tense atmosphere between the two above-mentioned criminal organizations is still present and can be attributed to the “*stesa*” executed on **June 25, 2023** with the explosion of multiple gunshots towards the house of a leading member of the TRONCONE *gruppo* shot by an unknown person riding a scooter.

Moreover, recent intelligence-led policing has confirmed in the Fuorigrotta district the presence of the GIANNELLI *clan*, whose operational base appears to be in the Agnano hamlet and in Rione Cavalleggeri d’Aosta. The above-mentioned *Camorra gruppo*, already affected in the past by restrictive measures against multiple members, was the object of an investigation carried out by State Police and Penitentiary Police on **July 18, 2023** that led to the implementation of a pretrial detention order<sup>52</sup> against 8 affiliates, charged with Mafia association, illicit possession and carrying of firearms, possession of narcotic drugs, damage, arson and unauthorized access to devices suited for communicating with incarcerated individuals. In particular, the investigation has shown that the *boss* of the *clan*, although imprisoned, kept giving orders to a group of loyalists still active on the territory through a mobile phone illegally brought inside the prison facility. The investigation has also detected the GIANNELLI *clan*’s attempt to expand opposed to the ESPOSITO *clan* of the adjacent Bagnoli district and to the CALONE-ESPOSITO-MARSICANO *gruppo* of the Pianura district, from whom a series of acts of intimidation originated. At the peak of these acts, some eminent members of the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE carried out an attempt to mediate the parties.

The Soccavo district is marked by the historical antagonism between the VIGILIA and GRIMALDI-SCOGNAMILLO *clans* for the control of the illicit activities in the territory, which in the past had initiated multiple acts of violence. Lastly, the murder of an individual believed to be close to the VIGILIA *clan* that took place on **March 3, 2023**. The victim’s body was found with multiple gunshot wounds in a peripheral street of the adjacent Pianura district. The heated conflict and the military capacity of the above-mentioned criminal *gruppi* is further confirmed by the arrest *in flagrante delicto* of a leading member of the GRIMALDI-SCOGNAMILLO *clan* carried out by the State Police on **February 16, 2023** on charges of illicit possession and carrying and receiving of firearms. As a matter of fact, at the time of the arrest, the individual armed with a gun was traveling in his own vehicle with other 4 people, one of whom was wearing a bulletproof vest.

Rione Traiano, situated between the Soccavo and the Fuorigrotta districts, is one of the most important bases for the supply and dealing of narcotics. In the area, the SORIANIELLO, PUCCINELLI-PETRONE and CUTOLO *gruppi* continue to operate, the latter of which is weakened

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<sup>52</sup> No. 3514/2022 RGNR, no. 1948/2023 RGGIP and no. 218/2023 ROCC.

by the recent choice of one of its apical members to cooperate with judicial authorities. The SORIANIELLO *gruppo* at the moment appears to be the main criminal *gruppo* active on the territory.

**Western province** (*Pozzuoli, Quarto, Bacoli, Monte di Procida, Ischia and Procida*).

The Municipalities of the western province of Naples, surrounding the gulf of Pozzuoli, are characterized by the presence of numerous businesses and harbor infrastructures that have always aroused the interest of criminal groups. The territory in question has historically been under the criminal influence of the LONGOBARDI-BENEDUCE *clan*. Its evolution was defined by multiple judicial measures<sup>53</sup> from where, among other things, the extreme and constant instability of its internal balance has emerged. The *clan*, which was the object of much intense intelligence-led policing, survived thanks to the management of charismatic members that escaped their arrests and that have each time reorganized the *clan* with free affiliates and new recruits from Pozzuoli organized crime. The illicit interests have always concerned the trafficking and the detailed supply of narcotic drugs in those local open-air drug markets, usury and extortion at the expense of business owners, construction entrepreneurs and activities of unofficial car-park attendants.

The aforementioned instability of the balance has often manifested itself through acts of violence without causing a definitive fracture between the different parts of the organization. In fact, the *clan* is allegedly still cohesive, despite the choice made by some affiliates to cooperate with judicial authorities, and it continues to exercise the control of illicit activities in the territory.

During the semester under review, the release from prison, after a long detention, of two leading members of the LONGOBARDI-BENEDUCE *clan* has been registered, one of whom is the son of one the historical bosses.

On **March 10, 2023**, the State Police implemented an arrest warrant issued by the Public Prosecutor at the Court of Naples against an affiliate to the LONGOBARDI-BENEDUCE *clan*. He was held responsible for the murder, aggravated by Mafia-style methods, of another member of the *association*,

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<sup>53</sup> The evolution and structure of the faction are described in the judgment no. 1132/18 RGNR issued on July 9, 2018, by the examining magistrate (GUP) of the Court of Naples. This judgment was issued at the expense of multiple members of the clan in relation to article 416a and other crimes aggravated by the Mafia-style methods (Criminal procedure no. 16727/11 RGNR and operative part of the judgment no. 3421/20 of June 15, 2020 Reg. App. no. 2452/19), and to the judgment no. 7044/20 and no. 15740/2017 RGDIB issued by the Court of Naples on November 6, 2020 (also related to the Criminal procedure no. 16727/11 RGNR) at the expense of other members of the above-mentioned association.

which occurred in 2008 in “Rione Toiano”, as part of the internal conflicts for the control of the illegal business in the Pozzuoli area.

The LONGOBARDI-BENEDUCE *clan* extends its influence also to the Municipality of Quarto Flegreo (Naples) through the organization called ALA QUARTESE<sup>54</sup> (or AMICI DEL BIVIO). In the semester under review, there is the recent release from prison of 4 leading figures of the association; as a result, a restructuring of the internal balance cannot be ruled out.

**In the Municipalities of Bacoli (Naples) and Monte di Procida (Naples)** there are no new elements as opposed to the previous semester.

**Western province** (*Acerra, Afragola, Arzano, Caivano, Cardito, Casalnuovo, Casandrino, Casavatore, Casoria, Crispano, Frattamaggiore, Frattaminore, Giugliano in Campania, Grumo Nevano, Marano di Napoli, Melito, Mugnano di Napoli, Qualiano, Sant’Antimo, Villaricca, Volla*)

The territories of the Municipalities of the western *hinterland* of Naples are characterized by the presence of multiple *gruppi* of the *Camorra clan*. They are militarily hardened and equipped with a significant amount of weapons. At the same time, they are capable of pursuing more silent criminal strategies oriented toward the infiltration of the legitimate economy and to the subjugation of the Public Administration in order to direct its choices in favor of the criminal organizations. The heated rivalry between the *associations*, which are always ready to establish their own supremacy over their rivals, makes the balance very unstable and variable.

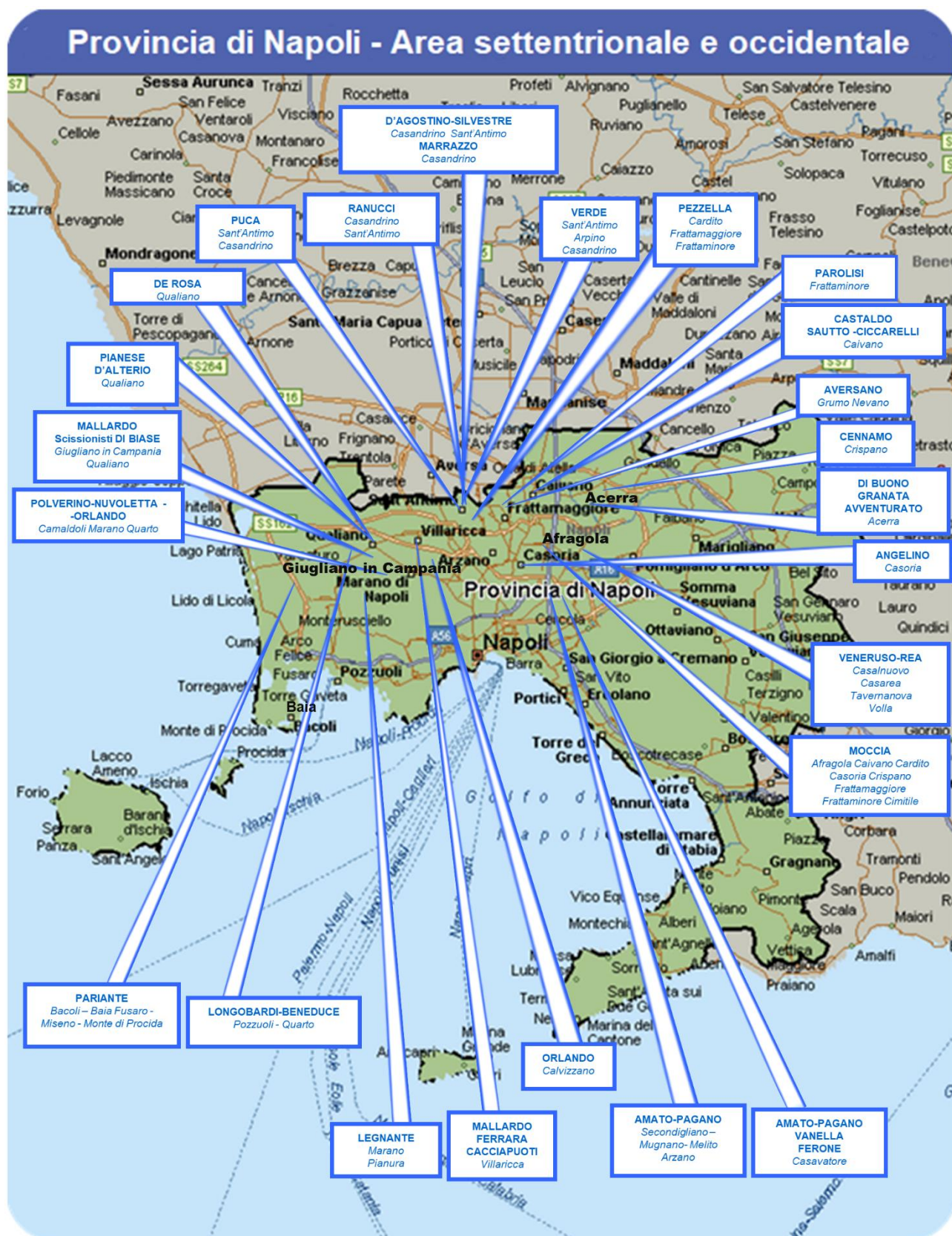
In the Municipality of **Acerra**, recent intelligence-led policing allegedly confirmed the presence of the ANDRETTA, AVVENTURATO, DI BUONO and TEDESCO *gruppi*. In particular, on **January 18, 2023**, the Carabinieri implemented the provisional arrest of crime suspects<sup>55</sup> of 2 apical members of the ANDRETTA *clan*, respectively father and son, both charged with attempted aggravated murder, extortion, carrying and possession of weapons and narcotic drugs trafficking.

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<sup>54</sup> Its head is currently detained.

<sup>55</sup> No. 24842/2021 RGNR issued on **January 13, 2023**, by the District Attorney’s Office of Naples. On **January 20, 2023**, the Court of Nola (Naples) validated the arrest and issued the pretrial detention order no. 65/2023 RGNR and no. 331/2023 RGGIP against the suspects.





Title: Province of Naples – western and northern areas



The first individual, who was released after a long detention, has allegedly once again taken on the role of *boss* of the criminal *gruppo* making a series of extortion requests to a construction company and managing a local open-air drug market<sup>56</sup>.

During the semester under review, the intelligence-led policing also damaged the AVVENTURATO *gruppo* on **April 3, 2023** with the implementation of a pretrial detention order<sup>57</sup> issued by the Carabinieri against 3 suspects ascribable to the above-mentioned *association*. They were charged with Mafia-type association and conspiracy to murder aggravated by the purpose of favoring the AVVENTURATO *gruppo* of the *Camorra clan*. The 3 suspects allegedly commissioned and obtained the weapons for the murder of a rival *boss* that occurred in Acerra on May 20, 2020, whose executors had already been arrested in a previous policing operation.

The mentioned instability of the criminal balance in the territory of Acerra appears to be further confirmed by the ambush set up on June 1, 2023 to a leading member of the DI BUONO *famiglia* who remained unharmed. Unknown people fired multiple gunshots towards him while he was together with another person in a street of the city center.

In the Municipality of **Afragola**, the supremacy of the MOCCIA *clan* has been judicially verified, even though, in the last few years, it was the object of multiple law-enforcement actions that led to the conviction of many bosses and followers, some of which became individuals who cooperated with the judicial process. **The above-mentioned clan represents** a sizable criminal group (for the number of affiliates and the extent of the supervised territory), also active in other Municipalities of the western *hinterland* of Naples through referring *gruppi*. Each *gruppo* has its own autonomy and territorial jurisdiction, and together with the *clan*, have taken a confederative form.

In this regard, it is helpful to quote what the GIP stated in the pretrial detention order<sup>58</sup> related to the “*Leviathan*” operation concluded in 2018 by the DIA of Naples. In the pretrial detention order the association is described “*as an aggregate of numerous local criminal groups. Each of them is led by*

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<sup>56</sup> The investigation documented, among other things, the ability of the criminal group to earn, during a religious procession organized on January 30, 2022, in the Municipality of Acerra, the so-called “*Mafia-style bow*” of the *fercolo*, arranged by the head’s son to pay tribute to his father.

<sup>57</sup> OCC no. 8151/2021 RGNR, no. 3754/2022 RGGIP and no. 91/2023 ROCC issued on **March 21, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>58</sup> On January 23, 2018 the Operation Center of the DIA of Naples, the State Police, the Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza, in the context of the “*Leviathan*” operation, implemented the pretrial detention order no. 30350/2013 RGNR, no. 18835/2016 RGGIP and no. 5/2018 RMC, issued on January 05, 2018 by the GIP of the Court of Naples against 45 people, charged with Mafia-type association, illicit possession of common firearms and assault weapons, extortion and laundering, aggravated by Mafia-style methods and purposes. The investigation was focused on different leading members and affiliates of the Camorra organization called the MOCCIA *clan*, operative in Afragola, in other Municipalities of the western hinterland of Naples and in the Capital. This allowed the reconstruction of its pyramid-shaped organizational structure and of the main illicit areas of interest.

*a “senator”, that is an historical member of the clan who is in charge of the control of one or more territorial units subjected to the clan’s hegemonic power and who has a management autonomy. The relationships with the group’s base are managed by “lieutenants”, linked to the “senator” by a trust relationship. The “senators” are obliged to account for their actions to a superior that acts as a “coordinator of the different territorial divisions of the clan and who is appointed directly by the Moccia famiglia and their direct contact person. This person plans the business strategies common to all territorial cells, settles potential internal contrasts, represents the organization “to the outside...”. The members of the Moccia famiglia have the command of the entire organization. While still keeping a hidden position to minimize the risk of potential involvement in investigations, they keep managing “from a distance” the association through a coordinator, to whom they privately convey the decisions on the more important matters of the association”<sup>59</sup>.*

The aforementioned structure allowed the criminal faction in question to survive numerous judicial inquiries and to keep a significant operational ability that makes it one of the most dangerous criminal groups on the national scene to this day.

As a matter of fact, the extension of the MOCCIA *clan* is already documented far beyond its territory of origin, where it formed relationships with other criminal groups and qualified representatives of the business by branching out the investments in various economic fields.

In this regard, operation “Oro Verde” is mentioned, that was settled on **March 10, 2023** by the Carabinieri under the coordination of the DDA of Ancona, which implemented a pretrial detention order<sup>60</sup> against 8 people, within the provinces of Ascoli Piceno, Naples, Bari and Pescara. They were charged with illegal traffic of waste related to the collection of waste vegetable oils, aggravated by the purpose of favoring the MOCCIA *clan* of Afragola. The raw material just mentioned, which has high commercial value due to the incentives connected to the final production of biofuel, was being smuggled from the urban oil bins, then stored in specific storage containers in the region of Marche, and finally brought, without the documentation necessary to prevent its traceability, to other businesses outside the region.

The growing business vocation of the MOCCIA *clan* and the resulting minor interests shown in the management of the more traditional illicit activities has favored, in the territory of origin, the growth of less noble but more aggressive local criminal groups, which have apparently replaced the historical

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<sup>59</sup> Excerpt of the order (pp. 28 and 29) no. 30350/2013 RGNR, no. 18835/2016 RGGIP and no. 5/2018 RMC issued on January 5, 2018, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>60</sup> No. 1082/2021 RGNR, no. 4379/2021 RGGIP issued on **February 20, 2023**, by the Court of Ancona.

*association*. Some acts of intimidation<sup>61</sup>, which occurred in the Afragola area during the semester under review, seem to indicate its presence and a higher inclination to violence compared to that of more organized *clans* with more “refined” manners.

In the Municipality of **Caivano**, which was recently the scene of severe criminal events that had national resonance, the criminal balances seem to be particularly unstable. The local *Camorra associations* tend to assert their dominance on the territory by showing off their military capacity through “*stese*” and armed confrontations.

The area is characterized by the presence of multiple open-air drug markets, especially in the popular complexes known as “Parco Verde” and “Bronx”, that were built in the 1980s with State land appropriations after the earthquake of the Irpinia territory. Here, the absence of services and infrastructures fueled a widespread social decay and favored a criminal subculture that allowed the *Camorra associations* to elevate themselves as alternative representatives of the State. In December 2022, the Carabinieri concluded an impressive policing operation, which has severely damaged the historical SAUTTO-CICCARELLI *clan*, with the implementation of a pretrial detention order<sup>62</sup> against 33 people. In the order, the GIP mentions the Caivano working-class areas with regard to the supply of narcotics, and defines them as “...*Rioni of public social housing situated at via Circumvallazione Ovest, the so-called “Parco Verde”, and at via Atellana, the so-called “Rione IACP”, also known as “Bronx”, already seen as one of the largest open-air drug markets of Western Europe...*”<sup>63</sup>.

On **June 8, 2023** the Carabinieri carried out a pretrial detention order<sup>64</sup> against 20 members of the GALLO-ANGELINO *clan*. The *clan* took advantage of the detention of the SAUTTO-CICCARELLI *clan*’s leading members in order to take control of the illicit activities in the territory. The suspects were charged with Mafia-type association, extortion, illicit possession and carrying of common firearms and assault weapons, all aggravated by Mafia-style methods and all committed between November 2019 and May 2020. The *association*, which is active in Caivano and in the adjacent territories, apparently implemented multiple acts of extortion towards construction entrepreneurs and business owners of the area thanks to a large supply of weapons, many of which were skillfully hidden

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<sup>61</sup> During the night of **May 29, 2023**, unknown people fired some gunshots to the address of the headquarters of a car rental owned by a previously convicted criminal. On the scene, the Carabinieri found some firearm casings. On the same night, unknown people fired some gunshots against the residence of another previously convicted criminal, who was seen many times with the victim of the first act of intimidation. On **May 30, 2023**, the State Police intervened in a café in Afragola where the owner found an unexploded improvised explosive device that was positioned by unknown people among garbage cans.

<sup>62</sup> No. 30752/2016 RGNR - 5392/2018 RGGIP - OCC no. 391/2022 issued on November 14, 2022, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>63</sup> Excerpt of the order (p. 37) no. 30752/2016 RGNR no. 5392/2018 RGGIP and no. 391/2022 OCC issued on November 14, 2022, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>64</sup> No. 20178/2019 RGNR, no. 25155/2022 RGGIP and no. 55/2023 OCC.

underground or inside the walls of buildings. The substantial military capacity ensured the *clan* the supremacy over other criminal factions. From the investigation it emerged that the control of the territory was implemented in a systematic way, also through apparently lawful activities aimed at helping economically fragile people. This allowed the criminal group to gain social acceptance by setting up a food distribution bank for families in need during *lockdown*.

On **October 17, 2023** while this document was being written, in the Caivano Municipal Council, which had already been disbanded with the Presidential Decree (DPR) of August 31, 2023 pursuant to article 141 of the Consolidated Law on Local Authorities (TUEL) for the resignation of 13 Council members, the Special Commission for the Provisional Administration of the Authority took office for the duration of 18 months and was appointed with the DPR pursuant to article 143 of the TUEL after verified Mafia infiltrations exposed the administration to insistent conditioning. This last order was implemented as a result of an investigation which led to the implementation of the provisional arrest of crime suspects<sup>65</sup> against figures of the SAUTTO-CICCARELI *clan* and some managers and an employee of the Caivano Municipal Council. They were all charged with Mafia-type association, extortion, corruption, obstructing a public tendering procedure and influencing the tendering procedures of the aforementioned local Authority in order to be awarded tenders for the implementation of public works, and then cash in, from various entrepreneurs in charge of the works, money from extortion destined to increase the income of the local *Camorra clan*.

In the Municipalities of **Frattamaggiore**, **Frattaminore** and **Cardito**, historically under the control of the PEZZELLA *clan*, the acts of intimidation already observed in the last semester continue, allegedly indicating the friction between emerging criminal groups that are looking for new areas. In particular, on **March 28, 2023** in Cardito, the State Police issued an administrative order of provisional arrest of a crime suspect<sup>66</sup> against a suspect charged with attempted murder, illicit possession and carrying of common firearms and assault weapons and receiving of stolen goods, all aggravated by Mafia-style methods and purposes. On **March 5, 2023** the prisoner allegedly took part, with other unidentified accessories, in a raid with *Kalashnikov* gunshots against the residence of some relatives of the representative of the PEZZELLA *clan* in the Cardito territory.

The criminal leadership of the MALLARDO *clan* seems to be consolidated in **Giugliano in Campania** especially in the control of illicit activities, also thanks to its strong connection, also of kinship, with the CONTINI-BOSTI and LICCIARDI *clans*. Together they all form the well-known criminal *cartel* called the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE. The MALLARDO *clan* allegedly

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<sup>65</sup> Criminal procedure no. 26409/2021 RGNR issued on **October 9, 2023**, by the District Attorney's Office of Naples.

<sup>66</sup> No. 7085/2023 RGNR issued on **March 27, 2023** by the District Attorney's Office of Naples.

extends its influence also in the neighboring Municipality of **Qualiano**, where it exercises the control of illicit activities through previously convicted local criminals active under its supervision.

Moreover, the mutual interests between the above-mentioned *clan* and the *Camorra associations* active in the adjacent territory of Villaricca (Naples) and in some areas of the province of Caserta are verified, especially with the *BIDOGNETTI faction* of the *CASALESI cartel*.

In the last few years, the *MALLARDO clan* was the object of much intelligence-led policing that also allowed the authorities to make a profile of its structure and the illicit areas of main interest. In this regard, it emerged from operation “*Babele*”<sup>67</sup> - concluded by the DIA of Naples in June 2022 with the arrest of 25 members of the *association* charged with Mafia-type association, extortion, illicit possession and carrying of firearms, fictitious ownership of assets, self-laundering and more - that the *MALLARDO clan* seems to be organized in the Municipality of Giugliano in Campania through various components all under the same leader and represented by the *SELCIONE*, *SAN NICOLA*, *CUMANA* and *VARCATURO/LAGO PATRIA gruppi* (named after the geographical areas). The aforementioned policing operation had further investigative developments that led on **June 23, 2023** to the implementation of a pretrial detention order<sup>68</sup> issued by the DIA of Naples against 3 other members of the *MALLARDO clan*, charged with Mafia-type association, external participation in Mafia association, extortion and attempted extortion all aggravated by Mafia-style methods. The investigation verified the contiguous relationships between the *clan* and a construction entrepreneur in Giugliano who, in exchange for benefits, carried out multiple acts of extortion toward other local entrepreneurs. The two other recipients of the protective measure are leading members of the *association*, charged with the extortion of EUR 90 thousand to a local construction entrepreneur engaged in the building of a residential complex.

Moreover, the intense extortion activities of the *clan* in question are documented by the arrest warrant<sup>69</sup> implemented by the Carabinieri on **May 17, 2023** against 5 affiliates to the *association*, severely suspected of attempted aggravated extortion toward a local construction entrepreneur, and aggravated by some acts of intimidation<sup>70</sup> against local businesses observed during the semester.

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<sup>67</sup> Pretrial detention order no. 34242/2016 RGNR, no. 19525/2017/RGGIP and OCC no. 112/2022 (operation “*Babele*”) issued on March 24, 2022, by the Court of Naples, against 25 members of the *MALLARDO clan* charged with Mafia-type association, extortion, illicit possession and carrying of firearms, fictitious ownership of assets, self-laundering and more.

<sup>68</sup> No. 34242/2016 RGNR, no. 19525/2017 RGGIP and no. 184/2023 OCC issued on **June 13, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>69</sup> No. 18344/20 RGNR issued on **May 9, 2023**, by the District Attorney’s Office of Naples.

<sup>70</sup> On **February 8, 2023**, the Carabinieri intervened at a betting agency in Giugliano in Campania where unknown people fired an improvised explosive device which damaged the entrance of the agency and the building above. On **March 17, 2023**, late in the evening, unknown people fired multiple intimidating gunshots against the shutter of a clothing shop in Giugliano in Campania (Naples).

Moreover, among the intelligence-led policing against the MALLARDO *clan* concluded during the semester in question, noteworthy is the property prevention measure<sup>71</sup> implemented in Varcaturo (fraction of the Municipality of Giugliano in Campania) on **March 1, 2023** by the Carabinieri, which led to the seizure of 5 apartments valued at around EUR 1 million. The investigation confirmed the direct availability of the properties from a leading member of the above-mentioned *clan*, responsible for aggravated extortion toward a local construction entrepreneur.

On **March 2, 2023**, in Giugliano in Campania, the State Police and the Guardia di Finanza found and seized a large quantity of weapons and ammunition inside an apartment<sup>72</sup>, including assault weapons, as demonstration of the elevated military capacity of the local *clans*.

In the Municipality of **Villaricca**, the leadership of the FERRARA-CACCIAPUOTI *Camorra clan* is verified. It is characterized by a structure divided in two distinct groups: one with a strong business vocation<sup>73</sup>, the other with a clearly military nature.

These two groups are headed, respectively, by the *bosses* of the FERRARA and CACCIAPUOTI *famiglie*, connected by close family relationships. The illicit interests of the aforementioned *association* seem to mainly be geared towards the narcotic drugs industry and extortion against businesses and local companies.

What has been said seems to be confirmed by the operation concluded by the Carabinieri and the Guardia di Finanza on **June 5, 2023** with the implementation of a pretrial detention order<sup>74</sup> against 19 suspects, charged with Mafia-type association, attempted murder, extortion, narcotic drugs trafficking and illicit possession and carrying of firearms, all aggravated by Mafia-style methods and purposes. The investigation allowed the authorities to verify in the Villaricca territory the ongoing activity of the *association*, to define its diarchic structure with a predominantly family composition, and also allowed them to verify multiple acts of extortion against construction entrepreneurs, gyms and gambling rooms.

Also, interests of the *clan* toward the hydrocarbon industry and narcotic drugs trafficking have emerged, while keeping the territory of Villaricca out of the drug dealing business to deflect the law enforcement officials' attention. The operation led to the seizure of 11 businesses linked to the *association*, and to the discovery of its historical mutual interests with other Neapolitan criminal groups and those of the province of Caserta, especially with the MALLARDO and CONTINI *clans*

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<sup>71</sup> Seizure order no. 66/2021 RGMP and no. 4/2023 RDECR issued on **January 30, 2023** by the Protective Measures Department of the Court of Naples.

<sup>72</sup> In particular, the activity led to the discovery and seizure of 3 Kalashnikov machine guns, 4 sniper carbines, 1 pump-action gun, 1 hand grenade, 7 rifles, 38 handguns and a range of ammunition of various calibers.

<sup>73</sup> Especially in the construction industry, catering industry, the hydrocarbon industry and in the food marketing industry.

<sup>74</sup> No. 46943/2013 RGNR - no. 1157/2014 RG GIP - no. 136/2023 RG OCC issued on **May 11, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

of the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE and with the CASALESI *clan*, even though it acted with total autonomy and with a well-established sphere of territorial jurisdiction.

In the areas of the Municipalities of **Mugnano** and **Melito di Napoli**, the activity of the AMATO-PAGANO *clan* seems to be confirmed. The latter is also known as the *clan* of “SECESSIONISTS” or “SPAGNOLI” since it was created from the division from the DI LAURO *clan*, with whom in the past it had some bloody feuds (known as *Scampia feuds*) that in the first years of the new century caused bloodshed in the western districts of Naples. The rise of the *clan* in question is strictly connected to the rise of a Neapolitan drug trafficking *broker* who supplied drugs to the *gruppi* for over a decade. This drug dealer was arrested in Dubai in 2021 and deported in Italy in 2022 after multiple investigations concerning international narcotic drugs trafficking, including operation “Three crosses”<sup>75</sup>, concluded in November 2022 by the State Police and the Guardia di Finanza of Reggio Calabria with the arrest of 28 people, among whom there was **a leading member of the AMATO-PAGANO clan**.

**The above-mentioned clan allegedly still has the monopolization of the narcotic drugs trafficking in the areas it controls, also through extortions and infiltrations in the Public Administration to direct the choices made to its own advantage.** These confirmations emerged from the “Playmaker” operation concluded by the DIA of Naples on **April 18, 2023** with the implementation of a pretrial detention order<sup>76</sup> against 18 people, including companions of the AMATO-PAGANO *clan* and exponents of the elective team of the Council of Melito di Napoli. The suspects are allegedly charged, for various reasons, with Mafia-type association, political-Mafia exchange vote, attempts to political rights of the citizen, corruption, external participation in Mafia association and attempted extortion. From the investigation, serious evidence emerged regarding the interference of certain exponents of the AMATO-PAGANO *clan* in the local elections that took place in October 2021, which was implemented promising the votes to the candidates in exchange for money and other benefits to the criminal group. It was also implemented through the verification of various acts of extortion against construction entrepreneurs involved in the carrying out of works in Melito di Napoli. On **May 9, 2023**, the District Officer of Naples, by proxy of the Minister of the Interior, appointed a Commission of Inquiry and its relative Support unit (pursuant to article 143 of the TUEL), composed of delegates of the Police Forces, including an official of the DIA, in order to verify the existence of Mafia infiltration and connections to Mafia criminals within the above-mentioned Council. Immediately afterwards, as a result of the resignation of more than half of the

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<sup>75</sup> OCC no. 978/2022 RGNR - 607/2022 RGGIP - 11/2022 OCC issued on **September 24, 2022**, by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>76</sup> No. 13850/21 RGNR, no. 7239/22 RGGIP and no. 98/23 ROCC issued on **March 27, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

Council members, the local Municipal Council was disbanded pursuant to article 141 of the Consolidated Law on Local Authorities by Decree of the President of the Republic of **May 30, 2023** which contextually appointed a Special Commissioner.

On **January 23, 2023**, a leading member of the AMATO-PAGANO *clan* was murdered inside a restaurant in Melito di Napoli.

The criminal influence of the AMATO-PAGANO *clan* is also present in the neighboring Municipality of **Arzano**, thanks to the group called CLAN OF THE 167 OF ARZANO, which took over the MOCCIA *clan*'s control of that area after the murder of the representative of the latter criminal group, which occurred in 2014 in Arzano.

The CLAN OF THE 167 OF ARZANO is allegedly particularly active in the narcotic drugs and extortion sectors, as documented by the investigation that led the State Police on **April 7, 2023** to the implementation of a pretrial detention order<sup>77</sup> against 4 people connected to the above-mentioned *Camorra association*, all charged with attempted extortion aggravated by Mafia-style methods and purposes against a local business.

In **Marano di Napoli** the activity of the NUVOLETTA, POLVERINO and ORLANDO *clans* is confirmed. These clans are traditionally oriented to international drug trafficking and to the reuse of the resulting profits in businesses. A recent policing operation concluded by the Carabinieri on **January 23, 2023**<sup>78</sup>, was directed at some leading members of the NUVOLETTA and ORLANDO *famiglie* involved in acts of extortion against a local construction entrepreneur who allegedly delivered them the total amount of EUR 80 thousand between 2017 and 2020.

The Municipal Council of Marano di Napoli, already disbanded for Mafia infiltration by the Presidential Decree of June 18, 2021, was placed under receivership for another six months by the Presidential Decree of October 12, 2022 pursuant to article 143 of the TUEL. In this regard, a new municipal administration was established after the elections held on **May 29, 2023**.

In the Municipalities of **Volla** and **Casalnuovo**, on **March 20, 2023**, the State Police implemented an arrest warrant<sup>79</sup> against 2 suspects, one of which was considered a leading member of the VENERUSO-REA *clan*, which dominantly controlled over time the illegal activities in that territory. The two arrested are seriously suspected of participating in attempted extortion aggravated by Mafia-

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<sup>77</sup> No. 8476/23 RGNR and no. 108/2023 ROCC issued on **April 05, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>78</sup> No. 27647/2020 RGNR, no. 26646/2021 RGIP and no. 7/2023 ROCC issued on **January 9, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>79</sup> Administrative order of provisional arrest of crime suspect no. 661/2023 RGNR issued on **March 16, 2023**, by the District Attorney's Office of Naples.



style methods and against a construction entrepreneur in Casalnuovo. On **March 2, 2023** in Volla, another leading figure of the above-mentioned *clan* was the victim of a *Camorra* ambush executed by two disguised men who shot him to death with multiple gunshots while he was driving his own vehicle.

This event is allegedly the indication of tensions with other criminal groups active in that territory, among which there is the antagonist PISCOPO-GALLUCCI *clan*. These *clans* could take advantage of the resulting power gaps to enforce their own leadership.

In the territories belonging to the Municipalities of **Sant'Antimo**, **Casandrino** and **Grumo Nevano** the presence and the continuing operation of the PUCA, VERDE and RANUCCI *Camorra gruppi* have been judicially assessed. These groups are characterized by a family-centered structure around which new recruits polarize and in recent times have been suffering from the absence of charismatic figures. Despite remaining clearly distinct criminal entities, over the years they have been switching between non-aggression relationships and phases of heated conflict for territorial control and the contention of illegal interests in the fields of extortion, infiltration in the legal economy, in the Public Administration and in the control over drug-pushing marketplaces. The contention of drug-pushing marketplaces in the territory of Sant'Antimo is thought to lie at the origin of the murder and the wounding of two previously convicted people, which occurred on **March 8, 2023**. This episode, led on **March 28** to the detention of 3 people as crime suspects<sup>80</sup> accused of participating in attempted murder and murder, aggravated by Mafia-style methods.

**Southern province** (*Cercola, San Giorgio a Cremano, Portici, Ercolano, San Sebastiano al Vesuvio, Torre del Greco, Torre Annunziata, Boscoreale, Boscotrecase, Pompei, Castellammare di Stabia, Sant'Antonio Abate, Pimonte, Agerola, Penisola Sorrentina, Casola di Napoli, Lettere*).

The Municipality of **Cercola** is supposed to be under the criminal influence of the DE LUCA-BOSSA *clan* from the neighboring Neapolitan district Ponticelli. Nevertheless, the intelligence-led policing implemented in the last few years<sup>81</sup> and the following and current supremacy of the rival *clan* DE MICCO-DE MARTINO reportedly have led the first *association* to circumscribe its territorial area to Rione Caravita.

In the Municipalities of **San Giorgio a Cremano** and **Portici** the criminal trends seem to be substantially steady compared to the previous semester. The long-term local *associations* TROIA and VOLLARO<sup>82</sup>, that have fallen within the sphere of influence of SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE and

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<sup>80</sup> Order No. 7362/2023 RGNR issued on **March 24, 2023**, by the District Attorney's Office of Naples.

<sup>81</sup> No. 6695/2019 RGNR, no. 4098/2022 RGGIP and no. 381/2022 ROCC, issued on November 10, 2022, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>82</sup> The TROIA *clan*, alias *Gelsomino*, from San Giorgio a Cremano (lately represented by the ATTANASIO *gruppo*) and the VOLLARO *clan* from Portici. With reference to the latter *gruppo*, it should be noted that a leading member seems

which used to have control of the illegal activities, due to the pressing intelligence-led policing appear to have given way to the *Camorra*'s MAZZARELLA *cartel*, which is thought to operate via contact groups. With reference to the aforementioned VOLLARO *clan*, in Portici the criminal presence of some of its members has allegedly been registered, as emerged from the arrest *in flagrante delicto* of a historical member of the *association* for drug possession and dealing carried out by the State Police on **May 9, 2023**. The criminal had already been a victim of a *stesa*<sup>83</sup> in the second semester of 2022, when unknown persons had fired 28 gunshots against his house.

The control over illegal activities in the territory of **Ercolano** is historically disputed between the *Camorra associations* ASCIONE-PAPALE and BIRRA-IACOMINO, which over the years have played a leading role in many violent fights, both reporting several victims. At the moment, these two *associations* appear significantly weakened by the impactful intelligence-led policing that led to the imprisonment of several affiliates and leading members. They remain present and active, however, in drug trafficking and dealing, and acts of extortion to the detriment of companies and commercial activities. The current conflictual relationship between the two criminal groups has most recently been documented in the shooting that took place in Ercolano on **March 16, 2023**, when a leading member of the ASCIONE-PAPALE *clan* was wounded by a member of the BIRRA-IACOMINO *clan*.

The ASCIONE-PAPALE *clan*, as well as the GALLO-LIMELLI-VANGONE *association* in Boscoreale, Boscotrecase and Trecase, have allegedly extended their criminal influence in the neighboring Municipality of **Torre del Greco**, a territory which historically belongs to the FALANGA *famiglia*, whose leaders are imprisoned or cooperating with the judicial process.

The Municipality of **Torre Annunziata** remains under the management of the *Commissione Straordinaria* (Temporary Receivership) following the 18-month dismissal provided by the Presidential Decree issued on May 6, 2022, for the assessed influence of organized crime on local administrative bodies. In this territory, control over illegal activities has historically been exercised by the GIONTA and GALLO-CAVALIERI *clans*, which have been collaborating for years, peacefully dividing the management of acts of extortion and drug trafficking. In 2006, following some vicissitudes, the two criminal groups started opposing one another, causing victims on both sides. Over the time, within the GALLO-CAVALIERI *clan* an additional and significant branch emerged named GALLO-PISIELLI, dedicated to drug trafficking and dealing in the “Parco Penniniello” area. The GALLO-CAVALIERI and GALLO-PISIELLI *groups*, backed by ties of

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to have transferred his residency in Via Stadera (Poggioreale district), an area under the control of the CONTINI *clan*, member of the SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE.

<sup>83</sup> Translator's Note: the term describes a typical Mafia-type association's means of marking the territory and intimidating people. It consists of running wildly on a scooter or a car and firing bullets at random.

kinship, initially used to stand together in order to counter rival *clans*, but then diverged and split into different criminal organizations. Throughout the semester under review, one of the leading members of the GALLO-CAVALIERI *famiglia* and the grandson of the GIONTA *clan*'s historic leader were released. The latter's release happened one year after the release his grandmother, who is the wife of the above-mentioned *boss*.

In this regard, a recent investigative activity, concluded on **June 22, 2023**, by the Carabinieri with the issuing of an arrest warrant<sup>84</sup> against 11 people, seems to have ascertained, inter alia, a renewed convergence of interests between the GIONTA and GALLO-CAVALIERI *famiglie*. These two, between 2016 and 2023, reportedly cooperated in several acts of extortion to the detriment of different companies in Torre Annunziata and Torre del Greco. Furthermore, some investigative activities seem to have documented the rise in Torre Annunziata (Naples) of a new *Camorra gruppo*, a branch of the GALLO-PISIELLI *clan*, named QUARTO SISTEMA or SAURIELL-SCARPA, which is thought to have triggered actions in order to subvert the GIONTA and GALLO-CAVALIERI leadership. During the semester, some crime episodes<sup>85</sup> seem to be attributable to such a context, notably the wounding<sup>86</sup> of an individual with criminal records for drugs and the murder<sup>87</sup> of one of the nephews of the GALLO-PISIELLI *clan*'s leader.

Drug trafficking and dealing, as for other crimes, is one of the main sources of income for criminal groups also in Torre Annunziata. Here, in the second semester of 2022, the Carabinieri enforced a pretrial detention order<sup>88</sup> to the detriment of a group of people accused of criminal conspiracy aimed at drug dealing operating in Rione "dei Poverelli" in the Municipality of Torre Annunziata. The investigative activity represents the development of the previous operation, concluded by the Carabinieri in August 2022, out of which an extensive involvement of minors in drug dealing had emerged.

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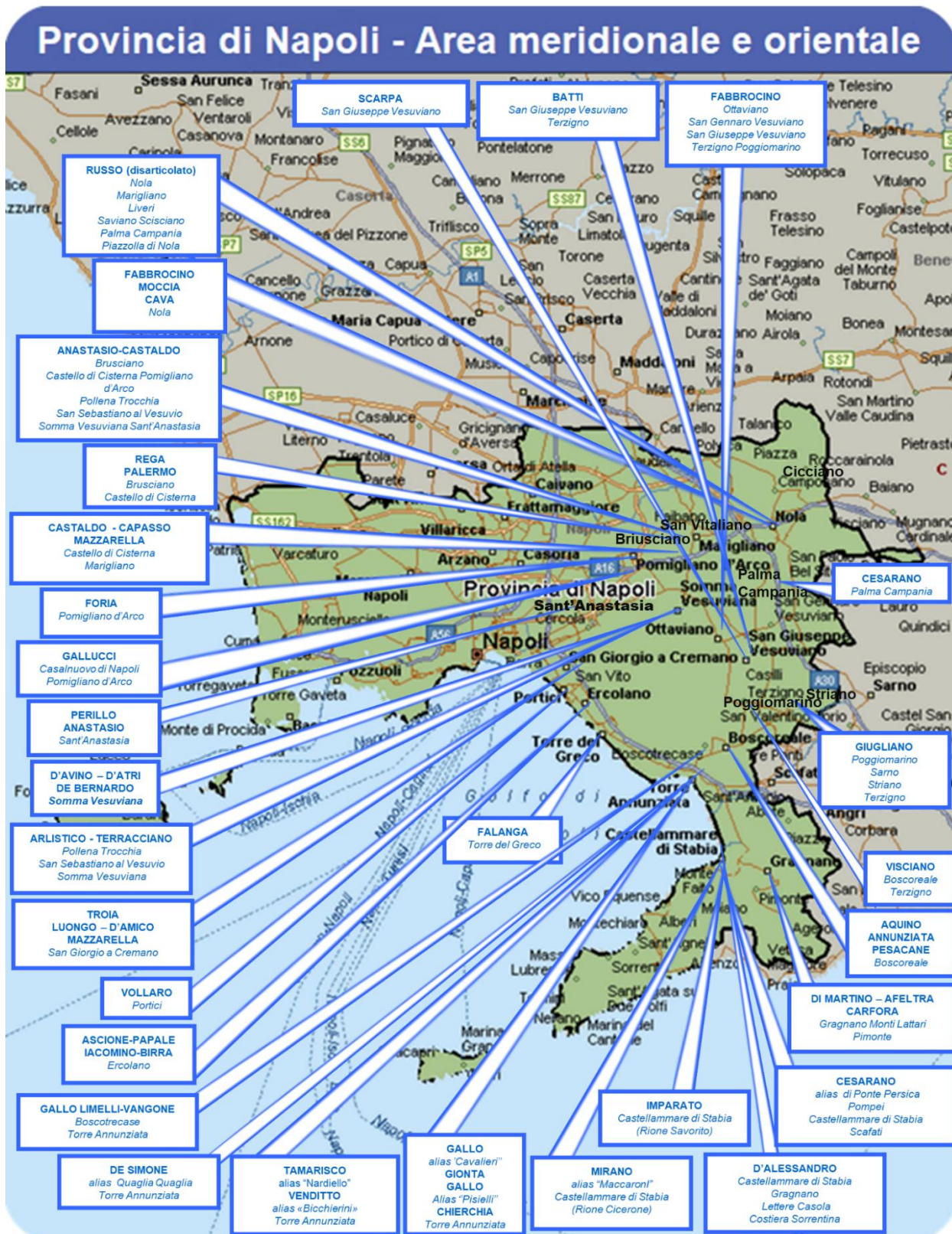
<sup>84</sup> Arrest warrant of murder suspect no. 15913/2023 RGNR issued on **June 16, 2023**, by the District Attorney's Office of Naples.

<sup>85</sup> On **March 15, 2023**, near "Parco Penniniello" in Torre Annunziata, unknown individuals on a motorcycle fired some gunshots towards the house belonging to a local person with a criminal record. On **May 30, 2023**, in Torre Annunziata unknown individuals on a motorcycle fired some gunshots towards the house of a subject related to the GALLO-CAVALIERI *clan*. On the site the Carabinieri found 4 shell casings and some bullets retained by the iron gate of the building.

<sup>86</sup> During the night of **March 21, 2023**, a subject with 4 abdominal gunshot wounds arrived at San Leonardo di Castellammare di Stabia Hospital. According to early investigative results, the victim, with several criminal records for drugs, is thought to have been reached and wounded by two individuals while driving a scooter.

<sup>87</sup> In the afternoon of **March 26, 2023**, in San Leonardo di Castellammare di Stabia Hospital the nephew of the GALLO-PISIELLI *clan*'s boss died. He was seriously wounded by gunshots during an ambush. The victim, with criminal records for Mafia association, drug trafficking and weapon crimes, had returned to freedom in June 2022 after serving his sentence.

<sup>88</sup> No. 8361/2018 RGNR, no. 3004/2021 RGGIP and no. 136/22 RMC issued on December 30, 2022, by the Court of Torre Annunziata.



Province of Naples - southern and eastern area

A person with a criminal record of great importance is thought to come from Rione "dei Poverelli" in Torre Annunziata. This criminal is involved in an investigation for drug trafficking between Calabria and Campania conducted by the Guardia di Finanza under the coordination of the District

Anti-Mafia Prosecutor's Office of Salerno. The investigative activity, concluded on **June 13, 2023** with a pretrial detention order<sup>89</sup> issued by the Court of Salerno, led to the arrest of 8 people accused of conspiracy aimed at drug trafficking. The group was headed by the aforementioned person with a criminal record belonging to Rione "dei Poverelli", who was previously connected to the CESARANO *clan* in Castellammare di Stabia (Naples) and then moved to Torre Annunziata. He has allegedly acted as a bridge among the *clans* of Torre Annunziata and Calabria in order to buy large loads of cocaine (at least 2 quintals) at competitive prices, destined to the open-air drug markets of Campania.

In the Municipalities of **Boscoreale**, **Boscotrecase** and **Trecase**, the GALLO-LIMELLI-VANGONE *clan*'s activities may have been confirmed. Its criminal vocation is thought to be oriented to drug trafficking and control of the local open-air drug markets', particularly in "Piano Napoli", a public housing complex in Boscoreale, as emerged from an investigation activity concluded by the Carabinieri in December 2022<sup>90</sup>, which, among other things, has allegedly ascertained the supply of drugs also to the market of the Sorrentine peninsula.

In **Castellammare di Stabia** the D'ALESSANDRO *clan* is thought to be still operational. Despite the detention of many of its leaders, it can still count on the presence of many leading figures in the reference area, including some close members of the deceased historic leader's family.

In the same territorial context, a recent police operation has allegedly ascertained the permanence of the CESARANO *clan*, whose illegal interests seem to extend to the neighboring territories of Pompeii (Naples) and Scafati (Salerno). Specifically, on **July 10, 2023** the Carabinieri enforced a pretrial detention order<sup>91</sup> against 20 people related to the aforementioned *clan*, accused of Mafia-type association, attempted murder, extortion, illegal gun license, robbery, drug detention aimed at drug dealing, unauthorized access to devices suitable for prisoners' communication, all of which aggravated by the Mafia method and purposes.

Castellammare di Stabia's Municipal Council is still dissolved because of Mafia infiltration pursuant to article 143 of the TUEL, as provided by the Presidential Decree of February 28, 2022.

In **Gragnano** the operation of the DI MARTINO *clan*, whose historical leader is currently imprisoned, may have been confirmed. It has reportedly emerged from a recent investigative activity that the aforementioned *clan*, that seems to be operational in drug cultivation and selling, has allegedly established in such illegal sector criminal business relationships with the

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<sup>89</sup> No. 8080/2022 RGNR, no. 5599/2022 RGGIP and OCC no. 72/93 issued on **May 31, 2023**, by the Court of Salerno.

<sup>90</sup> OCC no. 5041/20 RGNR, no. 4664/21 RGGIP and no. 122/22 RMC, issued on **November 15, 2022**, by the Court of Torre Annunziata (Naples).

<sup>91</sup> No. 21785/2018 RGNR, no. 15883/2019 RGGIP and no. 215/2023 RMC issued on **July 4, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.



D’ALESSANDRO *clan* from Castellammare di Stabia. Notably, on **May 2, 2023**, the Carabinieri, together with the Guardia di Finanza, implemented a pretrial detention order<sup>92</sup> to the detriment of some of the leaders of the DE MARTINO *clan* from Gragnano, including the head of the *clan*’s son, accused of criminal conspiracy aimed at drug trafficking and dealing. Investigative reconstructions stated that the head of the *clan*’s son is supposed to have gone into business with a contact person belonging to the D’ALESSANDRO *clan* for the Sorrentine peninsula who, despite being imprisoned, is thought to have given instructions to his partner through a mobile phone illegally introduced in his correctional facility in order to buy cocaine and marijuana from the DI MARTINO *clan* to smuggle in Sorrento area.

In the Municipalities of **Pimonte** and **Agerola** the operation of the AFELTRA *clan* is supposed to be confirmed. Its illegal interests focus on extorsions, notably to the detriment of businessmen in the flourishing local dairy sector.

As emerged, the aforementioned D’ALESSANDRO *clan* is thought to extend its criminal influence up to the neighboring **Sorrento** territories, where it supposedly controls drug dealing. Indeed, recent investigative activities are reported to confirm the widespread interest of criminal organizations belonging to surrounding areas towards the rich Sorrentine peninsula with regard to drug selling. On the subject, attention should be drawn to the pretrial detention order<sup>93</sup> carried out by the Carabinieri on **May 23, 2023**, which led to the arrest of 33 members of a criminal group based in Vico Equense, dedicated to drug dealing in the Sorrentine peninsula, accused of drug detention and dealing, as well as extortion, illegal detention of firearms and possession of stolen goods. The investigative activity seems to have revealed that the group had many references in the supply of drugs, including the *clans* operating in Parco Penniniello, in Torre Annunziata.

**Eastern province** (*Nola, Saviano, Piazzolla di Nola, Marigliano, Scisciano, Liveri, Palma Campania, San Gennaro Vesuviano, San Giuseppe Vesuviano, Terzigno, San Paolo Belsito, Brusciano, San Vitaliano, Cimitile, Mariglianella, Castello di Cisterna, Pomigliano d’Arco, Cicciano, Roccarainola, Somma Vesuviana, Cercola, Massa di Somma, San Sebastiano al Vesuvio, Sant’Anastasia, Pollena Trocchia*).

The Municipalities of Naples’ eastern province, as in other Campanian realities, are characterized by the presence of *Camorra clans* with family-centered structures and by strong attachment to the

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<sup>92</sup> No. 27363/2020 RGNR, no. 27156/2021 RGGIP and no. 110/2023 ROCC issued on **April 5, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>93</sup> No. 5041/2020 RGNR, no. 4664/2021 RGGIP and no. 35/2023 RMC issued on **May 3, 2023**, by the Court of Torre Annunziata.

territory. It is reported that there hasn't been any substantial change in the crime balance concerning these *gruppi* in the semester under review. In the area surrounding **Nola**, notably, the continuous intelligence-led policing of the last few years is reported to have noted the persisting criminal influence, even if strongly reduced, of the SANGERMANO and RUSSO *clans*.

In **San Vitaliano** a pretrial detention order<sup>94</sup> executed on **January 28, 2023** by the State Police led to the arrest of 4 leaders of the FILIPPINI *clan*, accused of participating in illegal detention of firearms and serious injury, aggravated by the Mafia method and purposes. The *Camorra gruppo*, whose main illegal interests are thought to concern extorsions and drug selling in the reference territory, is reportedly accused of firing at the legs of a drug dealer who was thought to have disobeyed the rules imposed by the *clan*.

Again with regards to the area surrounding Nola, finally, in the semester under review there have been some acts of intimidation against some local administrators<sup>95</sup>. Similar episodes occurred in 2022, always to the detriment of local administrators, setting fire to a car in one case, and delivering a package containing a bullet in the other. In this respect, it is not excluded that such events may be attributable to the attempt of criminal local associations to interfere with Public Administration in order to affect the decision-making processes.

In the **San Giuseppe Vesuviano, Ottaviano, San Gennaro Vesuviano** and **Terzigno** Municipalities, previous investigative activities have confirmed the historical presence of the FABBRONCINO *clan*, significantly reduced over the time by the intelligence-led policing. In this regard, on **June 29, 2023** the State Police implemented a pretrial detention order<sup>96</sup> against 6 representatives of the aforementioned *clan*, accused of attempted extortion aggravated by the Mafia method and illicit possession of firearms. Investigations made it possible to reconstruct the extortion perpetrated in 2019 to the detriment of a construction company engaged in the road resurfacing of the Municipality of San Gennaro Vesuviano, as well as to document the considerable arms disposability of the criminal group. The measure also concerned the deceased promoter and historic leader of the *clan*'s cousin. In the semester under review, it must be noted that a prominent exponent of the *association*, deemed as the deceased historic leader's potential heir, has been released<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>94</sup> No. 35110/2021 RGNR, no. 80/2023 RGGIP and no. 17/2023 OCC issued on January 16, 2023, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>95</sup> On **February 20, 2023**, the State Police intervened in a street in the center of Nola, where unknown people had set fire to a city councilor's car. On **May 10, 2023**, again in the center of Nola, unknown people set fire to a car and a scooter belonging to a city councilor's husband. On **May 25, 2023**, unknown people broke into the Mayor of Nola's villa, setting fire to his car and motorcycle.

<sup>96</sup> No. 6079/2019 RGNR, no. 27427/2019 RGGIP and no. 195/2023 ROCC, issued on **June 22, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>97</sup> On **March 14, 2023**.

In the Municipality of San Giuseppe Vesuviano, whose City Council was dissolved because of Mafia infiltration<sup>98</sup> for 18 months with the Presidential Decree issued on June 10, 2022, the extraordinary commission appears to still be installed pursuant to article 143 of the TUEL. In the area of **Pomigliano d'Arco**, which is under the historical criminal influence of the MASCITELLI *gruppo*, some acts of intimidation<sup>99</sup> that took place during the semester under review in the popular complex in via *Jan Palach*, a well-known open-air drug market, are thought to have caused a breach of the local criminal balance. It is not to be excluded that the MAZZARELLA *clan*, which was already operating in the neighboring territories, has possibly expanded its influence in such area. This allegedly emerges from the pretrial detention order<sup>100</sup> executed by the Carabinieri on **June 26, 2023**, against 4 people accused of extortion aggravated by the Mafia method. The people arrested, recalling their affiliation to the MAZZARELLA *clan*, have allegedly threatened and used violence against a person to force him to leave his rented apartment and to pay amounts of money on more than one occasion.

The military capacity of the criminal groups located in such territories is supposedly confirmed by the seizure of weapons executed by the State Police on **May 5, 2023** following the arrest *in flagrante delicto* of a person with criminal records driving a stolen car. One RPK and three guns with appropriate ammunition were found in the vehicle. The search extended to a warehouse used by the arrested person, located in the neighboring Municipality of Casalnuovo (Naples), where 2 more RPK, 3 guns, 4 rifles and plenty of ammunition were found, as well as several accessories with symbols of the police forces.

In **Sant'Anastasia**, the ANASTASIO *clan* is supposed to still have control over illegal activities. The recent release of a leading member of the rival OREFICE *clan* may lead to the escalation of some old conflicts between these two *associations*. On **May 24, 2023** in the Municipality of Sant'Anastasia a shooting took place for trivial reasons. The action occurred outside a bar in the center of the city between two local youths, who were later arrested by the Carabinieri. On that occasion, a ten-year-old girl and her parents got injured: the girl, whose head was hit by some splinters, got emergency surgery. The episode aroused public indignation and concern, on par with other episodes that occurred

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<sup>98</sup> The Municipality of San Giuseppe Vesuviano (Naples) has already been the subject of similar dissolution measures adopted respectively with the Presidential Decree issued on June 4, 1993, and the Presidential Decree issued on December 9, 2009.

<sup>99</sup> In the night of **January 19, 2023**, unknown individuals set off an improvised explosive device in the public housing complex in via *Jan Palach*, near a previously convicted criminal's house. The Carabinieri found some firearm shell casings there. Not far away, near the house of another previously convicted criminal under house arrest, the military found 5 more shells from a gun. In the evening of **May 30, 2023**, another improvised explosive device destroyed the parked car used by another previously convicted criminal living in the same public housing district.

<sup>100</sup> No. 5239/2023 RGNR, no. 8202/2023 RGGIP and no. 166/2023 ROCC issued on **June 5, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.



during the same semester in the province of Naples. What is particularly alarming, however, is the Mafia subculture which imposes itself in such territorial contexts, where obtaining weapons of considerable offensive potentialities is extremely easy and very young people increasingly take part in these events.

In the remaining territories belonging to the eastern province of Naples no changes have been recorded compared to the previous semester.

### **Province of Caserta**

In the province of Caserta, the Mafia phenomenon has its maximum expression in the Municipality of Casal di Principe and, more generally, in the area of the Agro aversano, where the CASALESI *Camorra cartel* originated and evolved. In the past, this *cartel* was described by the magistrates as “*undoubtedly the most powerful Mafia group operating in Campania... whose features resemble more Sicilian Mafia organizations than the other Campanian Camorra organizations*”<sup>101</sup>. Compared to the initial top-down structure, headed by the BARDELLINO *famiglia*, the latest findings emerged from investigations, most recently the pretrial detention order<sup>102</sup> executed by the Carabinieri on November 22, 2022, documented the fact that CASALESI *clan* is currently represented by the SCHIAVONE, BIDOINETTI, ZAGARIA and IOVINE *famiglie*, which have supposedly preferred a path of emancipation of single *associations* to the original unified dimension. Each *association* is thought to control a well-defined territorial area while maintaining complex collaborative relationships with the other groups. Also, according to the declarations of some people cooperating with the judicial process, the SCHIAVONE and BIDOINETTI *famiglie* are reported to be the most representative members in the current balance, with many points in common. The ZAGARIA *faction*, on the contrary, is thought to have opted for a more isolated position, remaining around the initial household, surrounded by trusted people. Finally, the IOVINE *gruppo* appears to be absent compared to the original *cartel*. Talking about the territories of criminal influence, the SCHIAVONE *famiglia* is thought to be most present in Casal di Principe (Caserta) and Caserta. Indeed, the BIDOINETTI *faction* is supposed to operate in Castel Volturno, Parete, Lusciano and Villa Literno. Finally, the ZAGARIA *famiglia* allegedly exerts its criminal influence in the Municipalities of Casapesenna, Trentola Ducenta and Aversa (Caserta). Each territory is thought to be divided and assigned to “local

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<sup>101</sup> As stated by the GIP (p. 6) in pretrial detention order no. 66575/2010 RGNR, no. 5114/2011 RGGIP and no. 660/2011 OCC, issued on October 27, 2011, by the Court of Naples, in the premise concerning the existence of the CASALESI *clan*.

<sup>102</sup> OCC no. 11733/13 RGNR, no. 12993/21 RG GIP and no. 370/22 ROCC, issued on November 3, 2022, by the Court of Naples, executed on November 22, 2022 by the Carabinieri.

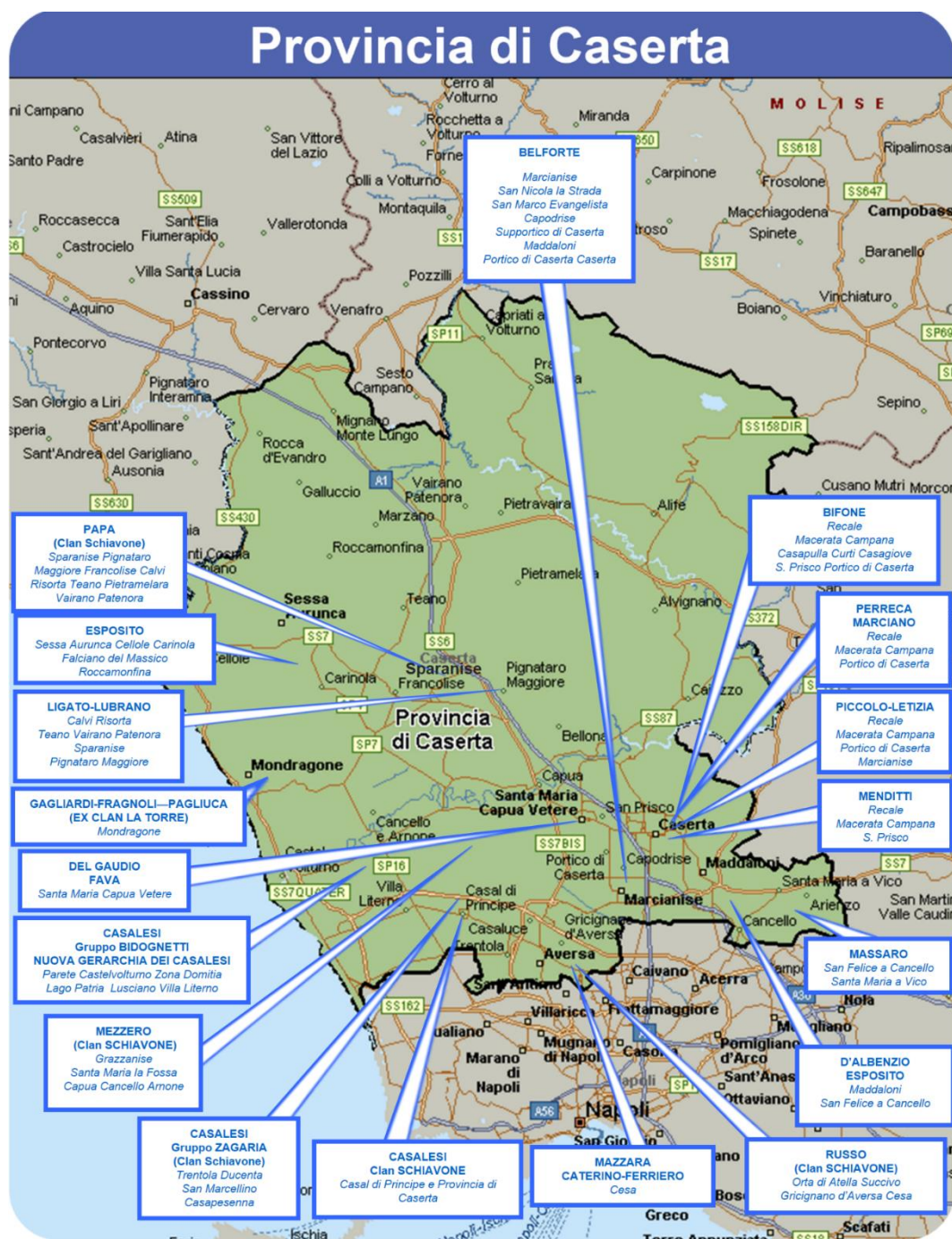
leaders”, who work as *direct reports* of the relevant *factions*. Illegal interests supposedly concern extortions, notably to the detriment of supermarkets, construction sites and other companies in the field of waste collection and treatment, control over gambling houses and the field of funeral homes<sup>103</sup>. Control over the latter is coordinated on the basis of previous agreements that took place with an illegal “consortium of companies”. The increase in the importance attached to drug market is new, and it overcomes the traditional reluctance of the CASALESI group towards such sector. Indeed, drug trafficking took on an important role among the *clan*’s sources of income, through the establishment of several open-air drug markets in the territories of the Agro aversano, controlled by each local leader or by third parties in return for payment to the *association*. Furthermore, the CASALESI *cartel*’s particular entrepreneurial vocation, compared to other Campanian crime organizations, is now well-documented. Such vocation is put in place through the reuse of money earned from crime in economic activities and infiltration in service contracts via corruption and the collusion of public officials, thanks to the crime organization’s high capacity to build dense networks with entrepreneurial world’s leaders and local administrators.

In this regard, the police operation concluded in Sparanise (Caserta) in December 2021 by the State Police allegedly highlighted the interest of the CASALESI *cartel*, notably of the SCHIAVONE *faction*, towards social assistance fields (the so-called “third sector”), where they supposedly infiltrated relying on corruption, cooperating with officials of local administrations. The investigation saw the participation of an administrator of the Municipality and people connected to territorial organized crime, as well as entrepreneurship and representatives of local services management, and on December 19, 2022 led to the adoption of the order of dissolution of the institution because of Mafia infiltration pursuant to article 143 of the TUEL.

In such context, characterized by the *Camorra associations*’ high capacity to influence local economic and administrative structures, the authorities have kept intensifying hubs of Mafia prevention. Notably, during the semester under review, the Prefect of Caserta issued 19 anti-Mafia bans against as many companies deemed related to or permeable by *Camorra clans*.

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<sup>103</sup> An activity in which the BIDOINETTI *famiglia* was historically engaged.



## Province of Caserta

During the same period, the contrast to Mafia assets also turned out to be significant. In this regard, it should be noted the seizure of assets<sup>104</sup> executed on **February 21, 2023**, by the Guardia di Finanza and the Carabinieri to the detriment of an entrepreneur in the food retail industry connected to the ZAGARIA faction of the CASALESI clan. Such preventive measures concerned bank accounts, company shares and the relevant capital goods, amounting to an estimated value of approximately

<sup>104</sup> No. 157/2022 RGMP and no. 3/2023 RDS issued on **February 9, 2023**, by the Prevention Measures Section of the Court of Santa Maria Capua Vetere (Caserta).

EUR 60 million. The seizure of assets<sup>105</sup> executed on **February 23, 2023** by the Guardia di Finanza and the Carabinieri to the detriment of two more entrepreneurs related to the ZAGARIA *faction* and operating in road freight transport and waste management fields is likewise noteworthy. The Seizure order, which concerned movable assets, real estate, company shares and financial reports, amounting to about EUR 50 million, was adopted after the judicial control's outcome of a company attributable to the aforementioned entrepreneurs. The investigation has also supposedly uncovered the two entrepreneurs' engagement with an international drug-trafficking *broker* of Neapolitan origin, who had been arrested in Dubai in 2021 and extradited in Italy in March 2022. The aforementioned *broker* has been involved in several investigation activities, among which the “*Tre Croci*” operation<sup>106</sup> concluded on October 6, 2022 by the Guardia di Finanza of Reggio Calabria. Notably, in 2021 the two entrepreneurs allegedly made available to the aforementioned drug trafficker a warehouse to hide 600 kg of cocaine inside some *containers* headed to Australia. The collaboration between the *broker* and the entrepreneurs, which are thought to have earned EUR 7 million, supposedly dates back to the period from 2008 and 2010, with several loads of cocaine from Brazil for a total of 6,000 kg and, later, between 2017 and 2021, with at least a dozen of transports from the Netherlands. During the semester under review, in the framework of the contrast to Mafia assets, three confiscations of assets<sup>107</sup> took place. Such seizures were executed by the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate (DIA) of Naples to the detriment of organized crime in Caserta for over EUR 11 million and became definitive and irreversible with the judgments issued by the Supreme Court of Cassation concerning the relevant proceedings.

The CASALESI *cartel* is not the only criminal group to be found in the province of Caserta. In Teverola, on **April 7, 2023**, the Carabinieri executed a provisional arrest of crime suspects<sup>108</sup> against 2 people accused of participating in multiple acts of extortion, aggravated by Mafia methods, to the detriment of a local pharmacist and a local electrical equipment retailer. The crime suspects, already at the top of a *Camorra association* emerged from the natural evolution of the old PICCA *clan*, operating in the territories of Carinaro and Teverola, had recently been released from prison after a long detention period and had planned a reorganization of the original criminal *gruppo*. In Marcianise, the BELFORTE *clan* (so-called “MAZZACANE”), the only criminal organization in

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<sup>105</sup> Seizure decree no. 69/2020 RGMP and No. 2 bis/2023 RDS issued on **February 15, 2023**, by the Prevention Measures Section of the Court of Santa Maria Capua Vetere (Caserta).

<sup>106</sup> OCC no. 978/2022 RGNR - 607/2022 RGGIP - OCC no. 11/2022, issued on September 24, 2022, by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>107</sup> No. 19977/2021 RGCASS (LA TORRE *clan*), for a total amount of EUR 5 million; no. 42150/2021 RGCASS (CASALESI *clan*), for a total amount of EUR 5.8 million; no. 33936/2021 RGCASS (CASALESI *clan*), for a total amount of more than EUR 500 thousand.

<sup>108</sup> No. 9337/2023 RGNR issued on **April 7, 2023**, by the District Attorney's Office of Naples.

Campania which currently follows in the footsteps of Raffaele Cutolo, is allegedly confirmed to be operating. The *association* is thought to extend its criminal influence on the neighboring Municipalities of San Nicola la Strada, San Marco Evangelista, Casagiove, Recale, Macerata Campania, San Prisco, Maddaloni and San Felice a Cancelllo. The *clan*, which is named after the two brothers who lead and promote it, supported by the respective wives as it often happens in *Camorra famiglie*, has consolidated on a marked family structure and has great military capacities. These features, as well as the existence of a “common fund”, enabled the organization to survive over the years to the intelligence-led policing, which has however strongly reduced the organization’s assets. The BELFORTE *clan* relies on several satellite *gruppi* for control of the territory and the management of its illegal activities, that mainly include extortions to the detriment of commercial activities and drug trafficking. In this regard, the Carabinieri concluded a recent police operation on **April 19, 2023** with a pretrial detention order<sup>109</sup> against 23 people, including some members of the BELFORTE *clan*, accused of being part of 2 different crime groups in Milan and Marcianise. The latter had managed to consolidate a thriving business in drug trafficking and dealing over the years. In Marcianise, recent investigative activities<sup>110</sup> have supposedly documented the presence of the PICCOLO-LETIZIA *clan*, in strong opposition to the aforementioned BELFORTE *clan* and allied with the PERRECA *clan*, operating in the neighboring Municipality of Recale. This *association*, although severely reduced, is thought to still be operating in the reference territory, as emerged from the arrest *in flagrante delicto*<sup>111</sup>, executed on **June 1, 2023** by the State Police, against a direct member of the aforementioned *famiglia*, author of several acts of extortion aggravated by Mafia methods to the detriment of a bar owner in Caserta.

In the district of **Santa Maria a Vico and San Felice a Cancelllo** a recent investigative activity executed by the Guardia di Finanza of Marcianise has allegedly documented the continuing operativity of the MASSARO *clan*. The operation was concluded on **January 12, 2023** in Santa Maria a Vico (Caserta) with a pretrial detention order<sup>112</sup> against 6 people accused of participating in extortion and corruption aggravated by the Mafia method. The investigation shed light on a system based on threats and corrupt practices for illegal buying and selling of the local cemetery’s chapels,

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<sup>109</sup> No. 28402/2018 RGNR, no. 21107/2019 RGGIP and OCC no. 75/2023 issued on **April 18, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

<sup>110</sup> No. 16400/2019 RGNR, no. 7624/2020 RGGIP and ROCC no. 114/2022, issued on March 25, 2022, by the Court of Naples

<sup>111</sup> The arrest was validated by the issuance, on **June 12, 2023**, by the Court of Naples of the pretrial detention order no. 14714/2023 RGNR, no. 11573/2023 RGGIP and no. 183/2023 RMC.

<sup>112</sup> No. 2591/2019 RGNR, no. 1555/2020 RGGIP and no. 1/2023 RMC issued on **January 2, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

and saw the participation of organized crime leaders and local public officials, as well as an entrepreneur in the funeral industry.

Organized crime's interest towards funeral industry was additionally documented by a different investigative activity which on **January 13, 2023**, in the Municipalities of Pignataro Maggiore and Pastorano (Caserta), led to the execution of a pretrial detention order<sup>113</sup>, concluded by the Carabinieri, against 4 leaders of the *LIGATO clan*, who are thought to have made several extortion requests since 1988 to a local entrepreneur in the funeral industry.

The aforementioned *LIGATO clan* and the allied *LUBRANO clan*, operating in the territories of Pignataro Maggiore and Pastorano, appear to be historically associated with the *SCHIAVONE faction* of the *CASALESI cartel*, which thereby extends its influence and control over illegal activities to other Municipalities in the province of Caserta. The same happens in the Municipalities of Sparanise, Francolise, Calvi Risorta, Teano, Pietramelara, Vairano Patenora, Caiazzo and Piedimonte Matese, where the operativity of the *PAPA famiglia* has been ascertained. This *famiglia* is likewise associated with the *SCHIAVONE faction* of the *CASALESI cartel*.

As regards the province of Caserta, finally, the thriving drug dealing business concerning the coastline, from the Domizio coast to the borders of Lazio, should be noted. Such territory, which has always been under the control of the *CASALESI cartel*, is characterized by intense drug dealing carried out by Italian and foreign individuals, the latter coming mostly from Africa and Romania. In recent years, however, an increase in the presence of people coming from the Neapolitan *hinterland* has been observed. These people try to make room in the local criminal context, notably in the drug trafficking field.

## Province of Salerno

The province of Salerno is characterized by a lack of territorial homogeneity, with socio-economic features that consequently affect local criminal phenomena.

The territory's flourishing economy is appealing to crime organizations, which often come from neighboring areas, and represents a potential destination for illegal investments. Indeed, in the neighboring areas, territorial contiguity with criminal environments coming from the provinces of Naples and Caserta and nearby Basilicata and Calabria tends to foster the influence of

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<sup>113</sup> No. 20928/2022 RGNR, no. 24305/2022 RGGIP and no. 9/2023 ROCC issued on **January 9, 2023**, by the Court of Naples.

the Mafia *associations* historically rooted there. As a result, the *gruppi* in Salerno usually establish criminal business relationships with them. Therefore, in the area a plurality of *associations* characterized by a family structure persists. Some of them represent an evolution of historical *clans* that often follow the footsteps of Raffaele Cutolo, while others developed in recent times as a consequence of power vacuums caused by the intelligence-led policing. Emerging groups have illegal interests in the following fields: drugs, extortions and, generally, acquisitive offenses often realized by resorting to violent acts.

In georeferencing criminal phenomena in the province of Salerno, the territorial partition in four homogeneous macro areas (the *city of Salerno*, the *Agro nocerino-sarnese*, the *Sele Plain* and the *Cilento*) remains valid. In such areas the existing associations exert their influence generally avoiding mutual interference.

In the City of Salerno, intelligence-led policing in recent years has presumably documented the hegemonic permanence of the D'AGOSTINO *clan*, despite some attempts of emerging *gruppi* to work their way into the power vacuums originated from the restrictive measures taken against some leaders belonging to the aforementioned *clan*. This information allegedly emerged, notably, from the operation concluded by the Carabinieri in July 2022 with the arrest<sup>114</sup> in the provinces of Salerno, Avellino, Caserta, Chieti and Frosinone of some people related to the STELLATO *clan*, which historically opposed the D'AGOSTINO *clan*. The charges imputed included Mafia association, extortion, illegal gun license and detention, drug-related crimes, money laundering, swindling and more, the latter aggravated by the Mafia method and purpose. The investigation has supposedly ascertained, inter alia, the STELLATO *clan* leader's attempt to gain sole control over drug dealing in the eastern side of the city after being released in June 2020.

The STELLATO *clan*'s particular ability in delinquency and its insidiousness reportedly emerge also from the operation concluded on **May 25, 2023** by the State Police and the Penitentiary Police with the execution of a pretrial detention order<sup>115</sup> against 53 people, including the son of the aforementioned *clan*'s boss. The charges imputed included association for the purpose of unlawful trafficking of narcotic drugs, drug dealing and related crimes, committed within the walls of Salerno's prison.

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<sup>114</sup> OCC no. 2060/2019 RGNR - 71/2022 ROC and no. 2060/2019 - 74/2022 ROC, issued respectively on June 21 and 24, 2022 by the Court of Salerno.

<sup>115</sup> No. 4507/2021 RGNR, no. 2486/2022 RGGIP and no. 50/2023 RMC issued on **April 3, 2023**, by the Court of Salerno.



# Provincia di Salerno



Province of Salerno



Some acts of intimidation<sup>116</sup> recorded during the semester under review would be attributable to the context of tension between the *clans* outlined above.

Drug trafficking and dealing, in addition to extortions and usury, are still the main unlawful interests pursued by criminal organizations active in the provincial capital.

To this field should be traced the investigative activities concluded by the law enforcement officers during the semester under review in the City of Salerno. In particular, on **February 28, 2023**, the Carabinieri executed an arrest warrant<sup>117</sup> against 2 people with a criminal record, accused of extortion aggravated by the Mafia method at the expense of 2 art dealers of Rome. On **March 13, 2023**, the State Police executed an arrest warrant<sup>118</sup> against 5 people with a criminal record, accused of complicity in attempted extortion aggravated by the Mafia method, robbery, receiving stolen goods, illegal possession and illegal firearms permit, and possession with intent to deal drugs. In particular, the mentioned investigative activity has uncovered that the arrestees attempted to take over the fish market of Salerno, extorting money from companies in this sector. In the matter of the drugs sector, there were several confiscations of drugs<sup>119</sup> in the period under review. Concerning that point, the “Manfredi” harbor is worth a special mention: its strategic geographical location and its efficient connection with the hinterland expose it to the aims of organized crime, both of the province of Salerno and of the neighboring territories, which are potentially involved in the logistics hub for the transit of trafficking. This is allegedly proven by the considerable drug seizures of the

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<sup>116</sup> On **January 1, 2023**, during the night, inside the social housing district “Rione Petrosino”, unknown individuals fired towards the dwelling of a subject arrested by the Carabinieri the previous December for illegal carrying of firearms and attempted extortion at the expense of a bakery in Salerno. On **March 23, 2023**, the same subject was arrested again by the Carabinieri for illegal possession of firearms, in execution of arrest warrant no. 9976/22 RGNR and no. 6354/22 RGGIP issued by the Court of Salerno. On **June 6, 2023**, as a result of controls carried out inside the social housing district “Rione Petrosino”, the man was reported once again to the Judicial Authority by the State Police for illegal possession of firearms and receiving stolen goods, since inside a garage in his possession were discovered numerous ammunitions of firearms as well as a scooter that is proceeds of theft.

During the night of **April 4, 2023**, inside the social housing district “Rione Petrosino”, unknown persons on scooters opened fire against the main door of a building.

On **April 18, 2023**, in Matierno di Salerno, a person with a criminal record for drug dealing was hit in the groin, not seriously, by a gunshot fired by unknown people.

<sup>117</sup> No. 3205/2021 RGNR, no. 7065/2021 RGGIP e no. 30/2023 RMC issued on **February 22, 2023**, by the Court of Salerno.

<sup>118</sup> No. 3444/2021 RGNR and no. 36/2023 RMC issued on **March 2, 2023**, by the Court of Salerno.

<sup>119</sup> During the semester under review, the law enforcement officers have been arresting numerous individuals accused of possession with intent to distribute drugs, often also found in possession of firearms. In particular, on **February 20, 2023**, the State Police arrested two spouses, who owned two fruit and vegetables stores, found in possession of 2 guns with relative ammunition, 2 badges used by the law enforcement and some drugs. On **March 11, 2023**, the State Police arrested *in flagrante delicto* a person with a criminal record, found in possession of 450 gr of cocaine and a gun with its ammunition. On **March 20, 2023**, the Carabinieri arrested *in flagrante delicto* a convicted person already under house arrest, found in possession of drugs - with intent to distribute them - and the relative packaging material.

last few years<sup>120</sup>, followed by the latest police operations, that have led to the recovery and the seizure of vast amounts of drugs. In this regard is recalled the arrest *in flagrante delicto* of 2 persons and the contextual seizure of 60 kg of cocaine executed on **February 7, 2023**, by the Guardia di Finanza inside the harbor of Salerno. The individuals were caught while they were about to retrieve the drug inside a *container*. Once again, on **March 30, 2023**, in the harbor of Salerno, the Guardia di Finanza, in collaboration with the Customs and Monopolies Agency of Salerno, seized a load of 200 kg of cocaine hidden inside a *container* coming from South America. Finally, on **April 23, 2023**, in Boscoreale (NA), the Guardia di Finanza arrested the owner of a company importing legumes and seized over 1,000 kg of marijuana hidden inside a *container*, that passed through the harbor of Salerno. The *container* transported commodities coming from North America and was allocated to the above-mentioned company.

In relation to the neighboring Municipality of Vietri sul Mare, investigations of the last few years documented the operation of the *APICELLA clan*, which succeeded the already dominant *BISOGNO clan* in controlling local illegal activities. These activities would include - besides the traditional extortive practices and drug trafficking - the unlawful management of beach facilities and the infiltration into legal economic activities, such as roadside assistance service and removal and judicial custody of vehicles.

The already mentioned *BISOGNO clan* reportedly confirms its operation in Cava de' Tirreni instead, a municipality located between Salerno and the territory of *Agro nocerino-sarnese*. Its unlawful interests would include extortions, usury and drug trafficking, also pursued through its own contacts, such as the *ZULLO famiglia*. The current social dangerousness of some members of the *BISOGNO clan* and, therefore, the operation of the *clan* itself, are documented by the seizure of assets<sup>121</sup> executed by the DIA of Salerno in the first half of 2022. The operation was proposed by the District Attorney of Salerno and the DIA Director, against an individual already convicted by final judgment of Mafia associations, since this person is a member of the above-mentioned *Camorra clan*. The ablative measure involved several business activities in the food and fuel distribution sectors, as well as financial relations and other assets, for a total amount of EUR 1 million.

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<sup>120</sup> On **April 6, 2022**, at the harbor of Salerno, the Carabinieri and the Guardia di Finanza seized about 275 kg of cocaine, hidden in some containers also containing fruit and vegetables coming from Ecuador.

<sup>121</sup> Seizure decree no. 22/2021 RMSP and no. 4/2022 Seizure order issued on **June 6, 2022**, by the Prevention Measures Section of the Court of Salerno.

The municipalities of the Amalfi Coast<sup>122</sup>, although not characterized by endogenous *associations*, fall into the goals of criminal *groups* of the neighboring territories. Among the several, widespread illegal activities carried out, drug-related and acquisitive crimes stand out.

The *Agro nocerino-sarnese* territory<sup>123</sup> has always been affected by criminal organizations of *clans* from municipalities of Vesuvius due to the territorial promiscuity that characterises this area. This condition often encourages interference from Neapolitan criminal groups, such as the CESARANO *clan*, whose influence is expanded from Castellammare di Stabia (Naples) and Pompei (Naples) to the territory of Scafati (Salerno). This is profit-sharing or even commingling, as in the case of the FEZZA-DE VIVO *clan* from Pagani (Salerno) and the GIUGLIANO *clan* from the near Municipality of Poggiomarino (Naples). In particular, the latter circumstance would emerge on December 2 2023, after the State Police, the Carabinieri and the Guardia di Finanza executed a pretrial detention order<sup>124</sup> against 25 members of these last two *Camorra* organizations allied together. Their influence reached some municipalities east of the Naples province and of the *Agro nocerino-sarnese* territory. These persons were accused of Mafia association, murder, extortion, offenses related to weapons and more. The order would document, among other things, how the *boss* of the GIUGLIANO *clan* - settled in the Municipality of Pagani (Salerno) - assumed the main role of “advisor” to the members at the top of the local FEZZA-DE VIVO *association*. The latter recognized his high criminal reputation for his experience gained within the so-called NUOVA FAMIGLIA, at that time in conflict with the NUOVA CAMORRA ORGANIZZATA of Raffaele Cutolo.

In relation to this latest operation, on **April 5, 2023**, the Carabinieri and the Guardia di Finanza caught a subject who, after being fugitive for 4 months, together with his brother still untraceable, are considered the actual boss of the FEZZA-DE VIVO *clan*. The man, who evaded the mentioned restrictive measure on December 2 2022, was tracked down in Cava dei Tirreni near a dwelling of a woman, who was also arrested for facilitating the *boss*’s absconding.

The dominant position of the mentioned FEZZA-DE VIVO *clan* in Pagani would seem to be confirmed, which is recognized as having a high military capability, due to seizures of firearms<sup>125</sup> and also seizures of assault weapons executed in the last few years. Its unlawful interests would be geared toward extortion, the drugs sector and acquisition and management of economic activities.

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<sup>122</sup> It includes the Municipalities of Amalfi, Atrani, Cetara, Conca dei Marini, Furore, Maiori, Minori, Positano, Praiano, Ravello, Scala and Tramonti.

<sup>123</sup> It includes the Municipalities of Angri, Corbara, Nocera Inferiore, Nocera Superiore, Pagani, Roccapiemonte, San Marzano sul Sarno, San Valentino Torio, Sarno and Scafati.

<sup>124</sup> OCC no. 2968/2019 RGNR, no. 3214/2020 RGGIP and OCC no. 138/2022, issued on November 24, 2022, by the Court of Salerno.

<sup>125</sup> OCC no. 5117/2019 RGNR and no. 3503/2020 RGGIP issued on **October 5, 2020**, by the Court of Salerno.

In relation to the drugs sector, previous investigations would document the maintenance of the *clan*'s monopoly. This latter would provide drugs to minor *gruppi*, that run the local drug dealing squares or would require them to pay a sum of money in exchange for the possibility to get supplies from other sources.

The operation of the MARINIELLO *clan* and of other newly formed *gruppi* would be confirmed in the Municipality of Nocera Inferiore (Salerno). The criminal groups' main unlawful interests include the drugs sector, infiltration into public contracts, extortion and usury. Concerning this point, on **May 16, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza executed a pretrial detention order<sup>126</sup> against 13 individuals. The persons were directors and Chief Executive Officers of a real estate brokerage firm, accused of participating in aggravated usury and extortion in a factoring assignment at the expense of another company working in the renewable energy sector. The order also entailed the preventive seizure of funds, immovable property and shares with a total amount of EUR 2 million. In contrasting wrongdoings in the matter of drugs, on **June 13, 2023** the Guardia di Finanza executed a pretrial detention order<sup>127</sup> against 8 individuals, accused of association aimed at drug trafficking. The investigative activity has revealed that the criminal group's *boss* - while being under the obligation to stay in Scalea (Cosenza) - would have played the middleman between the *clan* of Torre Annunziata (Naples) and those of Calabria, purchasing on several occasion up to 200 kg of cocaine. The police have conducted operations in the territory in question that have highlighted - as already mentioned for other situations - the increasing and widespread inclination of criminal *associations* to consummate tax crimes. To this context would be attributable the operation concluded on **June 15, 2023** by the Guardia di Finanza, who executed a pretrial detention order<sup>128</sup> against 7 individuals and the preventive seizure of goods and values for a total amount of EUR 3 million. Alleged criminal offenses go from fraudulent to tax evasion, to self-laundering and obstructing a public tendering procedure, with the involvement of some capital companies engaged in selling petroleum products. The operation of the TEMPESTA *clan*<sup>129</sup> would be confirmed in Angri (Salerno) and in the meantime would have regained strength thanks to the release of some preeminent exponents. It would also have formed alliances with certain more active individual of emerging local *gruppi* and with *associations* of the neighboring area of Vesuvius. On **May 9, 2023**, the DIA executed a confiscation order of numerous immovable properties against a preeminent exponent of the TEMPESTA *clan*. This latter had already received an asset-protection measure<sup>130</sup> in September 2022, on the proposal signed by

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<sup>126</sup> No. 1112/2020 RGNR and no. 4543/2020 RGGIP issued on **April 18, 2023**, by the Court of Nocera Inferiore (Salerno).

<sup>127</sup> No. 8080/2022 RGNR, no. 5599/2022 RGGIP and no. 72/2023 RMC issued on **May 31, 2023**, by the Court of Salerno.

<sup>128</sup> No. 3307/2021 RGNR and no. 3956/2021 RGGIP issued on **May 29, 2023**, by the Court of Nocera Inferiore (Naples).

<sup>129</sup> Named after the alias of his deceased founder, boss of the NOCERA *famiglia*, nicknamed indeed "Tempesta" (Storm).

<sup>130</sup> No. 9/2023 and no. 9/2022 RMSP issued on **February 23, 2023**, by the Court of Salerno.

the Prosecutor of Nocera Inferiore (Salerno) and the DIA Director. The individual had been convicted by final judgment for Mafia association, murder having more than one aggravating circumstance, usury and extortion. The dominant operation of the *SERINO clan* with unlawful interests toward extortion, usury, drug trafficking and money laundering through commercial activities would be confirmed in Sarno (Salerno). Previous investigations would have proved the inclination of the *association* to infiltrate the local Public Administration, interfering also in administrative elections. In the same territory also other criminal *gruppi* would coexist peacefully, such as the *GRAZIANO clan* of Quindici (Avellino). It would have unlawful interests in extortion activities, infiltration in public contracts through firms that are attributable to them, and new resources mainly dedicated to drug trafficking.

In the Municipalities of San Marzano sul Sarno (Salerno) and San Valentino Torio (Salerno) - long ago under the influence of the now dismantled *ADINOLFI clan*, - chaotic and irregular criminal events exist. There are several local *gruppi* and new profiles trying to emerge in the local criminal scenario, as well as other cliques from the provinces of Naples and Avellino.

The *LORETO-RIDOSSO clan* would operate in the Municipality of Scafati (Salerno), historically allied to the *CESARANO clan* from Castellammare di Stabia (Naples) and also operative in Pompeii (Naples). The mentioned promiscuity of the *Agro nocerino-sarnese* territory here causes a widespread instability of criminal balances. There are also new *gruppi* trying to emerge, engaged in drug dealing, extortion and acquisitive crimes, also with the use of firearms and explosives. This situation would be confirmed by the crimes<sup>131</sup> reported in this territory during the semester under review.

Lastly, in relation to the *Agro nocerino-sarnese* territory, on **January 19, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza executed a pretrial detention order<sup>132</sup> in Castel San Giorgio (Salerno) against 82 individuals.

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<sup>131</sup> On **January 25, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Scafati executed a pretrial detention order no. 165/2022 RGNR and no. 260/2022 RGGIP issued on January 20, 2023, by the Court of Nocera Inferiore (Salerno) against 3 individuals accused of criminal damage. The three allegedly detonated an improvised explosive device outside a local butcher shop. Late in the evening of **February 13, 2023**, in the Mariconda di Scafati neighborhood, a young man was shot in the leg by a minor after a fight. On **March 26, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Nocera Inferiore (Salerno) executed a pretrial detention order no. 60/2023 RGNR and no. 60/2023 RGGIP issued on March 24, 2023, by the Juvenile Court of Salerno, against the author of the aforementioned injury, accused of participating in grievous bodily harm and illegal carrying of firearms, aggravated by despicable and futile motives. It is not ruled out that the episode occurred in the context related to drug dealing.

On **February 27, 2023**, in Scafati, a masked man entered a store, threatened the owner with a gun and made him hand over the proceeds. As the author of the robbery was running away, he shot the owner of the store and injured him not seriously.

On **March 26, 2023**, in Scafati (Salerno), the Carabinieri arrested *in flagrante delicto* a person with a criminal record from the Municipality of Sant'Antonio Abate (Naples) for possession with intent to distribute drugs. During the search the man was found in possession of over 50 doses of cocaine.

On **May 12, 2023**, in Scafati, during the night unknown persons detonated an improvised explosive device outside a phone store. The explosion damaged the surrounding buildings and parked vehicles.

<sup>132</sup> No. 331/2020 RGNR and no. 2847/2020 RGGIP issued on **December 27, 2022**, by the Court of Nocera Inferiore (Salerno).

These persons were accused of conspiracy aimed at committing numerous tax crimes through issuing non-existent invoices, tax evasion, in addition to receiving stolen goods, money laundering, reinvestment of money and more. The suspects had organized a fraudulent scheme to evade VAT, with the participation of one of the biggest corporate groups in the petroleum sector in Italy concerning the “white pumps”. The order also entailed the seizure of movable and immovable property worth more than EUR 136 million. The aforementioned investigation confirms that criminal groups are increasingly interested in tax crimes characterized by possibilities of high profit and reduced legal uncertainty.

The *Piana del Sele*<sup>133</sup> is characterized by flourishing agricultural settlements and farms that feed the industry for the transformation of the related raw material and connote the local economy. This agricultural vocation is the reason for facilitation and exploitation of illegal immigration and prostitution by foreigners, in addition to labor exploitation, which are documented by some investigations concluded in the last few years. At the same time, there is the presence of local criminal groups that have unlawful interests that lie mainly in the sectors of drugs and extortion.

In the Municipality of Eboli (Salerno), once under the hegemonic control of the MAIALE *clan*, the current criminal scenario would be extremely fragmented, without a strong Mafia-style organized crime group. It is not excluded the attempt to recreate new *associations*, considering that the charismatic individuals of the long-standing local Mafia-style organizations will be released.

In Battipaglia (Salerno), the unlawful activities would be controlled by the PECORARO-RENNA and DE FEO *clans*, whose long-standing contrast recently would have left room for new joint interests. This would be documented thanks to an investigation<sup>134</sup> concluded in 2019 by the Carabinieri and State Police. Further confirmation of this comes from the inquiry<sup>135</sup> concluded by the Carabinieri in 2019, highlighting the alliance between the DE FEO and PECORARO-RENNA *clans* in controlling drug dealing, also through the constitution of a “kitty” in order to share profits later.

In the last few years, a significant connection emerged between the PECORARO-RENNA *clan* and some *associations* from Naples province, in particular with the MALLARDO<sup>136</sup> from Giugliano in

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<sup>133</sup> Also known as *Piana di Paestum* and it includes the Municipalities of Battipaglia, Eboli and Capaccio Paestum.

<sup>134</sup> Criminal procedure 12100/2016 RGNR of the Salerno Court. This operation led to the arrest of 37 individuals among leaders and members of the *clans*, unveiling an armed association dedicated to drug dealing and drug trafficking operating in the Municipalities of Salerno, Bellizzi (Salerno) and Pontecagnano Faiano (Salerno).

<sup>135</sup> Pretrial detention order no. 12100/16 RGNR and no. 726/17 RGNR issued on July 10, 2019, by the Court of Salerno against 18 members of the PECORARO-RENNA and DE FEO *clans*, accused of conspiracy aimed at drug trafficking, drug dealing and illegal possession of firearms.

<sup>136</sup> The MALLARDO, CONTINI-BOSTI and LICCIARDI *clans* represent the *Camorra cartel* denominated SECONDIGLIANO ALLIANCE. It exerts its criminal influence in most of the City of Naples and in some Municipalities of the northern hinterland of Naples.

Campania (Naples) and with CESARANO from Pompei (Naples). The circumstance would have emerged from an investigation concerning a truck driver's murder committed in Pontecagnano Faiano (Salerno) in 2015. It would appear that the PECORARO-RENNA would have commissioned the offense to an exponent of the CESARANO *clan*, and then executed by the exponents of the MALLARDO *clan*. The instigators and perpetrators of the offense have been recently convicted by final judgment<sup>137</sup>.

The DE FEO *clan* - recently strengthened because of the return of some leading figures in the territory - would operate in the district of the municipalities of Bellizzi (Salerno), Pontecagnano Faiano (Salerno), Montecorvino Rovella (Salerno) and Pugliano (Salerno). The unlawful interests are still extortions, money laundering and drug trafficking. This latter unlawful interest - as already observed - would be shared with the PECORARO-RENNA *clan* due to new commonalities of interests. The ongoing activity of the DE FEO *clan* is documented by the operation concluded by the Carabinieri on **March 17, 2023**. This latter executed a pretrial detention order<sup>138</sup> against 4 individuals linked to the *clan*, including one of the current bosses<sup>139</sup>, accused of extortion aggravated by the Mafia method. The investigation would have unveiled several extortionate conducts, committed by those in custody at the expense of private citizens and mostly aimed at the "recovery of claims" on behalf of third parties.

The *Cilento*<sup>140</sup> represents the fourth territory of the Salerno province where allegedly there is no evidence of the presence of local *Camorra* organizations. For this area as well, its particular geographical location would facilitate the Mafia infiltrations coming from neighboring territories, that would choose this area to infiltrate crucial sectors of the legal economy, local Public Administrations, in order to influence choices and reinvest illicit funds. In particular, the Mafia coteries, which hail from northern provinces of Campania and from the regions of Basilicata and Calabria, are interested in the territory of Vallo di Diano. This is documented by the investigation "*Oro nero*"<sup>141</sup> coordinated by the Districts Anti-Mafia Prosecutor's Office of Potenza and Lecce and

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<sup>137</sup> On March 29, 2022, the Salerno Court of Assizes imposed 30 years of imprisonment to the 5 offenders, among instigators and material perpetrators (judgment no. 2/2021 RGNR). The conviction became final (no. 28525/22 RGNR issued on February 10, 2023) after the dismissal of the appeal brought by the accused persons to the Court of Cassation.

<sup>138</sup> No. 12100/2016 RGNR and no. 39/2023 issued on **March 3, 2023**, by the Court of Salerno.

<sup>139</sup> Released in 2014.

<sup>140</sup> It includes the Municipalities of Agropoli, Capaccio Paestum, Castellabate, Cicerale, Laureana Cilento, Lustra, Montecorice, Ogliastro Cilento, Perdifumo, Prignano Cilento, Rutino, Serramezzana, Sessa Cilento and Torchiara, as well as the Municipalities within the Vallo di Diano district (Atena Lucana, Buonabitacolo, Casalbuono, Monte San Giacomo, Montesano sulla Marcellana, Padula, Pertosa, Polla, Sala Consilina, San Pietro al Tanagro, San Rufo, Sant'Arsenio, Sanza, Sassano and Teggiano) and the Valle del Calore district (Laurino, Piaggine, Valle dell'Angelo, Magliano Nuovo, Magliano Vetere, Felitto, Castel San Lorenzo, Roccadaspide, Aquara, Castelcivita, Controne and Postiglione).

<sup>141</sup> OCC no. 4626/2018 RGNR and no. 3022/2019 RGGIP, issued on March 23, 2021, by the Court of Potenza against 30 individuals, accused of Mafia association, conspiracy aimed at fraud on excise duties and VAT on mineral oils,

concluded by the Carabinieri and the Guardia di Finanza on April 12, 2021. This investigation highlights the current relations between the exponents of the criminal groups and those of the CASALESI *cartel* of Caserta, in managing fuel trafficking.

Due to its strong tourist affluence, the coastal area, instead, would facilitate illicit reinvestments, drug trafficking and drug dealing. On **May 16, 2023** in Perdifumo (Salerno), during an investigation<sup>142</sup> coordinated by the Rimini Public Prosecutor, which affected several provinces, the Carabinieri located a clandestine laboratory producing anabolic and the so called “date rape drug”. On that occasion, the Carabinieri arrested *in flagrante delicto* a local couple with a criminal record.

In Agropoli (Salerno), an investigation concluded by the Guardia di Finanza in 2020<sup>143</sup> would have documented the existence of exponents of the FABBROCINO *clan*. It is a *Camorra* organization that works in some municipalities in the eastern area of Naples with an entrepreneurial spirit, dedicated to reinvesting illicit assets acquired in numerous economic activities started in the territory of Salerno. In this regard, on **June 15, 2023**, the Supreme Court of Cassation rejected the appeal against the preventive confiscation ordered by Salerno Court of Appeal concerning properties covered by the mentioned order, making the measure final.

In the Municipality of Capaccio Paestum, recent law enforcement has highlighted the existence of individuals linked to the longstanding MARANDINO *clan*, whose *boss*, recently deceased, turned out to be associated with *Nuova Camorra Organizzata* of Raffaele Cutolo. The judicial actions towards the mentioned *association* over the past few years<sup>144</sup> have identified its unlawful interests in usury, extortion, as well as in acquisition and management of assets, such as beach resorts and welfare services in partnership with the ASL of Salerno. The last of these actions<sup>145</sup> - issued in July

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fictitious registration of assets and companies, money laundering, self-laundering and the use of illicit cash. It was also ascertained the sale of large quantities of agricultural diesel to individuals who then placed it on the ordinary automotive market, using mainly the so-called white pumps.

<sup>142</sup> Criminal procedure no. 3617/2022 RGNR initiated before the Public Prosecutor’s Office at the Court of Rimini.

<sup>143</sup> On October 29, 2020, the Guardia di Finanza executed a Seizure order no. 12/2018 RMSP and no. 1/2020 Racc. Seq. issued by the Prevention Measures Section of Salerno Court on September 22, 2020, against an exponent of the FABBROCINO *clan*. The ablative measure concerned shares and a variety of real estate properties, for a total amount of over EUR 13 million.

<sup>144</sup> In particular, it refers to the investigation concluded on March 20, 2018, by the DIA of Salerno with the confiscation (order no. 22/2017 RMP) of property attributable to a member of the MARANDINO *clan*, for a total amount of about EUR 3 million.

<sup>145</sup> More recently, on July 7, 2021, the Prevention Measure Section of the Court of Salerno issued, at the Quaestor’s proposal, the decree no. 28/2020 RGMP and 14/2021 RDEC. It imposes on the same individual the special surveillance of public security with the residency requirement in the municipality of Capaccio for 3 years, the confiscation of numerous immovable properties, vehicles, financial relations, and companies attributable to the above-mentioned person.



2021 by the Court of Salerno, which ordered the confiscation of property attributable to a member of the MARANDINO *clan* - became irrevocable on **February 8, 2023**.

### **Province of Avellino**

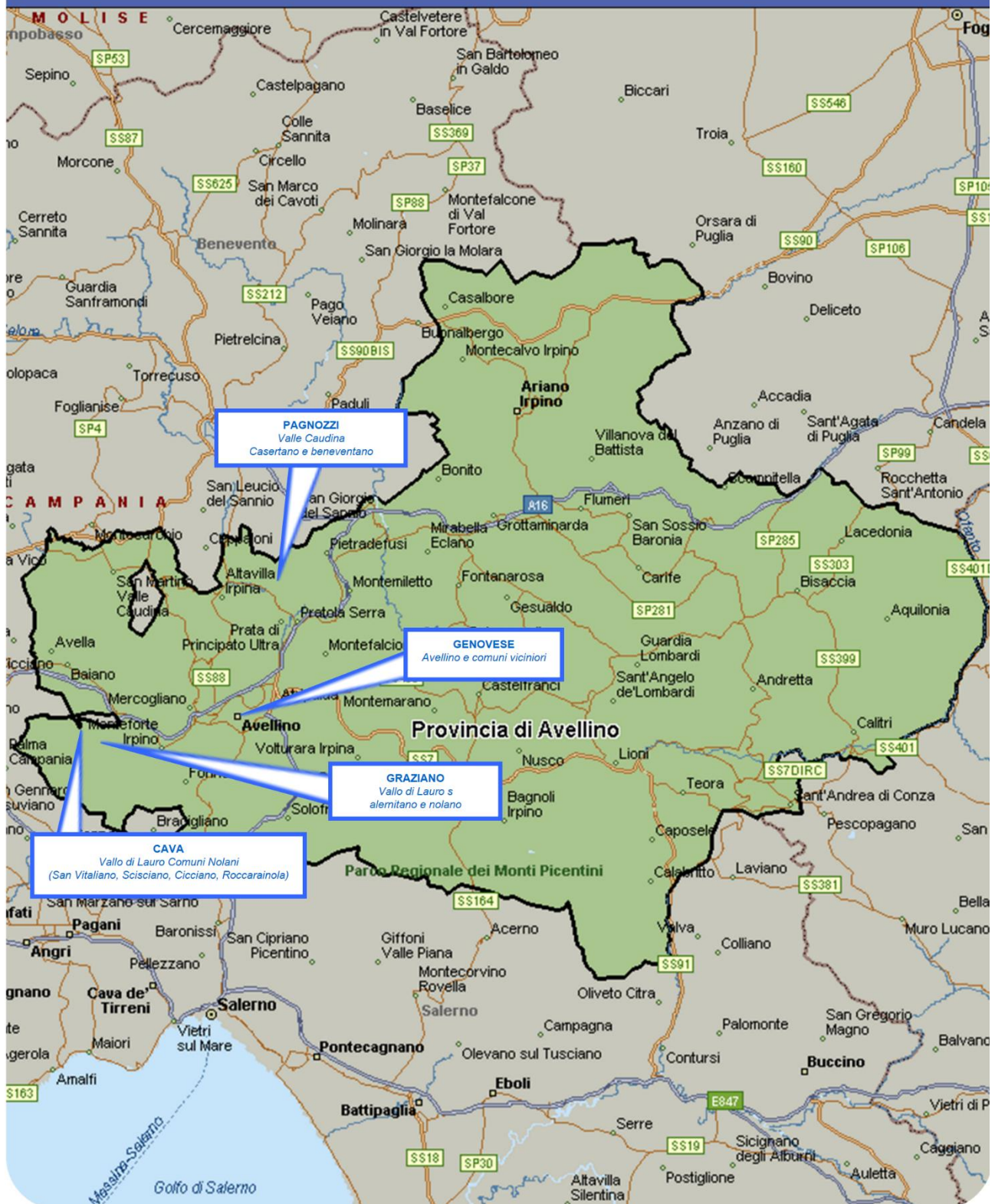
As for the province of Avellino, there are no significant changes compared to the previous semester. The criminal scenario of Irpinia is characterized by the existing relations between local organizations and *Camorra* associations from neighboring provinces. The territories that have a higher presence of criminals are Avellino, Vallo di Lauro at the border with Nola (Naples) and Valle Caudina, which is close to the province of Benevento.

In relation to the City of Avellino, the NUOVO PARTENIO *clan* would seem to be operating, which was previously the longstanding GENOVESE *clan*, significantly downsized by numerous operations. More recently, in early July 2023, the DIA of Naples executed a seizure order<sup>146</sup> against a real estate entrepreneur and her brother, both considered “close” to the NUOVO PARTENIO *association*. The order is the result of the proposal for a preventive measure made by the Public Prosecutor of the Court of Naples and the DIA Director, after complicated investigations. It emerged that there is an intricate set of relations with individuals having a high criminal profile, that would facilitate the economic-entrepreneurial and criminal success of the aforementioned individuals. The latter would have run the sector of real estate auctions since 2016, “steering it” toward the *clan*’s interests. The ablative order affected companies, financial relations, movable and immovable property, worth about EUR 10 million.

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<sup>146</sup> No. 88/2022 RGMP issued on **June 20, 2023**, by the Prevention Measures Section of the Court of Naples.

# Provincia di Avellino



Province of Avellino

The two rival *clans*, CAVA and GRAZIANO, would be reported to be operating in the Vallo di Lauro territory. Both *clans* are from the Municipality of Quindici (Avellino) and in the past were also the authors of bloody conflicts, whose respective leaders recently died of natural causes.

In this territory, the latest investigations would prove that the most violent forms of crime would be overtaken by more silent establishment and profit strategies. In particular, in the pretrial detention order<sup>147</sup> executed by the Carabinieri on **April 26, 2023**, against 2 exponents of the CAVA *clan*, accused of participating in extortion aggravated by Mafia modalities and purposes, the GIP deemed subsisting the so-called *territorial extortion*, that integrates the aggravating circumstance of the Mafia method in the absence of specific violent behavior. These 2 exponents allegedly offered their *protection* to a construction entrepreneur (whose excavator was set on fire) in return for the payment of a sum of money in order to carry out his activity. This invoked the power of threat derived from belonging to the CAVA *clan*, without resorting to violent methods, proving the persisting silent subjugation of the territory.

The PAGNOZZI *clan* is from the Municipality of San Martino Valle Caudina (Avellino). It is represented by some exponents that still do not belong to the *clan* and several other members. Its unlawful interests would include extortion, drugs, gambling, this latter through the distribution of *slot machines* in coffee shops, in arcades and in betting shops. These extend to the province of Benevento and in the region of Lazio. The actual operations of the *clan* would emerge from recent law enforcement that concerned it within the province of Benevento, to which reference is made for further information.

As for the province of Avellino, on **May 16, 2023**, the Prefect appointed the commissions of inquiry pursuant to article 143 of the TUEL (Consolidated Law on Local Authorities), to verify possible infiltrations or Mafia connections in the Municipalities of Monteforte Irpino and Quindici, as further proof of the high pervasive ability in local governments of the criminal groups present there.

## **Province of Benevento**

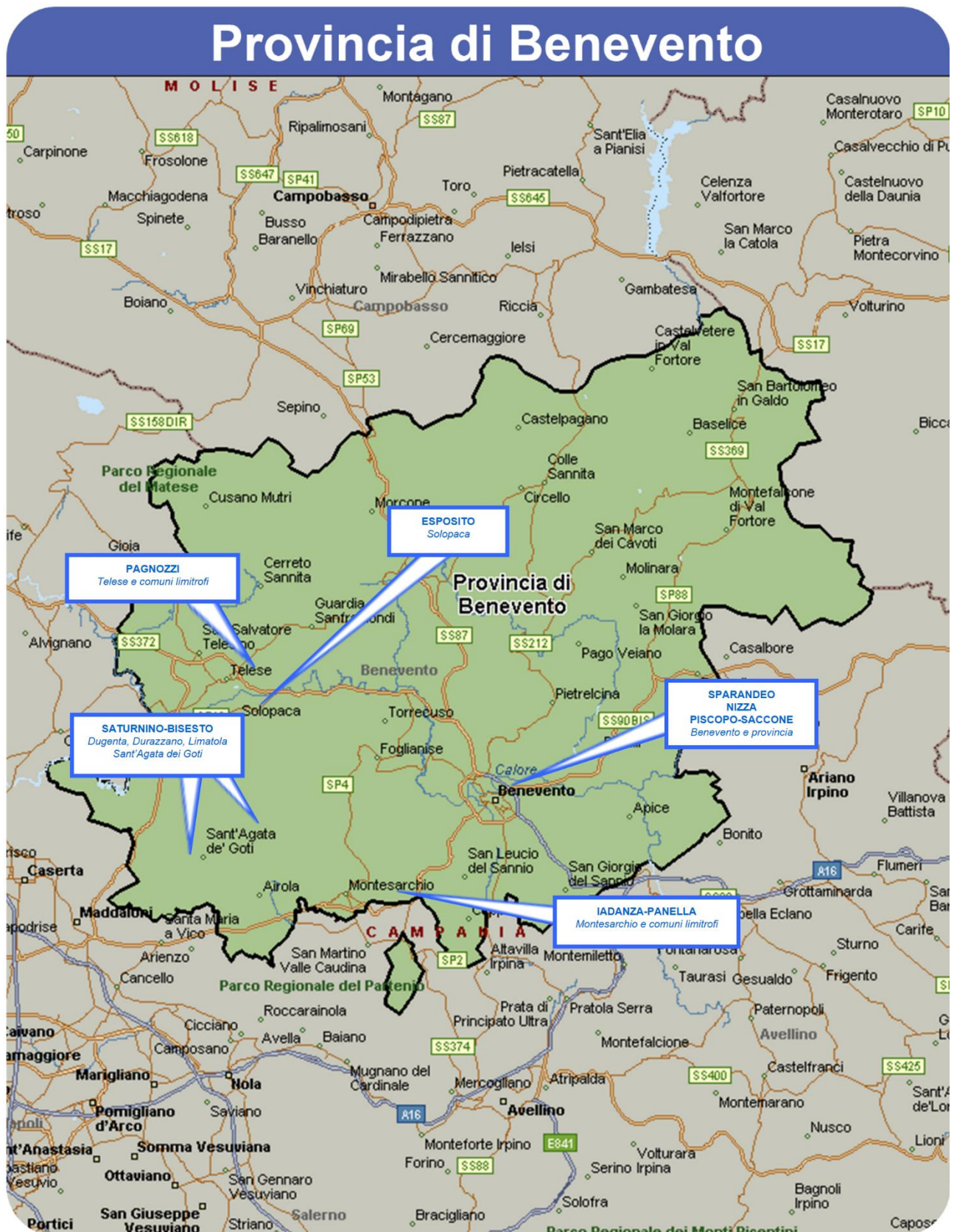
During the period under review, the Samnite criminal scenario shows no significant changes compared to the previous month. During the years, the steady law enforcement has considerably

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<sup>147</sup> No. 31190/2020 RGNR, no. 29694/2021 RGGIP and no. 116/2023 RMC issued on **April 13, 2023**, by the Court of Salerno.



downsized the old *Camorra* local organizations, that are still present nonetheless, thanks to the most traditional illegal activities, such as extortion, usury and drug dealing.



Province of Benevento

The long-standing hegemony of the SPARANDEO<sup>148</sup> *clan* would be confirmed in Benevento, with the conditional participation of the PISCOPO-SACCONI and NIZZA *gruppi*, always operating in usury, extortion and drug dealing<sup>149</sup> sectors.

The PAGNOZZI *clan* would still operate in the Valle Caudina territory, located between the provinces of Benevento and Avellino, even though it is deeply weakened since its most important figures have been arrested. Currently, the *association* would be handled by one of the sons, still at liberty, of the deceased historical boss. The *clan*, originating from the Municipality of San Martino Valle Caudina (Avellino), has always expanded its criminal influence to the neighboring Municipalities of Montesarchio, S. Agata dei Goti, Airola and surrounding areas. In these territories, it controls extortions at the expense of merchants and local entrepreneurs, drug trafficking and drug dealing, as well as laundering and reinvestment of illicit proceeds obtained from these activities. The *clan's* unlawful interests would also include gambling and betting, in particular the distribution of *slot machines* in coffee shops, in arcades and in betting shops, according to the interdiction measures implemented in 2022 by the Prefect of Benevento, against 7 companies of this sector. These latter belonged to an individual considered a leading figure of the PAGNOZZI *clan*, already subjected to the special surveillance measure and convicted by final judgment for Mafia association. This individual allegedly proved to be implicated in previous judicial investigations<sup>150</sup>, in which this person appeared to be the majority shareholder of a company that supplied devices for arcades. The individual is also indicated by the PAGNOZZI *clan* as its reference in Rome<sup>151</sup>. In this regard, a significant presence of the PAGNOZZI *clan* is now judicially documented in the Capital, where it has allegedly reinvested huge illicit funds.

In some areas of the Samnite province, the *association* would exert its influence using *gruppi*, whose alliance is based on a family structure. In the municipalities of the Telesina area and, in particular, in Sant'Agata dei Goti (Benevento) the representative of the *clan* would be the SATURNINO-BISESTO

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<sup>148</sup> On June 8, 2022, the State Police arrested *in flagrante delicto* of illegal possession of firearms a leading figure of the SPARANDEO *famiglia*. During a surveillance operation, the man was allegedly found in possession of a gun with ammunition, hidden in the waistband of his pants and, in that circumstance, reacted by attacking the officers.

<sup>149</sup> On **May 3, 2023**, the man - a leading figure of the PISCOPO *famiglia* - was released after serving a punishment as promoter of a criminal organization dedicated to drug trafficking and drug dealing. Two of the man's brothers appear to be active in the territory, both habitual offenders in the drug sector. One of them is subjected to personal preventive measures by the special surveillance of the public security, with the obligation to reside in the residential Municipality.

<sup>150</sup> Reference is made to the "Tulipano" operation, ended with the execution of the pretrial detention order no. 48291/2008 RGNR, no. 40672/2009 RGNR and no. 28411/2009 RGGIP, issued on January 22, 2015, by the Court of Rome against 61 individuals, accused of Mafia association, drug trafficking, extortion, money laundering and reinvestment of illicit funds. The organization depended on the PAGNOZZI *clan*, that turned out to have crime business relations with exponents of other criminal cliques from Campania, Calabria and the Capital, including members of the CASAMONICA *famiglia*.

<sup>151</sup> According to the measure, the mentioned individual allegedly facilitated the *clan's* interest, allowing him to purchase new portions of territory through the business of *slot machines*.

*gruppo*. Instead, in the Municipalities of Montesarchio, Bonea, Bucciano, Castelpoto, Campoli del Monte Taburno, Tocco Claudio, Cautano and Forchia, the PAGNOZZI *clan* would use the IADANZA-PANELLA *gruppo*, whose unlawful interests would range from drug dealing to extortion.

## - EMILIA-ROMAGNA

In Emilia-Romagna, the outcome of law enforcement work confirmed the inclination of Mafia organizations to infiltrate in the legal economy and in Public Administration, while foreign organizations focus mainly on drug trafficking and dealing, and on the exploitation of the prostitution of others.

Criminal organizations from Calabria, Campania and Sicily are present in the region, together with foreign criminal organizations.

In order to define the various geographical contexts in relation to the homogeneity of the criminality rooted in the area, we can locate the *'Ndrangheta* organization in the provinces of Reggio Emilia (epicenter), Modena, Piacenza and Parma, consistently with the several final judgments of the notorious *Aemilia* trial.

In Emilia, the work of the FARAO-MARINCOLA *cosca*, that originated in the province of Crotone, is recorded in the provinces of Bologna and Modena, mainly with the presence of members of the MUTO *famiglia*. In Bologna, as in Reggio Emilia and Ferrara, recent investigations have also attested to the entrenchment of Nigerian Mafia-type associations mainly active in drug trafficking.

In the province of Piacenza, the presence of *famiglie* linked to the Calabrian NICOSIA *cosca* from Isola di Capo Rizzuto (KR) has been recorded. Over the years in the province of Rimini the presence of individuals from Campania linked to the CONTINI *Camorra clan* has been recorded, while in the province of Modena the rooting of the CASALESI *clan* has been recorded. Lastly, in the Forlì area, connections between local economic operators and leading figures of the PESCE *'Ndrangheta cosca* from Rosarno (RC) have been documented.

The numerous law enforcement operation against *cosche* from Reggio Calabria (BELLOCCO, IAMONTE, MAZZAFERRO, MORABITO-PALAMARA-BRUZZANITI), Vibo Valentia (MANCUSO), Crotone (not only from Cutro, but also the FARAO-MARINCOLA from Crotone) and other Calabrian *famiglie* prove this presence of criminal *consorteries* of Calabrian origin.

Also with reference to the six-month period, it should be noted that on **March 6, 2023**, an asset seizure order<sup>1</sup> worth more than EUR 11 million - issued by the Court of Appeal of Bologna on **February 21, 2023** against a person originally from Crotone residing in Reggio Emilia and close to the GRANDE ARACRI *cosca* was executed. The measure followed the sentence<sup>2</sup> to 8 years and 6

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<sup>1</sup> Decree no. 577/2022 SIGE – 40081/2022 SIEP.

<sup>2</sup> Sentence of the Court of Appeal of Bologna no. 6036/2020 of December 17, 2020, final May 7, 2022.

months of imprisonment for Mafia association and the crime of fraud aggravated by the Mafia method (a crime committed from 2004 to February 2018 and proven as part of the notorious *Aemilia* trial).

On the following **May 30, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Bologna during the “*Aspromonte Emiliano*”<sup>3</sup> operation, executed two pretrial detention orders against 41 individuals. The charged crimes are mostly related to narcotics legislation, - in some cases also in the form of association and aggravated by having committed the alleged facts in order to facilitate the activity of Mafia-type associations of the *'Ndrangheta* ROMEO-STACCU *consorteria* of San Luca (Reggio Calabria), committed mainly in Reggio Emilia, but also in the province of Parma and in the territory of Lazio since 2019. Moreover, the investigation activity made it possible to reveal a particular modality for the payment of drug shipments. In particular, the individuals in charge of the money deliveries, who are connected with *'Ndrangheta* groups from Crotone but with ramifications also in northern Italy, used cryptophones for telephone communications and followed a method of recognition within the “delivery chain” (composed of the cash picker, the courier and the recipient “*broker*”). In particular before the money exchanges, they shared via text message the serial number of a banknote (so-called “token”) and, upon delivery, the courier’s and then the recipient’s signatures were affixed to the bill itself, which, when photographed, constituted confirmation of the transaction. The investigation revealed that the criminal network had transnational ramifications and depended on a leading figure of the *'Ndrangheta* arrested in Spain in March 2021 after a period as a fugitive. This individual had moved significant quantities of narcotics of various types by dealing with South American drug traffickers. The drugs, coming from South America, made stopovers in Africa (Ivory Coast), passed through ports in northern Europe (especially Hamburg, Rotterdam and Antwerp) to arrive in Italy where it was sold especially in the north by the Emilian organization. In just two years, the latter allegedly trafficked a ton of cocaine, 430 kilograms of hashish, and 90 kilograms of marijuana. Contacts with the Lazio CASAMONICA *clan*, Milanese criminality, and Albanians and South Americans based in Lombardy also allegedly emerged.

Regarding Sicilian crime, previous investigations had assessed the interests in the region’s business/entrepreneurial sectors of individuals “close” to the RINIZIVILLO *famiglia* of Gela (Caltanissetta), as well as to the NICOTRA *famiglia* of Misterbianco (Catania).

The foreign criminal organizations operating in Emilia-Romagna appear to be mainly interested in the drug trafficking sector and have gradually managed to take over sectors formerly dominated by local criminal organizations, which are now more inclined to infiltrate the economic/entrepreneurial sector.

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<sup>3</sup> Criminal Procedure 2192/21 RGNR DDA.



## Province of Bologna

In the six-month period in question, the province of Bologna remains a territory targeted by individuals linked to organized crime of Calabrian origin, especially the MOLÈ-PIROMALLI of Gioia Tauro (RC), but the presence of members “close” to the *Camorra* CASALESI *clan* is also noted in the Bologna area.

In the province, the interest of criminal organizations in the narcotics sector remains high.

In this regard, on **February 21, 2023**, the Carabinieri carried out a pretrial detention order<sup>4</sup> against 3 homeless Tunisians for drug trafficking, identified following investigations into a shooting that took place on January 25, 2022 along the tracks of the San Vitale (BO) train station, which was immediately framed as part of a dispute of drug-pushing marketplaces and for which, at the time, one person had already been arrested.

Moreover, on **March 22, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza<sup>5</sup> seized 44 kilograms of cocaine concealed inside the cavity made in a tractor-trailer coming from Belgium, arresting the two drivers, one of Calabrian origin from the province of Vibo Valentia and the other from the province of Messina.

Also regarding drug trafficking, on **March 28, 2023**, the State Police of Bologna executed a pretrial detention order<sup>6</sup> against 21 people since 2014. The measure stems from investigations carried out on a group of individuals mostly of Dominican nationality dedicated to narcotics trafficking activities on an international scale who had vehicles with false bottoms to transport the narcotics.

## Remaining regional territory

In the six-month period in question, there are several sentences that have certified the presence of individuals affiliated with the GRANDE ARACRI *clan* from Cutro (KR) in the provinces of Reggio Emilia, Modena, Parma and Piacenza, often involved in significant judicial investigations or affected by measures resulting from past investigations.

The province of **Reggio Emilia** represents the epicenter of the *'Ndrangheta* presence in the Emilia territory, since it has been the setting of criminal conduct subject to several sentences as part of the “*Aemilia*” trial, with influence on the provinces of Parma, Modena and Piacenza.

From a purely investigative perspective, in addition to the already described “*Aspromonte Emiliano*” operation, it should be noted that on **January 19, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza arrested<sup>7</sup> 5 foreigners

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<sup>4</sup> Criminal Procedure 6709/22.

<sup>5</sup> Criminal Procedure 3736/2023 RGNR and 2956/23 RG GIP.

<sup>6</sup> Criminal Procedure 14213/2021.

<sup>7</sup> Criminal Procedure 352/23 of the Court of Trento.

(3 Tunisians, 1 Albanian and 1 Portuguese woman) for drug trafficking, seizing 4 kilograms of cocaine and heroin, as well as cutting agent, cash and an illegally held weapon.

On February **20, 2023**, the Carabinieri arrested a Moroccan man who had concealed more than 25 kilograms of marijuana in a building that he illegally occupied.

On **June 21, 2023**, State Police arrested<sup>8</sup> in Reggio Emilia a 29-year-old man of Albanian nationality found in possession of 72 kilograms of cocaine inside his car, that was kept in a garage in his possession, in addition to the cash sum of EUR 50 thousand earned from the illicit activity.

In the province of **Modena**, on **February 19, 2023**, the State Police arrested 2 people residing in Ravenna and Ibiza (Spain), respectively, as they were transporting more than one kilogram of “ecstasy” (about 2,900 pills), in addition to a quantity of cocaine.

In the province of **Piacenza**, on January 23, 2023, the Carabinieri executed a pretrial detention order<sup>9</sup> against 29 individuals believed to be responsible for drug dealing. The investigation activities involved a total of 40 suspects (including 8 Moroccans, 5 Albanians, 2 Tunisians, 2 Romanians, and 2 Ecuadorians) implicated in a systematic dealing of significant quantities of drugs mostly in the province of Piacenza between September 2020 and March 2021.

Generally, criminal activities concerning prostitution and drugs affect also the province of **Rimini**.

It is reported that in Rimini, on **January 26, 2023**, the State Police arrested *in flagrante delicto* a homeless Turkish man, who was the subject of a European Arrest Warrant issued on October 25, 2022, by German Authorities because he was held responsible for voluntary manslaughter. The man was staying in a Rimini hotel with false Greek identity documents, and a clandestine gun was also found and seized upon notification of the pretrial detention order.

In the province of **Ferrara**, on **February 14, 2023**, the State Police arrested *in flagrante delicto* an Albanian man caught in possession of more than 25 kilograms of hashish where he lived. The following **April 6, 2023**, the State Police arrested an individual of Pakistani nationality, as he had concealed inside his home about 7 kilograms of heroin, as well as the sum of more than EUR 62 thousand in cash.

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<sup>8</sup> Criminal Procedure 3281/23 RGNR and 2111/2023 RG GIP.

<sup>9</sup> OCC 1836/21 RGNR.

## - FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA

In a period of general crisis, economic activity in the region has nonetheless grown, with an increase in productivity<sup>1</sup>, especially in the construction and services sectors, and the consequent growth in the number of people employed<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, criminal organizations have always been interested in this thriving economic fabric, as they have large amounts of capital at their disposal to reinvest. They think of these areas with great entrepreneurial vocation as a landing point, with a silent activity of infiltration into the legal economy. This is confirmed by the results of previous investigations concluded in the territory over the years, which have revealed the presence and operation of individuals traceable to the historical and structured criminal organizations, such as the *'Ndrangheta*<sup>3</sup>, *Cosa Nostra*<sup>4</sup>, *Camorra*<sup>5</sup>, and the *Apulian criminality*<sup>6</sup>, even though they have never found rooted structures of these organizations in the Region. This aspect could leave room for possible settlement attempts by components of other criminal groups, as the geographical position leans towards the Balkan area. The outcome of several investigations<sup>7</sup>, concluded in the reporting period in the Friuli

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<sup>1</sup> According to data of the “Indicatore Trimestrale dell'Economia Regionale” (ITER). Productivity rose by 3.7% compared to the corresponding period in 2022, in line with the national trend.

<https://www.bancaditalia.it/pubblicazioni/economie-regionali/2023/2023-0006/2306-Friuli-Venezia-Giulia.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> The positive results deriving from the substantial investments aimed at the realization of major infrastructure works (among which the ones related to the design and expansion of the A4 freeway and the port of Trieste have the greatest economic commitment) as well as the funds provided by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan for the Region, which would amount to more than EUR 2 billion (figure provided until **June 2023** by the Cabina di Regia PNRR della Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia) have certainly contributed to the development of this macroeconomic phenomenon..

<sup>3</sup> Which aims to infiltrate the legal economic circuit through individuals belonging to or close to the *'ndrine* (the basic unit of the *'Ndrangheta* of Calabria), who have been operating for years in this territory in the construction, mining, and contract transport sectors. In this regard, we can recall the “*Provvidenza*” and “*Camaleonte*” operations of 2017 and 2019 and, more recently, the “*Joy's Seaside*” operation concluded in March 2021 by the State Police of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>4</sup> These are individuals involved in major Mafia investigations with economic interests in the real estate sector. In this regard, it should be recalled that on July 7, 2021, a man from Catania who was living in the province of Pordenone, leading member of the *SCALISI clan*, was held responsible for Mafia-type association, extortion, robbery, and association for the purpose of drug trafficking and was arrested in execution of Sentence no. 1593/2020 issued by the General Prosecutor's Office of Catania.

<sup>5</sup> In particular in the territory of the regional coast up to the town of Caorle (Venice), the presence of individuals with economic interests in the catering sector (owners of pizzeria franchises of brands with national and international scope) and in the clothing retail trade was noted. Moreover, previous investigations (“*Piano B*”, “*White Car*”, “*Welfen*”, “*Lotar*”, and “*Markt*”, concluded between 2018 and 2019, and “*Cantonà*”, of 2020) have determined the perpetration of a number of typically “Mafia-like” crimes such as fraud, tax fraud, trafficking in weapons and drugs, as well as predatory crimes, ascribable to individuals believed to belong to or be close to organized crime in Campania. In particular, the “*Markt*” investigation targeted a number of individuals close to a *Camorra* criminal organization active in Friuli Venezia Giulia and eastern Veneto, believed to be responsible in various capacities for extortion aggravated by the Mafia method. They forced numerous Friulian and Veneto street traders not to carry out their business activities, effectively exercising full control over the territory through repeated intimidatory conduct.

<sup>6</sup> In the past, as part of the information activity conducted by the DIA of Trieste, the settled presence of individuals believed to be connected to organized crime from Apulia has been determined, particularly in the province of Udine, while forms of “criminal commuting” aimed at committing predatory crimes have been registered recently.

<sup>7</sup> Described in detail in the paragraphs on the individual provinces.

area, would in fact confirm that criminal groups, especially foreigners, operate in a wide variety of illegal activities (drug trafficking, facilitation of illegal immigration, interpenetration in the regional economic-financial sector). Institutional attention remains high on precautionary activity, in order to prevent or at least limit criminal interference in the public procurement and contracting sector, especially given the substantial public investments in progress and those planned<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, during the period in question, a measure was issued by the Prefect's office against a company whose shares were held by another company already affected by an anti-Mafia prohibitory injunction issued by the Prefecture of Treviso.

### Province of Trieste

Although not in a permanent form, the presence in the territory of Mafia-type criminal organizations, engaged in committing a variety of illegal acts and in permeating a thriving economic fabric such as that of Trieste, has been proven by previous investigations<sup>9</sup>. In this six-month period, it is worth highlighting the operation "*Ultimo atto*"<sup>10</sup>, concluded by the Carabinieri of Crotone on February 16, 2023 with the arrest of 31 individuals held responsible for Mafia-type criminal association, extortion and arms trafficking. By unveiling the current set-ups and functioning in the territory of Cirò and neighboring areas of 'Ndrangheta branches, such as the Cirò *locale* (the main local organizational unit of the 'Ndrangheta with jurisdiction over criminal activities in an entire town or an area in a large urban center) and the Strongoli 'ndrina, the investigation made it possible to trace one of the suspects, - held responsible for the crime of extortion aggravated by the Mafia method, - to Trieste, where he was staying and working at an operating company inside the city port.

Given its "strategic" geographical location, the city of Trieste represents a privileged access point in Western Europe of the so-called Balkan route, notoriously used not only by drug traffickers but also

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<sup>8</sup> The in-depth examination of public investment projects of greatest interest has been boosted, partly because of the simplification of procedures for speeding up the implementation of works or for the allocation of public grants, which could potentially be of particular stimulus to the interests of organized crime. Above all, we refer to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) for the Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region.

<sup>9</sup> In particular, an investigation by the Guardia di Finanza concluded in 2018, determined how an organization, notably from Campania, employed the illicit profit, through a series of tax frauds, in the acquisition and later management of a company that operated in the sector of storage and trade of petroleum products, as well as a concessionaire of assets and State waters in the Port of Trieste, which had already been alerted and subjected to an anti-Mafia ban issued by the Prefect of Trieste on the basis of the informative contribution provided by the DIA of the Region. The *modus operandi* of the organization was aimed at concretely hindering the identification of the criminal origin of the capital. Also from a precautionary point of view, the operation of individuals close to Mafia circles is confirmed: on February 7, 2022, the DIA of Trieste, assisted by the Naples Operations Center, executed the confiscation of assets (Decree of confiscation no. 5/2020 M.P. issued on February 3, 2022 by the Court of Trieste), for a total value estimated at EUR 580 thousand, against a convicted criminal from Campania held responsible for self-laundering and other tax crimes.

<sup>10</sup> OCC 2490/2022 RGNR Mod. 21 - 3328/2022 RG GIP - 9/2023 RMC, issued by the GIP of the Court of Catanzaro. It represents the continuation of the 2018 "*Stige*" operation afferent to the criminal dynamics of the Cirò *locale* (Criminal procedure 3382/15 RGNR - 2600/15 RG GIP).

by foreign gangs engaged in illegal immigration. With regard to these specific crimes, during this six-month period, a number of investigations were concluded in the territory and will be reported in chronological order. Operation “*Green Road*”<sup>11</sup>, concluded by the Guardia di Finanza of Trieste<sup>12</sup> on **February 16, 2023**, led to the arrest of 18 Nigerians believed to be responsible for international drug trafficking, on the Holland-Nigeria-Ethiopia route, via body packers. Before being disposed of, the drugs were stored at a house in the outskirts of Ferrara, in an area popular among the individuals belonging to that ethnic group. Investigations also led to the arrest, *in flagrante delicto*, of 30 other Nigerians and the seizure of more than 100 kilograms of narcotics including heroin, cocaine and marijuana.

The following **May 10, 2023**, the State Police of Crotone<sup>13</sup>, as part of operation “*Caronte*”<sup>14</sup>, unveiled a transnational organization dedicated to facilitating illegal immigration and money laundering. The organization, divided into cells active in Italy, Turkey and Greece, brought migrants to Italy on sailing ships via the eastern Mediterranean. Seven cells were found on the national territory, including the one from Trieste, which was considered particularly interesting because not only did it deal with the transit of migrants through the *Balkan route*, but it also managed the organization’s “common fund”. Likewise, the operation “*The End*”<sup>15</sup>, concluded on **June 27, 2023**, by the State Police of Trieste, enabled the dismantling of an organization involved in facilitating illegal immigration, arresting 13 Kosovars and Albanians, 10 of whom were permanently settled in the capital of the Region, and identifying 13 additional individuals. The organization was well-structured and had a significant number of means to transport smugglers and illegal immigrants to the Croatia-Slovenia border. As far as the precautionary activity is concerned, the monitoring and in-depth investigation of situations considered at risk of Mafia infiltration allowed the Prefect of Trieste to issue an anti-Mafia prohibitory injunction<sup>16</sup> against a company operating in the port processing sector and with its registered office in the capital of the Region in **June 2023**.

## Province of Gorizia

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<sup>11</sup> OCC no. 1937/20 RGNR - 1912/21 RG GIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Trieste on December 13, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> With the support of the Guardia di Finanza of Rome.

<sup>13</sup> In collaboration with the State Police of Brindisi, Foggia, Grosseto, Imperia, Lecce, Milan, Turin and Trieste, and with the cooperation of Europol and Interpol, through the foreign accessory bodies involved in the operations.

<sup>14</sup> Criminal procedure 6297/2018 RGNR DDA - 189/2019 RG GIP - 98/2022 RMC.

<sup>15</sup> Criminal procedure 4742/21 RGNR DDA - 3169/22 RG GIP.

<sup>16</sup> This measure follows a previous prohibitory injunction issued by the prefecture of Treviso against a public limited company, based in that province, which held a share in the firm based in Trieste affected by the prefectural injunction, because there was a well-founded danger of Mafia infiltration attempts.

The presence of Mafia-type criminal organizations is not recorded in the province. However, as in the past<sup>17</sup>, the economic vitality of the area, which includes the Monfalcone shipyards among its most important businesses, could attract the interest of individuals linked to organized crime<sup>18</sup>.

### Province of Pordenone

Even in the province of Pordenone, the presence of individuals linked to historical Mafia-type organizations was not found during the six-month period. Nevertheless, previous investigations have verified the presence of different criminal organizations and their activity. In particular, we refer to Sicilian organized crime<sup>19</sup>, operating in the construction sector<sup>20</sup>, as well as Apulian criminals active in drug trafficking<sup>21</sup>. In addition, the presence of foreign criminal syndicates is found in the territory, mainly dedicated to drug trafficking<sup>22</sup>.

### Province of Udine

Although there is no investigative evidence in the six-month period regarding the presence of Mafia-type criminal organizations, the province of Udine has in the past been affected by the activity of

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<sup>17</sup> In fact, outcomes of investigations carried out by the DIA of Palermo date back to 2013. These investigations unveiled attempts of an entrepreneur from Palermo and close to *Cosa Nostra* to infiltrate, in several contracts in the shipbuilding hub. This was the “*Darsena 2*” operation (OCC no. 9992/11 RGNR and no. 5428/12 RG GIP Court of Palermo), in which seven individuals were arrested and held responsible for Mafia-type association and laundering.

<sup>18</sup> Even if not related to Mafia, during last semester, a precautionary measure was executed (issued by the GIP of the Court of Venice on August 12, 2022, as part of the Criminal proc. no. 242/2020 RGNR and no. 4427/2020 RG GIP issued by the DDA of Venice) against 9 persons held responsible for trafficking and illegal waste management. The investigation revealed how the criminal organization, with connections both transnational (Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary) and in Lombardy and other provinces of the Veneto region, received, transported, managed and “...unlawfully disposed of large quantities of waste consisting mainly of rubber and plastic, as well as leather scraps and dangerous packaging...”, storing and abandoning them in industrial warehouses located in the municipalities of Borgo Veneto (Padua), Remanzacco (Udine), and Monfalcone (Gorizia).

<sup>19</sup> We report the arrest made by the State Police of Pordenone of a leading member of the SCALISI *clan* of Catania in July 2021.

<sup>20</sup> We recall the OCCs issued by the Caltanissetta Prosecutor’s Office in 2004 and 2005 against individuals associated with the EMMANUELLO *crime famiglia* from Caltanissetta, engaged in the construction industry in Aviano.

<sup>21</sup> We recall the final conviction that took place in October 2019 against an organization linked to the *Sacra Corona Unita*. The outcomes of the “*Uragano*” operation had revealed that some individuals, originating from Brindisi but residing in the province of Pordenone, played “*the role of intermediaries between this organization and another criminal organization*” (ed. Albanian) *operating in the regions of northeastern Italy*,” from whom they acquired several types of drugs destined to be distributed in Apulia. In addition, on November 29, 2022, an Apulian who resided in Pordenone was arrested as part of the “*Federico II*” operation (OCC no. 8075/12 RGNR - 70/12 DDA - 5897/13 RG GIP issued on December 6, 2016, by the Court of Lecce). This operation had dismantled two distinct organizations, one of which was Mafia-like, dedicated to extortion and drug trafficking and another Italo-Albanian, dedicated to importing large quantities of heroin from Albania, operating mainly in the Province of Lecce.

<sup>22</sup> In this regard, we mention the operation “*Dream Earnings*” (Criminal procedure no. 3885/2022 RGNR mod. 21 (formerly 2041/2020 RGNR mod. 44) Public Prosecutor’s Office at the Court of Pordenone) carried out by the State Police of Pordenone, coordinated by the local Public Prosecutor’s Office.

actual branches of historical organizations, such as the *'Ndrangheta*, *Cosa Nostra* and the *Camorra*<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, the operation in the territory of some delinquent groups, mostly composed of foreigners active in various criminal sectors<sup>24</sup> is registered. In this regard, as part of the operation “*Green Road*”<sup>25</sup>, focused on the dynamics of a Nigerian criminal group operating in the regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Piedmont and Tuscany, it was possible to identify a number of international drug trafficking routes, such as the Lagos-Addis Ababa-Milan/Rome route, used to supply the drug dealing market in the Northeastern regions, including the one involving the Udine area.

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<sup>23</sup> Phenomenon already described in detail in the last Semester Report.

<sup>24</sup> It should be recalled that last year in Cervignano del Friuli and in Bagnaria Arsa, the Trieste Guardia di Finanza arrested 2 Croatians *in flagrante delicto* for having sold 5 kilograms of cocaine in bricks to a compatriot and for the attempt to conceal another 80 kilograms in a woodland. The GIP of the Court of Udine validated the arrest, issuing OCCC no. 1569/2022 RGNR and no. 1528/2022 RG GIP and seizing the drugs.

<sup>25</sup> Already described in the section about Trieste.

## - LAZIO

In the first half of 2023, the Lazio criminal landscape was confirmed as diversified and complex, characterized by the coexistence of numerous local groups and organizations and consolidated branches of traditional Mafia organizations such as *'Ndrangheta*, the *Camorra* and *Cosa Nostra*. They frequently collaborate actively to facilitate the management of illicit trafficking and the consequent activities of money laundering and reuse of capital of criminal origin. The alteration of normal market balances and the contamination of the economic fabric were described in detail in the complex operations “*Tritone*” and “*Propaggine*”<sup>1</sup>, which promptly controlled attempts to implement an actual progressive colonization of certain productive sectors in the metropolitan area of the Capital and southern Lazio.

As is known, the Lazio criminal context, and in particular the metropolitan context of the Capital, are particularly complex, as they are marked by the presence of diverse illicit interests and by the strategic coexistence of organizations representing typical branches of traditional Mafias, and other criminal organizations of composite structure. These are local organizations, to which several sentences have now legally attributed the qualification of true Mafia associations. The impossibility of the organizations to impose their influence and authority in this complex area has led to the establishment of numerous foreign organizations. In this regard, we report the presence of Albanian, Chinese and Nigerian groups, which mainly target drug trafficking and frequently collaborate with other organizations.

Criminal organizations of Albanian origin have gained a dominant position, as they are able to exploit a dense network of international affiliates and they can guarantee the supply of large quantities of narcotics at lower prices, compared to those of other supply channels. Intimidation and subjugation, code of silence, aversion towards collaborators of justice, rigid internal rules that are widely recognized and respected among the members, as well as forms of alliance and collaboration with other criminal environments, are characteristics that closely resemble the set-up of traditional Mafias, in particular the *'Ndrangheta* environments. In the six-month period of reference, at a regional level, there is a rather widespread presence of criminal groups made up off Italo-Albanian members, which are active in various areas of the Capital (such as the Tuscolano and Ponte Milvio districts, some areas of the Castelli Romani, Pomezia, Ostia and Acilia), in northern Lazio, and in the areas of Latina and Frosinone.

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<sup>1</sup> Operation “*Tritone*” - OCC no. 9430/2018 RGNR and 9348/2019 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome on Feb. 14, 2022; Operation “*Propaggine*” - OCC no. 4114/16 RGNR and 1994/17 RG GIP issued on March 23, 2022, by the Court of Rome.



Chinese criminality continues to engage in activities of counterfeiting, falsification and sale of trademarks and distinctive marks, sale of counterfeit products, money laundering, and money transfer. They also engage in activities of exploitation of the prostitution of others, robbery and extortion mainly towards their own compatriots. Drug dealing activities mainly concern methamphetamines, synthetic drugs, and the “exclusive” distribution of the so-called “*Shaboo*”. In the economic management of illicit activities, issuing invoices for non-existent transactions and using an “informal” system of debt compensation, essentially based on trust, called “*fei ch’ien*”<sup>2</sup> are frequent practices. Sometimes they are used as a kind of parallel banking system and have acquired the characteristics of continuity and specificity, to the point of offering in the Capital real services of illegal financial intermediation.

Nigerian criminality deals with different types of illegal activities, engaging in drug trafficking, extortion, exploitation of the prostitution of others, facilitation of illegal immigration and human trafficking. Also in this case, in order to prevent traceability of financial transactions and in particular of money transfers to Nigeria, criminals resort to a financial system based essentially on different modes of fiduciary compensation, called “*hawala*”. It also facilitates other types of crimes such as computer fraud, credit card cloning and money laundering, frequently carried out through the use of cryptocurrencies.

The biggest Nigerian organizations, founded on cultism and esoterism such as the SEC (Supreme Eye Confraternity) and the BLACK AXE, can also benefit from international expansion and branching, and therefore have similarities with the membership rituals, vocabulary and, increasingly cross-border structure of the Calabrian *’ndrine*. Indeed, conditions of subjugation and a widespread code of silence, clear opposition towards collaborators of justice and support for prisoners are also fundamental elements of these criminal groups.

The “*Free Bridge*”<sup>3</sup> operation of **April 13, 2023**, which will be described in detail in the part dedicated to the province of Rieti, represents further confirmation of the presence of organizations of Nigerian origin. Their presence spread from the Capital to other areas of the Region, and in particular, in the Rieti territory.

For a long time, the peculiarity of the criminal structures present in the Region has been characterized by the widespread awareness of the need to avoid violent conflicts between the various groups. Each

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<sup>2</sup> Literally “*flying money*”, the “*fei ch’ien*” allows the transfer of a nominal value only to a counterparty abroad, which triggers the complex procedure of the amount’s compensation by resorting to various systems, including split transfers and simulated commercial transactions.

<sup>3</sup> OCC no. 2756/2022 RGNR and no. 2378/2022 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rieti on **March 27, 2023**.

group manages specific activities, avoiding in this way the risk of counterproductive overlapping, thanks to the high population density<sup>4</sup> and territorial extension.

However, a series of crimes observed in the six-month period of reference, such as murders and kneecappings, and the frequent discovery of clandestine weapons in the course of law enforcement activities<sup>5</sup> are still under investigation. Investigations aim to understand if these crimes are part of an ongoing redefinition of the criminal balance (e.g. aimed at the control of drug markets), or whether, on the contrary, they are isolated episodes that, although of exceptional gravity and relevance, do not have substantial repercussions on the criminal balance in the Lazio territory. The related investigations, which are still in progress, cannot at the moment confirm that these events can be framed within contexts of organized crime, although the characteristics and operating methodologies appear typical of more complex and structured criminal scenarios.

The Public Prosecutor at the Court of Rome, Dr. Francesco LO VOI described the peculiarity of the diverse and complex Rome criminal scenario in the course of the **July 12, 2023** hearing before the “Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry for Mafia and other criminal associations, including foreign organizations”. During the hearing, he made a significant comparison between the main characteristics of the Palermo criminal landscape, considered more schematic, and the criminal landscape of the “*district of the Rome Public Prosecutor’s Office, which corresponds with the entire Lazio region*”, with more intricate dynamics. He stated: “*For the executives at the Prosecutor’s office, the Palermo situation was relatively schematic. Cosa Nostra represented 80 percent of the activities and files that ended up on our tables... Then there was 20 percent of other criminal activities that sometimes connected with Cosa Nostra and sometimes remained independent.*” In contrast to the territory of Lazio, “*we have a series of Mafia organizations, so much so that the debate concentrated on the differences between native Mafia organizations, organizations relocated from the places of origin, on domestic Mafia, on foreign Mafia organizations, on the connections among them that we see on a daily basis in their collaborations. So, we have a number of Mafia-type criminal organizations that operate throughout the region. Some of them directly originate from and connect with the traditional Mafia (Cosa Nostra, Camorra, and ’Ndrangheta) and operate by the same schemes they employed and still employ in the original territories. There are also foreign organizations structured in a similar way,*” referencing to “*a strong presence of Albanian organized crime that interacts with significant gangs of local organized crime*” and to Nigerian organized crime

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<sup>4</sup> Lazio is the second-largest region in terms of resident population according to Istat (Istat Website-Demography in Figures - Territorial View-All Regions-Resident Population as of January 1, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> In the first 5 months of 2023, there were 5 murders, 8 kneecappings, 5 seizures of illegally held weapons, as well as 6 arson attacks along the Lazio coast.

that tends to expand its illicit interests and *“unlike in other regions of the national territory, does not simply operate through the various cults (Blake Axe, Eye and so on)”* therefore resulting *“as a general framework, a coexistence of various kinds of organizations.”*

The General Prosecutor goes on about the system of alliances anticipating the territorial expansion, with several criminal groups *“able to guarantee covering and protection, otherwise some form of conflict arises, and this means generating further crimes, of another sort and nature. Having to keep the territory occupied, we move on to the various forms by which certain rules have to be enforced, so that it occurs that in the management of drug trafficking, for example, the different open-air drug trafficking (such as those that can be found in Rome) become subject of contention.”* He also defines the situation regarding the spread of narcotics worrying *“despite the efforts, despite the operations, investigations, arrests and convictions that occur.... It is worrying for the simple reason that the massive supply responds to an enormous demand,”* found *“at any social level.”*

The resulting conflict situations *“resolve in kidnapping for a period of time, until the debt incurred is paid; in more severe cases, they resolve in gambling; they resolve in the burning of the club or the kiosk... by resorting to actual forms of extortionary activity. When the very issue becomes complex, they resolve in murder. So, we have had a series of related crimes connected to drug trafficking, which in turn were connected and derived from relations with Mafia-type associations of various kinds, which also resulted in murders.”*

As mentioned before, infiltrations in the economic-financial sector, carried out by exploiting proximity and collusions in the business world, are facilitated by the demographic density and heterogeneity, found throughout the Region, of the services and trade market. Therefore, the consequent recourse to proven and sophisticated money laundering, tax evasion and tax avoidance, has a strong impact especially in the restaurant, food and beverage and hotel or tourist facilities sectors.

Indeed, Lazio<sup>6</sup> continues to be the second region in Italy after Lombardy in terms of the number of suspicious transaction reports, with 8,295 SOS<sup>7</sup> from January to June 2023, 7,375 of which in the city of Rome alone<sup>8</sup>.

Therefore, money laundering operations represent the instrument through which illicit capital goes hand in hand with safe productive activities, inevitably altering the financial and economic structure of society, and are skillfully directed toward the most profitable and vulnerable contexts, with

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<sup>6</sup> Although it recorded a 12.4% decrease compared to the same period last year.

<sup>7</sup> In the first semester of 2022, there were 9,467. Bank of Italy - U.I.F.

<sup>8</sup> Bank of Italy - F.I.U. Anti-Money Laundering Reports of the Financial Intelligence Unit. Statistical data for the first semester of 2023.

particular attention directed toward promptly exploiting phases of possible instability or unexpected issues<sup>9</sup> in the target market.

In relation to the monitoring of public contracts and services, important anti-Mafia investigations were carried out by the Prefectures of Lazio to prevent dangerous legal entities from connecting with the Public Administration. In the semester under review, 20 prohibitory injunctions were issued by the Prefecture of Rome<sup>10</sup>, 2 by the Prefecture of Latina and 2 by the Prefecture of Frosinone<sup>11</sup>. These injunctions affected several companies operating in a variety of sectors, such as carriage by road for hire or compensation, the sale and rental of motor vehicles, sports betting, tourism, restaurants and food and beverages, up to construction and earthmoving. As for the modalities, repeated attempts at infiltration have been reported, implemented both through the presence of individuals belonging to Mafia organizations, and through the sale of business branches to other companies connected with or indirectly controlled by organized crime, confirming the consolidated pattern of resorting to compliant individuals with no criminal record against them.

It is no coincidence that the evidentiary framework collected during a previous investigation<sup>12</sup>, which had confirmed the reinvestment of large amounts of illicit capital in the field of the Roman restaurant sector, led to the conviction, issued on **January 23, 2023**, by the Court of Rome, against some members of a well-known *Camorra clan* rooted in a district of the Capital<sup>13</sup>.

On the basis of the analysis of the law enforcement activities carried out and the events recorded during this semester, we can therefore infer a prolific situation, particularly in the Capital and on the coast of the region. Here, the difficult coexistence between local criminal organizations, extra-regional branches of traditional Mafia organizations and foreign organizations, continues to manifest itself through a series of actions, even violent ones, for the control of the territory aimed mainly at the management of the drug market. There is also evidence of increasingly refined and sophisticated

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<sup>9</sup> Such as the recent war events that in a short period of time further shaken the balance already greatly destabilized by the protracted health emergency.

<sup>10</sup> Of these, 9 injunctions were issued against companies directly or indirectly linked to individuals involved in the “*Tritone*” investigation, which had revealed the presence in the areas of Anzio and Nettuno of branches of the ‘*ndrine* of Santa Cristina d’Aspromonte and Guardavalle. They then led to the dissolution of the Municipal Councils of the two local Authorities. On the other hand, 11 injunctions resulted from the outcome of a detailed investigation, on the basis of a circumstantial framework from which the existence of elements indicating a danger of criminal infiltration emerged, due to the traceability of commercial activities to individuals involved in the operations “*Propaggine*” and “*Propaggine 2*,” which had revealed the existence of a ‘*Ndrangheta* branch operating in the Capital.

<sup>11</sup> Another 2 prohibitory injunctions were issued in the region by the Struttura di Missione.

<sup>12</sup> OCC no. 26550/17 RGNR and 17152/18 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome on September 25, 2020. Operation completed in September 2020 by the Carabinieri of Rome, following which 13 precautionary measures had been carried out for the crimes of extortion, fictitious registration of assets and abusive exercise of credit activity with the aggravating factor of the Mafia method.

<sup>13</sup> More details will be provided later.

money-laundering strategies, including through the use of contacts and relationships, mainly at the local level, with bodies of the Public Administration.

### Metropolitan City of Rome

The remarkable extension of the Capital city area allows the associations to camouflage themselves and eagerly move among the diverse opportunities of investment, namely the countless economic and commercial businesses. It considerably reduces their visibility, and consequently makes the interference with free market and competition dynamics more subtle and ambiguous, compared to other more limited local contexts.

Even during the reference period, there are multiple interests of *'Ndrangheta*-style associations, in particular of the following *'ndrine*: ALVARO-CARZO of Sinopoli (Reggio Calabria), GALLICO of Palmi (Reggio Calabria), PELLE/VOTTARI of San Luca (Reggio Calabria), and FIARÈ of San Gregorio di Ippona (Vibo Valentia), MANCUSO of Limbadi (Vibo Valentia), GALLACE-NOVELLA of Guardavalle (Catanzaro), MARANDO of Platì (Reggio Calabria), STRANGIO of San Luca (Reggio Calabria) and BELLOCCO of Rosarno (Reggio Calabria).

In the area of the northern edge of Rome the presence of individuals close to the MORABITO *'ndrina* of Africo Nuovo (Reggio Calabria) has been established, in particular in the Municipalities of Morlupo, Rignano Flaminio, Riano, Castelnuovo di Porto and Capena.

In the area of Castelli Romani, interests and the presence of functional individuals for the MOLÈ *'ndrina* of Gioia Tauro (Reggio Calabria) and MAZZAGATTI *'ndrina* of Oppido Mamertina (Reggio Calabria) have been confirmed.

In the Appio Latino-San Giovanni district the interests of the PIROMALLI *famiglia* of Gioia Tauro (Reggio Calabria) persist, as already pointed out in the “*Alberone*”<sup>14</sup> operation in 2021.

Those judgments passed during the reference period<sup>15</sup> confirm the fact that in the Lazio<sup>36</sup> region, besides steady local criminal structures, there are real Mafia groups, branches of their original organizations. The “*Tritone*” operation<sup>16</sup> documented it, leading to the arrest of 65 individuals related

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<sup>14</sup> OCC no. 50430/2018 RGNR and 25855/2019 RG GIP, issued by the Court of Rome. The operation carried out by the State Police had resulted in 5 arrests in March 2021 against individuals who had taken part in an association dedicated to usury, illegal financial activities, and extortion in the Appio Latino district. The *modus operandi* envisaged lending money to several victims, mostly small entrepreneurs of the area. The sums of money had to be paid back with interest between 60% and 240% on a yearly basis.

<sup>15</sup> First instance judgment no. 37240/2022 RGNR and no. 34731/2022 RG GIP, issued on **February 23, 2023**, by the Court of Rome.

<sup>16</sup> OCC no. 9430/2018 RGNR and 19348/2019 RG GIP, issued by the Court of Rome on February 14, 2022. In particular, in the order 12 significant elements of the association (with various roles in management, planning, identification of criminal activities and goals to pursue, namely individuals who constantly contribute to the association's operability) have been notified of “*taking part in the arrangement of the organization operating in the Municipalities of Anzio and Nettuno and nearby territories (so-called locale of Anzio and Nettuno, “branch” of the locale of Santa Cristina d'Aspromonte, but largely constituted of individuals members of 'Ndrangheta famiglie originally from Guardavalle)*”

to the MADAFFARI, GALLACE, TEDESCO and PERRONACE *cosche*. It also put the Municipalities of Anzio (Roma) and Nettuno (Roma) under external administration, and then led to the dissolution of the Municipal Council. It unveiled the presence of a '*Ndrangheta "locale"*' (main local organizational unit of the '*Ndrangheta*'), which would in fact have taken control of some extensive coastline areas south of Rome. It represented the branch of the '*ndrine*' of Santa Cristina d'Aspromonte (Reggio Calabria) and of Guardavalle (Catanzaro).

The association would have managed international drug trafficking operations to "colonize" the economic-productive layer of that territory as well. The association would have infiltrated trying to influence the Public Administration, obtaining strategic procurement contracts in various sectors, from the fishing industry to waste disposal.

In particular, on **February 23, 2023**<sup>17</sup>, the Court of Rome issued the aforementioned sentence with which it sanctioned the existence of a Mafia-like '*Ndrangheta-style*' criminal conspiracy in the municipalities of Anzio and Nettuno, imposing a total of 260 years of detention to the 25 defendants convicted in an abbreviated proceeding. Each one of the four individuals, allegedly apical elements of the group, has been sentenced to 20 years of detention. Among the over 30 indictments for the defendants who chose the ordinary procedure instead, there is another prominent element considered to be one of the bosses of the *locale*, who aimed at taking control of the Roman coastline area, following the pattern of organization and modalities typical of the Calabrian '*ndrine*'.

In fact, the association would have been able to move huge quantities of cocaine from South America, including a cargo "*put at about 258 kg, liquefied inside coal, then proceeding to extract and sinter the narcotic substance*"<sup>18</sup>, which would allow the organizations to make huge profits, estimated at several million euro.

On **January 23, 2023**, a third phase<sup>19</sup> of the aforementioned "*Propaggine*" investigation conducted by the DIA was concluded, and the investigative outcomes, summarized in the previous orders, were strengthened, thanks to the latest provisions. It confirmed the presence of an arrangement of the organization operating in the Municipality of Rome (so called *locale* of Rome), "*with its bosses and*

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*as part of the Mafia-style united 'Ndrangheta organization, operating in the territory of the province of Reggio Calabria and in other Calabrian provinces, in the territory of several other Italian regions (Lazio, Lombardy, Emilia, Piedmont, Liguria, Valle d'Aosta), and in foreign territory (Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Australia), constituted of dozens of locali and with a collegial top body called "la Provincia". Their activity is also characterized by the use of the power of intimidation, arisen from the associative bond and the subsequent condition of subjection and silence created in the above mentioned territory, being aimed at: acquiring the management and/or the control of economic activities in many sectors (e.g. fishing industry, bread making, waste management and disposal, earth moving); committing crimes against heritage, life, and personal safety, against the Public Administration, and on the subject of firearms and drugs; asserting hegemonic control over the territory, even through agreements with counterpart criminal organizations, and infiltrations in Municipal Administrations; and, in any case, obtaining unjust benefits."*

<sup>17</sup> Judgment no. 37240/2022 RGNR and 34731/2022 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome on February 23, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> OCC no. 9430/2018 RGNR and 19348/2019 RG GIP, page 10.

<sup>19</sup> OCC no. 4114/16 RGNR and 1994/17 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome on January 18, 2023.

*members permanently dedicated to money laundering, self-laundering, and reinvestment of illegal capitals from other crimes, mostly on the subject of drugs, extortions, firearms, frauds and tax frauds”.*

In this third investigative lead, that is a natural continuation of the previous ones, an operative continuity of the Mafia-type crime group has been established also in the period following the “issuing of pretrial detention orders and precautionary seizures of May 10, 2022, and also after the issuing of the order of October 27, 2022”<sup>20</sup>.

In fact, the association, which had been active in the Capital since 2015, had obtained a peripheral and autonomous criminal structure, yet bound to the original territories, after a sort of official investiture obtained through the acknowledgment by the Calabrian “*casa madre*” (parent company), precisely in the Reggio Calabria area of Sinopoli-Cosoleto<sup>21</sup>. Through the power of intimidation derived from the associative bond and the subsequent condition of subjection and silence, it had resolved “*to acquire the management and/or the control of economic activities in many sectors*”<sup>22</sup> [...] *also through agreements with counterpart criminal organizations, and in any case, obtaining unjust benefits...*”<sup>23</sup>.

During the investigations, a recurring “*modus operandi*” had emerged, a “system” of the *cosche* of reference active in the Rome area, in an attempt to cover up the front men’s network and to prevent capital shares and companies from being traced back to them. This system can briefly be outlined in several crucial passages, including: the transfer of the lease of the real estate where the company at risk of detection used to work, then a new lease by a newly instituted company with other front men from the ALVARO-CARZO *clan*, in order to avoid potential anti-money laundering asset protection. This is followed by administrative authorization requests and new licenses on behalf of the newly instituted company. The last step is the start of the company activities, which actually took place “*in the same corporate assets of the previous company, believed to be compromised, including the launch, signature marks, etc.*”, while the company at risk of investigation by the DDA of Rome “*was left with debts only, mostly financial and social security related.*”

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<sup>20</sup> Page 11 of the mentioned order (no. 4114/16 RGNR).

<sup>21</sup> In the same order, some observations are mentioned, which were formulated by the Court of review, in dismissing an appeal of the defense aimed at stating that the GIP of Rome had no local jurisdiction, in favor of the Reggio Calabria one “*(...) it is evident from the very beginning, how precisely the GIP has answered for the unitary dimension of the ’Ndrangheta (at this point clear within legal framework as well), but has correctly pieced together the so-called Capitoline locale as it had emerged during the investigation, namely a legitimate locale (in a Mafia sense, since authorized and autonomous), whose criminal plan was designed and organized in the Capital, where most of the crimes were committed, which were its very reason for existence.*”

<sup>22</sup> “*... (e.g. fishing industry, bread making, pastry making, leather and waste oil disposal), systematically resorting to false registrations in order to cover up the real ownership of the businesses; committing crimes against heritage, life, and personal safety, and on the subject of firearms; asserting hegemonic control over the economic activities of the area (in particular in the catering, bar, and bread making industries)...*”.

<sup>23</sup> Criminal procedure no. 4114/16 RGNR and 1994/17 RG GIP of the Court of Rome. “*Propaggine*” operation.

This further continuation of the investigation led to the identification of 27 suspects, including 2 persons subject to pretrial detention orders.

In particular, a company active in the fishing industry was considered “*a strategic asset within the locale of Capitoline 'Ndrangheta*”, while other involved companies used to operate in different sectors, including catering, bars, tobacco shops and gambling halls.

The Prefecture of Rome, as previously mentioned, operated a swift administrative reaction. Indeed, it has issued 20 anti-Mafia interdictions, among which 11 against the companies involved in the “*Propaggine*” operation, and 9 against those in the “*Tritone*” operation, as confirmation of the dangerousness and invasiveness in the economic sectors attributable to the aforementioned *locale* of the *'Ndrangheta*.

The vivid presence of the *'Ndrangheta* within Lazio has also been proven through a judgment<sup>24</sup> issued by the Court of Cassation on **February 23, 2023**, which has definitely judged the confiscation order in June 2021 issued by the Court of Rome<sup>25</sup>. The provision had resulted from the processual outcomes of the “*Giù le mani*” operation<sup>26</sup> in July 2019, conducted by the State Police of Rome, as a result of which a seizure of property had been carried out, for a total value of EUR 120 million, against leading figures of the MORABITO-MOLLICA-PARAMARA-SCRIVA *'ndrina*. These were settled in the northern province of Rome, (in particular in the municipalities of Rignano Flaminio, Morlupo, Sant'Oreste, Capena, Castelnuovo di Porto, Campagnano and Sacrofano)<sup>27</sup>.

Moreover, active individuals on the Roman territory emerged within the “*Eureka*” operation<sup>28</sup>, coordinated by the DDA of Reggio Calabria and concluded on **May 3, 2023**, by the Carabinieri. It led to the issuing of 4 precautionary injunctions against 108 persons investigated, in various ways, for Mafia-type association, external complicity in Mafia associations, and association aimed at international drug trafficking, aggravated by transnationality and huge quantity, possession/traffic of

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<sup>24</sup> Judgment of the Supreme Court of Cassation, Sixth Section. Crim. no. 13468 of 2023 underlines that the Court of Appeal “*has provided invalid and completely usable elements in the preventive judgment*” considering in particular that the goods purchased by the person in charge “*and in part fictitiously assigned to their relatives, are the result of the reuse of the profits of illegal activities, which were set up in the period against which the qualified dangerousness had been verified, also as a consequence of the punishment of the accused with regard to the crime referred to in art. 416-bis of the Crim. Code. In view of the illegal origin of the goods, the following conducts of fictitious registration would constitute a mere further expression of qualified dangerousness*” (page 5).

<sup>25</sup> According to art. 24 of Decree Law 159/2011.

<sup>26</sup> Provision no. 52/2019 of the Court of Rome - Section “Prevention Measures”.

<sup>27</sup> 16 real estate units located in Rignano Flaminio, 2 shares of limited companies, are part of the patrimonial complex subject to definitive confiscation of goods.

<sup>28</sup> Criminal proc. no. 4612/2022 RGNR DDA - 37/2022 OCC DDA issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria on **March 10, 2023**; and OCC no. 3886/2022 RGNR-DDA and OCC no.5208/2022 RGNR DDA, 3223/2022 RG GIP DDA and 42/2022 ROCC issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria on **March 13, 2023**.



normal and assault weapons, money laundering, aiding and abetting, procured inobservance of the condemnation, fraudulent transfer of assets and other crimes<sup>29</sup>.

Preventive seizure orders against commercial companies, movable and immovable properties located in Italy, Portugal, Germany, and France have also been carried out, with a value of about EUR 25 million<sup>30</sup>.

Initially focused on illegal traffic attributable to leading figures of the NIRTA-STRANGIO 'ndrina, the investigations were later extended to various *famiglie* of the Locride. In addition to the above-mentioned types of offense, they even pieced together conduct aimed at reinvesting illegal capital in entrepreneurial activities – both in Italy and abroad – in particular in catering, tourism and real estate industries.

Within the aforementioned investigation, as mentioned above, some individuals operating in the Capital have also been identified, specifically 11 persons who “*affiliated themselves and created an organization whose aim was to commit an indeterminate series of fake corporate registrations in Italy and in Portugal*”, with the aggravating circumstances of transnationality and the aim of facilitating the PELLE *cosca* operating in San Luca (Reggio Calabria). The activities, which had been carried out, have documented the various roles of those participating in the association. In particular, they made it possible to identify an individual from San Luca (Reggio Calabria)<sup>31</sup>, bound by ties of kinship with 'ndrine which had been located in that territory for a long time<sup>32</sup>. The individual was the organizer, promoter, financier and hidden “*dominus*” of a vast patrimony, including an Italian company (which controlled a prosperous restaurant in the very popular area of Ponte Milvio, considered to be one of the main tourist destinations and of the so-called Roman “*movida*”) and 9 Portuguese companies, which ran 5 restaurants in Lisbon, Braga and Porto. The profits of the restaurants merged into a common fund, and then were divided among the group’s elements.

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<sup>29</sup> Some of the provisions, converted in European arrest warrants, have been carried out in Germany (9 suspects), Belgium (6 suspects), France (3 suspects), Portugal (1 suspect), Romania (1 suspect), and Spain (1 suspect), mostly in crimes involving drug trafficking and money laundering.

<sup>30</sup> As explained in the Reggio Calabria DDA statement, related to the outcomes of the “*Eureka*” operation, the investigation was carried out within 2 joint investigation teams in conjunction with the investigations carried out in the various countries, acquiring the respective circumstantial elements in real time. Eurojust has assured the maximum operational support, thanks to a stable connection with the other foreign judicial authorities involved. The Belgian and German judicial authorities have also enforced 15 and 24 restrictive orders, respectively, carried out by local Authorities, against other suspects of drug trafficking and money laundering crimes. The investigation carried out by the Ordinary Court of Reggio Calabria had in fact been started in June 2019 after the connections between the Carabinieri and the Belgian Federal Police, which was investigating some individuals related to the NIRTA *cosca* of San Luca (Reggio Calabria) active in Genk (Belgium), as well as being involved in international drug trafficking.

<sup>31</sup> As stated in the mentioned order (5208/2022 RGNR DDA, page 7), throughout previous investigations (OCC no. 40508/2007 RGNR of the Court of Rome) significant anomalies had been noticed (over EUR one million “*deposited 'off the books' with a transaction from abroad to abroad*” as an integration of the formally agreed price) in the acquisition by the same individual of another known restaurant in the area of Piazza di Spagna.

<sup>32</sup> NIRTA and PELLE of San Luca (Reggio Calabria).

In addition, the mentioned capital shares, properties, dwellings and buildings attributable to the suspects are in fact part of the patrimonial complex subject to seizure.

At the moment, the *'Ndrangheta* appears to be the organization more intent on seizing and taking the opportunity of money laundering, inevitably facilitated by the extension of the territory and the population density of the Capital. It also used strategic occasional collaborations with some representatives of the local criminal groups.

Regarding this, on December 13, 2022, during the “*Blu notte*” operation<sup>33</sup>, the Carabinieri carried out a pretrial detention order issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria against 64 persons, allegedly responsible in various ways for Mafia association, external complicity in Mafia association, license and possession of normal and assault weapons, extortions, usury, damages aggravated by Mafia purposes, money laundering, self-laundering and drug trafficking.

Mostly focused on the illegal activities of BELLOCCO of Rosarno and LAMARI-LAROSA-PESCE of the plain of Gioia Tauro, the investigation had made it possible to identify two individuals, in the Roman territory, close to the SPADA *clan* of Ostia. After getting in touch with leading figures of Calabrian Mafia groups, the individuals would have done something to facilitate them, namely, obtaining mobile phones<sup>34</sup>, which were introduced in the correctional facility also thanks to the collaboration with a detainee on work release.

Therefore, agreements were documented as well. These agreements were aimed at resolving the conflicts between the SPADA *clan* and some individuals of Calabrian origins, business owners in the areas of Ostia and Anzio, aimed at the design of a drug traffic route from Calabria to the Roman coastline area.

On **March 15, 2023** the State Police of Rome carried out a seizure of property order<sup>35</sup>. The properties were allegedly attributable to two individuals close to the PIROMALLI *cosca* of Gioia Tauro (Reggio Calabria). That order represents the integration of a previous seizure decree<sup>36</sup>, carried out by the local Court in the same investigative context.

In fact, on November 8, 2022 the State Police had carried out a previous seizure of property order, aimed at confiscation. The seizure order concerned a patrimonial complex estimated at about EUR

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<sup>33</sup> OCC no. 3302/2019 RGNR-DDA and 2848/2021 RG GIP issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria on November 22, 2022.

<sup>34</sup> As indicated in page 223 of the mentioned order (Provisions no. 3302/2019 RGNR DDA and 2848/2021 RG GIP), a prominent element of a Calabrian *cosca* in the prison was able to “*manage every aspect of the cosca, giving dispositions in adherence to the criminal necessities of the time, and even getting to participate in the documented Mafia summit, despite the detention in a “high security” sector... The element used phones with clandestine SIM cards, which he manages to renew monthly thanks to the support of a supply chain of individuals attributable to other criminal group contexts.*”

<sup>35</sup> The seizure concerned a real estate unit located in Siderno (Reggio Calabria), and a life insurance policy, in which a deposit of EUR 80 thousand had already been made.

<sup>36</sup> Integration of **March 10, 2023**, to the Seizure order no. 89/2022 of November 8, 2022 - Court of Rome - Section MP.

one million, against the two above-mentioned individuals, together with a third element. The three of them were all bound by ties of kinship. They had been based in the capital for some time and dedicated to usury and extortion with the aggravating circumstance of Mafia method, whose contacts with other criminal groups had been confirmed<sup>37</sup>.

On the front of *Camorra*-style criminality, the interests of the CONTINI and MOCCIA *associations* can be confirmed, aimed at taking advantage of the various opportunities of money laundering provided by the remarkable extension of the Capital. As previously mentioned, some leading figures of this last group have been convicted of various crimes<sup>38</sup>, including in particular extortion and properties fictitiously registered with the aggravating circumstance of the Mafia method, on **January 23, 2023**. The operation concluded by the Carabinieri in September 2020<sup>39</sup>, which had made it possible, in fact, to document the reinvestment of illegal capital in the field of the Roman catering industry by leading figures of the MOCCIA *clan*<sup>40</sup>, led to 13 precautionary measures. After this operation, a first instance judgment was carried out. Fourteen restaurants, allegedly attributable to that criminal context, were part of the patrimonial complex<sup>41</sup> subject to preventive seizure, issued along with the aforementioned restrictive orders.

In the reference semester, precisely on **May 17, 2023**, an arrest in Ladispoli (Rome) took place, in the northern Roman coastline area. The arrest was carried out by the Carabinieri after the final judgment of the Court of Cassation<sup>42</sup> against an individual of Neapolitan origin, presumably the boss of an organization which controlled various kinds of illegal traffic within the territory behind Monti Lattari<sup>43</sup>. This individual, bound by tight ties of kinship with another leading element of the same

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<sup>37</sup> The three of them, already convicted by final judgment of criminal activities related to drug trafficking and other serious crimes, were arrested with three other persons related to the PIROMALLI *famiglia* of Gioia Tauro in March 2021 by the State Police. This occurred at the end of the operation called “*Alberone*” (provisions no. 50430/18 RGNR and 25855/19 GIP issued by the Court of Rome on March 18, 2021), which had made it possible to identify and piece together the crimes of some individuals who did businesses in the Roman district of San Giovanni. In particular, these individuals provided loans with usurious interests to many small entrepreneurs, and people in the area in financial difficulties. The suspects were firmly inserted into the Roman crime scene and were charged of usury and extortion in mutually concerted action aggravated by Mafia method and illegal financial activities.

<sup>38</sup> Nine years of detention against a leading element of the organization, and 4 more convictions ranging from 8 years to 1 year and 4 months of detention against the other defendants.

<sup>39</sup> OCC no. 26550/17 RGNR and 17152/18 RG GIP of September 25, 2020, issued by the Court of Rome on demand of the local DDA. The protective order was based on the results of the investigation carried out between January 2017 and October 2018. This investigation had made it possible to document not only the mentioned reinvestment of capital, but also the phases of the extortion demand to the detriment of entrepreneurs in the catering industry. The investigation activities have found the illegal financial activity carried out by the leading figures of the MOCCIA *clan* through loans of large sums of money to 3 entrepreneurs. It has also pieced together and identified part of the *clan*’s complex, for a total value of approximately EUR 4 million.

<sup>40</sup> Rooted into many areas in the province of Naples and in Lazio.

<sup>41</sup> It further included 2 companies with registered offices in Rome, in the areas of the Pantheon and Castel Sant’Angelo, one luxury real estate, and three automobiles attributable to some of the suspects.

<sup>42</sup> Provisions. no. 1192/2023 SIEP and 516/2023, issued by Court of Appeal of Naples on **May 16, 2023**.

<sup>43</sup> And, in particular, in the Municipalities of Gragnano, Pimonte and Castellammare di Stabia (Naples).

criminal context, had been in the town of Lazio since March, after being placed under house arrest pending the pronouncement of the Court of Cassation. The Supreme Court, having dismissed the appeal of the defense, has confirmed the conviction to 7 years and 8 months of imprisonment for a series of crimes, including: aggravated extortion, possession of drugs with intent to distribute, aggravated personal injuries, assaulting and resisting a public officer; all were committed between 1997 and 2021.

As previously mentioned, some crimes recorded in Rome in this first semester of 2023 are still subject to careful analysis, in order to understand the dynamics and signs of possible impacts on the criminal structures of the Capital.

Although the direct imputability to Mafia-like context and dynamics has not yet been confirmed, the weakening of some organizations active in the metropolitan area might have encouraged crime groups, even emergent ones, to occupy drug marketplaces recently left “unattended” or not so widely controlled anymore by the associations of reference. The former organizations have been weakened both by internal counter-positions and by the judicial outcomes of the investigation activities.

Among the major events, two homicides have been registered. The two murders took place within 15 days of each other in the Roman district of Quadraro, in a close neighborhood of Tuscolano notoriously exposed to the influence of many local criminal groups.

The first one took place on **March 13, 2023** against an individual with a criminal record for drug-related offences. The individual was caught inside a service station by two individuals on a scooter, who fired four gunshots at him.

In this eastern suburban area of Rome, besides the interests of the CASAMONICA *clan*, the influence exerted by the SENESE persists. The SENESE are known for acquiring an autonomous and independent structure on the Roman territory, whilst maintaining a clear Campanian origin.

Although the homicide in question cannot offer a full comprehension of the dynamics between opposed criminal groups located in the Roman territory, because of the investigations being carried out, the info-investigative analysis of the elements that emerged might highlight a possible tie of kinship of the victim, though indirect, with leading elements of this last *clan*.

Two weeks afterward, on **March 27, 2023**, another person with a criminal record was killed inside his own dwelling; this person had ties of friendship with the victim of the just mentioned previous ambush. Throughout the investigation activities, which were started immediately, two individuals were detained<sup>44</sup> for homicide, possession of stolen goods and complicity in kidnapping crimes. Moreover, the further developments of the investigations organized by the DDA of Rome have

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<sup>44</sup> OCC no. 13614/2023 RGNR issued by the Court of Rome on Friday, **March 31, 2023**.

allowed the State Police to uncover and seize an armory composed of 10 pistols and a rifle, in the district of Pietralata.

Another serious episode took place on **February 22, 2023**, in the district of Magliana: an individual from Bari died after plummeting from the fifth floor of a building. He had allegedly been segregated there for a question of a sizeable debt. On **March 2** and **8, 2023**, respectively, the Carabinieri of Rome carried out a provisional arrest<sup>45</sup> of a crime suspect against two persons, both allegedly responsible for kidnapping for ransom with the aggravating circumstance of the death of the victim.

Surely not to be underestimated are kneecappings. Sometimes, kneecappings represent a typical modality of retaliation and conflict resolution in the world of organized crime. It was clearly explained in the above-mentioned observations of the public prosecutor of Rome.

In particular, some kneecappings are reported. These took place on **February 14, 2023** against two young men in the peripheral area of Morena, on **May 10** and **26, 2023** against two persons with a criminal record in the eastern area of Rome, precisely in the district of Tuscolano, and on **May 27, 2023**, against a person with a criminal record in the area of Castel Romano.

On **February 22, 2023**, another serious injury was reported, still in the lower limbs, against a person with a criminal record in the district of Tufello. On **June 6, 2023**, two individuals were arrested for this purpose<sup>46</sup>. The two of them, who allegedly burst into the victim's dwelling and hit him in the leg with two gunshots, were already known to law enforcement officials. As indicated in the pretrial detention order, in the criminal records "*it is evident that in both specific criminal contexts, a narcotic substance and an inclination towards committing crimes against heritage and people have emerged, with an ease of the procurement of weapons*". Moreover, the evidence collected represents a *cross-section of extreme determination in implementing crimes characterized by use of weapons and aimed at organizing punitive expeditions also supported by murderous intent, as described in the modalities of alternative criminal intent*".

Several seizures of weapons and ammunitions were carried out throughout the semester in various areas of the city (including Bufalotta, Formello, Borgata Fidene, Pietralata and in the Municipality of Anzio), precisely on **February 21**, on **March 4**, on **March 16**, on **March 30**, and on **May 6, 2023**. On **April 5, 2023**, gunshots were fired against the dwelling of a *Sinti* family in the area of Borgata Finocchio.

Within Sicilian organized crime, a consolidated infiltration ability in the economic base has been acknowledged. It is further confirmed by strong connections with the territories of origin.

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<sup>45</sup> OCC no. 7933/2023 RGNR issued by the Court of Rome on **March 1, 2023**.

<sup>46</sup> OCC no. 11721/23 RGNR and 16054/2023 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome on **June 6, 2023**.

The interests of the MAZZEI, PILLERA and SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglie* from Catania have been confirmed, as well as those of individuals “close” to the *famiglie* of the GRAVIANO of Palermo and RINZILLO of Gela. The TRIASSI, from the province of Agrigento and linked to the CUNTRERA-CARUANA *gruppo* and the FRAGALÀ one, are historically more active in the Roman coastline area.

In particular, the interests of this last *association* are present in the area of Pomezia, Ardea and Torvajonica, up to the northern areas of Latina, namely Cisterna and Aprilia. This *association* also boasts connections with the SANTAPAOLA, contacts with the CAPPELLO of Catania, with known groups from Campania, with the FASCIANI of Ostia, and the CASAMONICA.

However, the FRAGALÀ *association* was at the core of a complex investigation activity, which had led in November 2021 to 18 convictions also imposed to leading figures, and to the acknowledgment of the existence of typical elements of Mafia association<sup>47</sup>.

Along with the extra-regional projections of the traditional organizations mentioned above, the main local *associations* of FASCIANI, SPADA, and CASAMONICA continue to be active in the Roman territory. They are dedicated to various illegal activities, especially in the drug sector.

Additionally, in the semester under review, the illegal interests of the CASAMONICA *clan* are present, especially in the areas of Tuscolano, Cinecittà, Romanina, and in general in the outskirts of the eastern part of Rome up to the Castelli Romani.

As a confirmation of the current operability of this last organization, which is bound to the DI SILVIO *famiglia*, on **February 22, 2023**, the Court of Rome issued a conviction judgment<sup>48</sup> against 5 individuals gravitating within this criminal sector. This conviction has brought out extortion conduct aggravated by Mafia methods and aimed at finding the money to cover the legal costs incurred for the defense of members of the DI SILVIO *clan*. These members had been arrested in May 2018 after damage, threats and injuries inside a bar in the peripheral district La Romanina, considered to be a sort of “stronghold” of the CASAMONICA. This episode had raised a great deal of interest in the media, also because of the particularly violent aggression modalities and the injuries sustained by the victims. These led to the contestation of various aggravating circumstances, including the so-called

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<sup>47</sup> The “*Equilibri*” operation of 2019, conducted by the Carabinieri and coordinated by the DDA of Rome, had documented numerous illegal activities of the *clan*, including a consistent drug traffic from Spain and Colombia. It was managed in collaboration with other local, Sicilian, and Calabrian associations, and others from Campania. Moreover, other events have been placed together, such as usury, extortion, threats, and sometimes even bombings, creating an intimidating climate to the detriment of merchants and entrepreneurs.

<sup>48</sup> Judgment no. 2679/2023 (RGNR 27283/2018 - RG DIB 9987/2021) issued by the Court of Rome on **February 22, 2023**.

Mafia method<sup>49</sup> and the having taken advantage of circumstances so as to interfere with the public defense<sup>50</sup>.

This association does not neglect attempts to infiltrate itself inside the institutional systems, besides its known illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, usury, extortion and money laundering. On **February 14, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Rome enforced a restrictive measure<sup>51</sup> against a lawyer charged with bribing some judicial officers in order to obtain information and documents covered by secrecy. On **February 17**, the Carabinieri enforced a second protective measure against another individual involved in the incident. Since December 2021, the two arrested persons would have done something to obtain information regarding the initiation of investigation activities concerning various people. *“In that context, the suspects stand out as individuals who intermediate illegally, on behalf of variously interested people. The suspects make corrupting requests to public officials, in exchange for sensitive information covered by professional secrecy. This information is mainly attached to the existence of traditional and telematic wire tapings, concerning ongoing proceedings...”*<sup>52</sup>. The investigation has also brought out involvements with a person with a criminal record of drug trafficking. This person was also bound by ties of kinship with a member of the CASAMONICA.

Still, concerning the presence of local criminal groups using typical Mafia modalities (violence, threats and intimidating acts), on **March 23, 2023**, the Carabinieri carried out a pretrial detention order in prison<sup>53</sup> against 6 individuals. Two of this group are thought to be leading figures of the Roman organized crime scene, particularly active in the area of Casalotti and Boccea. The order has pieced together a prior theft<sup>54</sup> of 107 kg of cocaine, carried out by 4 of the 6 persons subject to the above-mentioned restrictive order. The other two individuals of the episode are known people with a criminal record already involved in the “*Maverik*” operation<sup>55</sup> and in the “*Grande raccordo*

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<sup>49</sup> “Consisting in showing off a conduct likely to exert that particular constraint and therefore that intimidation on passive individuals, proper to Mafia organizations, in a violent and provocative manner”. OCC no. 16627/18 RGNR, page 2.

<sup>50</sup> Among the victims of the aggression, there was also a civilian invalid customer.

<sup>51</sup> Criminal proc. no. 35243/22 RGNR and 3006/23 RG GIP of February 10, 2023.

<sup>52</sup> Page 2 of OCC no. 35243/22 RGNR and 3006/23 RG GIP of February 10, 2023.

<sup>53</sup> OCC no. 46339/22 RGNR and no. 35464/22 RGGIP, issued by the Court of Rome on December 10, 2022.

<sup>54</sup> Perpetrated in the dwelling of a person, who was about to die in the following days, probably of natural causes.

<sup>55</sup> “*Maverik*” operation (2018): the Carabinieri carried out 42 restrictive orders within Lazio, Campania, Tuscany, Lombardy and Marche, against members of a criminal group epigone to the TRIASSI *clan* (because of its weakening, consequence of the investigation activities carried out by the various police authorities within that criminal context) and rival of the SPADA *clan*. The members of the association were charged with armed association aimed at international drug trafficking, kidnapping for ransom, illegal possession of weapons, threats and possession of stolen goods in various ways. Contextually to the arrests, a seizure of property order related to real estates located in Rome, Ostia Lido, and Acilia had been carried out, for a total value of EUR 2 million.

*criminale*”<sup>56</sup> one. They are allegedly the main representatives of the smuggled batch of drugs (while it was temporarily deposited in the dwelling of the “victim” of the theft) and would not hesitate to use violence, threats, personal injuries and even kidnapping, in an attempt to acquire information aimed at retrieving the huge quantity of drugs. The first one was in fact arrested *in flagrante delicto* by the Carabinieri nearby a known shopping center of the Capital, near which he had confirmed to release an individual involved in the episode in exchange for the smuggled “goods”, in an attempt both to retrieve part of it and to receive a considerable amount of money in cash. The second known person with a criminal record<sup>57</sup>, active in the areas of Casalotti, Primavalle and Boccea, was arrested on **April 12, 2023** by the Carabinieri at the peak of a complex investigation activity coordinated by the DDA of Rome. The crimes committed were possession of drugs with intent to distribute, and kidnapping for ransom.

With regard to the known homicide in Rome, in the district of Appio-Claudio, and precisely in the Parco degli Acquadotti in August 2019, the legal process, which concerns the main accused, accused of being the actual executor, is still unfolding. The defendant, moreover, on **April 14, 2023**, was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment after an abbreviated proceeding for another serious crime, namely two counts of attempted homicide in the district of Alessandrino, which ended with the injuries of the intended victims<sup>58</sup>.

Among the other important events in the reference semester, an individual capture was registered. The subject had hidden in Spain, where he lived using fake documents to avoid the European arrest warrant, and who was considered to be the head of a criminal group within the area of Acilia, active in the drug trafficking sector, namely cocaine, hashish and marijuana. The group was tracked down on **March 15, 2023**, in the airport of Madrid, after about a year of being on the run. This individual had also been sentenced to a pretrial detention order, together with 13 other people, including various leading figures of Albanian origin of the crime scene. After a complex investigation, it had been clarified the role of this individual as supplier of the drugs to be placed in the drug marketplaces in various districts of the Capital, namely Torvecchia, Viminia and Acilia<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> “*Grande raccordo criminale*” operation (2019): the Guardia di Finanza carried out 51 protective measures against a criminal group which could also rely on bonds with leading figures of the SENESE *clan*. According to the results of the investigations, the *gruppo* was able to supply most of the drug marketplaces in various districts of the Capital.

<sup>57</sup> Already known for bonds with leading figures of the FASCIANI *clan*, emerged in the past, and for bonds with criminal groups composed of Italian-Albanian individuals.

<sup>58</sup> Abbreviated proceeding judgment no.1486/2023, 1837/23 RG GIP and 29993/21 RGNR issued by the Court of Rome on **April 14, 2023**.

<sup>59</sup> “*Spongebob*” operation. Order no 14537/2019 RGNR and 2859/2021 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome on February 14, 2022. As indicated in page 193 of the order concerning the dangerousness of the members of the organization within drug trafficking, it has been observed “*a significant ability in resisting the law enforcement officials’ intervention, so much so that the arrest of the members and the seizure of various batches of substance does not seem to have pushed back the association, which has continued its illegal trade*”.



With regard to the SPADA *clan*, on **April 22, 2023**, the Carabinieri carried out the preventive seizure of the dwelling located in Ostia, which had illegally been occupied for 17 years by a leading figure of the association. This confirmed the well-established influence of the SPADA in the Roman coastline area. On **July 4, 2023**, the Carabinieri arrested the individual, subject to the special surveillance measure with obligation of residence in the municipality of residence. He had been arrested because he had been found without a justified reason in the Municipality of Civitavecchia (Rome).

The control of the management of various public housing units in the district of Nuova Ostia aroused the interests of the FASCIANI *clan*, as a restrictive order proved. On **January 10, 2023**, the Carabinieri carried out a restrictive order<sup>60</sup> against two spouses bound by ties of kinship to this last association, with a strong suspicion of invading the premises, self-laundering and false statements, with the aggravating circumstance of Mafia facilitation. The investigation outcome proved that the couple had illegally occupied 8 extra-residential real estate properties and 75 premises designated as garages. They managed to enter into regular lease contracts also through the misleading of the public official in charge<sup>61</sup>.

The killing of a person with a criminal record on **February 2, 2023**, was significant as well. The man was killed in Ostia by several gunshots near his dwelling. At the end of the investigations that were carried out, on **June 8, 2023**, the Carabinieri arrested one person, with a strong suspicion of aggravated homicide and of carrying illegal weapons, by delegation of the public prosecutor of Rome. A few days later, on **February 11, 2023**, a married couple, both with criminal records, were caught off guard by an ambush of gunshots<sup>62</sup> near the coastline area of Ostia, precisely in Infernetto.

On **February 28, 2023**, in Ostia, the Carabinieri arrested a man who had turned his cellar into an illegal laboratory to make homemade silencers for pistols and rifles<sup>63</sup>.

On **March 9, 2023**, a known beach property in Torvajonica (part of the Municipality of Pomezia) was completely destroyed by a fire, the intentional origin of which cannot be excluded.

For what concerns the GAMBACURTA and NICITRA *associations*, no relevant episodes have been reported during the reference semester. Despite the intense intelligence-led policing<sup>64</sup> carried out by

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<sup>60</sup> OCC no. 40505/21 RGNR and 29120/22 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome on December 21, 2022.

<sup>61</sup> Various commercial premises and cellars located in the public housing complex have undergone a preventive seizure, for a total of approximately 5,000 square meters.

<sup>62</sup> The man, who had already been sentenced to 16 years imprisonment for a homicide in Milan in November 2009, was arrested after a restrictive order against him had been carried out.

<sup>63</sup> A pistol, 3 homemade silencers, and tools for working with metal were found at his home. A carbine with precision optics and ammunition were also retrieved during the search.

<sup>64</sup> On July 19, 2022, a conviction at second instance was confirmed against a leading figure, who was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment for extortion, drug trafficking, usury, money laundering and fictitious registration of goods, with the aggravating circumstance of the Mafia method. The Carabinieri carried out their arrest together with 57 other people in June 2018, within the “*Hampa*” operation.

the judicial and police authorities, the possible persistent influence of the first group, especially for what concerns the interests in managing drug trafficking in the districts of Montesapaccato, Boccea and Aurelia is not to be underestimated. The interests of the second association<sup>65</sup> should not be underestimated either, as in the northern area of the capital it was known, among other things, for seizing control of the distribution and management of slot machines.

Various seizures of drugs have been carried out in the neighborhood of the seaport of Civitavecchia. On **April 4, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza arrested a driver of Macedonian origin, along the Rome-Civitavecchia A12. The man was driving a semi-trailer truck with a Bulgarian plate directed to Rome. In a cavity inside its compartment, various lumps of hashish were hidden, for a total weight of approximately 650 kg.

On **April 17**, the Guardia di Finanza and the State Police intercepted a hidden shipment of drugs in a tractor trailer from Barcelona, for a total weight of almost 4,000 kg of hashish. On **July 7**, the Guardia di Finanza identified a 113 kg shipment of marijuana, hidden on a heavy vehicle just unloaded in the Port of Civitavecchia, carried by a foreigner and coming from Barcelona.

Therefore, it is not surprising that drug trafficking is the common denominator of the various criminal groups, also regardless of the Mafia characteristics judicially recognized. On **July 10, 2023**, during the “*Coca express*” operation, the Carabinieri arrested 5 people with a strong suspicion, in various involvements, of possession of drugs with intent to distribute. The Carabinieri dismantled a network of dealers which had its base in the Roman district of San Basilio, yet still managed to reach vast areas of the Capital, due to a tried and tested system of home deliveries. An operating mode that “*safeguarded its members against law enforcement officials’ interventions, and against the possible link to organized trafficking, as it had astutely managed to avoid a permanent establishment on the territory, which was always considered to be a structural element of the conspiracy aimed at drug trafficking*”<sup>66</sup>.

Therefore, the Court of Rome issued a confiscation order against an entrepreneur active in the construction industry, carried out by the Guardia di Finanza on **March 9, 2023**, within the conventionally known “*Corolla*” operation<sup>67</sup>. This confiscation order is a confirmation of the constant commitment to tackle goods derived from profits of illegal activities. In particular, the outcome of

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<sup>65</sup> Over time, the group has established itself in the Capital in the same way as a local crime group, especially in the Roman districts of Primavalle, Casalotti, Montesapaccato, Monte Mario, Aurelio and Cassia (in May 2021, the Court of Rome had sentenced more than 40 accused persons, including leading figures of the GAMBACURTA and the NICITRA associations. In March 2021, the Carabinieri had carried out a confiscation order concerning movable and immovable properties, with a value of approximately EUR 13 million, at the end of the “*Jackpot*” operation. It also included the special surveillance measure with obligation of residence of 3 years in the municipality of residence - OCC no. 41678/17 RGNR and no. 10964/20 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome).

<sup>66</sup> Criminal proc. 41725/22 RGNR and 8699/23 RG GIP.

<sup>67</sup> Proc. no. 135/2019 RG MP, confiscation order pursuant to art. 24 of Legislative Decree no. 159/2011.

the economic-financial inquiries referring to the period 1996-2015, a considerable disproportion between the declared incomes and the estate available to the head had emerged<sup>68</sup>, by means of stakeholders attributable to him<sup>69</sup>.

On **July 7, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza, jointly with the Carabinieri, at the end of the judicial course of the prevention proceedings<sup>70</sup>, implemented the final confiscation order issued on **June 14, 2023**, by the Supreme Court of Cassation, on assets related to 3 individuals, already arrested in June 2017 for crimes of criminal association, money-laundering and associated offenses. The above-mentioned proceedings resulted from an investigation on properties started in 2016 by delegation of the DDA (District Anti-Mafia Prosecutor's Office) of Rome, aimed at the application of confiscation by disproportionality (pursuant to article 24 of Legislative Decree no. 159/2011) through the reconstruction of the criminal profile of the defendants and, in turn, of the corporate, movable and real estate assets traceable to them, for a total amount estimated at over EUR 290 million<sup>71</sup>.

Regarding the presence of foreign criminal organizations in the area of Rome as part of law enforcement activities, on **April 20, 2023**, the State Police arrested two Albanians and a man of Polish origin, who were found in possession of 43 kg of drugs and EUR 37 thousand in cash. The main distribution center was located in the Rome district of Garbatella, while a garage used for storing the drugs was located in the eastern Rome area.

The "*Cash Express*"<sup>72</sup> operation, closed in Rome on **March 22, 2023**, by the Guardia di Finanza, proved the existence of a structured international money-laundering circuit, involving members of the Chinese community and Italian individuals already convicted for tax offenses, to whom several corporations used to conceal the proceeds of tax fraud were connected. Some members of the Chinese community, based in Rome, were allegedly willing to receive illicit money supplies and transfer them

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<sup>68</sup> Already involved in various judicial, tax, and fiscal matters for conspiracy, tax crimes, obstructing a public tendering procedure and fraud against the State.

<sup>69</sup> In the patrimonial complex subject to definitive confiscation appear: 504 real estate units, including dwellings, curtilages, commercial buildings and plots of lands located in Rome, Pomezia, Rieti, Olbia and Arzachena, Porto Cervo, including a multi-level car park near the district of Parioli in Rome, and a real estate complex of approximately 100 apartments, already leased by the municipality of Rome; 33 motor vehicles; a ship and a berth in Costa Smeralda; financial resources, securities portfolios, insurance policies and other values, for a total estimated amount of more than EUR 63 million. Confiscation order no. 135/2019 MP of **February 23, 2023**, carried out by the Guardia di Finanza on **March 9, 2023**.

<sup>70</sup> Proceeding no. 62-69/2017 MP. Definitive confiscation pursuant to art. 24 of Legislative Decree no.159/2011. "*Babylonia*" operation.

<sup>71</sup> Considering the significant discrepancies detected between the reported income and the movable and immovable assets at the disposal of the defendants, including through third parties, among which 72 companies, the decision of the Court of Cassation substantially confirmed the consistency of the ablative measure issued by the Court of Rome on July 15, 2020, within the context of the proceedings no. 62-69/2017 MP, confirmed on May 13, 2022, by the Court of Appeal of Rome with Order no. 39/2022.

<sup>72</sup> Criminal procedure 43766/2021 RGNR (Criminal records registry) of the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Rome.

to China, through banking channels, and then return the sums in cash to the Italian customers, after deducting the commission for the “service” provided. They carried out these complex operations through a proven compensation system known as “*fei ch'ien*”, which is quite common in those criminal environments as an attempt to avoid the traceability of even large movements and financial transactions. Certain companies specifically acted as collectors for the money, which was subsequently sent to accounts belonging to numerous Chinese companies and/or individuals. Furthermore, from the investigations carried out, it seems that these money-laundering methods were also used to conceal the proceeds of the alleged crimes, committed in Mafia associations. During the investigations, among other things, cash sums amounting to almost EUR 500 thousand were seized<sup>73</sup>. Another significant investigation was carried out by the Carabinieri on **March 23, 2023**, under the direction of the DDA of Rome, which implemented 47 pretrial detention orders against an organization involving Chinese, Filipino, Italian and Romanian citizens, charged in various ways with criminal association aimed at international trafficking of methamphetamine drugs. The charges were issued at the end of an articulated investigation that made it possible “... *to determine the existence of a structured criminal organization of Chinese matrix, present in Italy, with ramifications insisting on Rome, Prato and Padua and also at an international level, specifically in Greece, Spain and Holland, mainly active in national and international trafficking of methamphetamines (shaboo, MDMA, ketamine) and in the exploitation and aiding and abetting of prostitution*”<sup>74</sup>. During the investigation, the Criminal Investigation Department were also able to break the wall of silence, which is typical and usually unbreakable in that criminal context, by using the statements of a fellow national, formerly active in the narcotics business, and were able to determine “*the existence of a so-called ‘Roman’ cell consisting of Chinese citizens organized on different hierarchical levels*”, who were mainly involved in trafficking in a nightclub in the eastern suburbs of Rome. Moreover, the organization was in close contact with some nationals in Greece, who were the drug suppliers. On **April 12, 2023**, following complex investigations lasting almost a year, carried out by the Carabinieri as part of the operation called “*Knossos*”<sup>75</sup>, a network of drug dealers who managed the widespread distribution of marijuana, hashish and cocaine in the Pigneto and Torpignattara neighborhoods of Rome, has been dismantled. It was a “*flourishing drug market, well defined in terms of tasks and*

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<sup>73</sup> As well as cash, other movable assets worth a further EUR 150 thousand were also seized.

<sup>74</sup> OCC no. 34758/21 RGNR and 17464/2022 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rome on **January 19, 2023**.

“WHEREAS, the Public Prosecutor’s Office had detected, for some time, certain criminal cells of the Chinese matrix present in the Capital and directly connected to the principal structure active in Prato, in Tuscany, ... it is pointed out how, in the specifics of the present investigation, an extremely solid collaboration emerged between the various ‘cells’ and the mother structure (in Prato) in the supplying of drugs, and in particular, of methamphetamine which, in Rome and in Italy generally, is characterized by the obstinate spread of the consumption, with a demand in constant and exponential growth” (page 17).

<sup>75</sup> Criminal procedure no. 14729/2019 RGNR of the Court of Rome - DDA (District Anti-Mafia Prosecutor’s Office)

goals, organized in lookouts and checks to support and defend the area with a shift of drug dealers to ensure an ongoing illicit business”<sup>76</sup>. The case involved 15 people (Italian, Bangladeshi, Romanian and Tunisian citizens), suspected, in different ways, of association aimed at illicit drug trafficking.

### Province of Latina

Over time, the criminal organizations operating in the Province of Latina have shaped this territory, making it similar in features, though on a smaller scale, to the Capital’s. As a matter of fact, also in this area, the numerous ramifications of the traditional Mafias have led to the search for a substantial balance with the well-established local criminal formations characterized by their marked autonomy, considerable criminal profile and ability to decisively influence the local socio-economic fabric. The various illegal businesses include drug dealing, illegal possession of weapons, environmental crimes, money-laundering, usury and extortion. A number of illegal businesses have been detected in the legal economy, such as illegal waste management and disposal, forms of labor exploitation - especially of foreign workers, who are not rarely involved in illegal businesses.<sup>77</sup> In October 2022, as proof of the interest of organized crime in the waste disposal business<sup>78</sup>, the State Police implemented a confiscation order issued by the Court of Rome, worth EUR 10 million and concerning entrepreneurs working in the real estate and waste management business. They were involved in the “*Dark Side*”<sup>79</sup> operation also carried out by the State Police, which had documented the unlawful practices performed by an association engaged in illegal waste disposal, responsible for numerous incidences of illegal dumping, including that of toxic substances, in the area between Latina and Aprilia (Latina). The main offenses charged include continuous illegal waste trafficking, setting up an illegal landfill in an area of Aprilia, unauthorized waste management and environmental pollution. The area of Gaeta, Formia, Minturno, and generally the entire lower Lazio coastline, is affected by the presence of Campania-based criminal organizations, and in particular the BARDELLINO and CASALESI clans. The complex money-laundering operations carried out by the MOCCIA clan<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> The investigations carried out by the Carabinieri also made it possible to locate and arrest other Italian citizens, not members of the above-mentioned association, but nevertheless operating in two further neighboring drug markets.

<sup>77</sup> On **January 11th, 2023**, the State Police arrested three non-EU citizens *in flagrante delicto* - one of them with narcotics convictions - who had been found in possession of approximately 4 kg of opiate bulbs, concealed in a car, while attempting to escape police control.

<sup>78</sup> Order no. 76/2022 RGMP (Register of Criminal Offences) of October 13, 2022, issued by the Court of Rome - MP Section.

<sup>79</sup> OCC no. 23611/16 RGNR of October 17, 2017, by the Court of Latina.

<sup>80</sup> Criminal procedure no. 30350/13 RGNR DDA of the Court of Naples. Preventive Confiscation Order issued on April 14, 2022. Several companies, one of which located in Latina, were also part of the seized assets, with a total value of approximately EUR 150 million, used by the Moccia clan for alleged money-laundering operations. As reported on page 6 of the above-mentioned order, numerous business activities were “*used both as a multiplier of earnings and as a tool for the preservation and implementation of relations useful for maintaining the Mafia power of the Moccia famiglia*”.

have also at times involved and exploited companies operating in Latina, while the interests in this area of the MALLARDO and DI LAURO *clans* have favored the real estate investment business.<sup>81</sup> It is reported that the GAGLIARDI-FRAGNOLI *clan*, originally from the neighboring town of Mondragone (Caserta), had already extended its influence in the past to the bordering areas of lower Lazio, as had the D'ALTERIO *gruppo*<sup>82</sup>, contiguous to both Campania-based and indigenous criminal groups, known for its repeated attempts to interfere in the management of the fruit and vegetable market in Fondi (Latina), considered to be one of the largest agri-food centers in Europe.

On **March 9, 2023**, the State Police of Cassino (Frosinone) arrested<sup>83</sup> for extortion two people, originally from the province of Naples and residing in the municipalities of lower Lazio, who allegedly exerted continuous pressure and illegitimate demands against a businessman. They reportedly resorted to strongly intimidating messages, also declaring that they belonged to or had links with the BARDELLINO *clan*, known in that local context by the judicial records also for its illicit interests in that territory and in particular for the leverage exercised in the Formia (Latina) and Gaeta (Latina) areas.

With specific reference to the *'Ndrangheta* associations, the well-known “*Propaggine*” and “*Tritone*”<sup>84</sup> investigations have confirmed the interests in this area of the ALVARO and CARZO *'ndrine*, as proven by the presence in the hinterland of Latina and Aprilia (Latina) of two individuals, both from the province of Reggio Calabria, who have been subject to bans.<sup>85</sup> In addition, the interests of the TRIPODO-ROMEO, LA ROSA, BELLOCCO and COMMISSO *cosche*, which are constantly

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<sup>81</sup> Seizure of assets no. 10/2018 RGMP and no. 18/2022(S) Reg. Decr. issued on November 4, 2022, by the Court of Naples - MP Section. Various Campania *clans*, including MALLARDO and DI LAURO, could rely on the collaboration of an entrepreneur who “*over a very long period of time has certainly acted in economic synergy with leading members of the Camorra associations established in the area, acting as a catalyst for their criminal interests and investing the illegally acquired money*” (page 2 of the aforementioned order). The assets confiscated included companies, motor vehicles and financial transactions, and more than 600 immovable properties, based in several cities in Italy, including Naples, Benevento, Caserta and Latina.

<sup>82</sup> OCC no. 52510/18 RGNR and 10708/2019 RG GIP issued on February 24, 2020, by the Court of Rome - DDA and implemented by the Carabinieri against 5 individuals the following March in Fondi (Latina), Pontecorvo (Frosinone), Frosinone and Caivano (Naples), at the end of the operation “*Aleppo 2*” during which the illegal business activities of the *association* had been revealed. The organization was structured on a family basis with links to *Camorra clans* in Caserta and, despite previous coercive measures, “*maintained monopolistic control over road haulage to and from the fruit and vegetable market of Fondi using the Mafia method*”, managing to impose the use of companies run by nominees and applying a commission to haulage carried out by independent individuals. In this respect, the previous operation “*Aleppo*” (2018) had already resulted in the execution of a pretrial detention order against 8 people for having controlled the market business by means of a “*Mafia-type intimidatory power in order to monopolize transports to and from the fruit and vegetable market, obtained thanks to deep-rooted links with the Camorra clans of Caserta*”.

<sup>83</sup> OCC no. 887/23 RGNR and 566/23 RG GIP issued by the Court of Cassino on March 10th, 2023.

<sup>84</sup> Operation “*Propaggine*” - OCC no. 4114/16 RGNR and 1994/17 RG GIP, issued by the Court of Rome on 23 March 2022; Operation “*Tritone*” - OCC no. 9430/2018 RGNR and 19348/2019 RG GIP.

<sup>85</sup> One of whom was deemed “*formally a member of the 'Ndrangheta, with endowment of the so-called 'Società Maggiore*”, on account of the “*constant contribution*” provided to the association. The other, instead, was identified during the investigations as a reference point in the Latina area for the procurement of weapons, with the aggravating factor of facilitating “*the activity of the unitary Mafia association called 'Ndrangheta, in particular of its territorial articulation operating in Rome*” (OCC no. 4114/16 RGNR and no. 1994/17 RG GIP, pages 720 and 739).

looking for strategic cooperation with indigenous criminal groups, would also be recorded. The merging of interests between traditional Mafias and local groups, such as the DI SILVIO, CIARELLI and TRAVALI *clans*, creates in this area a peculiar criminal phenomenology in which local criminal associations would keep an increasingly central role.

The high impact of organized crime on the socio-economic background of the province of Latina had clearly become evident already at the end of the “*Alba Pontina*” and “*Alba Pontina 2*” operations, which, by contesting the aggravating factor of the Mafia method, had supposedly reconstructed the various illegal business activities carried out by the DI SILVIO-TRAVALI *gruppo* using intimidation methods.

Lastly, on **January 25, 2023**, the Court of Rome passed sentences for a total of 160 years of imprisonment<sup>86</sup> against 19 defendants who had opted for the abbreviated proceedings, once again acknowledging for the DI SILVIO *clan* the existence of the typical features of a Mafia organization. The trial had been the result of another articulated judicial police investigation co-ordinated by the local DDA and concluded by the State Police in October 2021, called “*Scarface*”. It led to the arrest of 33 individuals<sup>87</sup>, members or associates of the DI SILVIO *clan*. In this case too, the existence of a family-based organization, based in Latina and operating over a vast area of the Pontine territory, was proven, which had provided conditions of subjugation and code of silence as a direct consequence of the intense intimidation resulting from the associative bond.

### **Province of Frosinone**

The province of Frosinone, from the point of view of illicit interests and criminal structures, is affected by the influence of the neighboring Campania region and the resulting attempts to influence certain sectors of the local economy. The main ramifications of *Camorrac* associations in this area can be traced back to the VENOSA *clan*, the CASALESÌ *clan*, the MALLARDO *clan*, the ESPOSITO of Sessa Aurunca (Caserta), the BELFORTE of Marcianise (Caserta), and other Neapolitan *clans* such as the well-known LICCIARDI, GIULIANO, MAZZARELLA and GIONTA. Moreover, the presence of indigenous groups such as the SPADA and the DI SILVIO is also recorded, linked by kinship ties with the families of the same name active in the Capital and in the Pontine province.

Significant episodes during the six months under consideration included a number of operations to tackle drug trafficking, usury and extortion.

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<sup>86</sup> Two leading figures were given the highest sentences, 20 and 19 years of imprisonment each.

<sup>87</sup> For various offenses of Mafia-type criminal conspiracy, drug trafficking and dealing, extortion, kidnapping, theft, possession and illegal carrying of weapons.

On **February 16, 2023**, the State Police arrested a man *in flagrante delicto* for possession with intent to sell drugs, at whose home more than 5 kg of cocaine was found.

On **March 24, 2023**, the Carabinieri enforced an asset confiscation order <sup>88</sup> against a multiple offender, who had been the subject of a precautionary measure <sup>89</sup> in May 2022, along with 38 other suspects, and in the past already considered to be a member of “*a criminal association rooted in the territory of Frosinone and Sezze, in which he was the organizer as well as guarantor of the plural coexistence of the various criminal associations operating in the province of Frosinone and Latina as the regulator-mediator of illicit businesses*”<sup>90</sup>.

On **April 14, 2023**, the State Police arrested<sup>91</sup> an Albanian national, having found about 6 kg of cocaine-type drugs and over EUR 36 thousand in cash in his house.

On **May 4, 2023**, the State Police enforced a personal precautionary measure<sup>92</sup> against four members of a *Sinti* family living in the Sorano area and known in the investigative circles for their involvement in the sectors of usury and drug dealing, some of whom had already been involved in the previous operations “*Ultima corsa*”<sup>93</sup> and “*Requiem*”<sup>94</sup>. The investigations reconstructed the stages of a typical case of usury, extortion demands and serious and repeated threats over time, starting in 2016, which had led the victim to a state of serious exasperation due to the fear resulting from the strong subjection. As the above-mentioned ordinance clearly points out, “*what actually weighs decisively and strengthens the relationship between the person subjected to usury and the usurer, is the intensity of the psychological bond of subjection and fear and the conviction of the person suffering usury that he has no alternative to his situation in any case: only the usurer, at the time of need, has ‘helped’ him and even if he is gradually taking away his assets and his peace of mind*”. It also shows the significance of the fact that the Frosinone area has been involved in complex judicial police

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<sup>88</sup> Proc. no. 2/2023 RG MP - Early confiscation order issued by the Court of Rome - Section of Prevention Measures on March 20, 2023. The assets subject to the ablative measure include two cars, real estate units in the province of Latina and certain bank accounts.

<sup>89</sup> Criminal procedure no. 43060/2019 RG PM - DDA Rome

<sup>90</sup> Proc. no. 2/2023 RGMP - Confiscation order issued by the Court of Rome - MP Section on March 20, 2023 (page 5).

<sup>91</sup> Within the framework of criminal prosecution no. 4083/22 RGNR DDA of the Court of Rome.

<sup>92</sup> OCC nos. 235/2023 RGNR and 767/23 RG GIP issued by the Court of Cassino on May 2, 2023.

<sup>93</sup> In September 2022, the State Police implemented 17 precautionary measures issued by the Court of Cassino, at the end of an articulated investigation activity that allowed the dismantling of a criminal association traceable to a group of *Sinti* origin, operating mainly in the areas of Sora (Frosinone) and Isola del Liri (Frosinone), dedicated to drug trafficking, extortion and usury. The proceeds were also used to make loans at usurious rates to the detriment of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs in economic distress.

<sup>94</sup> In October 2020, the State Police and the Guardia di Finanza implemented a precautionary measure against 25 persons under investigation for association aimed at drug trafficking, money laundering and extortion. The investigations had led to the identification of two factions, one of which was a local one headed by criminal elements from Sora (Frosinone), and the other by a family of Campanian origin who had moved to the Sorano area some time ago. After an initial period of cooperation in supply and distribution activities, which also involved the territory of Cassino, the two groups then clashed over the acquisition of a monopoly on distribution of the drugs.



investigations carried out in neighboring regions or even aimed at suppressing illegal trafficking at an international level, which proves that, in terms of criminal dynamics and strategies, this border area between Lazio and Campania is particularly suitable for the convergence of illicit interests of various matrixes and origins.

On **May 10, 2023**, at the conclusion of the “*Friends*”<sup>95</sup> operation, the Carabinieri executed an order of precautionary detention in prison, issued by the Court of Campobasso, against 4 suspects of *Rom* ethnic origin, held responsible, for various reasons, for criminal association aimed at trafficking heroin, cocaine and marijuana. The association was mainly active in the Molise provinces and turned to organized crime circles in the province of Frosinone and lower Lazio regions for drug supplies, from which most of the supplies destined for the Isernia and Campobasso drug markets came. Another important anti-drug operation, called “*Double Game*”<sup>96</sup>, closed on **June 28, 2023** by the Guardia di Finanza, involved numerous suspects, leading to the arrest of 12 people<sup>97</sup> belonging to a mainly Albanian gang based in the Marche region, for the alleged crime of conspiracy aimed at drug trafficking, with the aggravating factor of transnationality. The investigations have documented the provenance of drug shipments<sup>98</sup> from Northern Europe, in particular from Belgium and the Netherlands, destined for the Frosinone<sup>99</sup> drug markets, as well as those of Ancona, Macerata, Fermo and Pesaro-Urbino.

On **July 11, 2023**, the State Police and the Carabinieri concluded the “*Dejavù*” operation with a restrictive measure against 10 persons, investigated for criminal conspiracy aimed at drug trafficking. The operation was the result of a complex investigation started in December 2020, which particularly concerned an area located in a residential district of Frosinone. In the order<sup>100</sup>, it is highlighted that “*the drug market operated on the ‘Scampia’ model, i.e. without the need for prior agreements between dealers and buyers, who could go there and buy the desired quantity and type of drugs: cocaine, crack, hashish and marijuana*”, as well as the making use of video surveillance systems to prevent any intrusions or to block the work of the police.

## Province of Viterbo

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<sup>95</sup> OCC no. 871/21 RGNR - 1934/21 RG GIP issued by the Court of Campobasso on April 27, 2023 pursuant to the request of the local DDA.

<sup>96</sup> Criminal procedure 5314/2019 RGNR DDA of the Court of Ancona.

<sup>97</sup> Including 10 Albanians and 2 Italians.

<sup>98</sup> A total amount of approximately 700 kg of cocaine and hashish was handled.

<sup>99</sup> An Albanian member of the gang was a resident in the province and was among the persons subject to the restrictive measure.

<sup>100</sup> OCC no. 42934/21 RGNR issued by the Court of Rome on 6 July 2023, p. 2.

Among the *'Ndranghetist cosche* that, over time, have expressed their criminal interests in the upper Lazio region there are the GIAMPÀ, the TROVATO, the MOLLICA, the NUCERA<sup>101</sup>, the MAMMOLITI, the LIBRI, the ZUMBO-GUGLIOTTA, and the PIROMALLI *cosche*, some of which have been able to strategically exploit the propensity to drug trafficking of the Albanian criminal groups, already identified in this area in previous investigations<sup>102</sup>.

On **January 31, 2023**, the Supreme Court of Cassation issued a ruling<sup>103</sup> confirming the reconstruction of Mafia-type criminal dynamics in the province of Viterbo. The device refers to the operation “Erostrato”<sup>104</sup> (2019) of the Carabinieri, coordinated by the DDA of Rome, which made it possible to identify and dismantle a criminal organization led by a Calabrian ‘close’ to the GIAMPÀ-TROVATO *cosca*, recognizing the existence of the typical requirements of Mafia association<sup>105</sup>. “*The criminal group has experienced an exponential growth, moving from the first arson attacks to more blatant forms of intimidation typical of traditional Mafias, increasing the frequency of the crimes committed and also entering the Viterbo entrepreneurial circuit as an interlocutor capable of forcibly modifying commercial transactions and ongoing disputes*”.<sup>106</sup> The peculiar connotations of what in case law “*is defined as ‘atypical Mafia’ or ‘small Mafia’, i.e. of an organization with a reduced number of associates, which insists on a limited territory or a specific business sector, making use of the Mafia method*”, were expressed in the Viterbo area in an intimidating force that provoked “*not only in the victims but also in the community a condition of subjugation and code of silence*”. The results of the investigation in question had reconstructed the operations of an Italo-Albanian association, within which a person of Lametina origin, who had been settled in Lazio for several years, and an Albanian drug dealer played leading roles. The group, mainly dedicated to drug trafficking, was responsible for various other crimes such as robbery, aggravated theft, damage, threats and personal injuries, in order to establish a hegemonic role in the criminal landscape of the province and gain control of various economic activities, such as moving companies, nightclubs and ‘gold purchasing’ activities.<sup>107</sup> A large number of extortion cases, car and business fires were the

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<sup>101</sup> The projections of the Nucera clan in the Viterbo area and the money laundering activities carried out also with the involvement of some local entrepreneurs had already been documented in 2013 with the operation “*Eldorado*” of the DDA of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>102</sup> OCC no. 1095/20 RGNR and 980/20 RG GIP, issued by the Court of Viterbo in June 2020. During the activities, the discovery of considerable quantities of drugs had led to the arrest of several Albanian, Pakistani and Italian nationals.

<sup>103</sup> Judgment no. 213/2023 (no. 45638/2021 RGN).

<sup>104</sup> Court of Rome - Criminal Proc. no. 33359/17 RGNR and Criminal Proc. no. 21238/18 RG GIP.

<sup>105</sup> “*Summing up the outcome of the assessments of the trial results, the judgment expressed by the first judge as to the existence of the contested crime of Mafia-type association must be confirmed*”, p. 190.

<sup>106</sup> The fire acquires a particular meaning in the language of the criminal group, because, as highlighted on page 188 of the aforementioned sentence, “*it represents the typical modality of the criminal group’s reaction to unwelcome events and the signal sent to the victims to whom it is intended to induce a certain behavior. It is the signature of the group, as such recognizable by all those who lived in the Viterbo community*”.

<sup>107</sup> Interference with local business and professional circles was also of interest to the gang.

result of considerable intimidating power, to which the members of the association systematically applied in order to psychologically coerce the victims, emulating conduct, vocabulary and methodologies typical of more structured associative contexts, with the firm intention of importing the *'Ndranghetist modus operandi*.

As a side note, it is worth noting that in recent years real estate investments of the CASAMONICA *clan* have been reported in the areas of Tarquinia (Viterbo) and Montalto di Castro (Viterbo).

## Province of Rieti

In the Rieti area, drug dealing activities continue to be perpetrated by individuals traceable to Nigerian criminal groups that have long settled in the area, although subject to incisive counter-actions by the investigative authorities.<sup>108</sup> In particular, on **April 13, 2023**, at the end of a complex operation called *“Free bridge”*, the State Police implemented a pretrial detention order against 8 Nigerian citizens seriously suspected of drug-related crimes. In particular, they had set up their ‘base of operations’ in a very convenient location to cover their illegal conduct: in an area close to the river Velino, rather remote, although not far from the city center, where an intense vegetation prevented the rapid intervention of the police, allowing the suspects to escape and easily dispose of the drugs in case of inspections.

Moreover, the drug market was strategically located next to a healthcare facility of the Service for the treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts (Rieti SERD), thus also integrating the aggravating circumstance referred to in article 73, paragraph 1, letter g) of Presidential Decree no. 309/90. As significantly reported in the order in the context of a prognostic judgment concerning the social danger of the suspects and the possible repetition of the conducts *“it appears however equivalently and evidently acquired both that all the subjects took advantage of the clear condition of drug addiction of the transferees, concentrating their dealing activities in the vicinity of the SERD, demonstrating seriousness, obstinacy and unscrupulousness, as well as having moved large quantities of drugs with the loyalty of drug-addicted customers, demonstrating stability in their dealing activities, as their own exclusive source of income and as certain procuring of serial*

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<sup>108</sup> The existence of various groups dedicated to drug dealing had already been reported on several occasions in this criminal context, which had been the subject of several articulated judicial police operations, including *“Black Angel”* and *“Hello bros”*. The first was concluded by the State Police in February 2020 with the implementation of a pretrial detention order against 22 Nigerians, belonging to a criminal organization dedicated, inter alia, to drug trafficking, in contact with the country of origin for the movement of illicitly accumulated proceeds; the second one in April 2021 conducted by the State Police in several cities (L’Aquila, Rieti, Bari, Caserta, Naples, Reggio Emilia, Parma, Modena, Catania, Genoa, Messina, Potenza and Terni), during which 30 precautionary measures were executed against Nigerians living in Italy, believed to be members of the BLACK AXE organization. Numerous crimes were attributed to the organization, including drug trafficking, illegal immigration, computer fraud and money laundering.

*assignees*”. Eventually, on **June 12, 2023**, the State Police arrested one of the suspects who had disappeared during the final stage of the investigation, while on the next **August 25** it tracked down the last of the suspects in Rieti, who was also the addressee of the aforementioned pretrial detention order.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> OCC no. 2756/2022 RGNR and 2378/2022 RG GIP issued by the Court of Rieti on March 27, 2023, p. 7.

## - LIGURIA

In the Liguria Region, Calabrian Mafia organized crime is structured<sup>1</sup> through the *locali* in Genoa, Lavagna (Genoa) and Ventimiglia, making Liguria a criminal macro-area under the control of the Calabrian *cosche* established there. Recently, there has also been judicial knowledge of a further significant operative settlement in Bordighera (Imperia)<sup>2</sup>.

With regard to the presence of groups of other criminal matrixes, the presence of single extra-regional ramifications of the *Camorra*<sup>3</sup> and *Sicilian Mafia*<sup>4</sup>, although not organized in structured associations, is to be noted. All the Ligurian provinces are characterized by the presence of foreign criminal gangs, often made up of irregular non-EU citizens of African, South American or Eastern European origin, mostly operating in the drug trafficking and dealing sector. Some recent anti-drug activities, inter alia, have shown operational synergies between Albanian organized crime and individuals linked to the *'Ndrangheta* and local crime.

### Province of Genova

In the Genoa province, the *'Ndrangheta* is structured on the Genoa and Lavagna *locali*. It is precisely in the Genoese territorial context that it is worth noting the arrest on **April 27, 2023**, by the Carabinieri, of a leading member of the BONAVOTA *cosca*, fugitive since December 2019, as he had been reached by an order of pretrial detention<sup>5</sup> in prison for the crime of Mafia association, issued as part of the well-known “*Rinascita-Scott*”<sup>6</sup> operation. As part of this, the man had been recognized

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<sup>1</sup> Criminal proc. 1389/2008 RGNR DDA of Reggio Calabria, operation “*Il Crimine*” (2010); Criminal proc. 2268/10 RGNR DDA, operation “*Maglio 3*” (2011); Criminal proc. 9028/10 RGNR DDA, operation “*La Svolta*” (2012); Criminal proc. 12506/13 RGPM - operation “*I Conti di Lavagna*” (2016); Criminal proc. 5953/11 RGNR DDA, operation “*Alchemia*” (2016).

<sup>2</sup> Belonging to the BARILARO-PELLEGRINO *famiglia*, a proxy of the SANTAITI-GIOFFRÈ *cosca* of Seminara (Reggio Calabria).

<sup>3</sup> People associated with the CASALESI, ZAZA-MAZZARELLA, AMATO-PAGANO, D'AMICO and RINALDI *clans* were identified.

<sup>4</sup> Criminal investigations have identified the presence of members of the GALATOLO-FONTANA *famiglia* of Acquasanta in Palermo, of the Gelese EMMANUELLO *clan*, while recent preventive initiatives by the DIA (Anti-Mafia Investigation Department) have detected the presence of individuals already recognized as being members of the LO PICCOLO *cosca* in Palermo.

<sup>5</sup> Nos. 1359/14 RG GIP, 148/18 RMC and 148 bis/18 RMR issued by the Court of Catanzaro on December 12, 2019, in the framework of the criminal prosecution 2239/2014 RGNR DDA of Catanzaro (operation “*Rinascita Scott*”), for offenses under article 416 bis of the Criminal Code, paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

<sup>6</sup> In that framework, the A.G. (Judicial Authority) issued 333 personal precautionary measures against the same number of members of *'Ndrangheta* groups in Vibo Valentia, criminally divided into dozens of *'ndrine* and *locali*, among which the following *cosche* MANCUSO, LA ROSA, FIARE/RAZIONALE/GASPARRO, LO BIANCO/BARBA, CAMILLO/ARDEA ACCORINTI, PISCOPIANI, BONAVOTA, CRACOLICI, SORIANO, PITITTO-PROSTAMO-IANNELLO and PATANIA operate.

as the promoter, leader and organizer of the BONAVOTA *cosca*, with the responsibility of taking the most important decisions in the interests of the association, also outside his home region. It is also relevant to note the ruling of the Court of Appeal of Genoa in the “*Ponente Forever*”<sup>7</sup> trial, issued on **January 4, 2023**, which sentenced a person of Calabrian origin, held responsible for numerous episodes of possession and sale of cocaine and hashish and for aiding the absconding of a member of the GALLICO *cosca* of Palmi (Reggio Calabria).

As regards the activities against drug smuggling, on **February 2, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza implemented a precautionary detention order<sup>8</sup> against 4 individuals held responsible for the importation of a load of 435 kg of cocaine, previously seized in the port of Prà (Genoa) on February 7, 2022, inside a coffee *container* coming from Rio de Janeiro. In that circumstance, among other factors, the implication of a port employee had been detected.

On **June 13, 2023**, the Court of Genoa, as part of the “*Maglio 3*”<sup>9</sup> trial, sentenced a person<sup>10</sup> who, within the framework of the March 2010 local elections, allegedly promised the disbursement of sums of money and other utilities to leading members of the Ligurian *'Ndrangheta*, who undertook to channel their votes and those of persons close to them to the candidate. In addition, as part of the anti-Mafia prevention activity, the Prefect of Genoa, in the six-month period under review, issued 3 interdiction orders against 2 companies found to be close to *'Ndrangheta* contexts (one operating in the goods transport sector and the other in the construction sector) and 1 (operating in the transport sector) connected to Sicilian *Mafia* associations.

## Province of Imperia

In the Province of Imperia, the *Ventimiglia branch*, headed by the MARCIANÒ of Delianuova (Reggio Calabria) and expression of the PIROMALLI and MAZZAFERRO *cosche*, and the

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<sup>7</sup> Criminal Proc. no. 11617/18 RGNR Genoa District Prosecutor’s Office. The operation carried out in a context of international cooperation with the French Gendarmerie, in September 2020, led to the arrest in Sanremo of a subject of Calabrian origin, who was found to be the head of a criminal cell, with a logistical base in the Imperia area, which procured, from an Albanian organization, large quantities of cocaine, then destined for French gangs.

<sup>8</sup> Order no. 58/2023 R.G.P.M. mod. 21 and no. 207/23 RG GIP issued on January 17, 2023, by the GIP at the Court of Genoa on the request of the local Public Prosecutor’s Office.

<sup>9</sup> Criminal proc. 3232/12 RGNR - 10710 RG GIP, excision of Criminal proc. 2268/10 RGNR DDA (District Anti-Mafia Prosecutor’s Office) of Genoa.

<sup>10</sup> Pursuant to Article 86 of Presidential Decree no. 570 of May 16, 1960, article 1 last paragraph of Law no. 108 of February 17, 1968, and article 7 of Legislative Decree no. 152/91 of May 13, 1991 (now 416 bis.1 of the Criminal Code).

Bordighera structure, connected to the BARILARO-PELLEGRINO *famiglie*, ramifications of the SANTAITI-GIOFFRÈ of Seminara (Reggio Calabria) *cosca*, are operative.

It is also proved that subjects linked to the GALLICO *cosca* of Palmi (Reggio Calabria) are operating in Sanremo (Imperia), as emerged from recent judicial events.

On **May 17, 2023**, the State Police of Ventimiglia placed a criminal of Campania origin under house arrest pursuant to a mandatory European arrest warrant issued as part of the larger operation “*Eureka*”<sup>11</sup>, which has been extensively mentioned in the chapters concerning the Calabria and Lombardy regions and which involved an association aimed at drug dealing with the aggravating factor of transnationality and significant quantities. The investigation, carried out by the District Prosecutors’ Offices of Genoa, Milan and Reggio Calabria under the coordination of the DNA (State Anti-Mafia Division), was developed through the European judicial and investigative cooperation of EUROJUST, EUROPOL, @ON and the Interpol I-CAN project. The man was held responsible for the reinvestment of drug money through a restaurant business in France under the supervision of a leading member of the GIORGI *famiglia* from San Luca (Reggio Calabria).

### **Province of Savona**

In the province of Savona and, in particular, in the Toirano (Savona) area, a ramification of the RASO-GULLACE-ALBANESE *cosca* of Cittanova (Reggio Calabria) appears to be active.

On **March 16, 2023**, the DIA implemented a decree<sup>12</sup> of confiscation of assets issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria against a subject originally from Cittanova (Reggio Calabria), but for a long time rooted in Albenga (Savona) and considered to be ‘close’ to a *Ndrangheta* Cittanovese *cosca*, whose operational projections in Liguria had also been confirmed at the outcome of a previous investigation, at the conclusion of which the DIA and the State Police had implemented an order of precautionary detention against 42 persons suspected of Mafia-type association, fictitious registration of assets and corruption, including the proposed defendant. More precisely, he would have had the strategic role of conveying communications between the various associates of the *clan* and his brother, head and promoter of the *cosca*. Despite being acquitted by the Court of Palmi in July 2020, the Court of Reggio Calabria also issued the confiscation order, considering that the circumstantial framework resulting from the previous investigation had led to the conclusion that the man was socially dangerous due to his contiguity to the aforementioned criminal organization. The order imposed the confiscation of 2 real estate properties and 1 bank account for a total value of EUR 400 thousand.

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<sup>11</sup> Criminal procedure 5886/2022 RGNR DDA; Criminal procedure 2520/2022 RG GIP DDA; no. ss/2022 ROCC; no. 44/2022 ROCC; no. 4/202S ROCC.

<sup>12</sup> Decree no. 31/2021 Seizure order - 38/2023 Order issued on March 9, 2023, by the Court of Reggio Calabria MP Section.

On **April 19, 2023**, the Court of Savona convicted<sup>13</sup> two brothers from Africo (Reggio Calabria), entrepreneurs in the construction sector<sup>14</sup>, of obstructing, in conspiracy, the freedom of tenders aggravated by the Mafia method. The case had emerged on July 26, 2022, when the State Police of Savona had carried out a precautionary detention order<sup>15</sup> against one of the two entrepreneurs, linked by kinship ties with members of the Africota MORABITO-PALAMARA-BRUZZANITI *cosca* and long established in Savona because, by threatening and using the intimidation force of the associative bond, he kept some bidders away from a public auction called by the Court of Savona.

On **May 3, 2023**, as a result of the “*Sunset*” investigation, the DIA (Anti-Mafia Investigation Department) and the Carabinieri implemented an order<sup>16</sup> of precautionary detention against 15 persons suspected, for various reasons, of association aimed at dealing, producing and distributing drugs. More specifically, an association operating in Savona and other locations in Italy and abroad was found to be active in the importation, sale and illegal possession of cocaine and heroin, directed, among others, by a well-known *'Ndrangheta* fugitive<sup>17</sup>. The investigations made it possible to outline a serious circumstantial picture thanks to a EUROPOL (European Police Office) report on the use of encrypted chats on messaging platforms that allowed the exchange of communications through a private global network of servers. The association, in interaction with a South American gang, was involved in at least two imports of cocaine from Spain of 31 kg and 50 kg, as well as its distribution in Italy. Contextually, the “*Money Delivery*” operation was carried out in Milan, described in detail in the section on Lombardy, concerning an association aimed at drug trafficking with the aggravating circumstance of transnationality and large quantities. This organization involved two brothers also under investigation in the “*Sunset*” investigation. Again, with reference to the narcotics sector, it should be noted that on January 2, 2023, the Guardia di Finanza of Genoa and Bari, following a house search at a hotel in Celle Ligure (Savona), proceeded to arrest *in flagrante delicto* 4 Albanian

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<sup>13</sup> Crim. proc. 4763/2022 RGNR.

<sup>14</sup> The two, who had already been the subject of various legal proceedings, had been subject to personal prevention measures and, as regards the companies, to Prefectoral prohibitory measures. On May 5, 2021, the Court of Genoa, by Decree no. 9/2021, recognized that the conditions of qualified social dangerousness (pursuant to article 4 lett. b) of Legislative Decree 159/2011) had been met for the two men, as they had been responsible for some interpositive conduct aimed at evading the prevention regulations, in addition to the application of the special surveillance. The measure became final following the sentence of the Court of Cassation on May 25, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Order no. 4763/21 RGNR and 5260/22 RG GIP issued on 19 July 2022 by the Court of Genoa at the request of the local DDA.

<sup>16</sup> Order no. 6267/2021 RGNR and 1555/2022 RG GIP issued on 10 February 2023 by the Court of Genoa at the request of the local DDA.

<sup>17</sup> At the time of the facts he was a fugitive in South America, where he had been established since the 1990s, hit by concurrent sentence execution order no. 147/2006 RES issued on 13 August 2008 by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Reggio Calabria, which redetermined the sentences imposed against him at over 28 years of imprisonment: escaped on June 24, 2019 from the “Carcere Central” in Montevideo (Uruguay), where he had been detained since 2017, pending extradition to Italy, arrested again on the evening of 24 May 2021 in a house in the city of Joao Pessoa in Brazil.



nationals found in possession of 285 cocaine bricks amounting to over 354 kg. At the port of Savona, on **January 17, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza seized a ton of cocaine, hidden in the keel of a Hong Kong-flagged merchant ship, coming from Santos (Brazil) after an intermediate stop at the port terminal of Punta Pereyra (Uruguay). During a control of a truck at the service area of Ceriale Sud (Savona), on March 1, 2023, the State Police found 261 kg of hashish and 107 kg of marijuana, arresting the Albanian driver of the vehicle. Drug shipments were found by the Guardia di Finanza in the port of Vado Ligure (Savona). On **March 15, 2023**, approximately 47 kg of cocaine, divided into 42 bricks, were seized inside a *container* of shelled hazelnuts from Valparaiso (Chile). Furthermore, on the following **March 23, 2023**, three Albanians were arrested *in flagrante delicto* while retrieving 81 kg of cocaine in a *container* containing bananas and coming from Ecuador. Finally, on **April 12, 2023**, another individual, also Albanian, was arrested *in flagrante delicto*, recovering more than 84 kg of cocaine concealed in a *container*, also from Ecuador, loaded with bananas.

### Province of La Spezia

In the province of La Spezia, the presence of family groups operating in diversified economic sectors considered to be contiguous to the GRANDE ARACRI *cosca* of Cutro (Crotone)<sup>18</sup> and FARAO-MARINCOLA of Cirò Marina (Crotone)<sup>19</sup>.

On **February 10, 2023**, in La Spezia and Carrara (Massa-Carrara), the State Police and the Carabinieri jointly proceeded with the implementation of a precautionary custody order<sup>20</sup> against 5 persons of South American origin, suspected of having imported cocaine from Colombia, thanks to the complicity of a courier who had swallowed the ova, containing over 1 kg of cocaine, and who had died as a result of the rupture of one of the casings.

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<sup>18</sup> The activity of the MUTO *gruppo*, which originated in Cutro (Crotone) was detected in Bolano (La Spezia). The *gruppo* deals with business activities in the trading of inert materials, road transportation and real estate, and it is built on blood relations and links with actors involved in the GRANDE ARACRI *cosca* in Cutro (Crotone), a *gruppo* under the radar of the “Aemilia” operation carried out by the DDA of Bologna.

<sup>19</sup> The presence of the ABOSSIDA *famiglia* from Crucoli (Crotone) was detected in La Spezia.

<sup>20</sup> Order no. 678/22721 RGPM no. 599/22 RG GIP issued on February 6, 2023, by the Court of La Spezia.

## - LOMBARDY

During the semester, judicial evidence, on an almost exclusive basis, has observed the outcomes of investigations focused on drug trafficking and dealing, sometimes organized in associated forms and with transnational features. The presence in high-ranking positions of certain contiguous individuals to Calabrian and Campanian Mafia organizations, active in their respective regions of origin, is reported in some of these investigations. However, considering the analyzed measures, no objections for suspected criminal offences pursuant to article 416a of the Criminal Code and/or specific aggravating circumstances article 416a, first clause of the Criminal Code have been made against anyone.

The use of innovative communication channels in an attempt to avoid the intelligence-led policing by different criminal organizations, aside from their organization level, is reported in the illicit drug trafficking sector: *dark web* and *encrypted* communication platforms are indeed the new tools that have rapidly spread among illicit drug traffickers and dealers.

During the semester, law enforcement officers and DIA investigations have proceeded on a more purely preventive level through the anti-Mafia inspections against the businesses interested in works related to PNRR (National Recovery and Resilience Plan) and *Milano-Cortina 2026 Olympics*. In this field, the intelligence-led policing by the Prefecture with the implementation of restrictive measures<sup>1</sup>, which have mostly involved businesses having ties to the *'Ndrangheta*, has remained steady.

The regional context is characterized by an efficient and driving economic and production model<sup>2</sup> which is a great opportunity of money laundering and reuse of illicit proceeds for Mafia-type criminal groups, and therefore to be infiltrated without the need for violent methods. Seeking consensus and approval from economic operators is the aim of organizations such as the *'Ndrangheta*, whose social consensus has increased since some individuals, whose membership in a Mafia context is established, are considered reliable partners to do business with by the socio-economic operators. The infiltration in the Lombardy economy by Calabrian organized crime can also be deduced from the restrictive

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<sup>1</sup> During the semester, the prefectures promulgated 14 anti-Mafia restrictive measures, 11 of which involved enterprises with critical elements associated with the *'Ndrangheta*.

<sup>2</sup> The *Bank of Italy's report on the Economy of Lombardy* submitted on June 28, 2023, highlighted that in 2022 the regional economy has continued to grow at a rapid pace, with the benefits of the sharp increase in activity in the building, recovery and services industry. However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine accentuated the increase in energy costs and difficulties in the supply of raw materials and intermediate products, which had already become apparent in the second half of 2021. These tensions resulted in a sharp acceleration in prices and a moderate slowdown in activity during the year. The solid growth in 2021-22 led Lombardy's GDP to overcome the 2019 level of 3.4%, which is much higher than that recorded by the Italian economy as a whole (1%). The increase in regional output is estimated at 3.8%, slightly higher than the national level (3.7%), while in the first months of 2023, inflation has decreased, although it remains high in historical comparison. In the real estate market, transactions and housing prices increased substantially and more than the national average. Bank lending still grew in 2022 but slowed in the second half of the year affected by rising interest rates and an orientation of banks' supply policies that have become more selective.

measures<sup>3</sup> promulgated by the Prefectures during the first semester of 2023, mainly ascribable to businesses with critical elements associated with the *'Ndrangheta*.

On the matter of seized and confiscated assets, data from the *Agenzia Nazionale per l'amministrazione e la destinazione dei Beni Sequestrati e Confiscati alla criminalità organizzata* (National Agency for the Administration and Destination of Seized and Confiscated Assets from Organized Crime), updated as of June 30, 2023, show that Lombardy occupies a significant position at a national level since it is in fifth place, with 3,285 confiscated properties, after Sicily (16,601), Campania (6,593), Calabria (5,056) and Lazio (3,594).

In the area of the Milan and Brescia Court of Appeal districts, the presence of groups ascribable to Calabrian organized crime has been confirmed by many operations recorded from 2005 to December 31, 2022. The compactness of many *gruppi* has been resized thanks to the Institutions' intelligence-led policing, despite their particular dynamism making them elusive. This is due to the continuous phases of regeneration and structural renewal, which cannot always be inferred from the investigative/judicial evidence, to the insertion of new associates or rather the interaction with other associations, even of different matrix or geographical origin.

The primary organizational structure of the *'Ndrangheta*, the so-called *camera di controllo* (control room), namely the *Lombardy*, is superordinate to the *locali* in the region and associated with the *casa madre* of Reggio Calabria. In the region, 24 *'Ndrangheta locali* would be found operative in the following provinces: Milan (*locali* in Milan, Bollate, Bresso, Cormano, Corsico-Buccinasco, Pioltello, Rho, Solaro, Legnano-Lonate Pozzolo (Varese)), Como (*locali* in Erba, Canzo-Asso, Mariano Comense, Appiano Gentile, Senna Comasco, Fino Mornasco-Cermenate), Monza-Brianza (*locali* in Monza, Desio, Seregno and Giussano, Lenate sul Seveso, Limbiate), Lecco (*locali* of Lecco and Calolziocorte), and Pavia (*locali* of Pavia and Voghera).

On the other hand, with regard to the criminal matrices of Sicilian and Campanian extraction, despite not having specific court rulings witnessing their penetration, conversely to the *'Ndrangheta*, the presence, of even considerable projections<sup>4</sup>, of *Cosa Nostra* and the *Camorra*<sup>5</sup> in specific areas is not excluded.

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<sup>3</sup> During the semester, 25 restrictive measures have been issued, 12 of which in Calabrian organized crime contexts. The measures ascribable to the different Mafia matrices concerned the following sectors: building, catering, waste treatment, real estate and transport.

<sup>4</sup> For example, in the province of Varese a significant presence of individuals deemed to be contiguous to Sicilian organized crime is reported. It is also reported that in the "*Crypto*" antidrug operation, carried out by the Carabinieri of Monza on **June 27, 2023**, which will be discussed below, both suspects ascribable to Calabrian organized crime and an individual residing in Cinisello Balsamo (Milan) contiguous to *stidda* in the province of Caltanissetta, have been reached by the restrictive measure, in high rank position.

<sup>5</sup> Concerning the presence in Lombardy of the latter criminal matrix, it is reported that on **April 19, 2023** the criminal proceeding recorded the implementation, by the Carabinieri of Marcianise (Caserta), of an arrest warrant – requested by the DDA in Naples – towards 28 individuals for hypothesis of association for the purpose of drug trafficking

As regards the infiltrations in legal economy in Lombardy, the extraordinary capital flow introduced in the Italian economic system thanks to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) can be an opportunity for criminal organizations that, with particular prominence in this area, have a marked entrepreneurial spirit. During the semester under review, in the monitoring and prevention activity implemented by the prefectures of the Lombard provinces, 25 prohibitive orders<sup>6</sup> have been issued overall.

It has emerged that, from the analysis of the prohibitive orders issued, Mafia criminal groups have an inclination to be present in a plurality of economic and entrepreneurial sectors.

The catering sector resulted undoubtedly the most attractive<sup>7</sup>. Regarding the '*Ndrangheta*, interests have also emerged in the building sector, in the real estate sector and in the vehicle maintenance and repair field, as verified on the occasion of anti-Mafia measures of inquiry done by the prefecture of Milan, that permitted the promulgation of 3 prohibitive orders against as many businesses operating in the aforementioned economic sectors. Moreover, the prefectures of Varese and Lecco ordered single measures charged to businesses active, respectively, in municipal waste collection and business training.

The interest of criminal groups, even if not related to organized crime, also remains in committing crimes related to waste storage in landfill, false statements frequently concomitant to hypothesis of laundering, self-laundering and invoicing for fictional transactions. These criminal activities are particularly profitable since they ensure remarkable profits against a lower sanctioning risk compared to other offense. The operations concluded during the semester have not attested the direct involvement of organized crime in the business of illegal waste trafficking, but they revealed the illegal interests of an unscrupulous entrepreneur active in the sector.

Regarding foreign criminality, the criminal police operations carried out in Lombardy have led to the conclusion that it is present and operative in different sectors, with special regard to acquisitive

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aggravated pursuant to article 416a 1 of the Criminal Code, both for having used the Mafia method and for having facilitated the BELFORTE *Camorra clan* of Marcianise (Caserta). The restrictive measure revealed that the aforementioned criminal organization would also extend its criminal interests to Milan in cocaine trafficking. The presence of two criminal *gruppi* has been revealed from the investigative activities: one of the two is operative in Campania, the other in Milan, headed by two half-brothers, one of them would have operated in Lombardy's capital on behalf of the BELFORTE *clan* (hence the allegation of the aggravating circumstance of Mafia facilitation) through *drug dealers* from Campania employed in the drug sale, especially cocaine. The sales took place through a sort of *call center* that received reservations and forwarded orders to the *drug dealers*, via coded messages, for drug deliveries directly to the buyers' homes. OCC. no. 28402/2018 RGNR, no. 211072019 RG GIP and no. 75/2023 OCC issued on **April 18, 2023**, by the Court of Naples, executed on **April 19, 2023**.

<sup>6</sup> Milan Prefecture 10 orders; Como Prefecture 1 order; Varese Prefecture 1 order; Lecco Prefecture 2 orders. Brescia Prefecture 4 orders; Bergamo Prefecture 1 order; Cremona Prefecture 4 orders; Mantua Prefecture 2 orders. In relation to criminal matrices reference, 12 involved businesses in Calabrian organized crime contexts, 1 involved a business in Sicilian organized crime contexts, 1 involved Camorra contexts and 6 reached business owners not contiguous to Mafia contexts.

<sup>7</sup> This sector indeed has been involved in the issuance of 6 prohibitive orders - 5 of them ordered by the Prefecture of Milan and 1 by the Prefecture of Lecco - that reached as many businesses most likely infiltrated by Calabrian crime.

offenses, drug trafficking and the exploitation of the prostitution of others. As regards the drug trafficking management, the phenomenon is characterized by the presence of organizations of Albanian and North African origin and/or from sub-Saharan Africa (Senegal, Gambia, Nigeria, etc.), that frequently interact with each other and with individuals related to Italian crime, with projections into other European countries like Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain.

### **Province of Milan and the metropolitan area**

With regard to waste management, on **February 15, 2023**, the Carabinieri of the Milan Environmental Protection and Ecological Transition Group, with the support of EUROPOL, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) and the coordination of EUROJUST international cooperation channels, executed 18 precautionary measures. The investigations, which also extended abroad, focused on a deal of money believed to be the profit of illegal trafficking of waste, amounting to more than EUR 90 million. This profit passed through the accounts of Italian, German and Hungarian companies and was likely reinvested in further activities, including illegal ones. The creation of the operation is ascribable to another 2020 investigation<sup>8</sup> in which 16 individuals were arrested for environmental crimes.

The Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza of Milan proceeded to the preventive seizure of a waste treatment plant located in Milan and of the related profit for a total amount of about EUR 8 million on **March 2, 2023**. The 7 suspects, 4 of whom are residents of Lombardy, are suspected, in different ways, of illegal waste trafficking, unauthorized waste management and forgery of registers and notifications. The investigation found that the suspects allegedly accumulated, within a facility in the hamlet of Cascina Guascona (Milan), tons of “dirty” waste (not undergoing the required treatment) then sold as *raw materials* to a company engaged in the construction of the Novara bypass.

As mentioned, other operations have found that drug trafficking is always attractive to the associations. On **March 27, 2023**, the GIP of the Court of Milan, following an abridged proceeding, pronounced the judgment<sup>9</sup> of conviction against 9 individuals, indicted in the “*Metropoli Hidden Economy*” operation. The first protective measures<sup>10</sup> were executed on September 6, 2022 by the Guardia di Finanza of Milan and Pavia against 13 individuals, investigated in different ways for conspiracy for the purpose of trafficking and supply of narcotics (hashish and cocaine), purchase and

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<sup>8</sup> Criminal procedure 43109/18 RGNR DDA.

<sup>9</sup> Judgment no. 16976/2022 RGNR and 25821/2022 RG GIP (excerpt from no. 14915/2022 RG GIP).

<sup>10</sup> Arrest warrant of the suspected person no. 16976/22 issued on **August 30, 2022**. The GIP of the Court of Milan did not validate the arrest warrant measure, ordering at the same time the protective measure no. 16976/22 RGNR and 14915/22 RG GIP issued on **September 9, 2022**.

possession of assault weapons, fictitious holding of assets and conspiracy for the purpose of insurance swindling.

The Guardia di Finanza of Milan, on **May 3, 2023**, executed a restrictive measure<sup>11</sup> involving 40 persons suspected in different ways of the crimes of partnership for the purpose of drug trafficking with the aggravating factor of transnationality and large quantities. The operation, termed “*Money Delivery*”, started with a European Investigation Order and with the analysis of messaging from encrypted communication platforms used on specific smartphones. Numerous shipments of narcotics were imported from Northern Europe to Lombardy, quantified at about 645 kg of cocaine, 240kg of hashish and 30 kg of ketamine, as reconstructed by investigators also on the basis of the content on the encrypted *chats*. At the same time, in Genoa and Reggio Calabria, the Carabinieri and the DIA<sup>12</sup> executed other restrictive measures ordered by that A.G. (Judicial Authority) as part of investigations related to the one in Milan, all of which merged, under the coordination of the DNA, into the larger “*Eureka*” operation. These investigations were developed through the European judicial and investigative cooperation of EUROJUST, EUROPOL, @ON and the Interpol I-CAN project. The “*Money Delivery*” operation, in particular, targeted two different associations engaged in drug trafficking (operating in the Milan area, Calabria and Campania). It documented the involvement in the illicit activities of a number of individuals contiguous to organized crime from Calabria and Campania to whom, however, no charges were made pursuant to article 416a of the Criminal Code or specific aggravating circumstances pursuant to article 416a 1 of the Criminal Code.

The following **June 23, 2023**, as part of the same investigation, a preventive seizure order<sup>13</sup> was executed, requested by the local DDA to the Court of Milan targeting, in addition, a company operating in the removals sector and a sole proprietorship operating in food retailing in the province of Varese. The ablative order resulted from economic-financial investigations that permitted to quantify the profit from drug trafficking at more than EUR 15 million.

Another anti-drug operation, termed “*Barrios*”, ended on **April 26, 2023**, with the execution of restrictive measures ordered as part of two separate and converging criminal proceedings<sup>14</sup>. The protective measures involved a total of 30 suspects allegedly guilty, in different ways, for association for the purpose of trafficking (including transnational trafficking) and supply of narcotics, money

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<sup>11</sup> OCC. no. 3125/2020 RGNR and no. 19220/2020 RG GIP issued on April 14, 2023, by the Court of Milan.

<sup>12</sup> As part of the “*Sunset*” operation.

<sup>13</sup> Preventive seizure order no. 31253/2020 RG NR and no. 19220/2020 RG GIP issued on June 14, 2023, by the Court of Milan.

<sup>14</sup> OCC. no. 31451/2021 RGNR and 18674/2021 RG GIP, issued by the Court of Milan on **March 29, 2023**, and arrest warrant issued by the Public Prosecutor of Milan on **April 17, 2023**, which was not validated by the GIP of the Court of Milan, which contextually ordered the implementation of protective measures with OCC no. 34606/2021 RGNR and 26560/2021 RG GIP on **April 28, 2023**.

laundering, extortion and possession and improper firearm permit. The associations<sup>15</sup> involved, that again had encrypted smartphones, were engaged in the import of narcotics from Spain and subsequent distribution in different Milan districts (Barona, Gratosoglio, Comasina, Quarto Oggiaro) and in the Municipalities of Rozzano and Bruzzano (Milan). Investigations also allegedly revealed a narcotics sale network within Milan's Opera prison, carried out with the complicity of family members of some detainees who were in contact with drug dealers active in the suburbs of the Country Seats and who were able to introduce drugs and cryptophones into the prison. During the investigations, EUR 240 thousand in cash and 329 kg of narcotics including cocaine, hashish and marijuana were seized.

Even with the "*Crypto*"<sup>16</sup> operation, which ended on **June 27, 2023**, the use of encrypted messaging platforms by coteries, which were later decoded by collateral international and European Union organization, is reported. The investigation, which focused on drug trafficking from Ecuador and Spain, ended with the execution of a protective measure<sup>17</sup> against 30 individuals indicted in different ways for conspiracy for the purpose of drug trafficking and dealing, money laundering, self-laundering and common firearms and military weapons trafficking. Judicial documents showed that the narcotic concealed in *containers*, landed in the harbor of Gioia Tauro (Reggio Calabria) and was then shipped to Milan. The association had established its operational base in the capital of Lombardy, from where one of the suspects maintained contact with the accomplices in Calabria. The latter were in charge of extracting drugs from the Gioia Tauro harbor and shipping them to Milan. At the same time, an illegal military weapons trade (machine guns, assault rifles, handguns, as well as bazooka and hand grenades) emerged, which some suspects purchased from a supplier. The supplier was sentenced to life imprisonment for aggravated murder and Mafia association and he took advantage of prison benefits and furloughs.

In Italy and abroad, in particular at Cinisello Balsamo (Milan), Muggiò (Monza-Brianza province), Giussano (Monza-Brianza province), Cesano Maderno (Monza-Brianza province), Carate Brianza (Monza-Brianza province), Dalmine (Bergamo) and Alicante in Spain (in collaboration with Spanish authorities), on **June 27, 2023** the Carabinieri executed a protective measure<sup>18</sup> against 15 individuals investigated for association aimed at transnational drug trafficking, including 3 foreigners (an Ecuadorian, a Gambian and an Albanian). The criminal group, through road transport, supplied large quantities of hashish and marijuana from Spain, which were then distributed in the provinces of

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<sup>15</sup> One group, based in Rozzano (Milan), specialized in importing, transporting and selling cocaine, hashish and marijuana. Another group, based in Milan, in the area of Sempione, was active in marijuana trafficking, a substance that was mainly sold in the "Barona" district of Milan, either directly in the open-air drug market or delivered to homes via instant messaging platforms.

<sup>16</sup> No. 21745/17 RGNR and 20856/19 RG GIP of the Court of Milan.

<sup>17</sup> OCC. no. 21745/17 RGNR and 20856/19 RG GIP issued on **June 6, 2023**, by the Court of Milan.

<sup>18</sup> OCC. no. 27781/2020 RGNR and 13155/2020 RG GIP issued on **June 6, 2023**, by the Court of Milan.

Milan, Monza-Brianza, Bergamo and Cremona. Again, the investigations, carried out thanks to the international cooperation channels activated through the issuance of a European Investigation Order, allowed the reconstruction of the use of the same encrypted messaging informatics platforms for the benefit of the group's criminal activity.

### **Province of Monza and Brianza**

During the semester under review, it is reported that on **May 10, 2023**, as part of the “*Maestrale Carthago*” operation, the Carabinieri of Vibo Valentia executed an arrest warrant on suspected offense<sup>19</sup> issued by the DDA of the Calabrian capital against 61 individuals. They belong to the main ‘*Ndrangheta famiglie*’ of that province, suspected in various degrees for: Mafia association, political-Mafia exchange vote, violations of the legislation on firearms, drug trafficking, bribery, extortion, receiving stolen goods and obstructing a public tendering procedure. The investigation permitted the organized crime presence “mapping” in the province of Vibo Valentia by reconstructing the roles, tasks and dynamics of leaders, promoters, organizers and participants, highlighting their strong economic-entrepreneurial orientation and ability to establish fluid relationships with “white-collar”, politicians and representatives of the Public Administration. For operational repercussions in Lombardy, the protective measure concerned two suspects allegedly affiliated with the ‘*Ndrangheta locale*’ at Mileto (Vibo Valentia) and residing in the province of Monza and Brianza.

### **Provinces of Como and Varese**

In the areas of Varese and Como, some relevant judicial confirmation is reported. On **January 16, 2023**, the GUP of the Court of Milan, following an abbreviated trial procedure, pronounced the judgment<sup>20</sup> of conviction against 14 individuals, indicted in the DDA of Milan “*Doppio Binario*”<sup>21</sup> trial. The operation, concluded in February 2022 by the Guardia di Finanza of Varese and Milan, had revealed the presence of a criminal conspiracy aimed at the issuance and use of invoices for non-existent transactions, bankruptcy and illegal supply of staff with the aggravating factor of Mafia method and facilitation.

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<sup>19</sup> Arrest warrant on suspected offense no. 9601/15 RGNR issued on **May 8, 2023**, by the DDA of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>20</sup> Judgment no. 15909/2022 RGNR and no. 15622/2022 RG GIP.

<sup>21</sup> OCC. no. 19144/18 RGNR and no. 22450/18 RG GIP issued on January 27, 2022, by the Court of Milan, upon request of the local DDA. On this point, investigations had highlighted the involvement of the ARENA-NICOSCIA *cosca* of Isola Capo Rizzuto (Crotone) through the ramifications of the groups, closely linked to each other also by family relationship, of the ALOISIO in the province of Varese, and of the GIARDINO, in the province of Verona. They allegedly inserted themselves in important business contexts through the supply of staff to the major companies that won calls for tenders.



In **January**<sup>22</sup> and **February**<sup>23</sup> **2023**, the Supreme Court of Cassation declared two convictions against 8 defendants in the “*Krimisa*”<sup>24</sup> proceeding, articulated on the infiltrations<sup>25</sup> of the FARAO-MARINCOLA *cosca* of Cirò Marina (Crotone) between the provinces of Milan and Varese, through the *Legnano (Milan)-Lonate Pozzolo (Varese) locale*, which is the territorial projection of the Calabrian coterie.

Again, on **April 27, 2023**, the Court of Como, following the ordinary procedure, pronounced the judicial conviction<sup>26</sup> of 8 individuals convicted as part of the “*Cavalli di razza*” trial. The operation, coordinated by the DDA of Milan, Reggio Calabria and Florence, had ended in November 2021 with the execution of more than one hundred protective measures against individuals contiguous to the MOLÈ-PIROMALLI *cosca* of Gioia Tauro (Reggio Calabria). The suspects were charged in different ways with crimes of Mafia association, external participation in Mafia association, extortion, illegal possession of firearms and firearm permit, self-laundering, criminal conspiracy aimed at drug trafficking, usury, fraudulent bankruptcy, tax evasion and bribery. With the recent conviction, the Court of Como convicted the 8 defendants, against whom the aggravating factor of being the armed association (article 416a section 4 of the Criminal Code) was excluded.

### **Provinces of Brescia and Bergamo, Mantua and Cremona**

A judicial conviction (abbreviated trial procedure) of the Court of Brescia<sup>27</sup> was issued on **January 30, 2023** against 3 individuals in the “*Atto Finale*”<sup>28</sup> trial for crimes of usury, extortion and financial crimes, all aggravated by the Mafia method. Investigations by the State Police, Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza of Brescia had concluded in October 2021 with the execution of 7 pretrial detention orders, revealing the operations of an organization committed to the perpetration of usury, extortion and financial crimes, headed by the FACCHINERI *cosca* of the ‘*Ndrangheta*. As part of the same criminal proceeding, on **May 2, 2023**, the conviction for the extortion crime of 5 additional defendants, but denying the aggravating factor of the Mafia method, took place.

Regarding organized crime with Nigerian origin, the execution of a pretrial detention order in prison issued by the GIP of the Court of Turin is reported, as part of the “*Bird Man*”<sup>29</sup> investigation. This

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<sup>22</sup> Judgment no. 75/23 issued on **January 20, 2023**, by the Supreme Court of Cassation.

<sup>23</sup> Judgment no. 606/23 issued on **February 17, 2023**, by the Supreme Court of Cassation.

<sup>24</sup> From the Greek name of Cirò Marina, Municipality of Crotone’s province.

<sup>25</sup> OCC. no. 14467/17 RGNR and no. 9361/17 RG GIP issued on **June 21, 2019**, by the Court of Milan, upon request of the local DDA.

<sup>26</sup> Judgment no. 478/2022 RG Court, 1512/2022 RG GIP and 2554/2022 RGNR pronounced by the Court of Como on **April 27, 2023**, including p.n. order dated **May 3, 2023**.

<sup>27</sup> Of November 28, 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Criminal proceeding 7456/19 RG NR and 9289/20 RG GIP of August 30, 2021.

<sup>29</sup> OCC no. 11820/2019 RGNR and 11452/2022 RG GIP of January 24, 2023.

investigation was executed by the State Police on **March 28, 2023** against 16 individuals belonging to the “*Eiye Confraternity*” *cult*. They were found responsible for Mafia association, possession for the purpose of drug trafficking, robbery, injury and extortion. From the investigation documents, the position of a suspect residing in the province of Bergamo and in possession of a residence permit for special protection (obtained under a false name) is particularly relevant. The latter, an employee of a ferrous materials treatment company based in the province of Bergamo, was allegedly at the top of the aforementioned *cult* with the role of *World Ebaka* (National Head).

On **January 26, 2023**, in at Brescia, the Guardia di Finanza executed a pretrial detention order in prison<sup>30</sup> against 19 individuals, including Albanians and Italians. They were responsible in different ways for possession for the purpose of heroin, cocaine, hashish and marijuana dealing. The investigation was also conducted simultaneously in Albania where additional 24 pretrial detention orders were executed. In addition, the preventive seizure of assets and financial resources for a total of more than EUR 4 million was ordered with the same order. The investigative activity, which began in 2017, following the seizure of two blocks of cocaine along the A4 highway at Seriate (Bergamo), revealed the relationships between the involved criminal groups that operated between Albania and Italy, where the narcotic was cut in two refineries in Milan and Cremona. Overall, the investigation permitted the arrest of 119 individuals and the execution of limiting orders of approximately EUR 1 million, over 5 years of activity.

On **February 8, 2023**, the Court of Brescia sentenced 7 defendants related to the CREA *cosca* of Rizziconi (Reggio Calabria). They were involved in an investigation conducted by the Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza of Brescia, under the coordination of the local DDA and concluded with the execution of 5 protective measures in prison<sup>31</sup> in October 2021. The defendants, in particular, were found in different ways responsible, in complicity with each other and with other individuals, of possession and carrying in a public place of assault and common weapons for the purpose of committing a murder that developed in an organized crime context.

The State Police, on **February 23, 2023**, near the Brescia train station, executed the arrest *in flagrante delicto* of 2 Albanian citizens responsible for possession of marijuana with the aim of dealing. The two individuals, stopped in a car, concealed about 8 kg of narcotic inside a suitcase.

The Carabinieri of Brescia and Mantua on **May 9, 2023**, executed a pretrial detention order issued by the GIP of the Court of Brescia<sup>32</sup> against 4 Moroccan individuals, who were found responsible for the crime of possession of cocaine, hashish and marijuana with the aim of dealing.

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<sup>30</sup> OCC no. 3209/17 RGNR - 7583/22 RG GIP of the Court of Bergamo of January 18, 2023.

<sup>31</sup> OCC no. 13944/20 RGNR of the DDA of Brescia.

<sup>32</sup> OCC no. 4053/2023 RG NR and no. 4958/2023 RG GIP.

Also, in the provinces of Mantua and Cremona, the active presence of a ramification of Calabrian organized crime, in particular ascribable to the GRANDE ARACRI *cosca* of Cutro (Crotone), has been documented in recent years through several judgments and judicial police operations.

With specific regard to the province of Mantua, it is reported that on **February 24, 2023** the DIA executed a confiscation order, on the joint proposal of the Brescia Public Prosecutor and the Director of the DIA, against a Calabrian entrepreneur operating in the transport sector in Lombardy<sup>33</sup>. The latter, already convicted of association aimed at drug trafficking, is believed to be linked to the ARENA-NICOSCIA *'Ndrangheta* association of Crotone origin and also active in the area of Mantua. The investigations carried out revealed how the individual, through his own companies, had managed to gain control of a large part of the local road transport business, facilitating the enrichment of the *cosche* also through the committing of tax crimes. Regarding the entrepreneur and his family, in fact, a significant disproportion between the declared income and the assets actually at his disposal was found. Five companies, three apartments, one warehouse, and bank reports with a total value of about EUR 700 thousand were seized. The Calabrian entrepreneur was also ordered to be charged with the prevention measure of special public security surveillance with the obligation with the obligation of residence in the municipality of domicile for 5 years.

Also in Mantua on **January 10, 2023**, the Carabinieri executed a personal and real protective measure, as part of the operation conventionally termed “*Sisma*”<sup>34</sup>, against 10 suspects found responsible, in different ways, for the crime of association aimed at corruption for acts contrary to the duties of office, bribery, fictitious ownership of companies, the Mafiamethod aggravating factor, for having facilitated the DRAGONE-CIAMPÀ *cosca* of the *'Ndrangheta* of Cutro (Crotone). The investigation, which derives from a report forwarded to the local Public Prosecutor in January 2020 by the “*Struttura Commissariale per l'emergenza e la ricostruzione dei territori lombardi colpiti dagli eventi sismici del 20 e 29 maggio 2012*” (Commission for the emergency and reconstruction of the Lombard areas hit by the earthquakes of May 20 and 29, 2012) established by the Region of Lombardy, permitted the arrest of 9 individuals involved in a corruption and bribery mechanism. This mechanism was aimed at diverting funds allocated for post-earthquake reconstruction in 2012.

In conclusion, regarding the Carabinieri's “*Glicine Akeronte*”<sup>35</sup> investigation that on **June 27, 2023**, led to the arrest of 43 individuals ordered by the Catanzaro DDA, it is worth mentioning the execution of a protective order issued against an entrepreneur, for external complicity in Mafia association and for having favored the “*Papaniciari*” and *Cutro locali* coteries. The entrepreneur comes from

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<sup>33</sup> Prevention measure no. 25/2021 RM SP of the Court of Brescia on November 25, 2022 (filed with the Registry on February 20, 2023).

<sup>34</sup> OCC no. 6882/2021 Mod. 20 and 5150/2020 Mod. 21 of the Court of Brescia GIP of January 5, 2023.

<sup>35</sup> OCC. no. 5768/16 RGNR, 5040/16 RG GIP and 237/22 RMC of the Court of Catanzaro of June 7, 2023.

Peschiera del Garda (Verona) and resides in the Mantua area. The DDA of Catanzaro allegedly revealed the presence of an organization of administrators, entrepreneurs and intermediaries in relation with the *'Ndrangheta clan* for the management of public contracts related to waste disposal in Calabria.

## - MARCHE

In the Marche region, geographically in the center of the Peninsula, the harbor of Ancona is a significant seaport for international vehicle and passenger traffic and one of the top harbors for cargo handling.

Marche's production system is mostly based on small and medium-sized enterprises operating in various sectors, such as agri-food, manufacturing and tourism. Given its entrepreneurial capacity, the area could potentially be attractive to organized crime. Moreover, given the significant public funding allocated to the Region of Marche through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), the *Next Generation UE* funds and the Structural Funds of the 2021-2027 Programming (*Fondi Strutturali della Programmazione 2021-2027*), institutional attention remains high to avert potential Mafia infiltration in the area.

State Police Intelligence-led policing carried out over the years show no evidence to suggest the embedding of Mafia-type criminal groups. However, the presence of ramification ascribable to criminal groups, mostly with a *'Ndrangheta*<sup>1</sup> matrix, with interests in the money laundering and re-use of illicit funds in the legal economy is reported. The presence of the *Camorra* is reportedly marginal but involved, through the management, by Campanian individuals, some of whom are linked to criminal *associations*<sup>2</sup>, in drug trafficking.

Regarding foreign crime, the activity of foreign individuals mostly Albanians<sup>3</sup>, Nigerians<sup>4</sup>, Romanians and Afghans<sup>5</sup> has been consolidated. They have managed to carve out their own spaces in the supply of the narcotics sector, as well as in the property crime. In this regard, the operations were mainly carried out in the provinces of Ancona, Pesaro and Fermo.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2019 “*Terry*” investigation had documented the involvement of the GRANDE ARACRI *'ndrina*, guilty of extortion and usury, both aggravated by the Mafia method. The 2020 “*Open Fiber*” investigation had confirmed *'Ndrangheta* interests in the area.

<sup>2</sup> Thus, it was the “*sta senz pensier*” operation (OCC no. 2023/17 RGNR and 282/18 RGIP, issued on March 5, 2018, by the GIP of the Court of L'Aquila). This operation was concluded by the Carabinieri in 2018 with the disarticulation of an organization of individuals from Teramo and Naples. The individuals were capable of bringing in, from the district of Secondigliano (Naples), narcotics that could meet the “needs” of drug dealing in the suburbs of Ancona and in the area of Teramo.

<sup>3</sup> On September 4, 2022, the Carabinieri had arrested an Albanian for possession aimed at the supply of narcotics.

<sup>4</sup> On **February 17, 2023**, the State Police of Pesaro had arrested 3 Nigerian individuals for possession aimed at the supply of narcotics. On November 12, 2022, the State Police had arrested 19 Nigerians, guilty of supply of narcotics inside a public park in the center of Pesaro. In 2021, as part of the “*Body Packer*” operation, an association of criminal Nigerian individuals dealing in the supply of cocaine and heroin was discovered in the cities of Ancona, Macerata and Pesaro.

<sup>5</sup> It is recalled the “*Daraga*” operation of December 17, 2020, in which the Carabinieri of Macerata executed a pretrial detention order, issued against 24 Pakistanis and Afghans as they were found guilty of drug production and trafficking. The criminal production chain ensured the import, processing and supply of heroin to provide the open-air drug markets in the area of Marche. The narcotic from Pakistan and Afghanistan was brought into Italy through the “Balkan route”. It was concealed inside pastry packages or transported by couriers with ovules in their bodies.

## Province of Ancona

During the semester, foreign criminality was guilty of illegal recruitment crime and facilitation of illegal immigration, as well as crimes in the drug sector. Regarding foreign criminality, it is reported the “*Country workers*” operation executed on **February 9, 2023**, by the Guardia di Finanza of Ancona. The investigations, which derived from the examination of suspicious bank transactions, led to the arrest of a Pakistani entrepreneur. The person is resident at Fermo and he had involved in the illegal activity more than 50 workers and about ten agricultural holding operating in the southern area of the region. The Pakistani citizen, in particular, in order to provide low-cost labor to the involved agricultural holding, hired compatriots economically in need by assigning them to work at agricultural land of third parties under exploitative conditions.

## Remaining regional area

The State Police’s investigations have confirmed how the supply of narcotics is the main illegal activity committed by both foreign associations and common criminal groups in the region of Marche. In this regard, on **January 13, 2023**, the State Police of Pesaro arrested a Liberian citizen for possession aimed at the supply of narcotics.

On **February 1, 2023**, at Pesaro and Urbino, the Carabinieri executed a pretrial detention order, as part of the “*Mare d’inverno*” operation<sup>6</sup>, against a criminal group composed of individuals from Campania and one from Calabria, partly settled in that area. They were guilty of possession, disposal and sale of large consignments of cocaine, destined not only for the provinces of Pesaro and Urbino, but also for Ancona, Rimini and Perugia.

On **March 6, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Fermo arrested 8 individuals (of Italian, Moroccan, Albanian and Romanian nationality), as part of the “*Underground*” operation<sup>7</sup>, who were guilty of drug trafficking. The criminal association was active mostly along the entire coastline of the Fermana and Macerata.

Regarding the facilitation of illegal immigration, it is reported the “*Wet shoes*” operation<sup>8</sup> executed on **January 31, 2023**, by the State Police of Macerata and Rome against a criminal conspiracy aimed at the facilitation of illegal immigration with the aggravating factor of transnationality. The 3

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<sup>6</sup> No. 661/2022 RGNR and 122/2023 RG GIP issued on **January 24, 2023**, by the Court of Pesaro.

<sup>7</sup> No. 1476/2021 RGNR and 156/2022 RG GIP issued on **February 21, 2023**, by the Court of Fermo. The activity, coordinated by the Public Prosecutor’s Office of Fermo, had been started in 2021.

<sup>8</sup> The investigation is an investigative development of the activity conducted by the State Police of Rome, coordinated by the Public Prosecutor’s Office of Rome. This investigative development followed the terrorist attack of December 19, 2016, at Berlin, conducted by an individual who had also stayed illegally in Italy. He came from Tunisia and then he moved to Germany with false identity documents.

Tunisians, who were arrested<sup>9</sup>, availed themselves of a network of accomplices in the area of Macerata and “...contacts with organized criminal groups operating in Tunisia that dealt with the sea transport of illegal immigrants”. The criminal association was able to manage the illegal landing of foreigners, mostly North Africans, on the Sicilian coastline, through the logistical support as well as by providing the necessary coverage to obtain documents for all the Countries of the Schengen area.

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<sup>9</sup> OCC no. 25582/21 RGNR and 773/22 RG GIP issued on November 28, 2022, by the Court of Ancona.

## - MOLISE

Even if the Molise region is not the birthplace of original Mafia-type organizations, this territory still suffers the influence of criminal phenomena in the geo-criminal neighboring areas. The condition of vulnerability due to its geographical location – as it is neighboring to provinces with a high criminal and organized crime rate, such as Foggia and Caserta – is associated with the risk of criminal penetration, related to acquisitive offences and drug trafficking, led both by groups coming from the Lazio region and by some foreign crime organizations.

Indeed, the more exposed areas are those next to the regional borders, along the Adriatic coast, in the southern part of the region, and in the areas of Sannio/Matese, where the presence of some referents of extra-regional criminal organizations was recorded.

### Province of Campobasso

In the local context of Campobasso, the economic sectors at risk of infiltration by the gangs are those of logistics, used car resale, running of nightclubs, public exercises and gambling houses, activities related with the building industry, waste management and with agricultural and energy sectors. In this regard, on **February 8, 2023**, the DIA performed a confiscation<sup>1</sup> order of properties approximately worth EUR 2.5 million, issued by the Court of Caltanissetta against an entrepreneur<sup>2</sup> who was supposed to be a member of the famous RINZIVILLO *clan*, leader of the Gela (Caltanissetta) criminal group.

The confiscation was aimed at 30 properties, buildings and lands located in Sicily, Basilicata and also Molise, three wind-powered renewable energy production plants in the province of Campobasso and Potenza, but also to financial corporations, individual companies and banking relationships. On **April 17, 2023**, in San Martino in Pensilis (Campobasso) a precautionary measure<sup>3</sup> for a subject thought to be responsible for extortion and damage was imposed by the Carabinieri. The investigations started in April 2022, after a damage incurred to a trader of Campomarino (Campobasso), after an attempt of extortion. The investigations made it possible to demonstrate other similar attempts of intimidation. The inquired person was in contact with the predatory criminality/criminal organization of Alto Tavoliere.

Even in areas with a low demographic rate, drug dealing is a phenomenon that has reached considerable dimensions, causing the social alarm in the region due to the increasing involvement of

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<sup>1</sup> No. 49/2021 issued by the Court of Caltanissetta - MP Section on **July 7, 2021**, became irrevocable on December 14, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> His criminal relevance was highlighted during the investigation of the operation “*Extra fines-Druso*” (2017), concluded with his arrest for extortion aggravated by the Mafia method.

<sup>3</sup> OCC no. 172/2023 RGNR and 113/2023 RG GIP issued on **April 12, 2023**, by the Court of Larino (Campobasso).



young people from Molise. During that semester, the law enforcement activities<sup>4</sup> have shown the operativity of the *criminalità foggiana* mostly along the coast and in the hinterland in the province of Campobasso, where it acts unscrupulously and violently. The *campani* and *laziali* groups have a stronger impact in the areas of Sannio/Matese and among Campobasso and Bojano.

On **May 10, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Campobasso implemented an arrest warrant in prison<sup>5</sup> for 4 individuals, all residents in that area, for trafficking and selling drugs. The group had a supply channel coming from the province of Frosinone, from which the drug aimed at the drug-pushing market of Campobasso arrived.

As far as the manifestations of the acquisitive crime spread by individuals coming both from Apulia and foreign territories are concerned, in this period the “*Vento Rosso*” operation was reported. The Larino Public Prosecutor’s Office coordinated the operation, which was closed on **May 25, 2023**, when the Carabinieri of Larino imposed a precautionary measure<sup>6</sup> against a criminal group of 11 persons, mostly coming from Romania. The group had organized itself to commit a series of thefts against companies active in the wind power and photovoltaic sectors in Molise, Campania, Apulia and Basilicata, in order to steal and resell the copper, electronic components and other ferrous materials.

### **Province of Isernia**

In the province of Isernia, the city of Venafro proves to be a good crossroads for drug trafficking<sup>7</sup> from Campania and Lazio.

On **February 1, 2023**, during the “*K2*” operation, the State Police of Isernia imposed an arrest warrant<sup>8</sup> against 8 persons, found guilty, in conspiracy and for various reasons, of detention of drugs for the purpose of drug trafficking. A foreign individual was the leader of the group. Thanks to the supply channels based in Rome, it was able to provide the trafficking network that worked in the Molisan province, giving life to a significant illicit turnover.

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<sup>4</sup> Some arrests for narcotics are mentioned as an example: arrest of a subject in Bojano (Campobasso), on **January 13, 2023**; arrest of 2 persons in Campobasso on **February 6, 2023**; arrest of a person with a criminal record in Campomarino (Campobasso), on **May 4, 2023**.

<sup>5</sup> No. 871/21 RGNR DDA - 1934/21 RG GIP issued by the Court of Campobasso on **April 27, 2023**.

<sup>6</sup> No. 999/22 RG GIP issued on **May 17, 2023**, by the Court of Larino.

<sup>7</sup> On **April 15, 2023**, the State Police of Isernia, after a house search, arrested an individual for holding 372 grams of cocaine. On **June 12, 2023**, the State Police of Isernia carried out OCC no. 36/2023 RGNR issued by the Court of Isernia to 3 individuals for possession of drugs with intent to distribute.

<sup>8</sup> No. 92/2021 RGNR - 689/2022 RG GIP issued on **January 19, 2023**, by the Court of Isernia.

## - PIEDMONT

The adaptability to the changes of the economic system and the ability to take advantage of their opportunities keeps the attention of the prefectural authorities, the judiciary, and the law enforcement at a high level, mostly in relation to public funding injections in the coming years<sup>1</sup>. This is true mainly referring to those regions like Piedmont, whose socio-economic context has long been in the criminal sights of traditional *Mafias*, and in particular of the *'Ndrangheta* that has been able to establish its presence here thanks to its strong entrepreneurial vocation and ability to act silently. This presence is also sanctioned by numerous court rulings, many of which have already become final, confirming how Calabrian sodalities have insinuated themselves by sometimes weaving mutualistic relationships with certain exponents of the economic-productive sphere and with sodalities of other Mafia criminal matrices.

Indeed, the investigations<sup>2</sup> made during recent years have shown how the *'Ndrangheta* is deeply rooted<sup>3</sup> in this area, mostly in the sectors of drug trafficking, extortion, usury and money laundering in diversified productive and commercial activities, having an impact on the economic balance and, sometimes, on the local political balance.

As far as the other criminal matrices are concerned, the more recent investigations and analysis allow us to understand how the *Sicilian Mafia* keeps its interests in the Region, mostly related to the transport and catering sectors and with the main purpose of laundering. Even if there are no signals of the rooting of *Camorra* associations in the Piemonte region, there has sometimes been evidence of the presence of individuals contiguous to them and in business relations with exponents of the local *'Ndrangheta* groups.

Regarding foreign crime, the coexistence of a plurality of ethnic Balkan, African and Romanian groups continues to be reported. They are mostly involved in drug trafficking and dealing, in the exploitation of the prostitution of others and in the commission of acquisitive crime.

In particular, the Albanian criminal organizations confirm to have acquired a main role in the landscape of international cocaine trafficking, often interacting with representatives of

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<sup>1</sup> In Piedmont the planning of Public Works is significantly increasing, mostly thanks to the injections of public funds related to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) and to the The National Plan for Complementary Investments to the PNRR (CNP). Indeed, according to the data published in June 2023 by the Bank of Italy, "... in May 2023 EUR 7.8 billion were given to public sector implementers for interventions that had to be realized in Piedmont, 6.9% of the national total. In the last two years the local Administrations of Piedmont issued invitations to tender and made contracts related to the PNRR for about 30% of the amounts to be tendered.... in the period 2023-26, the region's municipalities should increase their annual investment outlays by between 70 and 90%..."

<sup>2</sup> *Crimine, Minotauro, Colpo Di Coda, Esilio, San Giorgio, Helving, San Michele, Big Bang, Bardo, Panamera, Cerbero, Carminius - Fenice* and, lastly, *Platinum Dia* against the *'Ndrangheta's* infrastructures that operate in the territory of the Province of Turin; *Albachiara, Federico Barbarossa* and *Altan* against the *'Ndrangheta's* infrastructures that operate in the area of Asti, lower Piemonte and "Granda Province"; *Altopiemonte* against the so-called *Alto Piemonte* infrastructure; *Geenna* against the *locale* of Aosta.

<sup>3</sup> Also thanks to large stocks of weapons, as confirmed by recent evidence.

the *'Ndrangheta* crime groups. The North African criminality in this area seems to be more interested in the hashish and ecstasy dealing. Some recent investigative and judicial evidence have shown that associations with Nigerian origins have been reproducing for a long time, even in Piedmont, the typical “*secret cult*” schemes of delinquency.

Instead, Romanian criminality seems to be involved almost exclusively in the commission of acquisitive crimes, and this constitutes a widespread social alarm. This is true also talking about the criminal groups with *Sinti* origins that are set in Piedmont, that in some cases seem to be related with some representatives of the *'Ndrangheta* crime groups in the sector of weapons supply and custody. Lastly, there are reports of underage gangs<sup>4</sup>, mostly of North African origin, who have frequently been responsible for robberies and assaults.

### **Metropolitan city of Turin**

Despite the continuous contrast activity led by the judiciary and carried out by the police forces, the *'Ndrangheta* turns out to be the most prevalent criminal organization in the area, thanks to its structures whose operations have already been documented by the outcomes of major judicial investigations.

In particular, Calabrian crime groups turn out to be present in Torino through the “*locale of Natile di Careri in Turin*”<sup>5</sup> (the so-called “*of the natiloti*”), started by CUA-IETTO-PIPICELLA of Natile di Careri (Reggio Calabria) together with representatives of the CATALDO of Locri (Reggio Calabria), PELLE di San Luca and CARROZZA of Roccella Ionica (Reggio Calabria) ‘*ndrine*; the “*locale di Cuorgnè*”, promoted by the BRUZZESE of Grotteria (Reggio Calabria) and by some representatives of the CALLÀ of Mammola (Reggio Calabria), of the URSINO-SCALI of Gioiosa Ionica (Reggio Calabria) and of the CASILE-RODÀ of Condofuri (Reggio Calabria); the “*locale di Volpiano*” started by the BARBARO of Platì (Reggio Calabria) and constituted by members of the TRIMBOLI-MARANDO-AGRESTA and BARBARO di Platì (Reggio Calabria) ‘*ndrine*, all of them related to each other by kinship ties; the “*locale di Rivoli*”, expression of the ROMEO of San Luca (Reggio Calabria) ‘*ndrina*; the “*locale di San Giusto Canavese*” set up by the SPAGNOLO-VARACALLI of Ciminà (Reggio Calabria) and Cirella di Platì (Reggio Calabria) with the involvement of some members of the URSINO-SCALI of Gioiosa Ionica (Reggio Calabria) and RASO-ALBANESE of

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<sup>4</sup> In this regard, the Attorney General of the Republic at the Court of Appeal in Turin, Francesco Enrico Saluzzo, in the Report of the Criminal Police. At the opening of the 2023 judicial year, he reported an “*alarming increase in the forms of deviance and crimes committed by minors and by young people 18 years of age*”.

<sup>5</sup> An investigation made in 2018 concerning the execution of pretrial detention order against a member of the Ursino-Lo Presti *famiglia* made it possible to demonstrate that the “*locale di Natile di Careri*” is actually named, in *'Ndrangheta* circles, “*locale di San Francesco al Campo*”.

San Giorgio Morgeto (Reggio Calabria) *cosche*; the “*locale di Siderno a Torino*”, created by the COMMISSO of Siderno (Reggio Calabria) with some elements of the CORDÌ of Locri (Reggio Calabria); the “*locale di Chivasso*”, set up by the GIOFFRÈ-SANTAITI with the SERRAINO of Reggio Calabria and Cardeto, the BELLOCCO-PESCE of Rosarno (Reggio Calabria) and the TASSONE of Cassari of Nardodipace (Vibo Valentia); the “*locale di Moncalieri*”, established by the URSINO of Gioiosa Ionica (Reggio Calabria), together with some people affiliated with the URSINO-SCALI of Gioiosa Ionica (Reggio Calabria) and with the AQUINO-COLUCCIO of Marina di Gioiosa Ionica (Reggio Calabria); the “*locale di Giaveno*” set up by the BELLOCCO-PISANO of the *locale* of Rosarno (Reggio Calabria) and by representatives of Sicilian origin<sup>6</sup>; related to the Mafia-type crime of Calabrian origin, 4 anti-Mafia interdictions are reported to have been issued by the Prefect of Turin against 2 companies operating in the building sector and other 2 operating in the ecological equipment and systems sales sector.

Moreover, during the Semester, the Guardia di Finanza executed, on February 15, 2023, an early banning order, issued by the Court of Turin, against a representative of the AGRESTA *famiglia*. The measure ended with the final judgment of five years’ imprisonment<sup>7</sup> and covered 1 gym, 6 building units, 1 slot machine rental company, vehicles, and current accounts with a total value of more than EUR 1 million. The man was accused of belonging to a Mafia-type organization.

On **April 3, 2023**, during the “*Criminal Consulting-Pugno di Ferro*” trial<sup>8</sup>, the Court of Turin judicially condemned 18 people considered to be responsible for two separate criminal organizations engaged in the business of extortion and usury, aggravated by the Mafia method. Some of them cooperated with the URSINO-SCALI-MACRÌ *clan* of Gioiosa Ionica (Reggio Calabria). Also on **April 3, 2023**, the DIA ordered a confiscation<sup>9</sup> issued by the Court of Turin against an accountant. The man had already been ordered to be remanded in custody pending trial under a previous operation concluded by the DIA in 2015. The professional, key accountant for a well-known ‘*Ndrangheta famiglia* spread throughout the province of Turin and involved in illegal restraint and international trafficking, had established a real *vademecum* for the realization of VAT and European Union tax fraud. The properties covered by the measure, consisting of 4 companies (and shares in 2 companies) operating in the building and agricultural sectors, and traceable to the activity of the professional firm he owned, 66 real estate properties (located in Piedmont and Basilicata), 8 registered movable assets and 18 financial reports, have an estimated value of about EUR 4 million.

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<sup>6</sup> It is referred to some contacts with the Mafia-type association “*Cosa Nostra*” because in the Calabrian crime association there were numerous elements of Sicilian origin of the well-known Palermo famiglia the “MAGNIS”.

<sup>7</sup> Judgment no. 2986, issued on April 20, 2018, by the Court of Appeal of Turin – Section IV, after the “*Monitauro*” operation.

<sup>8</sup> Criminal procedure 10317/2015.

<sup>9</sup> No. 61/2021 RG MP - no. Rcc 50-2023 no. SIT-TIP.

The same measure also imposed a preventive order of special public security surveillance with the obligation to stay in the municipality of residence for a period of 3 years. Still, during the “*Cagliostro*” operation, on **April 20, 2023**, the Carabinieri ordered 35 people to be remanded in custody, issued by the Court of Turin<sup>10</sup>, because they belonged to a *'Ndrangheta* structure related to the ALVARO “*Carni i Cane*” *cosca* of Sinopoli, and they were also active in multiple acts of extortion and intimidation, thanks in part to the availability of several firearms, as early as 2015.

Always regarding Calabrian criminality, on **May 11, 2023**, the Court of Cassation during the “*Fenice*”<sup>11</sup> abbreviated trial procedure, that regarded the *'Ndrangheta* infiltration in Carmagnola (Turin), condemned the two accused people for Mafia association and political-Mafia exchange vote. Concerning drug trafficking-related crimes that involved criminal matrices different from the *'Ndrangheta*, on **February 8** and **May 7, 2023** the State Police seized about 3 kg of “*shaboo*” methamphetamine and arrested 2 Chinese citizens who lived in the Province of Turin. During the “*Carlo Felice*” operation, on **February 17, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza executed a pretrial detention order<sup>12</sup> issued by the Court of Turin against 10 members of an association aimed at international cocaine trafficking. In particular, the criminal association provided for the storage of the drug in warehouses located in the provinces of Asti, Alessandria and Cuneo and the following distribution in Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto, Tuscany, Sicily and Sardinia.

On **June 7, 2023**, the Carabinieri executed a pretrial detention order<sup>13</sup>, issued by the Court of Turin at the end of the “*Battle Royale*” operation against 4 persons responsible for drug trafficking episodes. The activity allowed the seizure of more than 130 kg of marijuana.

Another pretrial detention order<sup>14</sup>, issued by the Court of Turin on **June 8, 2023** was executed by the Carabinieri after the “*Piazza Pulita*” operation against 15 Italian citizens, responsible for trafficking a great amount of cocaine, marijuana and hashish in the West side of Turin.

Lastly, as far as foreign groups are concerned, the Police of State executed a pretrial detention order<sup>15</sup>, issued on **January 24, 2023**, by the Court of Turin against 16 Nigerian nationals, members of a *Mafia group* named EIYE<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Criminal procedure 532/20 RGNR - 27674/21 RG GIP issued on March 28, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Criminal procedure 23843/18 RGNR and 6128/20 RG GIP of the Court of Turin.

<sup>12</sup> Criminal procedure 2022/9954 RGNR (multiple files combined) - 8187/22 RG GIP.

<sup>13</sup> Criminal procedure 9481/2020 RGNR - 4747/2023 RG GIP.

<sup>14</sup> Criminal procedure 22070/19 RGNR - 2007/2022 RG GIP.

<sup>15</sup> Criminal procedure 11820/2019 RGNR - 11452/2022 RG GIP.

<sup>16</sup> The aforementioned Mafia organization, as explained in the body of the order and ascertained by investigative activities conducted over time, is part of the broader organization rooted in Nigeria, and is widespread in several European and non-European States.

During this period other criminal events happened. Even if they are not ascribable to the Mafia phenomenon, they have caused particular social alarm, such as those committed by the aforementioned “*baby gangs*”, many of North African origin.

### **Province of Alessandria**

In the lower Alessandria area, there is the “*locale del Basso Piemonte*”, that operates also in the territory of Asti, as well as the leader of the RASO-GULLACE-ALBANESE *gruppo*, that operates both in the province of Alessandria and in the Liguria region. Among the municipalities of Sale and Castelnuovo Scrivia (Alessandria), the GIORGI “*Boviciani*” of San Luca (Reggio Calabria) *cosca*’s operations related to international drug trafficking are detected. Crime of Romanian origin is operating, for the most part, in the commission of acquisitive crimes.

Also, in this province the transit of returnees that try to reach other border provinces continues. Within this framework the intervention carried out by the State Police should be ascribed. On **February 19, 2023**, on the A21 highway section, after a rear-end collision, the State Police found, inside a truck of French provenance, 13 irregular immigrants, all aged between 25 and 30 years old, of Indian and Bangladeshi nationality.

### **Province of Asti**

In the province of Asti the presence of ‘*Ndrangheta* organizations related to the *locale del Basso Piedmont* and to the *locale di Asti* is recorded.

As already reported for the province of Turin, during the “*Cagliostro*” operation the *Carabinieri* arrested 35 people active in a ‘*Ndrangheta* structure ascribable to the ALVARO *cosca*, “*Carni i Cane*”, of Sinopoli. During the search of the home of one of the suspects in the Municipality of Frinco (Asti), several firearms as well as a variety of ammunition were found.

Also for the province of Asti, the aforementioned judicial outcomes of the “*Fenice*” trial are reported. It was an abbreviated trial procedure and dealt, among other things, with the criminal infiltration of the ‘*Ndrangheta* in the province of Asti.

As far as the criminal organizations are concerned, on February 9, 2023, during the “*Fast Cash*” operation started on October 2022, the Guardia di Finanza executed a pretrial detention order<sup>17</sup> issued by the Court of Asti against 8 members of an ethnic *Roma* criminal association allegedly responsible for usury.

The Guardia di Finanza, on **March 23, 2023** also executed a pretrial detention order, issued by the Court of Asti, against 10 people, from both Albania and Italy, allegedly responsible of conspiracy,

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<sup>17</sup> Criminal procedure 845/2022 RGNR – 2747/2022 RG GIP.

swindling, money laundering, emission and usage of invoices for non-existent transactions and fraudulent evasion of tax payment. Concurrently with the arrests, a banning order of seizure of tax credits, illicit profit, properties and other assets worth more than EUR 1.5 billion was issued. During the period 2021/2022, the criminal organization practiced the commission of money laundering, self-laundering and predicate offences helped by an accountant working in Naples and one of his close Albanian associates, with an office in Schio (Vicenza).

### **Province of Biella**

In the area of Biella, the operating group is the *locale di Santhià*, attributable to the RASO *famiglia* of Cittanova (Reggio Calabria), that is active in the territories of Santhià (Vercelli), Cavaglià (Biella) and Dorzano (Biella).

Criminal groups of *Sinti* origin from the Campania region are also found to be active, historically in contrast with each other due to family disagreements.

### **Province of Cuneo**

In the Province of Cuneo, the *locale del Basso Piemonte* is found to be active, and it has some influence also on the provinces of Alessandria and Asti<sup>18</sup>.

Talking about the foreign criminality, there are some Albanian, Romanian, and African groups that allegedly share drug trafficking and the prostitution market. Criminal groups of *Sinti* origin also appear to be present here, mostly interested in the acquisitive crimes sector. The Cuneo area, located on the border with France, is often the scene of illegal immigration. In the last years, the transit of illegal immigrants to French territory appears to have taken an endemic form along the Valle Stura as well as through Turin's Valle di Susa. The journey made by citizens mostly from Pakistan or India toward France turned out, over time, to be organized and managed by people who used, from time to time, drivers (*passeurs*) hired with the task of transporting, often in precarious conditions, migrants inside minivans or trucks.

### **Province of Novara**

Novara's contiguity with the metropolitan city of Milan determines the criminal projection in the province of certain groups settled in Lombardy.

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<sup>18</sup> In relation to the context under review, as already indicated in the previous Semi-Annual Report, we note the ruling issued on October 21, 2022, by the Court of Asti, related to 'Ndrangheta infiltration phenomena in the Municipality of Bra (Cuneo).

Over the years, other *famiglie* traceable to Sicilian organized crime, as the PERRONE, also appear to have become firmly established in the area. Over the time, these groups have created strong relationships with local representatives of the *Ndrangheta* and with members of the PAVAGLIANITI *cosca*, that has a hegemonic role in the Bagaladi, San Lorenzo and Condofuri areas, and permanently settled in Cermenate (Como).

In the period under review, the judgment<sup>19</sup> issued by the Supreme Court of Cassation of **May 22, 2023**, is reported. It made 24 final convictions, handed down as part of the “*Krimisa*”<sup>20</sup> trial against some representatives of the FARAO-MARINCOLA *clan* of Cirò Marina (Crotone). One of them is a person from Novara who has been convicted for being a member of the *locale di Lonate Pozzolo* (Varese), with an active role in defining criminal strategies, resolving internal contrasts and providing arms.

Lastly, in this territory African, Albanian and Romanian groups seem to be also present, involved in drug trafficking, exploitation of the prostitution of others and *on-line* fraud activities.

### **Province of the Verbano-Cusio-Ossola**

In the Province of the Verbano-Cusio-Ossola, at the border of Switzerland, it is reported the presence of some representatives of the MAESANO-PANGALLO-ZAVETTIERI *'Ndrangheta cosca* of Roghudi (Reggio Calabria) and Roccaforte del Greco (Reggio Calabria), and of the PALAMARA *famiglia*, extension of the MORABITO-PALAMARA-BRUZZANITI *cosca* of Africo (Reggio Calabria).

Also in these areas the presence of Albanian criminals mainly engaged in drug trafficking is reported, while groups coming from East Europe are particularly operative in the acquisitive crimes sector.

### **Province of Vercelli**

In the province of Vercelli, the *locale di Livorno Ferraris* is reported to be active. It is the expression of the RASO-GULLACE-ALBANESE *'ndrine* and the *locale di Santhià*, as mentioned before, with projections in the province of Biella as well.

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<sup>19</sup> Judgment no. 21928-23

<sup>20</sup> Criminal procedure 14467/17 RGNR at the time registered at the Public Prosecutor's Office of Milan.



## - APULIA<sup>1</sup>

During the first semester of 2023, in the Apulia Region no significant changes in the general framework of organized crime have been recorded.

For the Mafia crime organizations of Apulia, having the control of territories is still essential, as it is a source of growth and sustenance, assured with extortion<sup>2</sup>, thefts<sup>3</sup> and robberies, perpetrated in some cases even by minors<sup>4</sup>.

A constant tendency to expand the territories controlled by *clans*, even outside the regional fields, is typical of the historical alliances, as well as foreign ones<sup>5</sup>.

The organized crime of Apulia developed, over the time, the capability to act in relevant economic contexts, contaminating the legal economy with the laundering of illicit funds, as widely reported in the “*Levante*” operation led by the DIA in the previous year.

One of the most incisive and significant results of the constant pressure put by the law enforcement of the Institutions is the increase of the number of individuals who cooperate with the judicial process. This phenomenon mostly regarded the groups of Bari.

The Apulia criminal context nowadays remains unstable also due to the continuous internal splits. Indeed, during the period under review, in continuity with the serious incidents highlighted in the past six months, multiple ambushes occurred in random order in almost the entire metropolitan area of Bari, in the Foggia area, in the province of Lecce and Taranto, symbolizing the fact that the struggle for territorial control branches throughout the whole regional area.

### Metropolitan City of Bari

From a criminal point of view, in Bari there are 4 hegemon *clans*, mainly corresponding to the Mafia *famiglie* historically rooted there, that spread in the province and in many areas of the Region. These *famiglie* are the CAPRIATI, the STRISCIUGLIO, the PARISI-PALERMITI and the DIOMEDE-MERCANTE. The DI COSOLA<sup>6</sup> *clan*, weakened after the death of its most important element, as

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<sup>1</sup> The following is a graphic depiction of the main underworld components in Apulia, whose positioning on the map, derived from the analysis of recent investigative activities, is merely indicative.

<sup>2</sup> Vgs, for example, the OCC nos.1764/23 RGNR - 1897/23 RGNR - 3143/23 RGNR - 4997/23 RG GIP issued by the GIP of the Court of Bari against the STRISCIUGLIO *clan* on February 23, 2023, and on June 12, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Vds. OCC no. 5473/2020 RGNR and 3034/2022 RG GIP issued on December 28, 2022, by the Court of Bari.

<sup>4</sup> Consider, in this regard, the OCC executed on May 9, 2023, by the Carabinieri of San Severo against 3 minors allegedly responsible in conspiracy and in various capacities for aggravated robbery. Also in Foggia, on **March 17, 2023**, the Carabinieri executed the pretrial detention order no. 167/23, issued on March 13, 2023 by the Juvenile Court of Bari against 3 minors allegedly responsible in conspiracy and in various capacities for attempted assassination aggravated by the unlawful carrying of weapons and aggravated robbery. One of the arrested individuals resulted to have kinship relationships with a historical and major representative of the *società foggiana*, leader of the Mafia SINESI-FRANCAVILLA *gruppo*.

<sup>5</sup> Just think about the consolidated relationship with the Albanian organized crime in illicit drug trafficking (Reference is made to the “*Shpirti*” operation, led by the DIA in July 2021, Criminal proc. 5769/19 RGNR mod. 21 DDA Bari, and also to the “*Zemra*” operation, led by the same Operative Center in June 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Established in the Carbonara, Ceglie del Campo and Loseto districts.

well as by the law enforcement of the Institutions<sup>7</sup>, despite its strong internal frictions, it is supposed to show signs of possible attempts at reconstitution and reassertion<sup>8</sup>. Subordinate to the aforementioned hegemonic *gruppi* is a plurality of smaller *gruppi* with limited operational autonomy, and among them are the MISCEO, MONTANI, ANEMOLO<sup>9</sup>, FIORE-RISOLI, DI COSIMO-RAFASCHIERI, LORUSSO, VELLUTO and TELEGRAFO<sup>10</sup> *gruppi*.

The CAPRIATI *clan* historically operates in the *Borgo Antico* of Bari and, through its *referents*<sup>11</sup>, in the *Fesca* district, in the San Cataldo area, in a wide portion of the Province of Bari and in some centers of the BAT Province. The criminal organization mostly operates in drug trafficking, extortion and in gambling management<sup>12</sup>. Given the prolonged detention status of the *clan*'s historical leader, several *regents* have joined him over time, including the latest, who was murdered on November 21, 2018.

On **June 12, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Bari executed a pretrial detention order in jail<sup>13</sup>, issued against 2 members of the CAPRIATI *clan*, responsible, in various capacities and in conspiracy, for a murder committed on September 29, 2021, in the San Girolamo district of Bari, aggravated by Mafia circumstances, for possession and illegal carrying of a firearm, and for multiple grand theft of the cars used to commit the crime. The investigation documented the interconnected criminal dynamics underlying the now overt and more topical frictions between the STRISCIUGLIO *clan* on the one hand, with a particular reference to the *branch* of the *San Paolo* district of Bari, and, on the other hand the PARISI-PALERMITI and CAPRIATI *clan*, which arose from the need to control the territory and were sharpened by the expansionist criminal policy implemented by the

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<sup>7</sup> “*Maestrale*” operation (2019) regarding the detachment of one of the members of the *clan* that operated in the North of Italy.

<sup>8</sup> OCC no. 3297/2020 RG mod. 21 and 3390/2020 RG GIP issued on April 27, 2020, by the GIP of the Court of Bari and the more recent no. 502/22 order, issued on April 19, 2022 against some affiliates responsible for an operational cell in the Municipality of Giovinazzo.

<sup>9</sup> Originally it was considered an autonomous *clan* close to the DI COSOLA and in business with the ZONNO *gruppo* of Toritto. Now it allegedly deals with extortion, drug trafficking and distribution of gaming and entertainment equipment in the Carrassi district (judgment on appeal no. 127/2022 RGA and 3137/22 Reg. Sent. of July 21, 2022 - “*Gaming machine*” operation).

<sup>10</sup> The TELEGRAFO *gruppo*, in the San Paolo district was affiliated with the MISCEO's *gruppo*, now it is supposed to be close to the STRUSCIUGLIO *gruppo*.

<sup>11</sup> They operate in Bari, in synergy with the CAPRIATI *clan*:

- The DIOMEDE-MERCANTE *clan* and the LORUSSO *gruppo*, whose main area of influence would appear to be the Fesca districts and the San Cataldo area. The San Girolamo district, where the CAPRIATI *clan* was historically located with the LORUSSO *gruppo*, after long contention, would have transited under the sphere of control of the STRISCIUGLIO *clan*;
- The MONTANI *gruppo* that, after the split between the MISCEO and TELEGRAFO *gruppi*, allegedly left the STRISCIUGLIO *clan*'s area to get closer to the CAPRIATI and DIOMEDE-MERCANTE area.

<sup>12</sup> The Criminal Investigation Department's operation led on November 14, 2018, under the name of “*Scommessa*”, highlighted the evolution of a branch of the *clan*, that has become a real *holding* with the capability of laundering a great deal of *dirty* money coming from gambling, internationally managed, by using the most sophisticated financial and technological tools in the market. Another operation, ended with a judgment on appeal on July 21, 2022, confirms the *clan*'s interest in the *gaming* sector.

<sup>13</sup> No. 203/23 RGNR and 2751/23 RG GIP issued on **June 6, 2023** by the GIP of the Court of Bari.

STRISCIUGLIO *articulation*, at the same time confirming the good relations existing between the Japigia *clan* and the CAPRIATI *clan*.

In the current semester the Prefect of Bari issued 2 bans against 2 societies that can be linked to criminal circles. In particular, one of them is supposed to be infiltrated by an individual belonging to the CAPRIATI *clan*.

The STRISCIUGLIO *clan* (*clan of the “moon”*) operates in the Bari Borgo Antico and, through its *articulations*<sup>14</sup>, in the *Libertà, Stanic, San Paolo, San Girolamo, Palese, Santo Spirito, San Pio - Catino, Carbonara, Ceglie del Campo* and *Madonnella* districts and operates in drug trafficking, extortions, usury, money laundering and distribution of gaming/entertainment equipment. The *clan*, which operates following the classical rituals of Mafia affiliation, is articulated into interacting *gruppi* respecting each others' different territories of influence and autonomy, with their own *apex members, middle cadres, crime handlers, soldiers, and fire groups*.

During the period under review, the predatory attitude of the clan, which, through violence and intimidation, continues to harass Bari entrepreneurs and merchants, has become more relevant than ever.

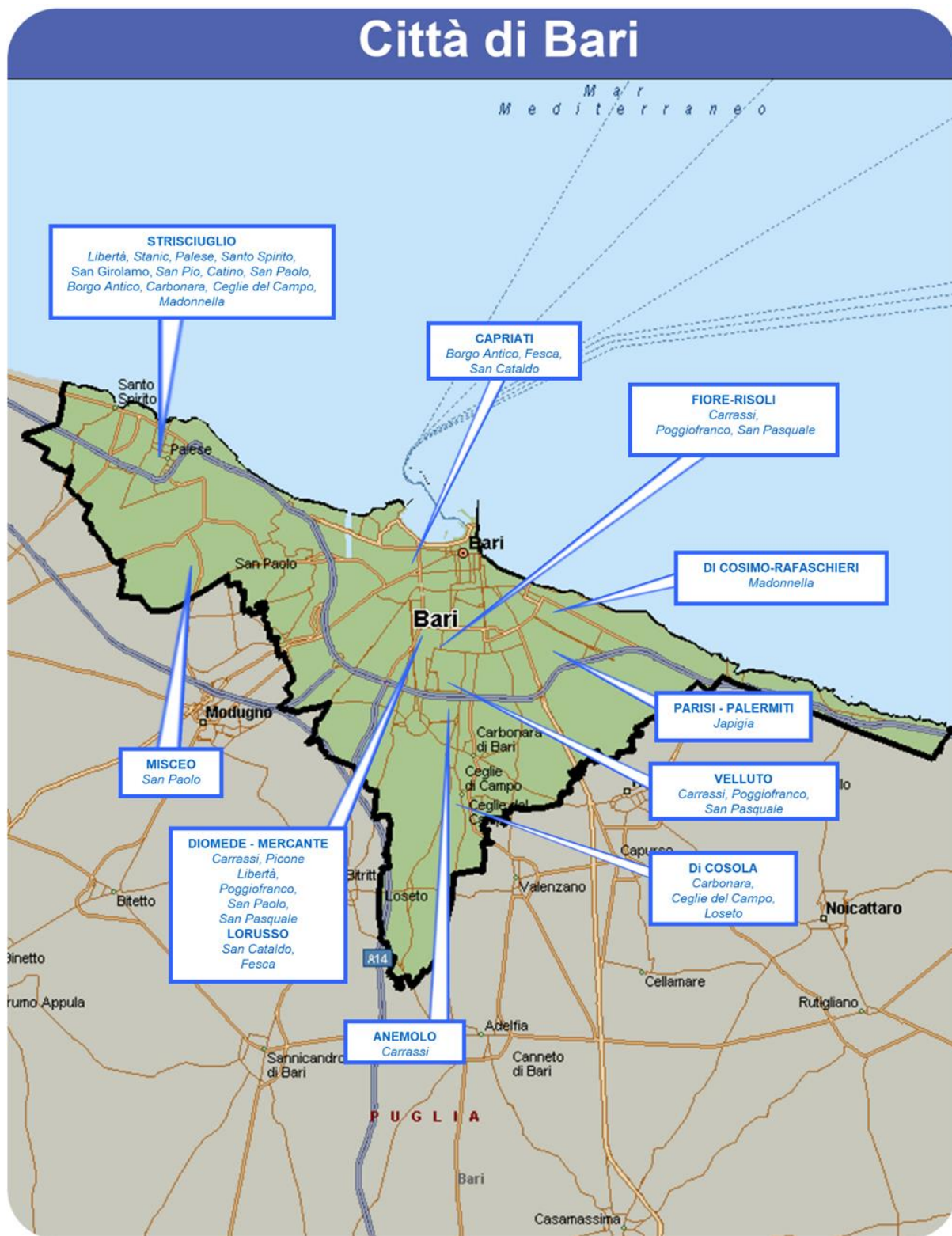
On **February 20, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Bari executed the pretrial detention order in jail<sup>15</sup> against 3 members of the STRISCIUGLIO clan, considered to be responsible for continuous extortion, aggravated by the Mafia method, and of unlawful carrying of a firearm. The extortionists, by repeatedly evoking the name of the *boss* (detained under art. 41 bis of the Criminal Code) of the faction referring to the STRISCIUGLIO clan, would thus have made the victim perceive all the strength and cohesion of the *clan* to whose sustenance the proceeds of the illegal activity would be destined. The entrepreneur, who ran a business in Bari's San Pio district, was allegedly forced to provide multiple services without any consideration and, likewise, to pay large sums of money for the sustenance of the *clan* and its *affiliates* in prison.

City of Bari

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<sup>14</sup> The contention for the criminal control of the Madonnella district provoked a split of the DI COSIMO-RAFASCHIERI *gruppo*, which was a historical ally of the PARISI/PALERMITI *gruppo*. The STRISCIUGLIO *clan* started an alliance with the *splinter wing* of the mentioned *gruppo* fueling the animosity between the parties involved, that would not seem to have subsided yet.

<sup>15</sup> OCC no.1764/23 RGNR and 1897/23 RG GIP issued on **February 23, 2023** by the GIP of the Court of Bari and OCC no. 3143/23 RGNR and 4997/23 RG GIP issued on **June 12, 2023** by the GIP of the Court of Bari.



On **April 7, 2023** the Carabinieri of Bari executed 6 detention orders<sup>16</sup> against 6 previously convicted people, who were supposed to be members of the *STRISCIUGLIO clan*, and to operate in the Madonnella and San Paolo districts. They were responsible for possession of an illegal weapon, aggravated possession aimed at drug trafficking, violation of the obligations inherent in special

<sup>16</sup> No.383/23 SIEP issued on April 5, 2023, by the Prosecutor's General Official at the Court of Appeal of Bari, including 3 with related suspension order Criminal proc. no. 14048/18 RGN.

surveillance, extortion aggravated by the Mafia method in conspiracy, resisting arrest and evasion. The measures stem from the criminal case that shed light on the Mafia war that broke out in 2018 between the STRISCIUGLIO *clan* and the PARISI-PALERMITI *clan's fazioni* for the control of the Madonnella district.

The PARISI-PALERMITI *clan* is historically rooted in the Japigia district in Bari, and it is growing in the whole province. Despite the long period of detention, its historical *leader* is able to act as a granter of the criminal balance among the different *cosche* of Bari. It operates in extortion, usury, drug trafficking, hydrocarbon smuggling and gambling. The clan is characterized by a *pyramidal* organization. It is constituted by a series of autonomous *groups* or single *referents* that operate in synergy with each other, not without episodes of contrasts, in the management of criminal activities in their respective territories (areas of the capital city, San Pasquale, Carrassi and Poggiofranco districts, or centers of the hinterland).

On **March 6, 2023**, the GIP of Bari filed a first instance order<sup>17</sup> against 11 individuals convicted, in various capacities, of the murder of a leading element of the DI COSIMO-RAFASCHIERI *group*, and for the attempted assassination of his brother, that took place in Bari on September 24, 2018, with the Mafia-method aggravating circumstance. Just one of the defendants did not receive the aggravating circumstance, because he allegedly acted without knowing that he was helping the PALERMITI *clan*. The DIOMEDE-MERCANTE *clan*, allied with the CAPRIATI *clan*, is divided in two *famiglie*: the DIOMEDE *famiglia*, whose areas of influence, especially for drug trafficking, are the Poggiofranco, Picone, Carrassi and San Pasquale districts, even if sometimes there are episodes of clashes with other groups; the MERCANTE *famiglia*, very close to the CAPRIATI *clan*, that mostly operates in the Libertà district, with ramifications on the San Paolo district, where they vie for criminal dominance with other rival clans.

## Province of Bari

The complex criminal dynamics that characterize the Bari Metropolitan City reverberate, inevitably, on the province's precarious Mafia balance. The projections of criminal interests in Bari's municipalities nourish existing critical problems in the capital city, generating an oscillating and enduring state of fibrillation in the entire provincial criminal context. The major criminal organizations in the Metropolitan City of Bari extend their sphere of influence in the province by making use of trusted referents or by employing the affiliation of apex individuals belonging to delinquent groups stationed in individual municipalities.

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<sup>17</sup> No. 1522/2022 Sent. 8141/2019 RG PM, 6246/2020 RG GIP issued on December 6, 2022, by the Court of Bari's GIP.

Criminal groups referring to the CAPRIATI *clan* in the province of Bari are based in the Municipality of Bitonto (CONTE *clan* and CASSANO-DI CATALDO *gruppo*), in the Municipality of Triggiano, as well as in the Municipalities of Putignano, Noci, Turi, Castellana Grotte, Monopoli, Alberobello and Conversano. Some referents would operate in the Municipality of Modugno, Giovinazzo, Terlizzi, Corato, Palo del Colle (where it would seem to be subject to the hegemony of the STRISCIUGLIO *clan* and the presence of the CIPRIANO), Molfetta and, finally, Mola di Bari, a town that would be part of an expansionist project of the CAPRIATI *clan*.

On **March 22, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Bari enforced an executive order of seizure of property<sup>18</sup> heading to an entity, who is considered referent of the CAPRIATI *clan*, from Terlizzi.

The investigations enabled the reconstruction of the individual's assets<sup>19</sup>, consisting mainly in assets fictitiously registered to third parties and stored over the years through the reuse of illegal activity's proceeds. The measure concerns movable property, real estate, bank accounts and business compendiums, for a total value worth EUR 20 million, all of them have been fictitiously registered to entities belonging to the same family.

The STRISCIUGLIO *clan* represents for the satellite criminal *gruppi* a source of fibrillations in the city of Bari and in the municipalities situated nearby. It keeps manifesting strong ambitious aims even in the province, like in the Municipality of Bitonto, where it can count on a new *gruppo*<sup>20</sup>, in the Municipality of Modugno, where it makes use of the *affiliated* ROMITO *gruppo*<sup>21</sup>, and marginally in Polignano. The STRISCIUGLIO *clan* would also be present in Conversano and Palo del Colle, where it seems to have conquered the territory taking advantage of a hard time the rival group experienced.

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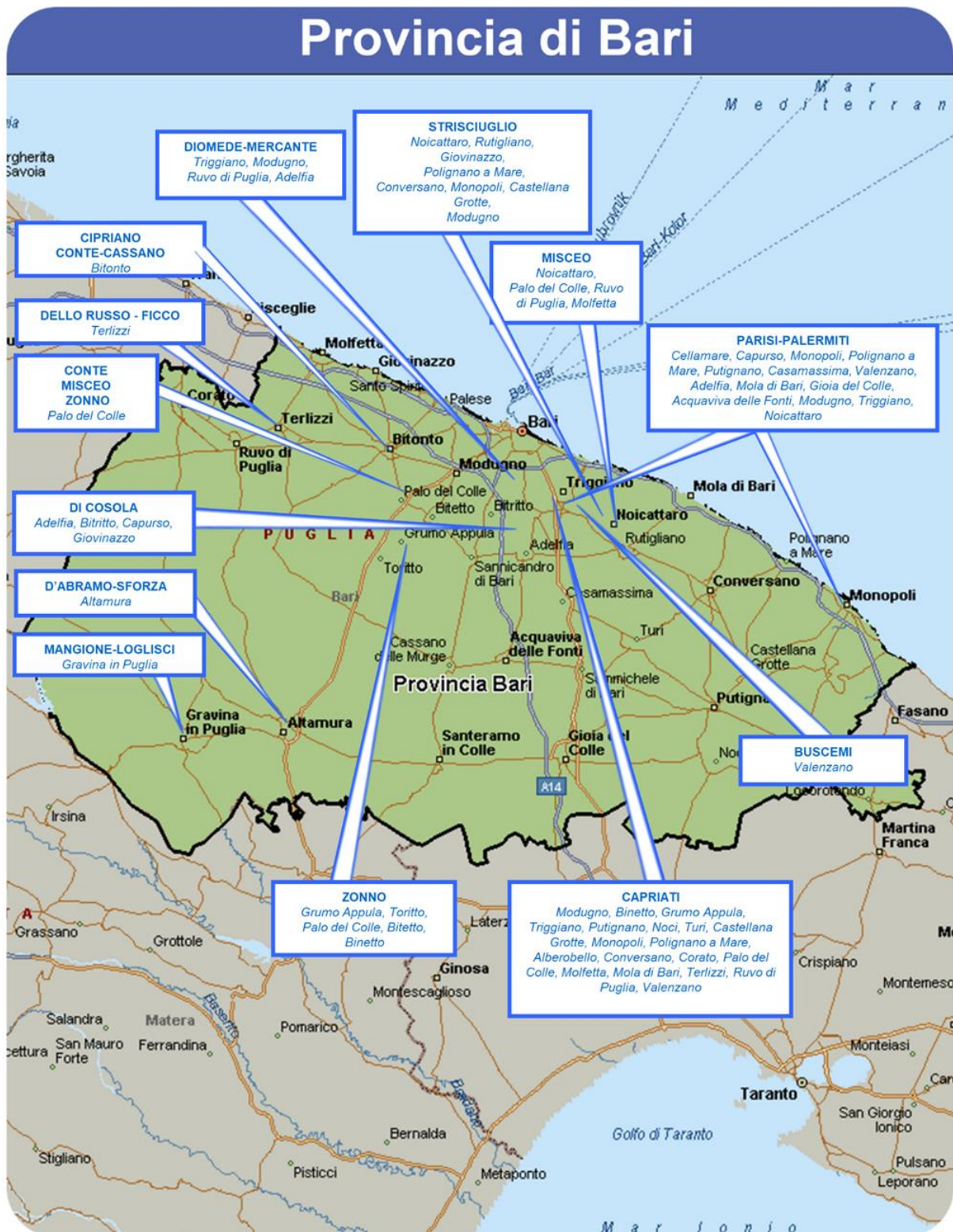
<sup>18</sup> No. 228/22 MP, issued on **March 13, 2023** by the General Court of Bari.

<sup>19</sup> The criminal profile of the purported individual has also been recognized in numerous judgments, including those with a 20-year prison conviction, following the criminal trial arising from the “Anno Zero” operation (Criminal proc. 16093/16 RG PM, 12660/2017 RG GIP and 974/2022 RG Sent. Judgment issued on July 22, 2022 by the GIP of the General Court of Bari), within which he was recognized, with abbreviated proceedings, chief of a criminal conspiracy aimed at drug trafficking, hegemonic in the Terlizzi territory.

<sup>20</sup> Considered until now as a minor *gruppo* as it originated from an internal fracture in the CONTE *clan*.

<sup>21</sup> Only residually and relative to the suburban area of Cecilia, bordering with the San Paolo district.





The PARISI-PALERMITI *clan* extends its own illicit interests in the province of Bari through trusted *referents* and the link with local criminal articulations. In the Municipality of Cassano delle Murge it takes advantage of the FIORE-RISOLI *gruppo*, in the Municipality of Gravina in Puglia it appears to take advantage of some affiliates to run the drug trafficking, cooperating also with criminal

organizations of Lucanian origin. Recent court orders<sup>22</sup> confirm the presence and the activity of the PARISI-PALERMITI clan in the extortion sector in the city of Trani as well. In Bitonto, the PARISI-PALERMITI *clan* can count on the CIPRIANO clan, meanwhile in Altamura on the D'ABRAMO-SFORZA *clan* and the LOIUDICE *clan*. Investigative evidence in Altamura has also documented the presence of an articulation traceable to the ANNOSCIA *gruppo*, an old affiliate of the PARISI-PALERMITI *clan*, hegemon in the Municipality of Noicattaro, and powerful also in Mola di Bari. The PARISI-PALERMITI *clan*, through the MARTIRADONNA *gruppo*, has influence, not only on Mola di Bari, but also on Torre a Mare and Polignano a Mare. While in Conversano the PANARELLI *gruppo*, always considered in touch with the Japigia district's elements, PARISI fief, seems to have passed under the protection of the STRISCIUGLIO *clan*.

On **February 3, 2023**, the GUP of Bari issued a first-degree judgment<sup>23</sup> against 14 persons within the scope of the criminal proceeding as a result of the “*Logos*” operation, deeming the existence of the Mafia-type association named LOIUDICE *clan* in the Municipality of Altamura. On **June 28, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Bari executed a remand in custody pending trial order in prison<sup>24</sup>, issued against 27 individuals, who are considered responsible, in various capacities and in conjunction with each other, of conspiracy to traffic in narcotics, aggravated by the Mafia method, possession and receiving of illegal firearms, murder and attempted murder. The “*Telos*” operation concerned members of the ANNOSCIA *gruppo*, whose apex is affiliated with the PARISI *clan*, actively working in the municipalities of Altamura and Noicottaro. Among the illicit interests of the syndicate, narcotics trafficking<sup>25</sup> took up a prominent place in terms of consistency and revenue and boasted outlets in the drug markets in the province of Matera as well as transnational supply channels<sup>26</sup>.

The DIOMEDE-MERCANTE *clan*, federated with the powerful CAPRIATI *clan*, boasts several areas of influence in the capital city and in its hinterland, such as the municipalities of Bitonto, Triggiano, Adelfia, as well as the ones of Altamura and Gravina in Puglia on a residual basis. The influence of the DIOMEDE-MERCANTE *clan* in Modugno appears to be weakened following the operation “*Break 24*”, led by the Carabinieri in the area, which has also involved the CAPRIATI on-site referent. The *clan* under examination, in Bitonto, is present through the CASSANO-DI CATALDO *gruppo* (related to the DIOMEDE) while in Ruvo di Puglia, in Triggiano and Adelfia it can count on the presence of its own referents.

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<sup>22</sup> As documented in the latest operation “*Levante*” conducted by the DIA department in Bari.

<sup>23</sup> No. 2232/2022 RG GIP - 12062/2018 RGNR - 210/2023 Reg. Judg. issued on February 3, 2023 by the GUP belonging to the General Court of Bari.

<sup>24</sup> No. 10689/21 RG RGNR, issued on **March 13, 2023** by the General Court of Bari.

<sup>25</sup> Cocaine, hashish, and marijuana type.

<sup>26</sup> The drug supplies come mainly from Spain.





Regarding the BAT province (Bari-Andria-Trani), the diverse criminal background characterizes itself for the coexistence of old *clans* that survived over time and of emerging criminal *gruppi*, which

are driven by a strong ambition for power, and which are subject to the external influences of the great associations of Foggia and Bari (*società foggiana*, *malavita cerignola* and *criminalità organizzata barese*), which maintain strong interests in the area. The growth (also from an economic point of view), related to numerous *partnerships*, seems to be tied only to fruitful synergies with *gruppi* belonging to other provinces in the management of specific illicit businesses.

The BAT provinces coteries are active in various illicit businesses, such as the ones bonded with predatory crimes<sup>27</sup>, to the extortions, carrying of firearms, counterfeiting, smuggling and drug dealing, as well as to money laundering, misappropriation of illicit proceeds and fictitious asset allocation. Particularly regarding the assaults on money carriers and robberies of truck drivers, despite last semester's decrease<sup>28</sup>, they represent highly remunerative activities in economic terms and in terms of criminal affirmation and self-exaltation<sup>29</sup>. Another criminal type highlighted recently is the one of *flash kidnapping* against entrepreneurs and wealthy freelancers, phenomenon already present in the province back in the '90s. These have been effectively countered thanks to the immediate action taken by the Police and the Judiciary<sup>30</sup>. On the subject, a *focused* and *functional* collaboration has been registered between BAT partnerships and criminal entities adjacent to organized crime concerning other provinces as well.

The one regarding offences against the agricultural sector represents a real meeting ground and synthesis between common crime and organized crime, given that many of the province's syndicates pursue this peculiar type of illicit activity, supporting or enabling it to exert control over the territory and raise cash, while at the same time exploiting it to facilitate the criminal growth of young recruits.

Besides theft of goods and farming vehicles, largescale property damage and crop fires have been registered probably with an aim of intimidation. It concerns signals, which could be related to an organized crime group aspiring to take control over the territory in a capillary way, even though the imposition of the "protection" services, but without disdain aiming at the acquisition of the sector's companies, which are particularly attractive for money laundering and for the income from public funding they may enjoy. Over the semester, arson and damage at the expense of businesses and companies have been reported, as well as acts of intimidation against local executive directors<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Thefts of vehicles and farming vehicles, burglary, merchant robbery, truck drivers' robbery, gaming premises robbery, armored car assaults and ATM robberies perpetrated mainly with the use of explosives, etc.

<sup>28</sup> On October 25, 2022, in Andria, an important police operation took over a conspiracy aimed at committing robberies against truck drivers, as well as theft of vehicles, receiving and money laundering.

<sup>29</sup> It is about areas of contact between local organized crime, the Cerignola and Bari one, by now established by various judicial orders.

<sup>30</sup> The operation "*Anonima pugliese*" (OCC no. 4317/2022 RGNR DDA and 7561/2022 RG GIP issued on **January 23, 2023**, by the General Court of Bari) and the OCC no. 1395/2023 RGNR DDA and 1563/2023 RG GIP.

<sup>31</sup> The arson involved the cars of two local administrators of a municipality in the province of BAT whose municipal council was subsequently dissolved for Mafia infiltration; arson of several building sites used for the construction of

About the BAT coterie, drug trafficking still represents the main source of economic supply, whose volume does not seem to undergo contractions over the time. The City of Andria, particularly, continues to represent a strategic sorting crossroad on the national territory of huge quantities of drugs.

On **February 8, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Barletta, as part of the operation “*Disfida*”, executed a remand in custody order against 14 individuals, persons considered responsible in connection with the offence of drug dealing, aggravated using minors under the age of 18. The survey shows the re-organization effort of some members belonging to the autochthon *partnerships* (STRANIERO-SARCINA *partnership*) that, having returned to freedom, have re-activated the drug trafficking concerning the light drugs, also taking advantage of the young recruits.

On **May 5, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Andria executed an early seizure order<sup>32</sup>, pursuant to arts. 20 and 22 of Legislative Decree no. 159/2011, against the heirs of an apical member of the Barletta CANNITO-LATTANZIO *clan*, murdered on January 15, 2019. The Court, while acknowledging the qualified social dangerousness of the defendant and the disproportion between the income declared and the one deriving from the exercise of business activity of his family unit, in partial acceptance of the proposal of the Prosecution, has ordered the seizure against the heirs and fictitious owners of the defendant’s assets, made of large immovable and movable property and a business for a total net worth around EUR 2 million.

On **January 10, 2023**, as part of the “*Pegaso*” operation, the Carabinieri of Lecce executed a precautionary measure<sup>33</sup> against a criminal team with availability of weapons, involved in drug trafficking, working in the middle east area in the Salento province, with its center in Martano (Lecce), in which a prominent figure of a *gruppo* native to Andria is present.

On **January 26, 2023**, in Andria and Barletta, as part of the “*Anonima Pugliese*” operation<sup>34</sup>, the State Police executed a restricting measure against 7 entities accused of attempted seizure for the purpose of extortion<sup>35</sup>, aggravated by the Mafia method. The investigation, through which has been

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both private and public works; as well as numerous other fires to the detriment of a consortium of country watchmen, the premises of a company managing the public car parks of a municipality in the province, and the explosion of a dynamite device placed under the car of an official of the company in charge of street cleaning and of management of the ecological island of a municipality in the province.

<sup>32</sup> No. 240/2020 RG RG, issued on **April 21, 2023**, by the General Court of Bari.

<sup>33</sup> OCCC no. 7348/19 RGNR - 3430/20 RG GIP - 150/22 OCC issued on December 21, 2022 by the General Court of Lecce against 15 entities on a total of 30 suspects, held in various capacities responsible for the offences of attempted murder committed by the Mafia, unlawful possession and carrying of firearms, serious threat, personal aiding and abetting, damage following fire, aggravated extortion, aggravated personal injury, attempted private violence, damage, aggravated theft, association aimed at illicit drug trafficking, illicit possession and transfer of drugs, attempted murder.

<sup>34</sup> OCC no. 4317/2022 RGNR DDA and 7561/2022 RG GIP issued on **January 23, 2023**, by the General Court of Bari.

<sup>35</sup> The *modus operandi* of the *flash kidnapping* involves, in summary, the precautionary tracking of the victim’s habits and a coordinated action taken by various criminal *gangs*, connected by radio.

possible to identify the perpetrators of the attempted abduction of an entrepreneur from Barletta, had been started following the complaint of a similar event, carried out against a wealthy entrepreneur from Andria. The action of the Criminal Investigation Department made an impact on Andria's LAPENNA *clan*, important part of the native PASTORE-CAMPANALE *clan*.

On **February 10, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Andria executed an early seizure order<sup>36</sup>, pursuant to arts. 20 and 22 of Legislative Decree no. 159/2011, against an entity considered 'close' to the LAPENNA *clan*, criminal part traceable to the PASTORE-CAMPANALE *clan*. The measure, resulting from asset investigations started in March 2022, has involved immovable property for a total net worth more than EUR 400 thousa, taking place in the Municipality of Andria, owned by the applicant and his family members. The Court, fully accepting the DDA proposal, has clearly assessed the disproportion between the value of the assets in the availability of the proposed household and the lawful incomes of the same household. Furthermore, it has evaluated the entity as socially dangerous - with a generic hazard character - constantly during the 2002-2017 period.

On **February 11, 2023**, in Andria and Bari, the State Police executed a remand in custody order<sup>37</sup> issued against 4 entities accused in conspiracy of attempted aggravated robbery. In view of the investigative findings, the criminal gang, made of 4 suspects and of other unidentified entities, planned to abduct a freelancer for the purpose of robbery. The event, although, despite being planned twice, has not been realized. Concerning the *modus operandi*, analogies with criminal events of the previous "Anonima Pugliese" operation emerged.

On **March 9, 2023**, in Andria, the Carabinieri of Bari, following the early seizure order made on May 18, 2021, have executed a confiscation decree<sup>38</sup>, pursuant to art. 24 of Legislative Decree no.159/2011, against a multiple offender, believed to be adjacent to the criminal world of Andria. It has been decreed the confiscation of the entity's and third parties' total assets, made of numerous immovable and movable property and company holdings for a total net worth around EUR 80 million. The recipient of the ablative measure boasts an important criminal resume, which started at the end of the '80's by committing robberies, then continued throughout the '90's with smuggling, to reach then the top, committing seizures of trailer trucks and armored cars, and lastly by financing the purchase of large batches of narcotics. Known for his extraordinary ability to reuse illicit proceeds, the recipient has always maintained stable and systematic relationships with different criminal

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<sup>36</sup> No.120/2022 RG MP, issued on **January 15, 2023**, by the General Court of Bari.

<sup>37</sup> No. 1395/2023 RGNR DDA and no. 1563/2023 RG GIP issued on **February 10, 2023**, by the General Court of Bari.

<sup>38</sup> No. 192/2019 RG MP and 44/2023 decree issued on November 30, 2022, by the Court of Bari on the proposal of the Trani Public Prosecutor's Office, filed with the clerk's office on **February 28, 2023**.

syndicates, extra-regional as well, resulting to be very close to the criminal *gruppi* of Andria and Cerignola, besides the LAPENNA *clan*.

On **May 6, 2023**, in Andria, a kidnapping was committed, aimed at capturing a driver working for a trucking company. In that context, 5 robbers, one of whom was equipped with a submachine gun, with a coordinated military action, kidnapped the truck driver for about 2 hours until they reached a location where the thugs took away the transported goods by loading them onto another truck.

On **May 16, 2023**, in Andria, the Carabinieri of Bari executed 20 pretrial detention orders<sup>39</sup> that confirmed the operativeness, since 2014, of the PISTILLO-PESCE *clan*, a family-based Andria-based *association*, in narcotics trafficking.

On **February 21, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Trani executed a precautionary measure<sup>40</sup> as part of the “*Corvo*” operation against 9 individuals held responsible, for various reasons, for continued extortion aggravated by the use of weapons and private violence all aggravated by the Mafia method. The investigation brought to light the existence of an agreement between the two main local criminal gangs for the division of the Tranese territory where they could develop, without contrasts and if necessary, even in collaboration, their criminal interests in both the legal and illicit sectors of the city. The top leaders of the ANNACONDIA *clan* and those of the FIORE-RISOLI *gruppo* from Bari, falling within the orbit of the PARISI-PALERMITI *clan* from the Apulian capital, now rooted in the town of Trani, in agreement with each other, would divide up the area of Trani that was economically more attractive (the tourist and nightlife area in the Porto and Castello localities), so that each could develop their criminal activities there unchallenged, in both illicit (extortion, money laundering, self-laundering) and legal (running business activities in the restaurant and funeral services) sectors.

The judicial measures of the six-month period<sup>41</sup> also attest to the presence of another CORDA-LOMOLINO *association* in the Andri area. The presence of referents of the LOMBARDI-REGANO *gruppo* is also recorded.

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<sup>39</sup> OCC no. 2662/2020 RGNR DDA and 5373/2020 RG GIP issued **on May 11, 2023**, by the General Court of Bari.

<sup>40</sup> No. 7414/2022 Mod. 21 RGNR DDA and 10083/2022 RG GIP of the General Court of Bari dating **February 14, 2023**. The proceedings were initiated as a result of investigative evidence arising from the criminal case 6844/21 RGNR and 4658/21 RG GIP of the General Court of Trani concluded with the execution of precautionary measures on May 11, 2022.

<sup>41</sup> Cited among them is judgment no. 1/2020 and no. 2418/19 CA issued by the Third Criminal Section of the Court of Appeal of Bari on January 7, 2020, regarding the “*Point break*” trial, activity carried out in Trani between 2016 and 2017 by the Carabinieri of Bari, who put an end to several extortion episodes by the CORDA *gruppo*. The second-degree ruling of the Bari Court of Assizes of Appeal is also cited – First Section no. 1/2023 – 26/2021 Reg. Gen. and 8665/2015 RGNR, filed on April 27, 2023, for the committed murder in Trani on February 18, 2007. Finally, noteworthy is the first instance ruling of the GUP General Court of Bari no. 225/2023 Sent. - 12353/2021 RGNR DDA (4067/2017) - no. 11492/2022 RG GIP dating February 7, 2023, (“*Medusa*” and “*L’immortale*” operations dating back to 2021).

In Bisceglie and the neighboring municipalities, previous investigative activities and recent sentencing devices<sup>42</sup> attest to the operations of criminal *gruppi* referenced by the CAPRIATI clan of Bari, active mainly in the narcotrafficking sector. In fact, the territory of the BAT province turns out to be a natural outlet for narcotics flows from Albania, but also a destination for loads transported by road from Spain and the Netherlands. This geographical positioning would enhance the strategic role in drug trafficking of BAT criminal gangs operating in the coastal area. These, also favored by relations with neighboring Albania, steadily increase their criminal potential by assuming, even at the local level, a central role in the massive sorting of narcotics in the territory.

The DE ROSA-MICCOLI-BUONAROTA and GALLONE-CARBONE *clans*, endemically engaged in a never-ending armed *feud* for years, are pitted against each other in Trinitapoli.

On **January 17, 2023**, the Assize Court of Bari upheld the sentence of life imprisonment<sup>43</sup> against a person, belonging to the DE ROSA-MICCOLI-BUONAROTA *clan*, for the murder of the boss of the rival GALLONE-CARBONE *clan*, who was killed in Trinitapoli on April 13, 2019. The court applied to him the main penalty of life imprisonment, the accessory penalty of legal disqualification from public office, and the security measure of probation for three years. The murder allegedly occurred in the context of the ongoing *feud* in Trinitapoli between the CARBONE-GALLONE and DE ROSA-MICCOLI-BUONAROTA *clans* over disagreements that arose in the context of drug dealing activities, thus effectively attesting to the Mafia context in which the mentioned associations operate.

On **February 9, 2023**, in Trinitapoli, the Carabinieri of Foggia enforced a pre-trial detention order<sup>44</sup> against 3 individuals believed to be contiguous to the DE ROSA-MICCOLI-BUONAROTA *clan*, held responsible for the murder of a member of the CARBONE-GALLONE *clan*, which took place on June 3, 2020, in Trinitapoli. The murder allegedly matured as part of the *feud* between the two criminal groups aimed at the hegemony of territorial control in the drug dealing sector in the town of Trinitapoli and in the neighboring towns.

On **March 30, 2023**, in Trinitapoli, during the execution of an OCCC<sup>45</sup> against 3 persons held jointly responsible for the illegal carrying and possession of an assault weapon in a public place, the State Police of Foggia arrested *in flagrante delicto*, a multiple convicted criminal within the SINESI-

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<sup>42</sup> Judgment no. 4998/2022 Reg. Sent – 1292/2022 Reg Gen. and 328/2021 RGNR delivered on December 16, 2022.

<sup>43</sup> No. 22/2022 Judgments - 14/2021 RG Dib and 8162/2019 RGNR dating October 5, 2022.

<sup>44</sup> No. 11109/2020 RGNR DDA - 8338/2021 RG GIP and 113/2022 RG MP issued on **January 31, 2023**, by the General Court of Bari.

<sup>45</sup> No. 1138/2023 RGNR no. 132/023 RG GIP and no. 30/2023 R. Preventive Measure. issued on **March 30, 2023**.

FRANCAVILLA Mafia *batteria* (gang) operating in the province of Foggia, found in possession, inside his home<sup>46</sup>, of a pistol with a counterfeit serial number.

On **June 29, 2023**, in Trinitapoli, the Carabinieri of Foggia executed a prison order<sup>47</sup> against 8 members of the DE ROSA-MICCOLI-BUONAROTA *clan*. The sentences to be served stem mainly from the second-degree sentence issued by the Court of Appeal of Bari - which became final on **June 22, 2023** - related to the 2020 “*Turn over*”<sup>48</sup> operation, which is the investigative follow-up to the previous “*Nemesi*”<sup>49</sup> operation (2019).

In the six-month period under review, by Presidential Decree of July 18, 2023, the six-month extension of the commissioner’s term of office of the Trinitapoli City Council already subject to dissolution for Mafia infiltration on April 5, 2022, by Presidential Decree, was formalized.

As part of the administrative activity to combat Mafia-type organized crime, the Prefect of Barletta-Andria-Trani on **April 20, 2023**, issued 2 anti-Mafia interdiction notices to as many individuals in relation to article 67 of Legislative Decree no. 159/2011, as they were both recipients of personal prevention measures that had become final. On **May 10, 2023**, an anti-Mafia interdiction was issued against a company operating in the fruit and vegetable sector, which, considering the investigations carried out, was deemed to be at risk of infiltration by individuals belonging to local Mafia organizations and the *Cerignola Mafia*. On **May 29, 2023**, an anti-Mafia interdiction was issued against a company, operating in the construction sector, as it was deemed to be at risk of infiltration by Andrian organized crime.

## Province of Foggia

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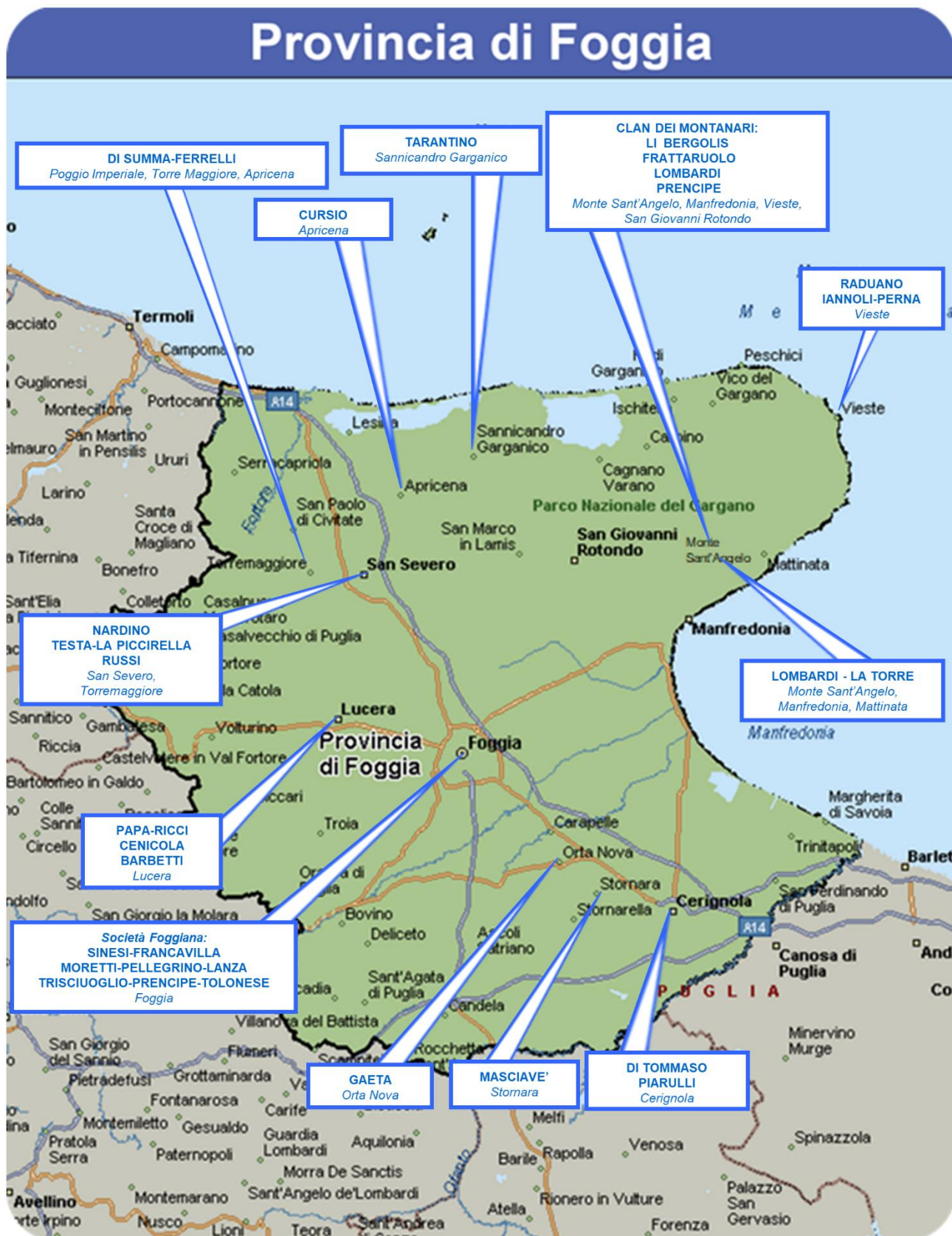
<sup>46</sup> Where he was serving the security measure of probation for one year.

<sup>47</sup> From no. 685/2023 SIEP to 692/2023 SIEP issued on **June 29, 2023**, by the Criminal Execution Office of the Public Prosecutor’s Office at the Court of Appeal of Bari on **June 27, 2023**.

<sup>48</sup> OCCC no. 10737/2019 RG GIP issued on July 1, 2020, by the General Court of Bari upon request of the local DDA (no. 11510/18-21), executed by the Carabinieri of Foggia back in 2020 against 12 entities belonging to the DE ROSA-MICCOLI-BUONAROTA *clan*.

<sup>49</sup> Conducted by the Carabinieri of Foggia, coordinated by the DDA of Bari, and resulted in the execution in 2019 of an OCC against 8 members of the GALLONE-CARBONE *clan* of Trinitapoli.





The interests of organized crime in the province developed along two lines: the traditional one (of narcotics trafficking, extortion and predatory crimes) and the criminal-business one, oriented to infiltrating the legal economy through typical operations of reuse of illicit profits. The Capitanata



area, especially in the Basso Tavoliere<sup>50</sup>, thanks to its proximity to Campania, represents, due to the vastness of its agricultural expanses, a central hub for the criminal interests of the main Foggia-based Mafia groups, also jointly with other extra-regional associations, operating in the illegal waste trafficking sector, which has taken on critical dimensions in this territory. Some of the most influential criminal organizations in the area have undertaken a real program of expansion in an extra-regional key with projections into Emilia-Romagna, Lazio and, in particular, Abruzzo and Molise, which are considered - the latter - especially by the Foggia and Sanseverese criminality (in particular, in the coastal strip and hinterland of Campobasso and the Pescara area) a real appendage of the territories of respective reference.

During the month of April 2023, the work of the commission of inquiry under former art. 143 of the TUEL in the Municipality of Orta Nova was concluded, following which, on July 17, 2023, the Council of Ministers, at the proposal of the Minister of the Interior, resolved the dissolution of the Municipal Council of the same municipality, pursuant to art. 143 of Legislative Decree No. 267/2000. In the provincial panorama this happened for the sixth time (Monte Sant'Angelo, Mattinata, Cerignola, Manfredonia and Foggia).

In the Foggia area, the Prefect's administrative action took the form of issuing 13 interdiction orders.

The *fourth Foggia Mafia* is composed of a plurality of distinct Mafia identities, namely the *Foggia society*, the *Gargano Mafia*, the *Alto Tavoliere Mafia* and the *Cerignola underworld*. The dislocation of these syndicates throughout the province basically traces the division of the province into 4 geographical quadrants into which the same territory is conventionally divided (Foggia, Gargano Macro-area, Alto Tavoliere and Basso Tavoliere).

Multiple investigative findings, however, have made it possible to ascertain that, in terms of criminal relations, the four main Foggia Mafia organizations are interconnected, according to logics of sharing strategies, interests, fields of action and mutual support.

### ***Foggia and its hinterland***

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<sup>50</sup> The *area dei Cinque Reali Siti* (Orta Nova, Ortona, Carapelle, Stornara and Stornarella) proves to be strategically coveted by the *clans* because it is highly developed economically, being able to count on a territorial vastness that offers a highly remunerative agribusiness sector and ample opportunities for the dumping and spilling of waste. This diversification, favored by the geographic location of that territory as well as the well-known ability of Cerignola criminality to act as a flywheel, favors the interaction of criminal *gruppi* from the neighboring Province of BAT.

In the city of Foggia there is a strong presence of the *Foggia society* (society) whose internal dynamics are characterized by changing balances, due to interactions with criminal groups, infighting and frequent power vacuums brought about by judicial events involving the most charismatic figures. The *Foggia società*, structured on a federative-type model, is conventionally divided into three *batterie* (gangs), that of the SINESI-FRANCAVILLA, that of the TRISCIUOGGIO-PRENCIPE-TOLONESE and that of the MORETTI-PELLEGRINO-LANZA.

The head of the SINESI-FRANCAVILLA *batteria*, currently detained under a 41 bis regime, represents one of the *società*'s historical figures, and his charisma is also recognized outside the region. The *batteria*, which is structured on a family basis, operates mainly in the provincial capital and is active in extortion, narcotics, usury, abusive security/guard services, receiving stolen goods, money laundering (especially in the funeral business) as well as illegal gambling. Traditionally rival and often pitted against the other two *batterie*, against which it has repeatedly clashed giving rise to several *Mafia wars*, it is projected into the province thanks to stable alliances or through its own cells located there, as well as boasting contacts with extra-regional (Sicilian and Calabrian) organizations. In the Mafia geography of the province, the most relevant bonds are the alliance with the LIBERGOLIS *clan* (*Gargano Mafia*) and operational synergies with the Sanseverese underworld, especially in the area of arms and narcotics trafficking. It has an extra-regional projection in Emilia-Romagna.

During the six-month period under review, the *batteria* in question was the subject of special investigative attention, which revealed a state of internal fibrillation, as evidenced by the arrest *in flagrante delicto* in Foggia on **January 18, 2023**, of a person believed to be the regent of the SINESI-FRANCAVILLA *batteria*, subject to special surveillance with mandatory residence, who was caught by the State Police of Foggia personnel inside a commercial establishment in possession of a semiautomatic pistol.

On **March 30, 2023**, the State Police of Foggia executed a pretrial detention order<sup>51</sup> against 3 persons held responsible, in conspiracy, for illegal carrying and possession of an assault weapon in a public place. The order in question originates from investigations conducted following the murder of an individual detained in a state of semi-freedom, considered contiguous to the SINESI-FRANCAVILLA *batteria*, which took place on the evening of May 17, 2022, near the Foggia Prison Facility while he was returning there. The investigation revealed an attempt to avenge the aforementioned murder by the widow and her nephew, who is also linked to the SINESI-

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<sup>51</sup> No. 1138/2023 RGNR – 1322/23 RG Gip - 30/23 R. Preventive Measure issued by the General Court of Foggia on **March 30, 2023**.

FRANCAVILLA *batteria*, in whose possession a pistol with a defaced serial number was found during the operation<sup>52</sup>.

The TRISCIUOGGIO-PRENCIPE-TOLONESE *batteria* operates mainly in the provincial capital and is active mainly in the areas of drug trafficking, extortion and money laundering in commercial activities (car trade, construction, and funeral services). It has developed synergies with the Mafia formation of Manfredonia (Foggia) and with elements of the Orta Nova (Foggia) criminality. Investigative evidence in recent years shows that it would side with the MORETTI-PELLEGRINO-LANZA *batteria*, determining, especially militarily, a supremacy against the SINESI-FRANCAVILLA clan. The *boss* of the TOLONESE *faction*, already subjected to the 41 bis O.P. regime, returned to freedom on **March 9, 2023** after a long detention.

The MORETTI-PELLEGRINO-LANZA *batteria* is hinged on a top structure to which the three heads of the *famiglie* of which it is composed belong. The consorteria is the most deeply rooted in the province and neighboring territories<sup>53</sup> having carried out a program of territorial expansion based on new and old synergies with groups from other operational contexts<sup>54</sup>. This network of connections has thus enabled the consorteria to project itself into the neighboring regions of Molise and Abruzzo as well. Traditionally interested in the areas of extortion, usury, drug trafficking and robbery, the *batteria* in question is considered, compared to the others, to have greater authority, strength and criminal charisma and has also demonstrated the ability to infiltrate the legal economy.

On **March 14, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Pescara executed a precautionary measure<sup>55</sup> against 11 individuals, many of them members of a fringe group<sup>56</sup> of the Foggia-based MORETTI-PELLEGRINO-LANZA *batteria*, who were deemed responsible for extortion and usury aggravated by the Mafia method. The criminal group, using the Mafia methods and the reputation of the relevant association, disbursed monetary loans at usurious rates to Abruzzo entrepreneurs operating in the restaurant and luxury car business, sometimes followed by extortion activities against them.

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<sup>52</sup> Confirming that the group was arming itself precisely to avenge the killing of its relative, it notes the seizure of a machine gun from a fourth individual, who was arrested *in flagrante delicto* by the State Police of Foggia in June 2022.

<sup>53</sup> By virtue of a close synergy with the CARBONE-GALLONE *gruppo* in Trinitapoli, it is also influential in the BAT province.

<sup>54</sup> It extends, in fact, its Mafia influence: in the Alto Tavoliere thanks to the support of the LA PICCIRELLA-TESTA *clan* from Sanseverese and other qualified referents of the local criminality; in the Gargano area with the *clan* once headed by the ROMITO *famiglia* and with the prominent figures gravitating around it, guaranteeing adherence even on the internal areas of the promontory (San Marco in Lamis and Monte Sant'Angelo). In the Basso Tavoliere it is allied with the GAETA *gruppo* of Orta Nova (to which it is also linked by family ties).

<sup>55</sup> No. 1599/2020 RGNR and no.69/2022 R. Meas. issued on March 6, 2023, by the GIP of the General Court of L'Aquila.

<sup>56</sup> Headed by a regent, daughter of the boss detained pursuant to art. 41 bis of the Criminal Code.

On **February 15, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Foggia executed a precautionary measure<sup>57</sup> against a high-ranking member of the MORETTI-PELLEGRINO-LANZA *batteria*<sup>58</sup>, believed to be responsible for the September 6, 2016, attempted murder of the head<sup>59</sup> of the SINESI faction of the SINESI-FRANCAVILLA *batteria*, in which he was wounded, along with his own minor nephew. On **May 12, 2023**, the Supreme Court of Cassation made irrevocable the judgment<sup>60</sup> of the Court of Appeal of Bari issued on June 14, 2022, under which a member of the Foggia-based MORETTI-PELLEGRINO-LANZA Mafia *batteria* was given<sup>61</sup> a 12-year prison sentence.

### ***Gargano macro area***

*(Municipalities of Vieste, San Marco in Lamis, Mattinata, Manfredonia, Monte Sant'Angelo, San Giovanni Rotondo, San Nicandro Garganico, Cagnano Varano, Rignano Garganico).*

It is the vast area belonging to the territory of Foggia, comprising the municipalities of the homonymous promontory and the coastal towns which surround it, within the stretch between the boundary of Lake Lesina and Manfredonia. Different criminal organizations commonly, named *Mafia garganica*, operate there and they can be grouped in two areas: the mountainous one, which includes the promontory municipalities (San Marco in Lamis, Monte Sant'Angelo, San Giovanni Rotondo, San Nicandro Garganico, Cagnano Varano and Rignano Garganico), and the coastal one, that comprises all the coastal municipalities (mainly Vieste, Mattinata and Manfredonia). Within the mountainous area, the leader is the so-called MONTANARI *gruppo* and all the criminal groups related to it. The term is used to identify the Mafia *gruppo* under the LI BERGOLIS *clan*, that over the time has become the most influential organization in the Gargano macro area, by proving to be a point of reference also for the other groups operating in that area. They are: LOMBARDI *clan* (known as “*Lombardoni*”) from Monte Sant'Angelo (Foggia) with family members also settled in Manfredonia; the FRATTARUOLO *clan*, being for decades the contact point of the MONTANARI in Vieste area; the PRENCIPE *clan*, coming from San Giovanni Rotondo (Foggia). From an extra-region point of view, the investigation results highlighted a synergy between the LI BERGOLIS *clan* and the Calabrian *cosca* (Mafia clan) PESCE- BELLOCCO of Rosarno (Reggio Calabria).

Another criminal organization of the mountainous area<sup>62</sup> is the one referable to the TARANTINO *clan* of Sannicandro Garganico (Foggia). It has to do with a purely family-based structure operating

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<sup>57</sup> OCCC no. 2371/2022. - 11832/2016 RGNR Mod. 21 DDA - 2371/2022 RG GIP - 166/2022 RMC issued on May 2022 by the General Court of Bari.

<sup>58</sup> Pursuant to art. 41 bis.

<sup>59</sup> Believed to be an apex figure in the *Foggia società*.

<sup>60</sup> No. 2677/2022 Sent. - June 14, 2022.

<sup>61</sup> As already ordered by the General Court of Foggia in Judgment No. 1/21 of the General Court of Foggia.

<sup>62</sup> Other organizations that are certainly worth investigating are the MARTINO *clan* of San Marco in Lamis and the DI CLAUDIO-MANCINI *clan* of Rignano Garganico. There are not any new and concrete information elements indeed,

also in the Municipalities of Apricena (Foggia) and Cagnano Varano (Foggia), on the boundary between the Gargano promontory and Alto Tavoliere. It mainly operates in the drugs and robbery sectors. Despite being back from a ten-year armed conflict against the CIAVARRELLA *famiglia*, the growth of a new generation within the *famiglia*, the synergistic axis with the MONTANARI of Monte Sant'Angelo (Foggia) and the emerged collaboration with the PESCE-BELLOCCO *cosca* of Rosarno (Reggio Calabria) for drug trafficking prove the persistent operativeness of the *clan*. It has been detected as well a specific interest in the livestock and agricultural and food sectors, oriented to the interception of public funds. Within the coastal area of Gargano, a new criminal organization is operating: the LOMBARDI-LA TORRE *clan* of Manfredonia/Mattinata, whose name arises from the investigation conducted by the Carabinieri of the ROS, an Italian law enforcement agency, in the recent December 2021 operation “*Omnia Nostra*”. The investigation results made it possible to clarify how such Mafia organization<sup>63</sup> has succeed as leader of that territory, after the murder of the leaders of the RICUCCI-ROMITO-LOMBARDI *clan*. The group is also influential in the Vieste area, thanks to the synergy with the RADUANO *clan*. In the rest of the promontory, particularly between San Marco in Lamis and Apricena, the *clan* can count on various alliances, above all with the Foggia MORETTI- PELLEGRINO-LANZA *batteria*, i.e. a gang with which it implemented one of the most solid criminal collaborations. The *clan* is dedicated to drug trafficking, extortion, money laundering and reutilization of illicit funds in business activities, as well as robberies of armored car transporters. It is this last field which led the clan to often interact with the organized crime of Basso Tavoliere, particularly with the one in Cerignola. From an extra-region point of view, the clan operates with some *Calabrian cosche*. They have the considerable ability to infiltrate the socio-economic fabric of the territory, above all the livestock, fisheries, fish market, catering and bathing waters sectors. The collaboration pathway undertaken by some *luogotenenti* (lieutenants), i.e. representatives of the *clan*, questions not only the operativeness of it, but also and above all its existence.

On **February 8, 2023** one of the leaders of the LOMBARDI-LA TORRE *clan* was convicted of murder by the Corte d'Assise d'Appello<sup>64</sup> (Court of Assizes of Appeal) and sentenced to life imprisonment.

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demonstrating their affiliation and/or contiguity to the Mafia-type organized crime of the province, with respect to the events. Nevertheless, several disqualifications dating back to the early 2000s, documented by the “*Free Valley*” operation, adopted from the Prefect of Foggia (district officer) still make it possible to associate them with the local criminal contexts and the dangerous influence they can wield on the socio-economic fabric of the territory.

<sup>63</sup> Under two *bosses* internal to the families of which it is composed, both held in rigorous imprisonment.

<sup>64</sup> With provision no. 5/23, confirming the judgment at first instance no. 3/20 given by the Foggia Court of Assizes.

In Vieste, the RADUANO clan appears to be operating, whose leader is thought to be one of the main movers of the Mafia context in the Gargano macro area and the province of Foggia, as shown by their involvement in several judicial proceedings. The subject in question, thanks to its ability to make new synergies and alliances with the *clan* of the Gargano area, the ROMITO, the Foggia *società*, the MORETTI-PELLEGRINO-LANZA *batteria* and the *malavita cerignolana* (Cerignola criminal underworld), contributed to the creation of one of the most violent systems in the Foggia criminal scene<sup>65</sup>. The leader of the *clan*, outrageously escaped from the prison of Badu Carros (Nuoro) on **February 24, 2023**<sup>66</sup>, was arrested again in Spain on **February 1, 2024** by the Carabinieri with the assistance of French law enforcement; together with their representative, he escaped from house arrest as well, in the province of Campobasso.

In the Vieste–Mattinata area, stronghold of the ROMITO and RADUANO *clans*, over the six-month report under consideration, two episodes of criminal damage have been reported against the exponents' family members<sup>67</sup> belonging to those Mafia organizations.

#### Alto Tavoliere

(Municipalities of San Severo, Apricena, Lucera, Lesina, Poggio Imperiale, Torremaggiore)

Organized crime operating within Alto Tavoliere has its own heart in San Severo city and it is fragmented into multiple coexistent Mafia organizations: the TESTA-LA PICCIRELLA *clan*, the NARDINO *clan* and the RUSSI *clan*. The TESTA-LA PICCIRELLA *clan* is from San Severo, but it turned out to operate also in the area of Torremaggiore-Lesina-Poggio Imperiale (Foggia). The investigation results outline a synergy with the MORETTI-PELLEGRINO-LANZA *batteria*, in adherence with the territorial expansion program pursued by the latter. The group operates in the arms and drug trafficking, extortion and robbery sectors, it maintains contact with Calabrian and Campania crime, and it shows a growing tendency to Abruzzo and Molise.

The NARDINO *clan* is organized in accordance with the *Camorra*-style model, and its leader is currently held in prison. Criminal interests mainly consist in drug trafficking, in which the *clan* has a central role.

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<sup>65</sup> As documented by the aforementioned anti-Mafia operation “*Omnia Nostra*”.

<sup>66</sup> Only a few days before his escape, precisely on 31 January 2023, further to a measure of the Court of Cassation stating the inadmissibility of the *boss*'s appeal, the Prosecutor-General's Office had sentenced him to 19 years of imprisonment with expiration of the sentence established in July 2046.

<sup>67</sup> In Mattinata, on 21 March 2023, towards the father of one of the ROMITO *clan*'s apical exponents, whose rural dwelling was ignited; in Vieste, on 9 May 2023, for the damage caused by the fire of the vehicle towards the uncle of a *boss* linked to RADUANO and ROMITO *clans*, collaborator of justice.

The RUSSI *clan* is firmly settled in the San Severo world of crime, also in virtue of its known relationship with the Foggia *società*. Following the murder of the leader of the Mafia group, their son and other members of their family appear to assure its operativeness. This group can count on greater financial movement compared to the *clans* of the province, and it is involved in drug trafficking on a national and international scale. Moreover, it is dedicated to usury, extortion, stealing and handling of stolen motor vehicles.

On **4 January 2023**, the Carabinieri of San Severo, within the “*Operazione brother*” operation, executed a precautionary measure<sup>68</sup> towards 4 persons thought to have committed the offense of illicit drug trafficking and possession (hashish, marijuana and cocaine). The group would operate in the old town center of San Severo, to which the purchasers would go, including those from Foggia hinterland. On **March 31, 2023**, the State Police of Foggia executed a precautionary measure<sup>69</sup> towards 8 persons charged with the offense of carrying and possession of illegal firearms, aggravated by the Mafia method. During the execution, one of the arrested people was found in possession of a veritable arsenal of firearms and munitions<sup>70</sup>. The starting point of the investigation were two murders that took place in San Severo in the summer of 2021, which spread agitation within 2 criminal groups operating in the densely populated district of San Bernardino in the Municipality of San Severo. It is regarded, indeed, as the provincial heart of illicit trafficking and the stronghold of several and different criminal groups, including those recently developed.

On **28 April 2023**, the State Police of Foggia, together with the Guardia di Finanza of San Severo, executed in that center a confiscation order<sup>71</sup> towards one of the leaders of TESTA-LA PICCIRELLA *clan*. The measure<sup>72</sup> concerned real estate and personal property with the approximate value of EUR 400 thousand, most of which had been already seized in advanced on May 29, 2020.

In Apricena, it is possible to highlight the operativeness of members of CURSIO<sup>73</sup> *famiglia*, already operating in the drug sector, aimed at regaining their own territory through racketeering techniques.

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<sup>68</sup> On December 30, 2022 in connection with Criminal procedure 3727/22 NR given by the Court of Foggia.

<sup>69</sup> Given by the Preliminary Investigations Judge at the Court of Bari in connection with proceeding RGNR no. 5671/22-21 DDA and 5636/2022 RG. Preliminary Investigations Judge.

<sup>70</sup> Including: a *Uzi* 9-bore *Luger* machine-gun with serial number 082173, fitted with two clips and a silencer; a 7.65-bore *Skorpio* machine-gun fitted with two clips; two 357-bore Magnum revolvers with grazed serial number; a Beretta 98FS model 9x21-bore semiautomatic pistol with punched serial number, fitted with two clips; a black silencer, a kit for cleaning short and long firearms; 54 45-bore a.c.p. cartridges, 50 9x19-bore Luger cartridges, 40 9x21-bore cartridges, 50 38-bore Special cartridges, 50 7.65-bore Browning cartridges, 66 357-bore Magnum cartridges.

<sup>71</sup> No. 170/2019 and 48/2022 given by the Court of Bari.

<sup>72</sup> It has become irrevocable further to the judgment dismissing an action given by the Court of Cassation on March 9, 2023, and further to the following measure No. 51/2022 MP and 90/2022 given on June 16, 2022 by the Corte d'Appello di Bari (Court of Appeal, Bari).

<sup>73</sup> Apricena (Foggia), March 2, 2023: execution of the precautionary measure 8178/2022 RGNR - 9921/2022 RG GIP-283/2022 RMCP given by the Court of Foggia on February 24, 2023, by the Carabinieri towards 4 members of the CURSIO *famiglia*, as held responsible for participating in continuous extortion.

Other minor local criminal groups are: CENICOLA, BARBETTI, PAPA-RICCI<sup>74</sup> and BAYAN in Lucera, and DI SUMMA-FERRELLI in Torremaggiore and Poggio Imperiale.

### ***Basso Tavoliere***

*(Comuni di Cerignola, Orta Nova, Stornara, Stornarella)*

In Cerignola, the PIARULLI *clan* and the DITOMMASO *clan*, which collaborates with the former in some criminal sectors, namely extortion, robbery and drug trafficking sectors, are mainly active.

The PIARULLI<sup>75</sup> *clan*, among the organizations referable to the *quarta Mafia foggiana*, is the one having such a high financial capacity that it can diversify laundering operations into various economic activities (management of reception halls, hotels, fuel service stations, supermarkets, car parks, companies in the agricultural and food industry). The main sectors of criminal interest are: large-scale management of drug trafficking; stealing of means of transport, including the special ones, and of vehicles used for handling-laundering<sup>76</sup>; arms, hydrocarbons and sophisticated alcoholic goods trafficking. Armed robberies to transporters of funds and robberies to road haulers, also perpetrated outside the region, as well as stealing to *caveau*, concretely proved the organization's peculiar behavior in managing, both in the organizing and operational phase, evident and alarming criminal events, due to their manner and unscrupulousness.

On **March 16, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Foggia and the Guardia di Finanza of Bari, within the operation “*Cocktail*”<sup>77</sup>, executed a precautionary measure towards 26 people (the majority residing in Cerignola), as held responsible, in various ways, for conspiracy oriented to illicit drug trafficking (cocaine, marijuana and hashish), carrying and possession in a public location of both common and assault firearms, extortion, motor vehicle theft, handling, personal aiding and attempted murder.

On **January 18, 2023**, the DIA executed a measure of seizure of assets<sup>78</sup> towards one of the leaders, a well-known exponent of Cerignola organized crime, embedded in the peculiar criminal sector of armed robberies to transporters of funds. The seizure regarded assets with a total value of EUR 5.5 million.

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<sup>74</sup> Lucera, **June 12, 2023**, the Carabinieri executed the petitioned order no. 2426/23 RGNR and no. 2426/23 RGNR given by the Court of Foggia on June 8, 2023, towards 3 individuals, among which the previously convicted criminal's son belonging to the RICCI *faction*. The persons are held responsible for illegal firearms carrying and possession, aggravated assault and handling.

<sup>75</sup> With projections in Lombardy.

<sup>76</sup> Large-scale, also *on-line* sale of the relevant prices.

<sup>77</sup> No. 2658/20 RGNR DDA - 10692/21 RG GIP - 380/21 RG, measure given by the Court of Bari.

<sup>78</sup> Advanced seizure order no. 49/2021 RMP given by Court of Bari. 3rd Crim. Section on November 24, 2022.



On **January 18, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Cerignola, within the operation “*Il gatto e la volpe*”, executed a precautionary measure<sup>79</sup> in various municipalities in the province of Foggia and Melfi (Potenza) towards 10 persons held responsible for crimes concerning drugs, cocaine and hashish.

It has been detected in the town of Stornara the presence of the MASCIAVÈ *famiglia*, strongly linked to Cerignola crime and to the zones of Orta Nova. The group is allegedly involved in extortion activities, commission of acquisitive offenses and illicit waste trafficking.

In Orta Nova, a *gruppo* linked by kinship with the MORETTI *famiglia*, which has a central role within the Foggia *società*<sup>80</sup>, would be operating.

The interests of such groups are divided into multiple illicit activities (waste trafficking, extortion and laundering in logistics and agricultural and food industry). Within such context, the “*Jackpot*” operation of **March 20, 2023** is noteworthy, with which Guardia di Finanza of Foggia executed a petitioned order<sup>81</sup> towards 13 people, held responsible for conspiracy oriented to frauds concerning hydrocarbons<sup>82</sup>. Among the leaders of the organization, there were the three brothers belonging to the Orta Nova (Foggia) criminal group. Concomitantly, a preventive seizure of assets was executed, for a total value of EUR 5 million.

On **May 18, 2023**, the Bari and Foggia DIA, together with the Carabinieri of Foggia, executed a confiscation<sup>83</sup> measure of patrimonial prevention towards a leading exponent of an Orta Nova (Foggia) criminal group. The value of the confiscated assets amounts to a total of about EUR 2.5 million, already subject to a measure of advanced seizure, executed in April 2021.

On June 3, 2023, the State Police of Foggia executed a precautionary measure<sup>84</sup> towards a person linked to an Orta Nova (Foggia) group and a relative of the Foggia MORETTI-PELLEGRINO-LANZA *batteria*’s boss. The two are believed to be respectively the principal and the executor of the attempted double murder never reported and which took place in Foggia on September 30, 2020

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<sup>79</sup> No. 5130/20 RGNR and 611/21 RG GIP given by the Court of Foggia on March 9, 2023.

<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, on June 3, 2023, the State Police of Foggia executed precautionary measure no. 7971/2022 RG GIP - 10183/2022 RGNR DDA - 162/2023 RG, given by the Court of Bari on May 30, 2023, upon request of the local DDA (Italian District Anti-Mafia Prosecutor’s Office) towards a person linked to GAETA *gruppo* and a relative of the MORETTI *faction*’s boss, part of the *batteria* with the same name. The two are believed to be respectively the principal and the performer of the attempted double murder never reported and which took place in Foggia on September 30, 2020, towards two previously convicted criminals. This event seems to be referable to indirect revenge dynamics within the *batterie* of the Foggia *società*.

<sup>81</sup> No. 6999/20 RGNR and 566/21 RG GIP, given by the Court of Foggia on March 10, 2023.

<sup>82</sup> In particular, the organization is supposed to have stolen vast amounts of gas oil for agricultural use, to which preferential rate and excise duty can be applied by allocating it to uses subject to higher tax, through a system of fraudulent invoices and public acts.

<sup>83</sup> Order no. 183/20 M.P. of February 15, 2023, given by the Court of Bari.

<sup>84</sup> No. 7971/2022 RG GIP - 10183/21 RG DDA - 162/21 RG, precautionary measure given by the Court of Bari on May 30, 2023.

towards two previously convicted criminals. This event seems to be referable to indirect revenge dynamics within the batterie of the Foggia *società*.

## Province of Lecce

In Lecce and its province, the well-known criminal groups of Salento continue to act criminally in the name of the currently imprisoned leaders of the *Sacra Corona Unita*. The investigation results confirm the operativeness of organized crime groups that continue to follow typical operational schemes of the *Sacra Corona Unita* although according to changeable aspects due to alliances and contingent contrasts. The control of the territory continues to be the fundamental element for the existence of criminal groups at any level, and it is realized through settled management modalities of drug trafficking and extortion, which appears to be still a hidden issue.

The moderate dimensions of Lecce districts do not facilitate a strict division of the territory into areas of influence, in which several criminal groups operate and coexist, within an atmosphere of mutual but precarious coexistence. There have been multiple criminal acts indeed, which prove the continuous operativeness of crime.

Over the six-month report under consideration, three anti-Mafia bans<sup>85</sup> have been given by the Prefecture of Lecce.

The well-known criminal groups of Salento are generally composed of family members and rooted in the small municipalities in which the members reside. Over the time, the said criminal groups have tried to maintain a family descent (where this lineage is absent, the group's operativeness, in fact, has shrunken or disappeared).

By analyzing the single criminal organizations and groups, the resulting outlined situation seems to be substantially unchanged with respect to the last six-month report.

In the city of Lecce, the BRIGANTI *sodalizio*, affected by the “*Game over*” operation results in 2022, is allegedly having some difficulties, although one of the organization's leaders, mainly composed of family members, was released in December 2022. The organization particularly operates in the drug trafficking on an international scale and in the acquisitive offenses sector. On **May 9, 2023**, the Lecce Public Prosecutor requested a committal to trial for 21 of the suspects belonging to the *sodalizio* and involved in the operation in question, by also questioning the offense

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<sup>85</sup> In particular: 1 ban; 1 ban confirmation further to a request for a review; 1 measure of collaborative prevention pursuant to art. 94bis of Legislative Decree no. 159/2011.

of Mafia association. The investigations found that the criminal group was in possession of arms and particularly interested in drug trafficking, as well as extortion.

Several components of the PPE *sodalizio*, composed of family members, were given heavy convictions during the lawsuit further to the operation “*Final blow*”<sup>86</sup>. Furthermore, many of the components have been recently also involved in the operation “*Filo di Arianna 2*”<sup>87</sup>. The illicit business of the criminal organization extends to the Municipalities of Lecce, Cavallino, Caprarica, Melendugno, Calimera, Lizzanello, Martano, Surbo, Trepuzzi, Squinzano, Campi Salentina and Salice Salentino. The organization operates particularly in drug trafficking on an international scale and extortions.

The PENZA criminal group is composed of family members as well, and it is allegedly operating in the municipalities of Lecce, Melendugno, Vernole, Caprarica, Calimera, Lizzanello, Cavallino and Martano. The organization operates particularly in drug trafficking on an international scale, with independent and diversified supply channels, namely Albania, the Netherlands, Spain, Calabria and Campania.

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<sup>86</sup> Criminal proc. no. 9621/2017 RGNR - 88/2017 RG DDA - 8125/2018 RG GIP - 19/2020 ROCC executed in 2020.

<sup>87</sup> No. 898/19 RGNR - 3841/20 RG GIP and 99/23 OCC given by Court of Lecce on April 17, 2023.

## Province of Lecce



The TORNESE *gruppo*, the leader in Monteroni di Lecce, is the most rooted and organized in the province of Lecce, and it exerts its influence also on several other Municipalities, namely Carmiano, Guagnano, Veglie, Leverano, Arnesano, Salice Salentino, Porto Cesareo, Sant’Isidoro frazione di

Nardò, San Cesario di Lecce, Lequile, San Pietro in Lama, Gallipoli and Santa Maria di Leuca. Despite being weakened by the last years' judicial inquiries and internal rift, which gave birth to an independent "costola"<sup>88</sup>, TORNESE organization is allegedly operating primarily in drug trafficking, even on an international scale, and extortion. The organization has links with the 'Ndrangheta<sup>89</sup>, the Camorra and Albanian organized crime; furthermore, it is active in illicit capital laundering in multiple business activities settled in Salento, even with the complicity of complaisant entrepreneurs. From the results of the recent operation "Filo di Arianna 2"<sup>90</sup>, conducted by the Carabinieri in the provinces of Lecce and Milan on **May 15, 2023**, the organization is supposed to be composed of three crime groups, headed by as many "uomini di fiducia" (trusted men). In particular, 16 individuals are held responsible, in various ways, for Mafia association aimed at illicit drug trafficking, bodily injury, robbery, aggravated extortion. The investigations<sup>91</sup> proved the actual reconstitution of the POLITI clan of Monetrone di Lecce, part of *Sacra Corona Unita frangia*, referable to the TORNESE famiglia. The re-establishment occurred under one of the components held in prison, who was given house arrest. The alliance between the POLITI clan and the MAMMOLITI 'Ndrangheta cosca of San Luca (Reggio Calabria) is allegedly aimed at the supply of vast amounts of cocaine. NOCERA clan (in the Carmiano, Porto Cesareo, Novoli and Veglie areas) and the PADOVANO clan (operating in Gallipoli at the time of the events) seem to be operating too, both linked to the TORNESE criminal group. The direct and indirect control of business activities is also supposed to exist, within the sectors of fishing, coffee trade, tourism, security services, vehicles trade and waste oil<sup>92</sup>.

On **February 25, 2023**, the Court of Cassation confirmed the convictions given with the judgment at second instance, by partially upholding two accused persons' appeals. This happened during the judicial inquiry arisen from the "Labirinto" operation executed by the Carabinieri in July 2018, with which two criminal groups under the TORNESE sodalizio were reduced.

The DE TOMMASI sodalizio is allegedly operating in the Municipalities of Campi Salentina, Trepuzzi and Squinzano, already under the criminal influence of the well-known *Sacra Corona*

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<sup>88</sup> As deduced from the judgment further to the operation "Battleship", in which the existence of an independent gruppo is confirmed, already belonging to the TORNESE organization which operates in the Municipality of Monteroni di Lecce.

<sup>89</sup> In particular, the MAMMOLITI cosca.

<sup>90</sup> No. 898/19 RGNR, no. 3841/20 RG GIP and no. 99/23 OCC given by the GIP Section at the Court of Lecce on April 17, 2023.

<sup>91</sup> Investigation progress within the Carabinieri operation "Labirinto" in Lecce between 2016 and 2017, towards the POLITI and RIZZO clans (both part of the *Sacra Corona Unita* criminal group).

<sup>92</sup> In that respect, during the investigations, some connections with the "Morfeo" investigation were found, conducted by the Carabinieri of Naples towards the MOCCIA clan. In particular, the investigations seem to have detected the expansion of the activity of vegetable waste oil draining, referable to the aforementioned Camorra gruppo also in the Salento territory, through the intermediation of members of the POLITI and NOCERA clans.

*Unita bosses* at the head of such organization<sup>93</sup>, where it seems to manage drug trafficking.<sup>94</sup> The COLUCCI *sodalizio*, composed of family members, is operating in the Municipality of Noha di Galatina, and despite being hit by the “*Insidia*”<sup>95</sup> operation, it seems to maintain its influence in the municipalities of Galatina, Aradeo, Cutrofiano, Neviano, Corigliano d’Otranto, Seclì and Sogliano Cavour.

The AMATO *sodalizio* exerts its influence on the territories of Otranto, Maglie and Scorrano, where the leader of the *clan*, heavily convicted, is serving a sentence in house arrest for health reasons.

The TROISI *sodalizio* is rooted in the Municipalities of Racale, Taviano and Alliste, with expansion to Ugento and Melissano. It is allegedly continuing to maintain the control of the drug trade in the municipalities of influence, despite the recent arrest of one of its apical exponents.

The SCARLINO *sodalizio* is in control of the Taurisano area. The leader of the criminal organization has been serving a life sentence since 1994. The DE MATTEIS *sodalizio*, composed of family members, has allegedly revitalized its known operativeness in Merine, Frazione di Lizzanello, with particular interest in the drug sector. The influence area, during the period of time considered, was the scene of assassination attempts and damage of property by unknown persons, which may suggest a connection between these episodes and probable internal conflicts.

The DURANTE *sodalizio*, operating in the Municipality of Nardò, seems to be weakened, further to the “*Blend*”<sup>96</sup> operation. The criminal group, headed by well-known previously convicted criminals of the *Sacra Corona Unita*, has allegedly managed a flourishing drug trafficking business. Although there were no signs of *clan* reorganization, the various episodes of theft, fires and damage towards both entrepreneurs and previously convicted criminals suggest agitation within the local criminal contexts.

The DE PAOLA *sodalizio* is in control of the Acquarica del Capo, Santa Maria di Leuca and Presicce areas. Nevertheless, in the hamlet of Santa Maria di Leuca, despite the regular presence of the said organization, there are neither organized crime groups, nor expansion attempts by neighboring

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<sup>93</sup> As emerged from the investigation results of the operation “*Final Blow*” (2020).

<sup>94</sup> The reference is to the law enforcement operation executed in 2021 by the Carabinieri (no. 12215/19 RGNR, 79/20 DDA, 5977/20 RG GIP and 35/21 OCC of the Court of Lecce), which made it possible to rout an emerging criminal organization, active in cocaine and marijuana trafficking, extortions and bodily injury, aggravated by the Mafia method. The organization is composed of well-known members of the DE TOMMASI *clan*, then “close” to the PEPE *clan*.

<sup>95</sup> OCC no. 4978/19 RGNR, 2530/20 RG GIP, 57/19 DDA, 05/22 OCC executed on February 7, 2022 (“*Insidia*” operation).

<sup>96</sup> Nardò, April 13, 2022 - “*Blend*” operation: restrictive precautionary measure in prison no. 4289/2019 RGNR - no. 45/2019 D.D.A - no. 2529/20 GIP - no. 44/22 OCC given by the Court of Lecce on April 4, 2022.

groups. The well-known local previously convicted criminals have apparently made “*reference*” to the TORNESE *sodalizo* indeed, over the last years.

The LEO *sodalizio* seems to be operating in the Municipalities of Melendugno and Vernole.

On **January 10, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Maglie, within the operation “*Pegaso*”, executed a precautionary measure towards 15 individuals held responsible in various ways for armed conspiracy oriented to drug trafficking, attempted murder, extortion, aggravated by the Mafia method. The investigations shed light on a criminal organization headed by an individual who has a family relationship with an apical exponent of the Lecce *Sacra Corona Unita*. The investigations began following the attempted murder of a previously convicted criminal, which took place in Soleto on August 9, 2019. During the investigations, several episodes of aggression and damage towards entrepreneurs were also documented.

On **June 13, 2023**, in Squinzano, a previously convicted criminal was ambushed, what could be relevant for the local criminal structures and balances, since the victim, together with his blood relatives, is thought to be close to the PEPE and PENZA Mafia *sodalizi*.

On **June 23, 2023**, in Galatina, the Guardia di Finanza executed a precautionary measure<sup>97</sup> towards 5 individuals held responsible for participating in various ways in offenses of Mafia association and extortion<sup>98</sup>.

## Province of Brindisi

In the northern part of the province of Brindisi, particularly in Fasano and in the neighboring municipalities of Cisternino and Ostuni, there is still a strong influence of Bari crime<sup>99</sup>, above all in the acquisitive offenses and drug trafficking sectors.

The area among the Municipalities of Santa Susanna, Oria and Francavilla Fontana, which has always been the domain of criminal groups firmly rooted in the territory and historically part of the *Sacra Corona Unita*, was the scene of two serious murders against young victims (in one case committed by a minor), during the six-month period. Such events, although not directly linked to

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<sup>97</sup> OCCC no. 626/ 23 RGNR -3050/23 RG GIP - 8/23 DDA and 133/ 23 OCC given by the Court of Lecce on June 19, 2023.

<sup>98</sup> Such measure, followed by various house searches towards all the suspects, provided a precautionary measure in prison, another one in house arrest, and a six-month cessation of activities for an accountant.

<sup>99</sup> There are several crimes, indeed, above all related to drugs and against assets, committed by persons residing in the Bari area, principally in the Fasano and Ostuni zones.

each other, combined with intimidating episodes, such as damage to property and fires, as well as crimes related to drugs, describe the area as the most critical in the province of Brindisi.

## **Province of Brindisi**



# Provincia di Brindisi



Over the past years, crime groups<sup>100</sup> operating in the City of Brindisi were involved in important legal proceedings which sometimes led apical exponents to cooperate with justice. These groups seem to be heavily weakened, despite their continuous attempts of reorganization, as proven by the

<sup>100</sup> BRANDI, MORLEO and ROMANO/COFFA gruppi.

arrest<sup>101</sup> of a known previously-convicted criminal in Brindisi on December 16, 2022, by the local State Police. He has already been convicted for Mafia association as belonging to the BRANDI *sodalizio* and he was arrested for the offense of extortion, aggravated by the Mafia method, towards a local tradesman.

The historic criminal VITALE-PASIMENI-VICIENTINO (MESAGNESI) *sodalizio*, rooted in the Municipality of Mesagne, during the six-month period, saw the release from prison of one of its apical exponents, and it is allegedly continuing to operate in the drug trafficking and extortions sectors. MESAGNESI are apparently in several municipalities of the province of Brindisi (regional capital included), by also coexisting, in some cases, with members of the opposite criminal group, within an outward “*Mafia-pax*”.

In the territory of Tutturano, Brindisi hamlet, as well as in the ones of Torre Santa Susanna and Erchie<sup>102</sup>, the ROGOLI-BUCCARELLA-CAMPANA *sodalizio*, historically rooted within the *Sacra Corona Unita*, appears to be operating, above all in the drug trafficking sector and in the “*pizzo*” (protection money) imposition.

The BRUNO *sodalizio* is apparently operating in the Municipality of Torre Santa Susanna, where it is supposed to control the drug trade. The BRUNO criminal independence is allegedly referable to its strong link with the historic leaders of the *Sacra Corona Unita*. At the moment, the expansion of the *clan*’s operativeness to the Municipalities of Oria and Erchie seems not to create tensions with the members of the ROGOLI- BUCCARELLA-CAMPANA *sodalizio*. On **February 13, 2023**, the murder of a young man occurred in Torre Santa Susanna.

As regards the institutional initiatives aimed at preventing organized crime from infiltrating the economic and social fabric of the province, the Prefect di Brindisi signed with the President of the province and some mayors a “*Protocol for the protection of law in the contracts sector*”<sup>103</sup>. This is aimed at ensuring more transparency when using public resources, set aside for the realization of public works, also in consideration of the important financing from PNRR. Within the document, more effective controls (already provided for in the sector legislation) are agreed to prevent and fight any attempt of Mafia infiltration<sup>104</sup>. On **January 30, 2023**, in Brindisi, within the operation

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<sup>101</sup> OCC no. 9589/22 RGNR - 68/22 DDA - 7689/22 RG GIP and 148/22 given by the Court of Lecce on December 15, 2022.

<sup>102</sup> With the Campania faction.

<sup>103</sup> With the President of the province of Brindisi and the mayors of the Municipalities of Cellino San Marco, Cisternino, Latiano, Mesagne, San Pancrazio Salentino, San Vito dei Normanni and Torchiarello.

<sup>104</sup> These include: the strengthening of the precautionary anti-Mafia checks by extending the information to public contracts with lower value thresholds than those indicated in the current legislation; the assurance, on the part of the contracting companies, of broader guarantees of reliability in the performance of the contractual provisions, especially to protect the regularity of work relations and the safety of workers; the possibility of activation, by the public body,

“*Square*”, the Carabinieri executed a precautionary measure<sup>105</sup> towards 16 individuals held responsible in various ways for drug trafficking and possession.

On **March 16, 2023**, in San Pietro Vernotico (Brindisi) and Cerignola (Foggia), within the “*Cocktail*” operation, the Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza of Bari executed a precautionary measure<sup>106</sup> towards 23 persons held responsible in various ways for the offenses of drug trafficking and possession, carrying of illegal arms and other offenses. The investigations made it possible to highlight a criminal organization active in drug trafficking and other offenses (extortion, arms trafficking, stealing and handling stolen motor vehicles), operating in the territory of Cerignola (Foggia) with expansion to San Pietro Vernotico (Brindisi), where 3 previously convicted criminals were arrested.

On **May 26, 2023**, in Francavilla Fontana, Oria and San Pietro Vernotico, the Carabinieri executed a precautionary measure<sup>107</sup> towards 10 individuals held responsible in various ways for conspiracy oriented to drug trafficking. The investigations made it possible to profile the territorial organization of an association active in the trafficking of various drug typologies (cocaine, hashish and marijuana), operating in the Municipalities of Francavilla Fontana and Oria.

## **Province of Taranto**

In the City of Taranto, different criminal groups coexist. They share out areas and districts of the city<sup>108</sup>, according to criteria of independence and criminal hegemony, although there is no shortage of episodes of conflict over territorial contention.

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of the avoidance clause if the companies, in the execution of the contract, are responsible for serious violations concerning work safety, namely before certain facts of a concussive or corruptive nature.

<sup>105</sup> No. 3222/20 RGNR GIP given by the Court of Brindisi on January 19, 2023.

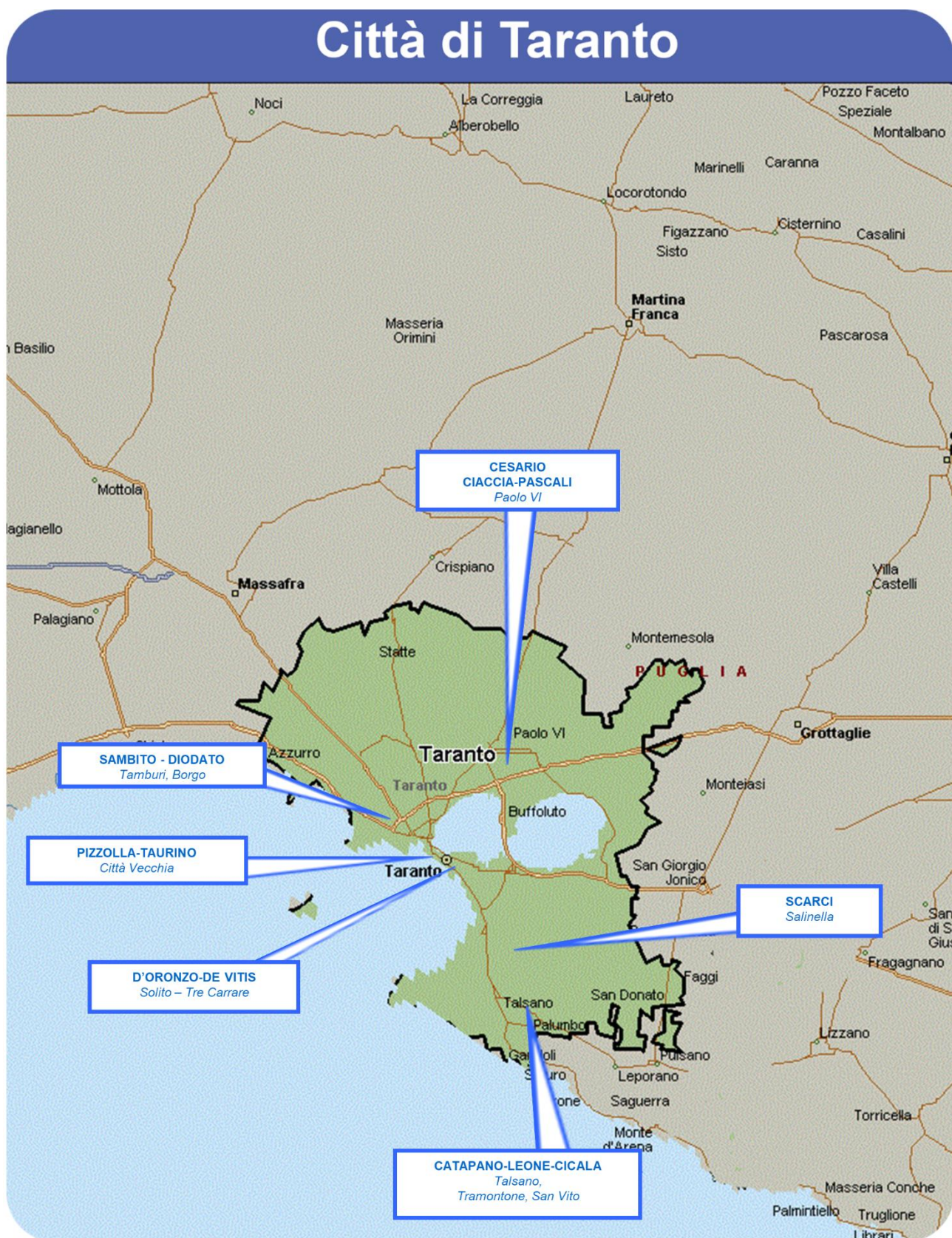
<sup>106</sup> No. 10692/2021 RG GIP and 380 380/21 RG, precautionary measure given by the Court of Bari on March 6, 2023.

<sup>107</sup> OCC no. 9896/21 Mod.21 RGNR - 74/2021 DDA - 3467/2022 RG GIP and 107/2023 OCC given by the Court of Lecce on May 16, 2023, and measure no. 90/2021 RGNR and 276/2022 GIP given by Juvenile Court of Lecce) on May 2, 2023 (for a minor).

<sup>108</sup> PIZZOLLA and TAURINO in the old part of the city; CATAPANO, LEONE and CICALA in the districts of Talsano-Tramontone-San Vito; CESARIO, CIACCIA and PASCALI in Paolo VI district; DIODATO and SAMBITO in the Borgo and Tamburi district; SCARCI in Salinella district; DE VITIS-D'ORONZO in the districts of Solito and Tre Carrare.



## City of Taranto

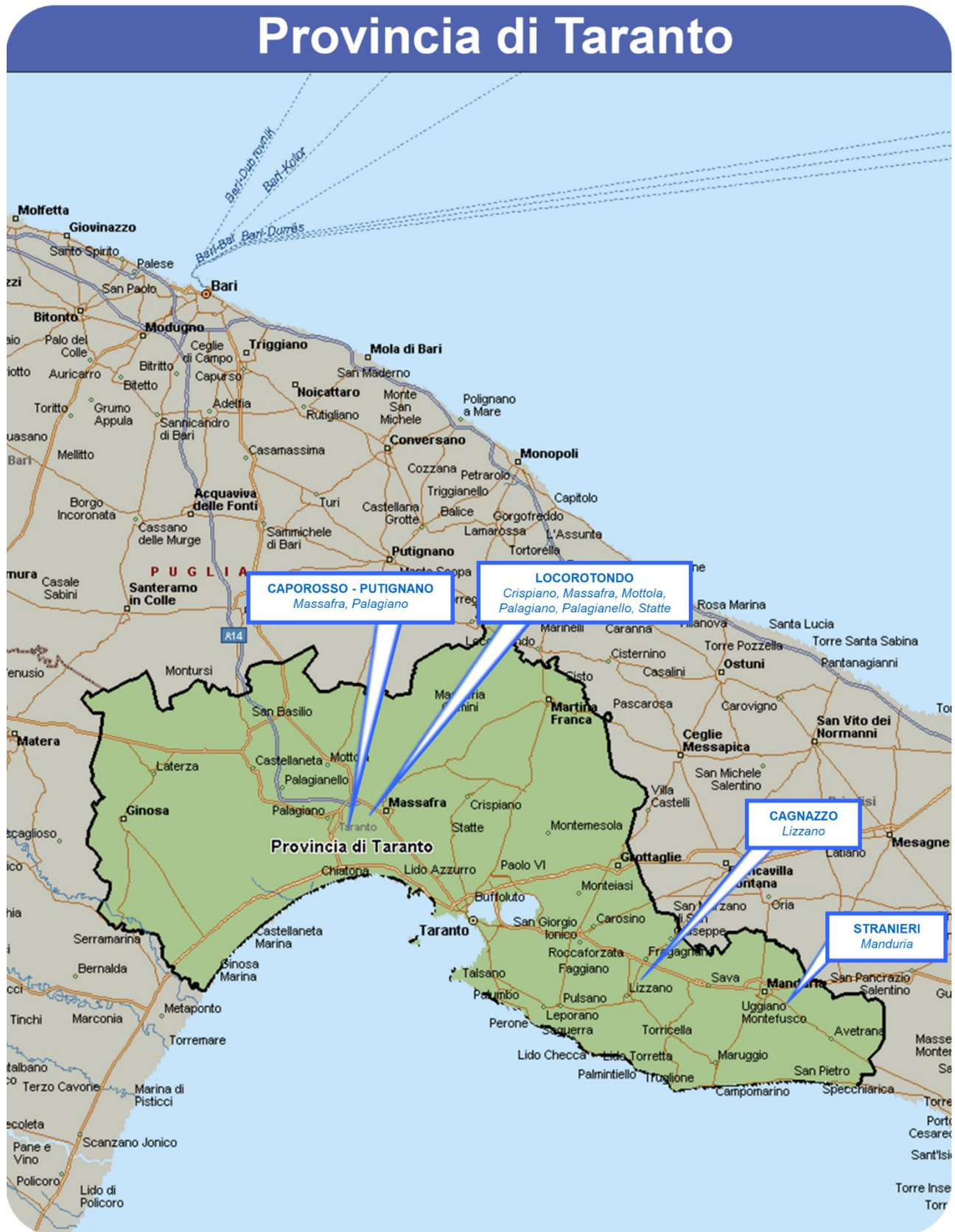


PIZZOLLA-TAURINO

Old Town



## Province of Taranto



In the province of Taranto there would be several crime groups<sup>109</sup> that exert influence in various municipalities, sometimes in opposition to each other.

On **May 3, 2023**, a measure was issued by the Court in Lecce, upon a proposal by the DIA Director<sup>110</sup>, who ordered the freezing of assets in the possession of a well-known previously convicted criminal from Taranto, in Greece and Bulgaria. The Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council no. 1805/2018 was implemented - by the Judicial Authority - concerning the judicial cooperation in criminal matters in the EU, allowing for the freezing and confiscation of assets and criminal proceeds. The activity arose from asset and financial investigation delegated by the Judicial Authority and resulted in a proposal for an asset-protection measure<sup>111</sup> that on October 24, 2019, gave rise to the seizure of 2 villas, 1 dwelling, 8 warehouses, and 1 plot of agricultural land located in Taranto, Castellaneta Marina (Taranto) and in Martina Franca (Taranto), 1 company shares, the assets of 5 companies generally working in the mussel and seafood industry, several vehicles and motorcycles, amounting to more than EUR 5 million, subjected to a subsequent first degree confiscation on January 20, 2022. Further inquiries delegated by the Public Prosecutor in Lecce, and aimed at countering illegally accumulated assets on foreign soil, including Greek and Bulgarian collateral bodies activation, made it possible to ascertain the existence of further investments of illegal origin in certain companies operating abroad. The outcome of further inspections led to an additional asset-protection measure involving company shares and assets in Bulgaria and Greece, operating both in the wholesale trade of fishery products and in the sector of international transport, with an aggregate amount of up to EUR 2 million.

On **January 19, 2023**, in Taranto and Statte, during the “*Hispanic express*” operation, the Carabinieri undertook a precautionary measure<sup>112</sup> against 8 individuals held liable for abetting possession and supply of illicit drugs. The criminal group was allegedly engaged in the importation of large amounts of hashish and marijuana type drugs, prevalently from Spain, and in the retail drug market in the City of Taranto.

On **March 27, 2023**, in Sava (Taranto), during the “*Charon*” operation, the Carabinieri undertook a precautionary measure<sup>113</sup> against 18 individuals held liable, in different capacities, for drug trafficking, possession and supply, and illegal possession of weapons and munitions.

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<sup>109</sup> The LOCOROTONDO *gruppo*, the CAPOROSSO-PUTIGNANO *gruppo*, the LOCOROTONDO-CAGNAZZO *gruppo*, the STRANIERI *gruppo*.

<sup>110</sup> Measure no. 35/22 MP of the Judicial Review by the Court of Lecce on April 26, 2023.

<sup>111</sup> Joint signature of the DIA Director and the procedural judge.

<sup>112</sup> Measure no. 7367/2020 RGNR issued on January 12, 2023, by the Court of Taranto.

<sup>113</sup> Measure no. 927/2020 RGNR - 2514/2021 RG GIP - 19/2023 OCC by the Court of Lecce on March 17, 2023.

On **March 9, 2023**, in Massafra (Taranto), during the “*Hybris*” operation, the Carabinieri of Gioia Tauro (Reggio Calabria) executed an arrest warrant in prison<sup>114</sup> against various individuals including a well-known previously convicted criminal from Massafra, already convicted for acting in a Mafia-type organization, with police records for attempted murder, extortion, bodily injury, robbery, illegal possession of firearms, and now suspected for extortion and robbery offenses, concurrent and aggravated as a consequence of being committed by a person acting in a Mafia-type organization.

On **May 8, 2023**, in Taranto, the Port Authority executed a preventive seizure order<sup>115</sup> for the purpose of confiscation of some companies found to be involved in illegal trafficking of waste, which were collected from the Port of Taranto and illegally dumped in Massafra.

On **June 14, 2023**, during the “*Best friends*” operation carried out in Taranto, the Carabinieri undertook a precautionary measure and, at the same time, a preventive and equivalent seizure order<sup>116</sup> against 5 persons accused of, in different capacities, illegal trafficking of waste and other environment-related offenses.

On **June 20, 2023**, the State Police of Taranto undertook a precautionary measure<sup>117</sup> against 5 persons accused of, in different capacities, murder and attempted extortion against a person, attempted murder of another person and extortion against a merchant, together with related violations of the weapons law.

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<sup>114</sup> No. 4194/20 RGNR - 2586/21 GIP - 21/22 OCC issued on March 6, 2023, by the Court of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>115</sup> No. 5197/21 RGNR - 37/21 DDA - 285/22 RG GIP issued on May 8, 2023, by the Court of Lecce.

<sup>116</sup> No. 494/21 RGNR - 4802/21 RG GIP - 113/2023 OCC issued on May 24, 2023 by the Court of Lecce.

<sup>117</sup> No. 4696/2023 RGNR GIP - 36/2023 DDA issued on June 19, 2023, by the Court of Lecce.

## - SARDINIA

There are no autochthonous Mafia-type association on the island. Nevertheless, in intelligence-led policing, performed over the years, projections of the so-called traditional *Mafias* have been identified, which have established real estate investments<sup>1</sup>, proceeds of illegal activities. Furthermore, contacts of the island's criminals with traditional Mafia groups from Southern Italy in the sector of drug trafficking emerged. This is confirmed by the criminal conviction<sup>2</sup> of **June 12, 2023** issued against a Sardinian-Calabrian group ("close" to the *mandamento* of San Luca) active in the supply of large quantities of cocaine from Calabria to Sardinia. Within the scope of drug trafficking and dealing, marijuana deserves particular attention, as it is allegedly grown in vast impassable territories of the hinterland through sophisticated cultivation methods, and without excluding the possibility that part of the production could be addressed outside the region.

Another event that arouses particular social alarm is assaults on cash-in-transit vehicles which are recorded in the territory.

On the island, the operation of foreign associations, in particular Nigerian ones<sup>3</sup>, devoted mostly to drug trafficking and dealing<sup>4</sup> and trafficking of young fellow countrywomen to be exploited in prostitution. In such criminal contexts, a Nigerian residing in Olbia was probably stabbed<sup>5</sup> in Sassari, victim of an ambush planned by 4 fellow countrymen.

Possible criminal infiltration holds the attention of institutional set-up, in particular the start of construction sites financed with PNRR funds could be of great interest for criminal groups, nevertheless, the procurement monitoring by the Prefectures and all law enforcement stationed in the country allows a proper activity of prevention.

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<sup>1</sup> The "*Fenice*" investigation of December 2019 is referred to, where interest of individuals "close" to the *'Ndrangheta* in laundering activity through the purchase of about ten apartments in a *resort* of Olbia had emerged.

<sup>2</sup> At the outcome of the "*Marghine*" operation conducted by the Carabinieri (Criminal procedure 1689/2018 of DDA of Cagliari - 731/2019 RG GIP), the group members were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from 5 to 18 years.

<sup>3</sup> The "*Voodoo*" operation is recalled (OCCC no. 11714/16 RGNR and 85681/2017 RG GIP issued by the Court of Cagliari on October 20, 2021) within the scope of which the Guardia di Finanza of Cagliari on November 22, 2021 had executed a restrictive measure issued against 40 members of a Nigerian criminal conspiracy designed to international money laundering, facilitation of illegal immigration and exploitation of the prostitution of others with the aggravating factor of transnationality. The investigations brought to light a reticular structure divided into three deep-rooted criminal groups, respectively, in Sardinia (in Cagliari), in Piedmont (in Turin), in Emilia-Romagna (in Ravenna), with extensive operation in other Italian and transnational (in Nigeria, Libya and Germany) areas.

<sup>4</sup> On **April 17, 2023**, the State Police of Sassari arrested (Criminal procedure 1244/2023 Mod. 21 of the Public Prosecutor of Sassari) a Nigerian found in possession of illicit drugs; on **June 12, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Sassari arrested a Nigerian (Criminal procedure 2118/2023 Mod. 21 the Public Prosecutor of Sassari) for possession for the purpose of supplying illicit drugs.

<sup>5</sup> Occurred on **June 19, 2023**.



Finally, acts of intimidation<sup>6</sup> against entrepreneurs and exponents of the Public Administration committed, prevalently, by burning automobiles and/or instrumental means to the business activity, including industrial hangars, are reported.

## Province of Cagliari

The investigative activity put in place during the six-month period confirms how drug trafficking<sup>7</sup> is the major economic interest for local and non-local crime factions. On **May 10, 2023**, during the “*Primavera Fredda*” operation, the State Police of Cagliari executed a detention order<sup>8</sup> against 27 individuals active in cocaine trafficking and robberies among the provinces of Cagliari, Sassari and Nuoro, seizing a total of 36 kg of cocaine.

## The Remaining Regional Territory

As mentioned, common crime in the island as well as foreign crime turns out to be devoted prevalently to drug trafficking and supply<sup>9</sup>. On **January 16, 2023**, the State Police of Nuoro, in executing a

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<sup>6</sup> **February 1, 2023**: cars of a local administrator from Bono (Sassari) were set on fire; **February 7, 2023**: arson attack in a construction site involved in building a new Sassari-Olbia road; **February 11, 2023**: arson attack in an Alghero company specialized in special waste collection; **March 1, 2023**: two cars assigned to a renewable energy company were set on fire in Olbia; **March 6, 2023**: finding of a device placed at the entrance to a nuclear physics laboratory in Lula (Nuoro); **March 8, 2023**: anonymous threatening letter sent to a local administrator in Desulo (Nuoro); **March 27, 2023**: writings against local political representatives in Bultei (Sassari); **April 3, 2023**: a local administrator’s car was set on fire in Mogoro; **April 22, 2023**: finding of a paper bomb at the entrance of a local administrator’s dwelling in Desulo (Nuoro); **April 29, 2023**: local administrator’s car was set on fire in Sordiana (Cagliari).

<sup>7</sup> On **February 6, 2023**, the Carabinieri of San Sperate (Cagliari) arrested (Criminal procedure 1856 RGNR and 1858/23 Mod. 21 by the Court in Cagliari) 3 individuals for possession and supply of illicit drugs, one of which turned out to be already involved in the “*Platinum-Dia*” operation; on **April 4, 2023**, the State Police of Cagliari arrested a previously convicted criminal, already subjected to house arrest, as found in possession of drugs; on **April 20, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Cagliari arrested (Criminal procedure 4782/2023 RGNR Mod. 21 by the Court of Cagliari) a person for possession and supply of drugs. On **May 18, 2023**, the State Police of Cagliari executed a pretrial detention order (Criminal procedure 7911/2019 RGNR by the DDA of Cagliari) against 3 individuals for drug trafficking and supply.

<sup>8</sup> Criminal procedure 1418/2021 RGNR Mod. 21 by the Court of Cagliari

<sup>9</sup> On **March 3, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Olbia arrested 2 Albanian women hiding 3 kg of cocaine in their car coming from Civitavecchia, on **March 9, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Lanusei arrested 2 individuals (Criminal procedure 164/2023 Mod. 21 by the Court of Lanusei) seizing about 34 kg of cocaine and about EUR 300 thousand in cash, on **April 7, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Lunamatrona arrested 2 individuals (Criminal procedure 4350/2023 Mod. 21 by the Court in Cagliari) found in possession of about 11 kg of cocaine, 1.6 kg of marijuana and other illicit drugs, on **May 17, 2023**, the confiscation of movable and immovable property ordered by the Court of Cagliari against 2 brothers convicted for drug trafficking and for whom the A.G. (Judicial Authority) considered profiles of generic dangerousness to exist, on **April 26, 2023**, the State Police of Alghero arrested a Venezuelan national (Criminal procedure 1283/2023 Mod. 21 by the Court in Sassari) who has his habitual residence in Spain found in possession of 1.3 kg of cocaine when he had just disembarked in Porto Torres from a ship coming from Genova, on **June 8, 2023**, while inspecting a truck disembarked from a ferry coming from Genova, the Carabinieri of Porto Torres arrested the

detention order<sup>10</sup> against 4 individuals for a bank robbery in Nuoro on May 9, 2022, found about 190 kg of hashish and marijuana at the dwelling of one of those arrested.

Again, on **February 14, 2023**, at the end of the “*Reazione*” operation, the Carabinieri of Nuoro executed a pretrial detention order<sup>11</sup> against 4 individuals held liable, over time, of several acts of intimidation (perpetrated also with weapons and explosives), as well as crimes against the person, property and supply of drugs.

Also noteworthy is the escape from prison in Nuoro on **February 24, 2023**, of a leading member of Apulian organized crime confined in a high-security prison. However, it can be specified that recently, on **February 2, 2024**, during the writing of this six-month report, the fugitive was tracked down in France by the Carabinieri and arrested with the help of the Authorities of that country.

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truck driver (Criminal procedure 2038/2023 Mod. 21 by the Court in Sassari) for possession of 11 kg of cocaine, on **June 29, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Olbia arrested a truck driver (Criminal procedure 1564/2023 Mod. 21 by the Court in Tempio Pausania) that, disembarked from the ferry on a semi-truck sailing from Livorno, had concealed 7 kg of cocaine inside the vehicle.

<sup>10</sup> Criminal procedure 965/2022 Mod. 21 by the Public Prosecutor of Nuoro.

<sup>11</sup> Issued by the GIP of the Court of Cagliari upon request of the local Public Prosecutor.

## - SICILY<sup>1</sup>

In Sicily, heterogeneous criminal groups co-exist, and not only Mafia-type ones. *Cosa Nostra* is in all provinces of the region, whereas the *stidda* appears to be rather localized in the central southern area of the island. Its area of influence includes portions of the provinces of Caltanissetta, Ragusa and Agrigento. In the eastern provinces, the presence of Mafia-type criminal groups different from *Cosa Nostra* is recorded.

In western Sicily, *Cosa Nostra* is structured in *mandamenti* and *famiglie*, and still lacking an apical structure. It has been forced to reshape its decision-making patterns, fitting to a process aiming at seeking greater interaction among the various provinces. In recent years, its top-down structure seems to have been interpreted according to less rigid patterns compared to the past, with particular regard to the distribution of territorial competences of its subdivisions. In the province of Agrigento, an “area” that is also under the influence of the *stidda* has been recorded. The *stidda* managed over the years to raise its criminal status, until it made pacts of mutual convenience with the *famiglie* of *Cosa Nostra*. In Trapani, a city strongly influenced over the years by the Mafia in Palermo, the presence of the criminal group’s leader Matteo Messina Denaro has weakened. Over the years, he has been a reference person for all issues of major interest, for the resolution of any disputes and for the appointment of the top leaders of the Mafia subdivisions, even those not from Trapani. He was arrested on **January 16, 2023**. During thirty years of absconding, the mass murderer *boss* has represented the undisputed *head* of the Mafia in Trapani, and a leading figure in the criminal scene of *Cosa Nostra* in western Sicily.

In the provinces of eastern Sicily, in addition to the subdivisions of *Cosa Nostra*, there are several independent Mafia-type criminal groups that do not belong to it, but they are equally dangerous and have a more variable and flexible structure. The metropolitan area of Catania is the most highly populous center of eastern Sicily and represents the economic and infrastructural hub of the southeastern part of the region, besides being the island’s main industrial, logistical and commercial hub. From this point of view, the entire geographical area can be considered the center of gravity of the principle criminal interests, the management and control of which is meticulously tended to by the most important criminal associations operating within the province. Indeed, important Mafia *famiglie* attributable to *Cosa Nostra* operate in this territory. They refer to its model in structural, functional and motivational terms as well as other criminal components for which their Mafia-like

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<sup>1</sup> The extreme fragmentation of the Sicilian criminal reality involves the graphic representation of the only main components, whose locations on the map are merely approximate.

nature has always been recognized. Even though they are based on the typical model of *Cosa Nostra*, they are quite distinct from it. Therefore, the criminal universe of Catania is more variable compared to the Palermo standard and has a business orientation that is also reflected in extra-regional projection areas. In the provinces of Siracusa and Ragusa, the influences of the *Cosa Nostra* of Catania and, to a lesser degree, of the *stidda* of Gela upon the Hyblaeen territory alone are clear.

The *Cosa Nostra* subdivisions are recorded throughout the island with projections, over the years, into regions of central and northern Italy and with entrenched ramifications in foreign nations even overseas<sup>2</sup>. The historical Sicilian emigrations to Europe (more considerable to Germany and Belgium) and to the American continents (U.S.A., Canada<sup>3</sup>, and to a lesser degree, Venezuela and Brazil), over the years, have led to the establishment of structured associations having similar characteristics to the original *Mafia* groups, with which they maintain close relationships of collaboration and mutual support. The close relations between members connected to the GAMBINO Mafia family of New York - American *Cosa Nostra* - and Sicilian Mafia members are explanatory. Interest in Spain has allegedly grown in proportion to the renewed interest in cocaine trafficking from *Cosa Nostra* in recent years. Indeed, it has been determined that Mafia organizations in Catania and Trapani manage drug trafficking: the former handle the cocaine trafficking coming from Colombia, and the latter the unlawful market that extends on the Marocco - Spain - Italy route. Members of Sicilian organized crime and, in particular, some individuals connected to the associations in Agrigento turned out to be in Belgium<sup>4</sup>, where they are allegedly active in illegal activities linked to drug trafficking in particular. Entrepreneurs to which the MAZZEI and PILLERA Mafia *famiglie* of Catania refer are allegedly in Romania. As regards illegal interests with Malta, mostly related to drugs, on **February 8, 2023**, the Judicial Authority in Catania pieced together the operation of a criminal group in the province of Catania that allegedly managed a significant drug trafficking of cocaine, marijuana and hashish. Besides, the Judicial Authority took inspiration from investigation conducted during the “*La Vallette*” operation, which concerned a branched-out faction of Italian and foreign criminals active in drug trafficking in Sicily, Calabria and Malta.

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<sup>2</sup> As regards Palermo, “*Cupola 2.0*” in December 2018 and “*New Connection*” in July 2019 operations. In relation to Agrigento the “*Passepartout*” operation is recalled.

<sup>3</sup> It is mentioned the “*Passepartout*” operation in November 2019. It has also unveiled an attempt to re-establish a network of relations, including international ones. Indeed, relations are documented between *associates* with the *Cosa Nostra* of Sciacca (Agrigento) and Mafia members operating in Porto Empedocle (Agrigento), Castelvetro (Trapani), Castellammare del Golfo (Trapani), and with certain individuals close to the GAMBINO Mafia family of New York, as well as Mafia members of Agrigento emigrated to Canada and the USA. During the six-month period, in **March 2023**, an attempted murder of a high-ranking member of the RIZZUTO clan took place. It can allegedly be indicative of a feud aimed at controlling economic interests in that place.

<sup>4</sup> Mention is made of a “feud” from the past developed between 2015 and 2018 on the “Favara - Belgium” axis within a criminal group dedicated to firearms and drug trafficking.

The presence in Sicily, and especially in Catania and Palermo, of foreign criminal groups active prevalently in exploitation of the prostitution of others, undeclared work and illegal recruitment, as well as trade in counterfeit goods and supply of illicit drugs deserves particular attention. More structured associations appear to be those of Nigerian origin, based on cultism and identified by various acronyms<sup>5</sup>.

As regards contrasting illegal assets, under anti-Mafia prevention regulations, through seizures and confiscations, even in the six-month period in question, the DIA achieved remarkable results by concretely containing the economic power of *Cosa Nostra* and other Sicilian Mafia groups. The seizures and the confiscations amounted respectively to slightly beyond EUR 2 million and EUR 99 million.

Also, in terms of contrasting Mafia infiltration in the procurement sector, the DIA contributed actively to the adoption of several anti-Mafia bans with other law enforcement agencies in support of the prefectural Authorities of the Sicilian provinces.

It should also be noted that on **March 27, 2023** an additional<sup>6</sup> Legality Protocol<sup>7</sup> was executed by the Prefect of Palermo, together with the prefects of the provinces of Agrigento, Trapani and Caltanissetta, with the Special Commissioner of the Government SEZs<sup>8</sup> in western Sicily, aimed at the extension of anti-Mafia precautions – in the most rigorous form of the Prefect's “information” – at the entire chain of executors and suppliers, and at sub-threshold public works contracts, as well as through constant monitoring of construction sites and companies involved in infrastructure measures in the special economic zones under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Finally, as regards Mafia infiltration in local public bodies, in Sicily 3 Municipal Councils were dissolved in the six-month period<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> MAPHITE, EIYE, VICKINGS, BLACK AXE, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Compared to the 3 legality protocols already executed by the Prefecture of Palermo respectively with the Special Commissioner of the Port System Authority, concerning development and redevelopment works of the interface areas of the port of Palermo with the city, and with R.F.I. regarding the construction works on the new Palermo-Catania rail link and the electrification of the Palermo-Trapani railway line.

<sup>7</sup> According to the guidelines adopted by the Interministerial Committee for Economic Planning most recently with the Decision no. 62 of November 26, 2020; in particular, the authority awarding the works commits to making available to the bodies institutionally appointed to the inspections – the Joint Forces set up in the Prefectures –, guaranteeing their access through telematic link to a Database created ad hoc, all information related to the “Anagrafe degli Esecutori” and “Settimanale di Cantiere”.

<sup>8</sup> Special economic zone.

<sup>9</sup> Castiglione di Sicilia (Catania) dissolved on **May 25, 2023**; Palagonia (Catania) dissolved with Presidential Decree on **August 9, 2023**, since in **April 2023** prefectural access had been ordered; Mojo Alcantara (Messina) dissolved with Presidential Decree on **February 3, 2023**.

## Province of Palermo

The *Cosa Nostra* of Palermo, representing the milestone of the Sicilian Mafia phenomenon, attempted to oppose the pulverization of the top structure, the so-called *provincial court*, repeated attempts to rebuild and revamp the organizational architecture by trying to identify figures capable of bringing together authority and *leadership* recognized by all the *famiglie* of the *mandamenti*. However, the constant intelligence-led policing performed in Palermo and in the province underline the difficulty *Cosa Nostra* has in re-establishing a top body. Such situation allegedly facilitates the affirmation of young exponents of the leading *mandamenti* and *famiglie*, who boast a Mafia *famiglia* background that they have joined, and, sometimes, are contrasted by the elderly “*uomini d’onore*” (“men of honor” who are members of the Mafia can), who, after being released from prison<sup>10</sup>, demand to regain their role within the group. The absence of a “leadership structure at the top” mostly entails *intermandamentali* agreements, based on sharing guidelines and distributing spheres of influence among the exponents of the various *mandamenti*. The distribution of the criminal network in 15 *mandamenti* (8 in the city and 7 in the province) and 82 *famiglie* (33 in the city and 49 in the province), all of which are internally hierarchically structured, remains.

Constant and incessant intelligence-led policing has most recently led to the arrest of Matteo MESSINA DENARO<sup>11</sup>, the undisputed *head* of the Mafia in Trapani that with his charisma and authority also affected matters related to the *Cosa Nostra* of Palermo and Agrigento<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Various police operations have shown that many of the *mafiosi* individuals who have regained their freedom after long periods of detention have turned out to be once again involved in the criminal dynamics of their respective factions. Recent releases of individuals who, in the past, have held top positions have involved in particular the TRABIA and VILLABATE *mandamento*, while in the regional capital it is noteworthy the releases of the *regents* of the two most influential *famiglie* of the PORTA NUOVA *mandamento* and some associated with the RESUTTANA *mandamento*.

<sup>11</sup> Known also by the nicknames “*U Siccu*” and “*Diabolik*”.

<sup>12</sup> In this regard, the “*Xydy*” operation concluded in 2021, insofar as it focused on the criminal dynamics of the province of Agrigento, involved also Matteo MESSINA DENARO who, through “...a current and highly secret communication network...,” allegedly shared some strategies with the *heads* of the *famiglie* in Agrigento, that “... unanimously recognize MESSINA DENARO as the only one who has the last word on the appointment in that territory, namely the revocation of top positions within the organization.” The boss of Castelvetro, also outside Trapani, was allegedly “... capable of making hard decisions for the balance of power in *Cosa Nostra*, besides his exceptional ability to disappear and vanish”.

As is known, on **January 16, 2023**, the Carabinieri of the ROS captured the mass murderer *boss*<sup>13</sup>, after thirty years of absconding, together with his driver<sup>14</sup>, who from Campobello di Mazara had accompanied him to the La Maddalena cancer clinic in Palermo. On **September 25, 2023**, the *boss*, sick with cancer, died in L'Aquila in the high-security prison to which he had been transferred after his arrest.

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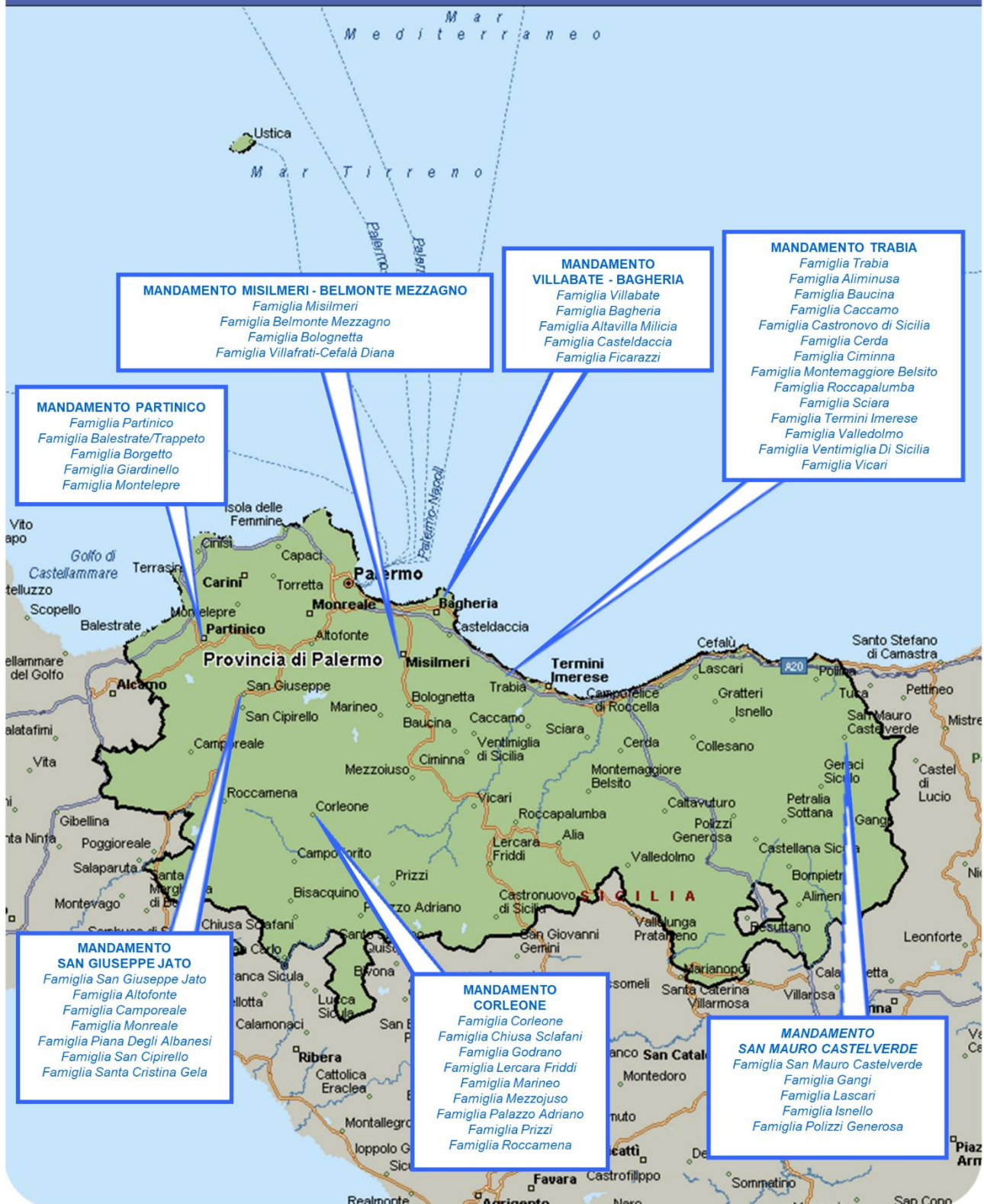
<sup>13</sup> Enforcement measure of concurrent penalties no. 91/2016 SIEP issued on January 16, 2023 by the General Public Prosecutor in the Court of Appeal of Palermo and no. SIEP 256/2008 issued on November 17, 2011 by the Prosecutor of Marsala.

<sup>14</sup> In execution of the order no. 680/2023 RGNR and no. 448/2023 RG GIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Palermo on **January 20, 2023**.

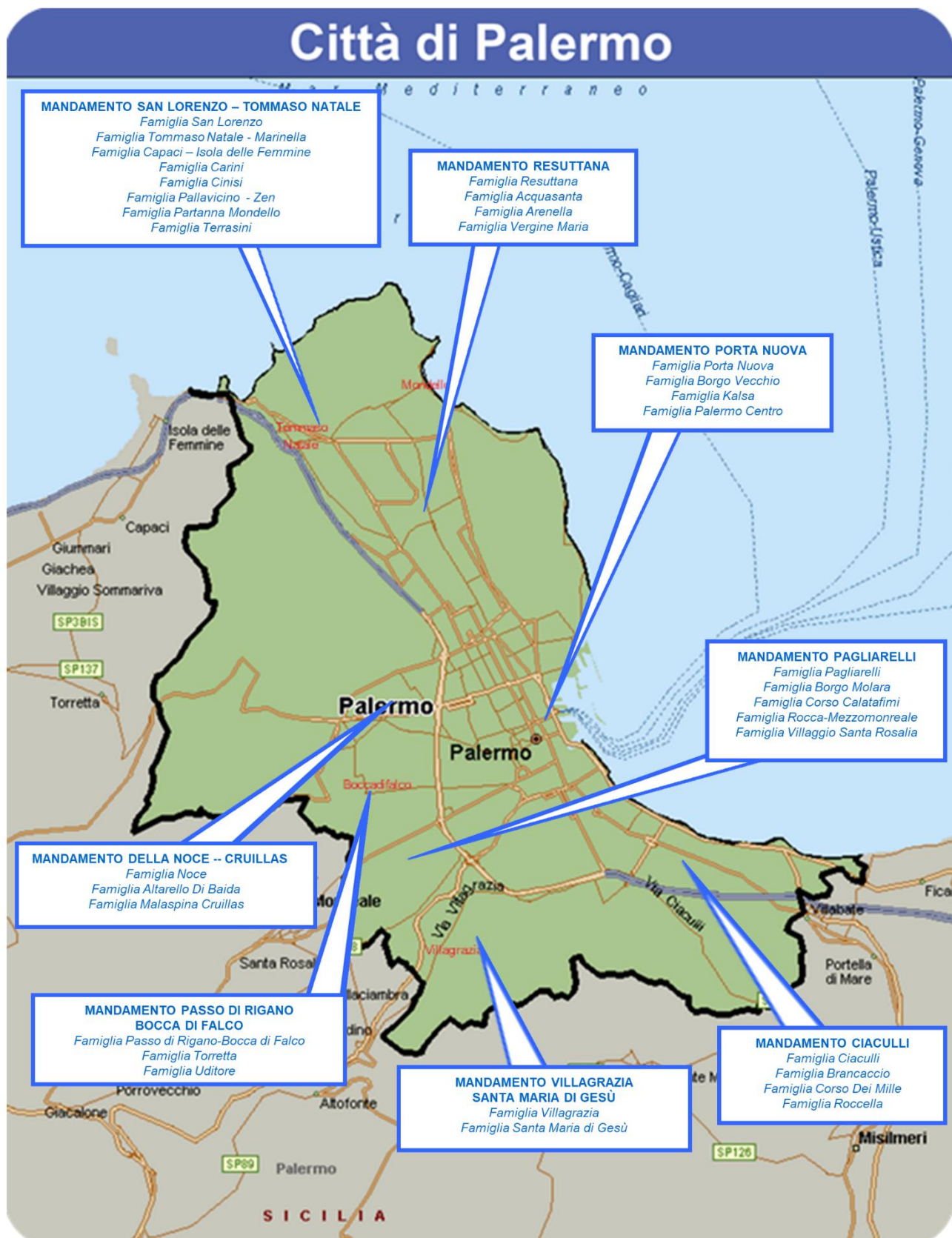
**Province of Palermo**



# Provincia di Palermo



City of Palermo



Further results have been achieved against *mafiosi* individuals: on **February 6, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Palermo arrested, by order of the Criminal Review Court of Palermo<sup>15</sup>, the elderly high-ranking

<sup>15</sup> Which cancels the measure no. 10193/2021 RGNR and no. 7004/2021 RG GIP - Section of GIP of the Court of Palermo issued on November 14, 2022.

member of the PORTA NUOVA Mafia *famiglia*, released from prison at the end of December 2022. On **February 27, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Palermo arrested<sup>16</sup> an individual deemed to be the material perpetrator of the murder committed against a high-ranking member of the PORTA NUOVA *mandamento* in 2014. According to the investigative activities, the perpetrator appears to have been hired by a *mandamento* insider who allegedly had an interest in murdering the victim in order to replace him as a leader after his death. In the city area within the competence of the PORTA NUOVA *mandamento*, in the recent past, two murders have been recorded<sup>17</sup>. They were attributable to internal tensions within the *mandamento*, regarding the management of the supply of illicit drugs.

On **February 28, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Cefalù arrested<sup>18</sup> heads and underlings of the TRABIA<sup>19</sup> *mandamento* and the Mafia *famiglia* operating in Campofelice di Roccella (Palermo), held liable for acting in a Mafia-type organization, extortion, drug and firearms trafficking.

The *mandamento* head, on the occasion of his detention, had delegated the regency to a companion, who was constantly and trustingly supported by another person particularly active in managing criminal enterprises being run in Campofelice di Roccella (Palermo) and, indeed, already ruling the Cerda *famiglia*. The latter, in particular, proclaimed himself as the heir of the *mandamento*'s head, since he was a man with peculiar criminal qualities and capable of establishing collaborative networks – including between *mandamenti* – with influential figures in organized crime.

The greater flexibility of the territorial competence of the criminal protected areas, compared to the past, as well as the minor rigidity in the “passage” of individuals between the various *areas* has already been documented in recent investigative activities<sup>20</sup>. Also, in the recent operation “*Villaggio di Famiglia*” there has been a movement of the criminal axis from PORTA NUOVA to the benefit of the neighboring PAGLIARELLI area. In particular, the transit of several individuals who were already part of the PORTA NUOVA criminal protected area (with areas of influence well rooted in the historic districts of Vucciria and Ballarò) has been documented within the PAGLIARELLI area and, in particular, of the VILLAGGIO di S. ROSALIA *clan*, whose criminal force in the context of

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<sup>16</sup> OCCC no. 1571/2023 RGNR ordered by the Court of Palermo - Section of the Judge for Preliminary Investigations, issued on **February 27, 2023**.

<sup>17</sup> The first was committed on May 31, 2021, the victim was the son of a *uomo d'onore* of the PALERMO CENTRO *famiglia*, held liable for managing the supply at the “Vucciria”. The second was committed on June 30, 2022, the victim was a member of the PORTA NUOVA *famiglia*.

<sup>18</sup> OCCC no. 5201/2020 RGNR and no. 4066/2021 RG GIP, ordered by the Court of Palermo - GIP Section, issued on **February 23, 2023**.

<sup>19</sup> Already CACCAMO *mandamento*.

<sup>20</sup> In this regard, it is referred to what is contained in the protective measure of the operation, carried out in 2022 “*Intero mandamento II*” in which the protected area of the so-called “NOCE” is renamed NOCE-CRUILLAS, in consideration of the apical role played by some individuals of the CRUILLAS *famiglia*, already an integral part of the same *mandamento*.

the situation that has emerged is even more vigorous<sup>21</sup>. The result is an overall picture of a compact partnership within it, where the heads of the different *clans* have always alternated in the sign of a substantial cohesion and linearity. The analysis of the various judicial measures of the semester confirms a strong interest of *Cosa Nostra*'s *clan* for drug trafficking, the management of which is one of the main channels of financing of the entire organization. In this regard, the existence of a single "establishment" in the management of the drug market in the city of Palermo had already been amply confirmed by the investigative evidence of last semester with the investigations "Vento"<sup>22</sup>, "Vento II"<sup>23</sup> and "Centro"<sup>24</sup>. The results had highlighted the role of coordination of the criminal protected area of PORTA NUOVA<sup>25</sup>, in the organization of the various drug-pushing marketplaces located in the nightlife of Palermo and in the neighborhoods Ballarò, Vucciria and Capo. In line with the arguments made in the previous six-month contribution, in the city of Palermo, *Cosa Nostra* imposed its direct management of drug trafficking and distribution and would aspire - in a prospective way - to assume a *leadership* position in the international sphere. Currently the drug supply is guaranteed by solid relationships with the 'Ndrangheta, the *Camorra*<sup>26</sup>, as well as other foreign suppliers<sup>27</sup>.

On **April 18, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Palermo initiated the "Cagnolino"<sup>28</sup> operation, taking into custody 21 individuals believed, for various reasons, to be responsible for criminal association aimed at drug trafficking, of the cocaine type, from Calabria to the City of Palermo. The investigation unveiled the existence of a group, financed and organized by a pair of brothers belonging to the VILLAGRAZIA-SANTA MARIA DI GESÙ area, "*in business - directly or through some trusted associates - with some members of the Calabrian BARBARO famiglia, bound together by a historical customer/supplier type bond on an absolutely equal footing*". The large shipments of narcotics were sold not only in Palermo, but also appeared to be operated in the province of Trapani and specifically in Mazara del Vallo (TP).

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<sup>21</sup> That will be detailed later.

<sup>22</sup> Criminal Proc. no. 10193/2021 RGNR Mod 21- DDA Palermo.

<sup>23</sup> OCC no. 10193/21 RGNR and no. 7004/21 RGGIP, issued by the GIP (JPE) of the Court of Palermo on July 15, 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Provisional arrest of crime suspect Decree no. 10193/2021 RGNR Mod. 21 DDA, dated on December 14, 2022, subsequently validated by Ordinance no. 10193/2021 NRRGN and no. 4004/2021 RGGIP of December 16, 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Which includes the *famiglie* of PORTA NUOVA, BORGO VECCHIO, KALSA and PALERMO CENTRO.

<sup>26</sup> It is mentioned the 2022 "Gold green" investigation that had led to the discovery of how people who were part of Mafia *clans* from PALERMO CENTRO and PARTANNA MONDELLO, had managed to purchase - through individuals operating in Campania and Calabria - large quantities of drugs destined for the Sicilian capital.

<sup>27</sup> Drug trafficking planning in synergy with Calabrian narco-traffickers and, contextually, on the Colombia-US-Italy axis, had been found as part of the 2021 "Stirpe e Tentacoli" operation with the arrest of 16 people including the boss of the CIACULLI criminal protected area.

<sup>28</sup> OCC no. 4276/2020 RGNR and no. 2906/2020 RG GIP, ordered by the Court of Palermo - Section of Judges for Preliminary Investigations, issued on **April 11, 2023**.



On **May 17, 2023**, the Palermo Police Headquarters initiated a detention order<sup>29</sup> against eight individuals responsible for the production, trafficking and possession of drugs. Prominent among them is the figure of a person in the PORTA NUOVA Mafia *clan* who allegedly organized, with a drug trafficker of Algerian nationality, the purchase of a large quantity of drugs imported from abroad.

On **May 23, 2023**, personnel from the Palermo Police Headquarters initiated the “*Bag*”<sup>30</sup> operation, arresting 16 individuals from the Brancaccio neighborhood who were part of an organization dedicated to the marketing and sale of significant quantities of narcotics. The investigative activity has, once again, highlighted the substantial flows of drugs, coming from Calabria and Campania. Involved in the trafficking were several Mafia partnerships united in the same *modus operandi* of drug management: a member of the BRANCACCIO Mafia *clan*, falling within the Ciaculli area; another one falling within the PALERMO CENTRO *famiglia* and belonging to the Porta Nuova criminal protected area; a third individual close to the NOCE Mafia *clan*, falling within NOCE-CRUILLAS area and lastly, one also close to the SANTA MARIA DI GESÙ Mafia organization, belonging to the VILLAGRAZIA-SANTA MARIA DI GESÙ criminal area.

On **June 29, 2023**, the State Police arrested 3 individuals<sup>31</sup>, responsible for possession and distribution of narcotics, who routinely supplied from persons close to the PALERMO CENTRO Mafia *famiglia*.

In the following operations, although in some cases a direct link with organized crime would not seem to emerge, it still appears difficult to rule out the existence of a Mafia establishment in a sector that, as argued, historically constitutes the business of *Cosa Nostra*.

On **Feb. 14, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Palermo as part of the “*Panaro 2*”<sup>32</sup> operation, arrested 7 individuals<sup>33</sup> responsible for the possession, transportation and sale of narcotics, in the Altarello neighborhood.

On **March 29, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Palermo as part of the “*Fairo*” operation, arrested 25 individuals charged in various capacities with the production, trafficking, illegal possession of drugs and for the purpose of dealing drugs. The investigation documented the operation of the Ballarò

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<sup>29</sup> OCC no. 947/2019 RGNE and no. 1092/2019 RG GIP issued on March 5, 2023 by the Section of Judges for Preliminary Investigations and Preliminary Hearing at the Court of Palermo.

<sup>30</sup> OCCC no. 9187/2022 RGNR and no. 4899/2023 issued by the Judge for Preliminary Investigations at the Court of Palermo on May 16, 2023.

<sup>31</sup> OCC no. 5363/2023 RGNR and no. 5031/2023 RG GIP dated June 28, 2023 of the Section of Judges for Preliminary Investigations at the Court of Palermo.

<sup>32</sup> OCCC no. 10446/2020 RGNR and no. 5911/2020 RG GIP of **February 6, 2023**. Operation “*Panaro*” was initiated on July 12, 2022, against 4 individuals responsible for possession, transfer and sale of narcotics.

<sup>33</sup> Including two brothers, sons of a collaborator of justice who committed suicide in 2002.

district's drug marketplace as *“the scene of a continuous and systematic activity of illicit marketing of drugs of the marijuana, hashish and cocaine type”*.

On **April 17, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Palermo initiated a detention order<sup>34</sup> against 12 individuals responsible for the illicit production, trafficking, possession, and sale of narcotics - including with the participation of minors - possession of illegal weapons, robbery, theft and more. The investigation uncovered a dense network of drug dealers operating within the public housing San Filippo Neri neighborhood, better known as ZEN.

On **May 23, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Bagheria initiated the *“Cristallo”* operation, arresting<sup>35</sup> 13 individuals responsible for transporting, possessing and dealing drugs and extortion in the territory of the Municipalities of Palermo and Casteldaccia (Palermo).

Further police operations confirmed episodes of extortion mostly carried out against representatives of the legal economy<sup>36</sup> (businesses, merchants) and these episodes were also realized in the form of imposition of labor and supplies.

On **Jan. 24, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Palermo initiated the *“Roccaforte”*<sup>37</sup> operation, which ordered the arrest of 7 individuals, including the *boss, uomini d'onore*<sup>38</sup> and contiguous to the ROCCA MEZZO MONREALE *clan* of the PAGLIARELLI *mandamento*, responsible for Mafia-type criminal association, drug trafficking and aggravated extortion. The investigation, which focused on a family unit that is an integral part of the ROCCA MEZZO MONREALE *clan*, made it possible to reconstruct several extortions against entrepreneurs and merchants in the area “of competence”. In fact, the control of the territory was guaranteed by the imposition of the payment of protection money on commercial activities and by serious acts of intimidation against those entrepreneurs who decided not to submit to the rules. It was precisely compliance with the most archaic Mafia rules that allegedly are the obsession of members of the Mafia *clan* who, intercepted during a meeting, constantly referred to the organization's rules: *“there is the written statute ... that they wrote ... the constituent fathers ...”*<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> OCCC no. 14310/2021 RGNR and no. 10255/2021 RG GIP issued on April 14, 2023 by the Office of the Judge for Preliminary Investigations at the Court of Palermo.

<sup>35</sup> OCCC no. 2170/2021 RGNR and no. 559/2023 RG GIP issued on May 15, 2023 by the GIP of the Court of Termini Imerese.

<sup>36</sup> It is mentioned the *“Intero Mandamento II”* operation of 2022, which discovered how business owners, artisans and entrepreneurs in the area were subjected to continuous extortionary pressure *“...capillarily carried out, as already ascertained, by the Mafia clans of the Noce-Cruillas Mandamento.”*

<sup>37</sup> Criminal procedure no. 16541/18 RGNR and no. 4992/22 RG GIP Ordinance on personal precautionary measures ordered by the Court of Palermo - Section of Judges for Preliminary Investigations and Preliminary Hearing, issued on January 20, 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Person who is a member of a Mafia *clan*.

<sup>39</sup> Sentence uttered during a Mafia gathering held in 2022 inside a house in the territory of Butera (Caltanissetta). A typewritten leaflet that is not intended as a *historical artifact* but, as the Court of Palermo has had occasion to clarify, *“a statute still in force. It indicates organizational charts, competencies, entry*

Investigative evidence has uncovered how, even from inside penal establishments, directives can be issued for the management of extortion activities, as shown by the detention order<sup>40</sup> against PAGLIARELLI bosses in detention “.... *imparting their own directives for the fair distribution of economic activities in the territory to avoid grievances.*”

Investigations have confirmed, even in this six-month period, the ability of the *Cosa Nostra* to guarantee assistance to its associates through the proceeds of illicit activities, which were used for the support of imprisoned *leaders* and *uomini d'onore*, as well as their families, in prison.

On **Feb. 17, 2023**, the State Police arrested 6 individuals responsible for being the organizers and executors of several robberies against credit institutions located in Palermo and the province as well as outside the Sicily region. One of them was found to be “close” to the CORSO DEI MILLE Mafia *clan*, which appears to be connected to the CIACULLI *mandamento*. The base of operations was the Brancaccio neighborhood, whose namesake Mafia *clan* is included in the same *mandamento*. The investigation activities made it possible to discover that the perpetrators of the robberies, who lived exclusively on the profit of these criminal activities, managed a “cash fund” to be reinvested in further illicit activities as well as to maintain the relatives of their inmate associates.

In the operation of **February 28, 2023**, members of the TRABIA *mandamento* provided for the support in prison of the associates and their respective families with the money earned from extortion.

On **March 23, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Palermo as part of the “**Persefone 2**”<sup>41</sup> operation arrested 21 individuals responsible for criminal association active in drug trafficking, with the aggravating circumstance of facilitating the criminal activity of the *Cosa Nostra*. The investigation showed that the main source of revenue to be used for the support of the prisoners was drug trafficking implemented by the BAGHERIA *clan*.

On **April 19, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Termini Imerese arrested<sup>42</sup> two individuals for extortion, usury and criminal damage.

On **April 26, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Palermo, as part of the “**Luce**”<sup>43</sup> operation, arrested four individuals responsible for Mafia association and aggravated extortion. The investigation uncovered

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*rituals, member rights and duties, elective procedures for representatives, and sanctioning procedures for those who violate the rules”.*

<sup>40</sup> Reference is made to the “*Villaggio di famiglia*” operation described below.

<sup>41</sup> OCCC no. 10988/2022 RGNR and no. 7453/2022 RG GIP of March 16, 2023 of the GIP of the Court of Palermo. Follow-up to the “*Persefone*” of 2021, which had led to the disarticulation of the Mafia *cosche* operating in the BAGHERIA/VILLABATE *mandamento*, identifying, among the lucrative fields of action set up, drug trafficking.

<sup>42</sup> OCCC no. 3690/2022 RGNR and no. 1068/2023 RG GIP dated March 30, 2023 of the Office of the Judge for Preliminary Investigations of the Court of Termini Imerese.

<sup>43</sup> Arrest in suspicion of crime no.12216/2022 RGNR issued on April 24, 2023 by the Public Prosecutor’s Office at the Court of Palermo - DDA.

how the associates of the VILLABATE Mafia *famiglia* imposed extortion on businesses in the area, specifically using a merchant as an intermediary and reference point for extortion, “....a person who was not a member of the Villabate Mafia group, namely ...omitted..., identified as the person in charge of personally having the relationship with ...omitted... for the purposes of collecting the sums of money demanded as payoff and their subsequent delivery to the leader of the cosca”.

The following **May 3**, an additional subject was arrested<sup>44</sup> on charges of extortion aggravated by Mafia facilitation.

As part of the “*Villaggio di famiglia*”<sup>45</sup> operation carried out on **June 27, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza arrested 26 individuals, who were responsible for Mafia association, robbery, extortion, handling stolen goods, fictitious asset allocation, fraudulent transfer of valuables, banking and credit crimes and others. The investigation, which originated from the previous operations “*All In*”<sup>46</sup> “*Brevis*”<sup>47</sup> and “*Brevis 2*”<sup>48</sup> mainly damaged *uomini d’onore* and individuals “close” to the VILLAGGIO SANTA ROSALIA and PAGLIARELLI Mafia *clans*, “married into” the PAGLIARELLI *mandamento*. The investigations also involved individuals part of the neighboring PORTA NUOVA *mandamento*, some of whom had placed themselves at the disposal of the head of the VILLAGGIO SANTA ROSALIA *clan*, while others transited there on the latter's authorization. In the acts stand out “*consolidated and detailed dynamics aimed at the exercise of an effective and penetrating power of economic control over the territory exercised by the Cosa Nostra through the triad constituted by the uomini d’onore*”<sup>49</sup>... “*still able to deploy their Mafia authority despite their current state of detention ...*” The measure also highlighted the centrality of the VILLAGGIO SANTA ROSALIA *clan* within the PAGLIARELLI *mandamento*, noting its autonomy in criminal decisions with respect to the other Mafia clans in the *mandamento* to the point of “*not being subjected to particular limitations even by the top management of the Pagliarelli mandamento, of which it is also part.*” The investigation has documented the ability of the VILLAGGIO SANTA ROSALIA *clan* to relate autonomously with other *famiglie* from different *mandamenti*, consolidating fruitful relations with them over time. Moreover, the compactness of this association, whose leaderships of the different clans have always alternated under the sign of substantial cohesion and linearity, has allowed the PAGLIARELLI *mandamento* a criminal reinforcement in the Palermo Mafia scene.

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<sup>44</sup> No. 8233/2022 RGGIP dated May 2, 2023.

<sup>45</sup> OCCC. no. 7061/2020 RGNR and no. 11639/2022 RG GIP issued on June 14, 2023 by the Section of Judges for Preliminary Investigations of the Court of Palermo, with a concomitant preventive seizure order.

<sup>46</sup> Carried out in 2020.

<sup>47</sup> Carried out in 2021.

<sup>48</sup> Carried out in 2021.

<sup>49</sup> *Triad consisting of the boss of the Santa Rosalia Villaggio clan and two uomini d’onore from the Santa Rosalia Villaggio clan.*



The *Cosa Nostra* continues to pursue the “*strategia della sommersione*” (submersion strategy) implemented mostly in the infiltration of the legal economy. In line with what has been depicted in the past, it has been pointed out that the economic control of enterprises active in funeral services and the transport of patients constitutes a sector of great interest for the *Cosa Nostra*. In this regard, Operation “*Fenice*”<sup>50</sup>, of October 2022, which had damaged the MISILMERI Mafia *clan*, made it possible to adopt several bans that, as will be discussed below, concerned activities related to the management of the transport of patients and funeral services, ascertaining the involvement of *uomini d’onore* who had set rules to ensure the Mafia-monopoly operation of the companies. In this regard, illicit agreements between the *Cosa Nostra* and the *stidda* were uncovered during the six-month period; in particular, Mafia infiltration emerged in product sectors such as “*the exclusive wholesale distribution of flowers in the main cemetery areas of the city of Palermo..... by Ragusan suppliers contiguous to the CARBONARO-DOMINANTE*<sup>51</sup> *stiddaro clan*” by virtue of an agreement made between the *head* of the VILLAGGIO SANTA ROSALIA *clan* (one of the *clans* that is part of the PAGLIARELLI *mandamento*) with a *uomo d’onore* of the Vittoria *stiddaro clan* (Ragusa).

Outside of Mafia contexts, in the area of illicit trafficking in foreign manufactured tobacco products, it should be noted that on January 24, 2023, the Guardia di Finanza of Palermo, near the A19 “Buonfornello” freeway junction, following the control of a tractor-trailer, arrested a Bulgarian citizen, as 45,000 cartons of cigarettes (totaling just over 12 tons of foreign manufactured tobacco products) were found and seized without the markings of the Italian State Monopoly.

No homicides attributable to organized crime<sup>52</sup> were recorded during the six-month period, while there were some acts of intimidation<sup>53</sup>.

With reference to the presence of foreign criminal organizations in Palermo, the operation of cultist groups of the Nigerian Mafia has been emphasized in the past. This was inferred from the outcomes of police operations that in recent years have been carried out in the Sicilian capital against individuals believed to belong to Nigerian cults that in other regions of Italy have obtained the judicial qualification of full-fledged Mafia organizations. An in-depth examination of the sentences related to these police operations induces a re-dimensioning of the Mafia qualification of these organizations, also in consideration of their criminal relations with the *Cosa Nostra*. One cannot fail to consider the

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<sup>50</sup> OCCC no. 7681/2022 RGNR and no. 3092/2022 RG GIP, issued on October 17, 2022 by the Judge for Preliminary Investigations at the Court of Palermo.

<sup>51</sup> Reference is made to the “*Villaggio di Famiglia*” operation.

<sup>52</sup> On **May 5, 2023**, an arrest was made (OCC no. 12637/2021 RGNR and no. 2301/2022 RG GIP of April 24, 2023) of a person accused of attempted murder in conspiracy committed on March 23, 2021. The event, the triggering cause of which was identified as an altercation that arose inside a bar in the San Filippo Neri neighborhood (better known as ZEN – Zona Espansione Nord) due to some argument involving two families.

<sup>53</sup> One act of intimidation against the Prosecutor for Juveniles, one against a journalist, as well as a series of incendiary acts against business activities.

significant presence of foreign individuals in Palermo and especially in the Ballarò district, where a part of these individuals commit crimes in the areas of drug dealing or the exploitation of the prostitution of others. However, these criminal activities are not to be considered attributable to the operation in the Palermo neighborhoods of Nigerian cults connoted by the Mafia method as much as to that of the *Cosa Nostra*, which continues to hold a monopolistic control of criminal activities in those territories. In this sense, so expresses the Supreme Court of Cassation<sup>54</sup>, with reference to the judgment of the Court of Appeal of Palermo<sup>55</sup> where “*in the final part (from p. 65 et seq.) the aspect of the connection of the supposed Palermitan Nigerian group with the Mafia association Cosa Nostra and, in particular, the Ballarò clan, was examined on the basis of the declarative data of some collaborators, not specifically contested with the appeal, who ruled out that the clan “recognized” another Nigerian Mafia association operating in the Palermo area and having equal Mafia stature, admitting, instead, that their association used Nigerian nationals as manpower and that as a response to disrespect of individual drug dealers, they traced episodes of beatings or removal from the neighborhood.*”

Even the Court of Cassation<sup>56</sup>, has, definitively confirmed the acquittal<sup>57</sup> from Mafia-type association for five defendants of the case known as the “*Black Axe*”<sup>58</sup> operation.

According to the Supreme Court, “*the use of violent methods to the detriment of associates to resolve internal disagreements are not in themselves sufficient to connote the New Black Movement association as Mafia-like.*”

Therefore, as the Court of Palermo<sup>59</sup> has ruled, “*the mere provision of internal rules, even if particularly severe, of violent corporal punishment for the associates who disregard them or put themselves in conflict within the group, of which, moreover, a generic trace has emerged, do not constitute that force of intimidation envisaged by the rule, which must necessarily project outward.*

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<sup>54</sup> Judgment of the Sixth Criminal Section of the Supreme Court of Cassation no.14444/2023 - filed on **April 5, 2023**.

<sup>55</sup> Court of Appeal of Palermo Second Section March 15, 2022, filed on May 20, 2022.

<sup>56</sup> Judgment of the Sixth Criminal Section of the Supreme Court of Cassation no.14444/2023 - filed on **April 5, 2023**.

<sup>57</sup> Already ruled by the Palermo Court of Assize of Appeals in R. Sent. no. 10/2022 R. Sent. no. 24/2020 RGAA and no. 1696/14 RGNR Proc. Rep. Palermo dated March 15, 2022.

<sup>58</sup> In November 2016, the State Police of Palermo had carried out the “Black Axe” operation, (in execution of the Decree of arrest of suspects no. 1696/14, issued by the Palermo D.D.A.) ascertaining the illicit activities of a vast transnational organization dedicated to drug trafficking, illegal immigration and prostitution management, zeroing in on its top management. That investigation had found that the suspects were being prosecuted for the crime under article 416 bis of the Criminal Code “...for having been part of the Nigerian Mafia organization BLACK AXE, promoting, directing and organizing its related illicit activities....”

<sup>59</sup> Operative part of the judgment dated on **May 18, 2023**, of the Court of Palermo Fourth Criminal Section.

*That is, it necessitates the externalization of the association's force of intimidation, even if circumscribed to a restricted territorial area and directed to subjugate and place in a state of omertà a restricted community, in this case foreign, in the Palermo area.”*

As regards the administrative prevention, a considerable institutional synergy was developed. This allowed the Prefect of Palermo to issue, in the first half of 2023, no. 39 anti-Mafia interdiction measures against companies in which elements of Mafia conditioning were detected. The most affected sectors during the six-month period include, firstly, the healthcare sector, and those related to funeral and cemetery services, followed by those related to the management of parking lots and auto workshops and the wholesale and retail trade of fishery products. The prefectorial inhibitory activity of the six-month period, aimed at containing the polluting Mafia's expansion in sectors of the economy, has fundamentally highlighted the connection, of a family and not only natural, that is anything but occasional and sporadic between the *Cosa Nostra* and the owners of these business ventures. It should be noted that the entrepreneurial realities drawn from the interdiction orders appear to have been set up primarily in the areas under the jurisdiction of the TOMMASO NATALE-SAN LORENZO, MISILMERI-BELMONTE MEZZAGNO AND NOCE-CRUILLAS *mandamenti*.

The work of the law enforcement against Mafia groups during the period under review, was also pursued through anti-Mafia prevention seizures and confiscations.

**On June 16, 2023**, in Palermo and in the locality of Corleone (Palermo), the confiscation<sup>60</sup> of two properties and a company, for a total value of approximately EUR 1 million, was carried out against a person with a criminal record, who, although not associated with *Cosa Nostra*, is believed to be “close” to leading members of the Corleone Mafia association. The measure, which consolidates half of the seizures<sup>61</sup> made against the same individual in September 2019, stems from the proposal for the application of a preventive measure formulated by the DIA jointly with the Palermo DDA in May 2019.

## **Province of Trapani**

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<sup>60</sup> Order no. 164/22 (no. 28/21 RRMP) of **June 14, 2023** - Court of Appeal of Palermo.

<sup>61</sup> Orders no. 147/19 RMP of May 25, 2019 and September 16, 2019 - Court of Palermo.

The numerous investigative activities carried out over the years against the large array of supporters of the *boss* Matteo MESSINA DENARO<sup>62</sup>, undisputed head of the Trapani Mafia and a prominent element in the *Cosa Nostra* criminal scene in western Sicily for more than three decades, have contributed to weakening the dense protection network, making his state of absconding increasingly difficult, to the point of ending with his capture<sup>63</sup> on **Jan. 16, 2023**. The arrest, carried out by the ROS Carabinieri, took place near the LA MADDALENA oncology clinic in Palermo, where the *boss* was being treated. Accompanying him on the occasion was as a driver<sup>64</sup>, a man of the *boss*'s highest trust. The investigations carried out by the investigators revealed that the former *boss* had acquired the identity of another person<sup>65</sup> by using his identity card, thanks to which he moved freely, underwent periodic medical examinations preparatory to oncological treatment, and had purchased a property<sup>66</sup> in Campobello di Mazara where he apparently resided during the last period of his fugitive status. Suffering from a serious oncological condition, the Trapani *boss* relied on the services of a retired<sup>67</sup> general practitioner, who was found to have provided professional services to the fugitive *boss*, under a false identity, on an intensive and continuous basis for several years, also in view of the professional's previous proximity<sup>68</sup> to the MESSINA DENARO family. Element of particular importance, which emerged during the investigation, turns out to be one of the *boss*'s sisters<sup>69</sup> who is described as “...*faithful executor of the boss's orders...*” having a central role in the communications system. In particular, the woman would have allowed “... *to the aforementioned MESSINA DENARO to continue exercising the apical functions of Cosa Nostra by providing, over a long period of time, to manage on his behalf and in his name the “cash” of the Mafia clan, from which MESSINA*

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<sup>62</sup> Born in Castelvetro (Trapani) on April 26, 1962. Wanted since 1993, he had been responsible for countless heinous crimes for which he had irrevocable life sentences.

<sup>63</sup> Sentence execution order no. 91/2016 SIEP of the Palermo Public Prosecutor's Office and no. 256/2008 SIEP of the Marsala Public Prosecutor's Office (Trapani).

<sup>64</sup> Subject to pretrial detention order no. 680/2023 RG GIP of the Court of Palermo dated January 20, 2023 - in the field of Criminal proc. no. 448/2023 RGNR.

<sup>65</sup> Arrested under OCC no. 623/2023 RG GIP of the Court of Palermo on January 23, 2023 - in the field of Criminal proc. no. 841/2023 RGNR.

<sup>66</sup> Numerous writings and “*pizzini*” used by the *boss* to maintain contact with associates were found and seized inside the house.

<sup>67</sup> Arrested by order no. 1139/2023 RG GIP of the Court of Palermo dated 7.02.2023 under Criminal proc. no. 1571/2023 RGNR.

<sup>68</sup> We read in the precautionary measure that “...*previous procedural emergencies allow today to enhance certain conduct of ...omissis ..., relating to his relations with the MESSINA DENARO family, and in particular with Matteo's brother, Salvatore, already convicted for Mafia association as well as for having allowed, through an important role in the conveyance of the well-known pizzini used by the then top leaders of Cosa Nostra, to exchange information and decisions fundamental to the life of the association*”.

<sup>69</sup> Arrested by order no. 1922/2023 RG GIP of the Court of Palermo dated January 3, 2023 – in the field of Criminal proc. no. 2707/2023 RGNR.

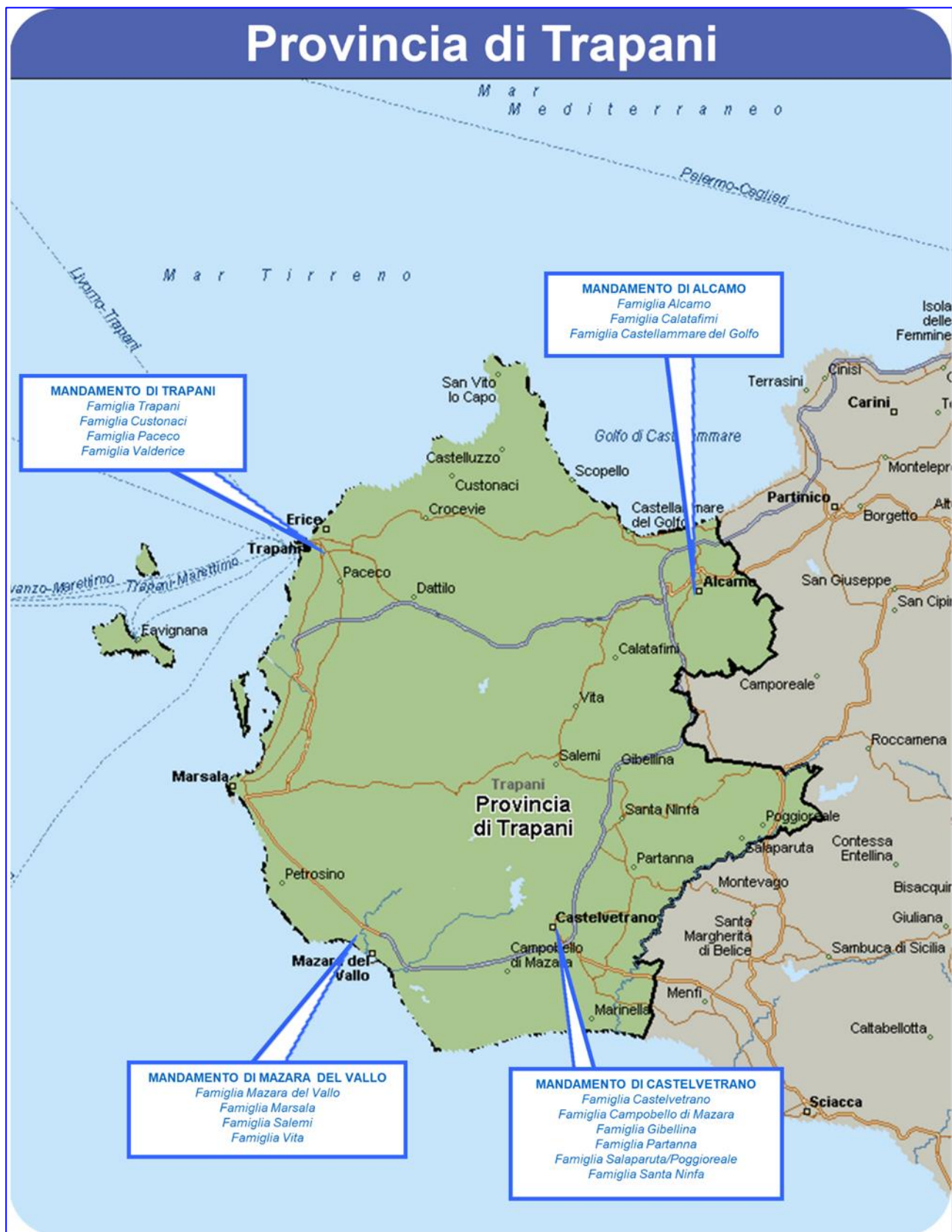
*DENARO himself also drew sustenance for his state of being a fugitive...”, as well as allegedly have ensured “to several Mafia associates and to the entirety of Cosa Nostra’s members to be able to communicate with their leader although the latter was in a state of absconding as collector and distributor of messages from and for the latter, a reference point of the reserved chain of transmission of the so-called pizzini”*<sup>70</sup>. In the context of additional supporters of the boss, other figures of particular interest appear to have been the wife<sup>71</sup> and daughter of a convicted lifer and the daughter and granddaughter of the Campobello di Mazara clan boss, who died in November 2020.

The aforementioned have allegedly “...provided for the needs of the fugitive’s daily life; having shared with him a coded language in written communications in order to conceal the identity of other people involved in his assistance; having taken special precautions at in-person meetings in order to evade law enforcement checks and having provided the boss information about possible risks associated with frequenting specific people and places”. Moreover, there were individuals identified as “sutlers” of the fugitive boss, recipients of a precautionary measure for having “...hosted MESSINA DENARO on a continuous basis and for many days at his home in .... Campobello di Mazara, where the latter habitually consumed his main meals and to which he could enter and leave while evading the observation services of the judicial police also thanks to the preventive surveillance that they carried out on the public street to check for the possible presence of the police or other persons, thus, ultimately providing MESSINA DENARO with prolonged assistance aimed at satisfying his personal needs and maintaining his state of absconding”, as well as an employee of the Municipality of Campobello di Mazara who appears to have lent himself to the collection and delivery, on behalf of Matteo MESSINA DENARO, of prescriptions and health documentation.

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<sup>70</sup> The term “*pizzino*” is a Sicilian term indicating a small piece of paper or note.

<sup>71</sup> Arrested by order no. 3661/2023 RG GIP of the Court of Palermo dated 11.04.2023 – in the field of pp no. 4260/2023 RGNR.



Map of the Province of Trapani

On **Sept. 25, 2023**, the cancer-ridden boss died in L’Aquila in the high-security detention centre to which he had been transferred after his arrest. The absence of Matteo MESSINA DENARO has

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generated repercussions in the Sicilian Mafia scene and in particular in the province of Trapani, “*he was the boss of the province of Trapani both from a material and a formal point of view and on the province of Palermo and on the whole Cosa Nostra he played a charismatic function, in the sense that being the last free mass murderer and the individual - to some extent also mythologized - whose role grew by virtue of his importance even as the others were captured, it is clear that some decisions that concerned important events in the Mafia organization obtained his consent or at least his non-dissent*”<sup>72</sup>.

Moreover, also in view of recent releases<sup>73</sup> of individuals close to Matteo MESSINA DENARO, which have already taken place or will take place soon, new structures may be created not only in the province of Trapani but reflections may also be perceived in the Palermo *Cosa Nostra*, where the *famiglia* of the aforementioned boss has co-interests also by virtue of family ties.

Trapani’s *Cosa Nostra* retains structural connotations of a traditional type by maintaining the 4 *mandamenti*<sup>74</sup> of Trapani, Alcamo, Mazara del Vallo and Castelvetro, which, in turn, would turn out to be articulated in 17 *clans*. As in the Palermo *mandamenti*, even the Trapani *mandamenti* showed forms of cooperation<sup>75</sup> among themselves. In this regard, **on June 22, 2023**, the ROS Carabinieri, with the support of the Carabinieri of Trapani, as part of the “*Elima*”<sup>76</sup> operation, carried out in 2017 (aimed at the capture of former fugitive Matteo Messina Denaro) executed five detention orders<sup>77</sup> for Mafia-type association, confirming the operativeness of the POGGIOREALE-SALAPARUTA Mafia *clan* included in the Castelvetro *mandamento*, while documenting the close relations with other groups in the provinces of Palermo and Trapani.

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<sup>72</sup> Statements of the Public Prosecutor De Lucia at the Court of Palermo at a hearing in the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the phenomenon of Mafias and other criminal associations, including foreign ones, on **July 13, 2023**.

<sup>73</sup> Among them are his brother and a brother-in-law, released from prison at the end of their sentences, and soon to be another brother-in-law who is an apex figure in the Trapani *Mafia* and closely related to the Palermo CIACULLI/BRANCACCIO *mandamento*.

<sup>74</sup> At the top of the Trapani and Alcamo *mandamenti* would turn out to be alternating, in an almost “dynastic” order, members of historic *clans*, such as those in Castelvetro traceable to Matteo MESSINA DENARO and elements of his family circle. Trapani (with 4 *clans* from Trapani, Custonaci, Paceco and Valderice), Alcamo (with 3 *clans* from Alcamo, Calatafimi and Castellammare del Golfo), Mazara del Vallo (with 4 *clans* from Mazara del Vallo, Marsala, Salemi and Vita) and Castelvetro (with 6 *clans* from Castelvetro, Campobello di Mazara, Gibellina, Partanna, Salaparuta/Poggioreale and Santa Ninfa).

<sup>75</sup> It refers to last semester’s “Hesperia” operation, which had ascertained forms of collaboration between members of the CAMPOBELLO DI MAZARA *clan* (CASTELVETRO *mandamento*) and those of the PARTINICO *clan* (SAN LORENZO-TOMMASO NATALE *mandamento*), as well as documented organized crime interests in the betting and judicial auctions sectors.

<sup>76</sup> OCCC no. 1100/22 RG NR - and no. 6828/2022 RG GIP issued by the Court of Palermo.

<sup>77</sup> Following the Supreme Court of Cassation’s verdict that had made the precautionary measures ordered by the Palermo Criminal Review Court.

In the province of Trapani<sup>78</sup>, *Cosa Nostra* doesn't refuse to carry out its criminal activities also taking advantage of the political-Mafia union<sup>79</sup> such as to generate contaminations in the administrative activity, through "interlocution", between Mafia members and local administrators. In this regard, it should be noted that in April 2023 came the first sentence of 12 years of imprisonment for external complicity in Mafia association, issued as part of the 2019 operation "*Scrigno*"<sup>80</sup>, against a former regional deputy.

On **March 3, 2023**, the Carabinieri arrested<sup>81</sup> a Petrosino Municipal Council candidate and a member of the Mafia association *Cosa Nostra*, "*for having accepted, as a candidate in the elections for the appointment of the Municipal Council of Petrosino, the promise by ...omissis....belonging to the Mafia association Cosa Nostra, to procure votes ... with the aggravating circumstance of having committed the act during the period of application of the preventive measure of special surveillance with obligation to stay or in any case in the 3 years following its termination*". The measure also states that "*..... the Mafia associate ... was carrying out an actual electoral campaign in favor of Mayor ..... and this by reason, .... of an agreement entered into with ... (candidate for the Municipal Council) ...*".

The "silent and businesslike" character of the Trapani *Cosa Nostra*, which tends to avoid episodes of violence, continues to carry out its criminal activities such as extortion crimes while also highlighting

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<sup>78</sup> This criminal context is historically characterized by the presence of secret "masonic lodges" that sometimes infiltrate the local economic and social field with interference in local governments and in the management of public contracts.

<sup>79</sup> In this regard, on December 13, 2022, the Court of Cassation upheld the final conviction of a politician, thus making final the sentence to 6 years of imprisonment handed down by the Palermo Court of Appeal on July 21, 2021 (no. 4215/2021 - Criminal procedure 1464/2018 RG - 1229/2007 no. - 8954/2007 RGGIP of the Court of Palermo) for external complicity in Mafia association. The appeal ruling reads that the defendant "*manifested his willingness towards (or closeness to) Cosa Nostra from the early 1980s until the beginning of the year 2006, and in any case, there is no evidence of the defendant's desistant conduct incompatible with his persistent willingness to exercise his functions and expend his energies in favor of the Mafia association.*"

<sup>80</sup> Already, the Court of Appeal's ruling issued on September 19, 2022, had aggravated the convictions for Mafia association and political-Mafia exchange vote against several of the Mafia's men, partially reforming the first instance decision issued on November 2020.

<sup>81</sup> OCCC no. 8619/2023 RGNR and no.1893 /2023 RG GIP of the Court of Palermo, which ordered the pretrial detention in prison of 2 individuals, investigated "*for having accepted, as a candidate in the elections for the appointment of the Municipal Council of Petrosino, the promise by ...omissis....belonging to the Mafia association Cosa Nostra, to procure votes ... with the aggravating circumstance of having committed the act during the period of application of the preventive measure of special surveillance with obligation to stay or in any case in the 3 years following its termination.*"



a strong vocation in the management of illicit drug trafficking, confirming collaborative relations between individuals from other Sicilian<sup>82</sup> provinces as well as with Calabrians<sup>83</sup>.

On **January 21, 2023**, three individuals were arrested<sup>84</sup> within the scope of the investigative activities “*Cemento nel golfo*”. They are held liable of extortion carried out on local entrepreneurs, aggravated by the Mafia method.

On **February 17, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Trapani arrested 14 individuals<sup>85</sup> within the scope of the “*Virgilio*” operation. They are suspects of drug dealing (crack, heroin and cocaine), extortion, money laundering and personal injuries.

On **May 10, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Marsala arrested 7 individuals within the scope of the “*Fox*”<sup>86</sup> operation. They are held liable for selling, dealing and transporting various amounts of cocaine-like narcotics from Catania to Marsala.

On **June 2, 2023**, the Operative Section of Trapani’s DIA, together with officers of the Carabinieri, coordinated by Palermo’s Anti-Mafia District Directorate, have carried out a precautionary measure aggravation order<sup>87</sup>. The person is convicted in first instance of Mafia-like association to over 20 years of detention. Between December 2021 and April 2022 several house arrest confinement violations have occurred. It’s been confirmed that the convict has held talks and met up with individuals outside his immediate family, who were found to have a criminal record. Therefore, based on the inspections carried out, Judicial Authority issued an order to increase the severity of the detention. There was risk of recidivism of Mafia-type crime: it was clear “*higher detention*”

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<sup>82</sup> In this regard, mention is made of the “*Cagnolino*” operation carried out in the current six-month period in Palermo, where a flourishing relationship emerged between the Palermo criminal organization and a group of drug buyers operating in the province of Trapani and specifically Mazara del Vallo. Of the previous semester, the “*Sugar*” operation is recalled, with the arrest of 21 individuals “*who allegedly managed two distinct active drug markets in Mazara del Vallo in the working-class neighborhood of Mazara 2, through a capillary distribution network capable of perfecting multiple transfers of narcotics on a daily basis, diversifying the supply from crack, marijuana, hashish and cocaine*”.

<sup>83</sup> As part of last semester’s “*Acheron*” operation, 29 individuals were arrested as they were held responsible for criminal conspiracy for drug trafficking, receiving stolen goods and possession of weapons and ammunition. The investigations had ascertained the relationships that would continue to be established between different criminal organizations and, in the circumstance, between Sicilian groups with Calabrian ones.

<sup>84</sup> Arrest warrant SIEP nos. 34, 35, and 36 (Sistema Informativo Esecuzioni Penali - Criminal Executions Information System) issued by the Court of Trapani’s Public Prosecutor’s office.

<sup>85</sup> Issued by the preliminary investigation judge (GIP) at the Court of Marsala no. 3501/19 RGNR - no. 132/23 RG GIP dated **September 2, 2023**.

<sup>86</sup> OCCC issued on May 4, 2023 by the Court of Marsala - GIP Section within the scope of Criminal procedure no.1516/2021 RGNR no. 2527/2021 RG GIP

<sup>87</sup>Precautionary measure aggravation order no. 4079/2016 RGNR and no. 432/2020 RG of **May 30, 2023** – Court of Trapani Criminal and Preventive Measures Section, as a replacement of house arrest.

*requirements*” were needed. In spite of the offender’s advanced age, these made way for the remand in custody of the offender.

In the territory surrounding Trapani, episodes of cigarette smuggling from Tunisia<sup>88</sup> and corruption were in place. On **February 28, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Palermo arrested three individuals, after pinpointing a Tunisian floating watercraft in the southern Trapani waters (Marsala coast). It was carrying 4 tons of contraband cigarettes, worth over EUR 600 thousand on the market.

On **March 7 2023**, within the scope of the “*Selinus*”<sup>89</sup> operation, 6 individuals (from Agrigento, Palermo and one from Enna) were held liable for corruption and abuse of power carried out in the archaeological site of *Selinunte*, *Cave di Cusa* and *Pantelleria*. The investigative activities carried out by the Guardia di Finanza of Castelvetro pointed out several anomalies in the public contracts concession system performed by the archaeological agency, questioning many violations.

During the semester, several acts of intimidation have occurred. They don’t represent a compelling social warning but, at the same time, they prove how rooted the phenomenon is<sup>90</sup>.

Regarding administrative prevention, a strong institutional collaboration has been implemented: Trapani’s Prefect was able to issue 12 prohibitory anti-Mafia measures in the first semester of 2023. These measures are against all companies operating in marketing, construction, foodservices and agropastoral that have been linked to Mafia-type conditioning.

On **March 7, 2023**, 12 properties with a total value of EUR 60 thousand were confiscated<sup>91</sup>: this was during the period in which the DIA issued ablative measures. The properties can be linked to two businessmen (father and son) close to the Mazara del Vallo (Trapani) *famiglia*. On May 30, 2023, in Castelvetro (Trapani), real estate and business assets worth around EUR 6 million were

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<sup>88</sup> Some individuals - Tunisians engaged in aiding and abetting illegal immigration - were taken note of during the last semester. The “*Charon*” operation carried out on 10 individuals made it clear. It proved the presence of an organization with a “*transnational nature, operating between Tunisia and Italy, composed of non-EU citizens and Italians living in Trapani’s area.... It was certainly aimed at committing crimes in aiding and abetting illegal immigration.*”

<sup>89</sup> Issued by the Court of Marsala - GIP Section no.3785/2020 RGNR and no.1145/2021 RG GIP of **February 27, 2023**.

<sup>90</sup> Including the findings of a severed sheep’s head, placed in the area in front of an Equitation Center entrance. The Center was run by the nephew of the former fugitive and the son of an informant. An executive for a Land Reclamation Consortium based in Mazara del Vallo reported receiving a letter at his workplace through regular mail. The content was menacing statements addressed to the receiver. Incendiary acts towards cars and real estate also occurred.

<sup>91</sup> Decree no. 3/23 (no. 9/20 RRMP) of September 11, 2022, filed in the records office on the January 13, 2023 - Court of Appeal of Palermo. The measure adds the seizure (decree no. 52/19 MP no. 32/16 RGMP of June 6, 2019, filed in the records office on the September 9, 2019 – Court of Trapani) of 20 real estate assets, 2 working automotive companies, 7 vehicles and 3 financial means amounting to EUR 1 million 200 thousand. The seizure will be carried out on the same offenders of September 2019.

confiscated<sup>92</sup>. The assets can be linked to a businessman embedded in Mafia-type activities related to the *famiglia* of Castelvetro. The businessman was able to infiltrate and influence the local economic structure in the public and private construction industry and in the asphalt concrete trade.

## Agrigento Province

In the province of Agrigento, the coexistence of *Cosa Nostra* and *stidda*<sup>93</sup> is clear: two Mafia groups historically rooted in the territory, always ready for the identification and division<sup>94</sup> of criminal activities to commit on the territory. Palermo's Public Prosecutor's office states that "*we are noticing a new presence of members, part of the former criminal organization, and new individuals, more related to the "stidda", that are working together to rebuild an organization able to hold talks with Cosa Nostra*"<sup>95</sup>.

Additionally, in this criminal context, some other family-based *gruppi* would also appear to be active: the *famigghiedde*<sup>96</sup> and the *paracchi*<sup>97</sup> that operate independently from the *Cosa Nostra* and *stidda* factions.

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<sup>92</sup>Decree no. 31/23 (no. 43/19 RMP) of **April 14, 2023** - Court of Trapani. The measure reinforces in a symmetrical manner the seizure (decree no. 43/19 RMP of 2.3.2020 - Court of Trapani) carried out on the same offender of March 2020.

<sup>93</sup> Originally it comes from the coast surrounding the province of Caltanissetta. Thereafter it widened its presence in areas bordering the provinces of Agrigento and Ragusa. At the beginning it was created in opposition to the *Cosa Nostra*. Today it seeks agreement with the *Cosa Nostra* to divide the illicit affairs. It is formed by the presence of several autonomous groups that generally work in horizontal coordination. With time some *stidda* groups have moved to other crimes, up to infiltrating in the economic structure (showed in the "*Leonesa*" operation September 2019 - OCCC no. 13650/17 RGNR and no. 6870/19 RG GIP issued by the GIP of the Court of Brescia).

<sup>94</sup> It is recalled that at the turn of the '80s and '90s there was a real war between the *Cosa Nostra* and *stidda*. At the end, Agrigento's *Cosa Nostra*, supported by the *Corleonesi*, prevailed in the bloody conflict. With time, the losing *stidda* groups were able to reassemble and shifted their interests in Northern Italy. With this, they became an organization more inclined to do real "business" than to commit violence-based crimes. At that time, one from the *stidda* men, was already deemed by Giovanni Falcone as the unique bond between Sicilian *stidda* and several active groups in Lombardy. The man who has been on the run for around 20 years was placed under arrest near Madrid (Spain), on December 17, 2021. The Palermo DIA carried out the European arrest warrant issued on May 29, 2014 by Agrigento's DA office.

<sup>95</sup> **July 13, 2023**, statements by the Public Prosecutor's office at the Court of Palermo, Mr. De Lucia at hearing in inquiry parliamentary committee on the phenomenon of Mafias and other criminal organizations, domestic and foreign.

<sup>96</sup> Present in Favara (Agrigento).

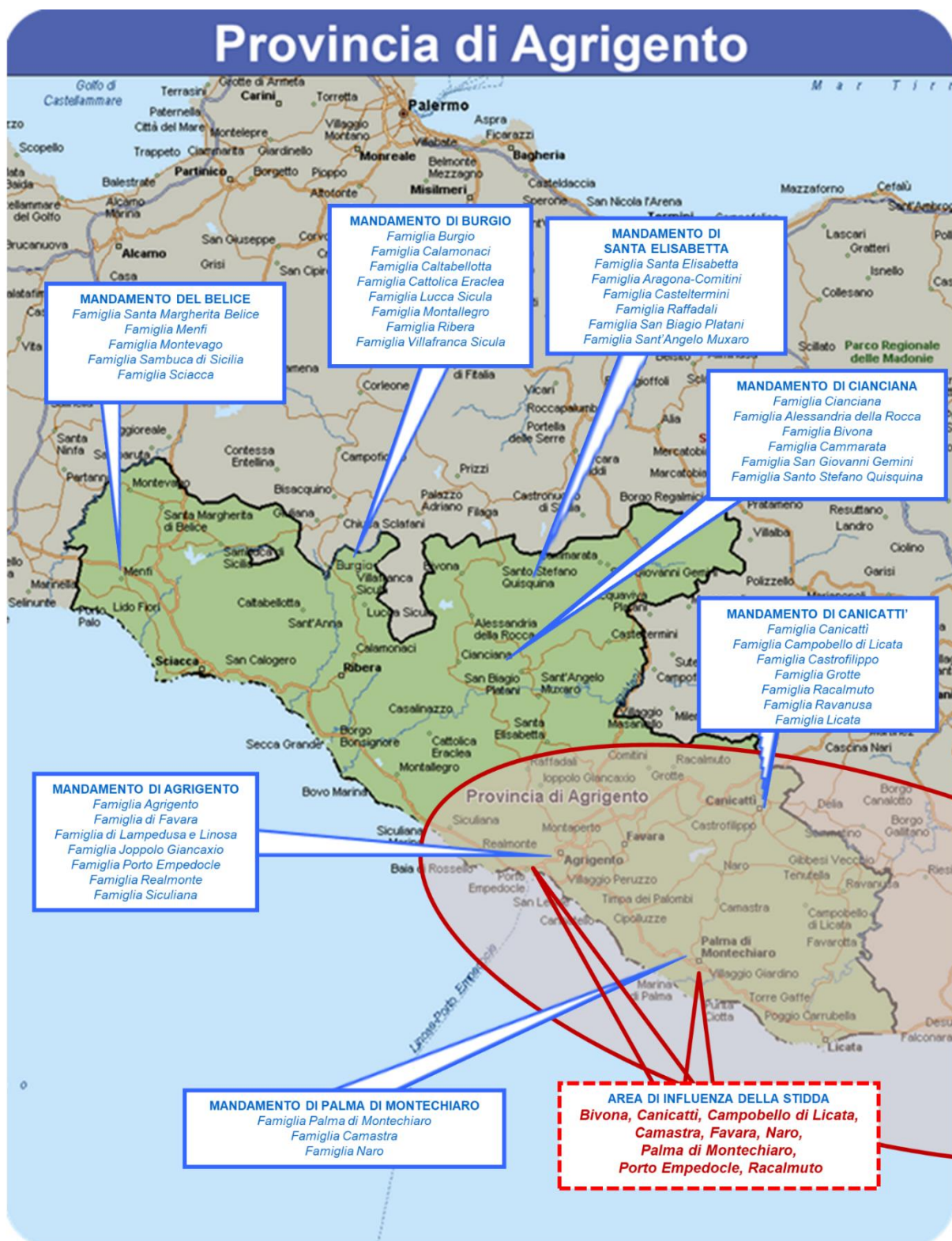
<sup>97</sup> The *paracchi* are Mafia-type groups active in the area of Palma di Montechiaro (Agrigento), every one of them is organized within itself hierarchically, in a less strict measure than *Cosa Nostra*. Regarding that, last semester's "*Oro bianco*" operation seems significant (OCC no. 15354/2017 RGNR and no. 12734/2017 RG GIP of Palermo's DDA, issued on January 4, 2021). It proved the functioning of the Palma di Montechiaro *paracco*. It is worth pointing out that the measure in question focuses on the aspect of *paracco* independence. It describes the *paracco* as a criminal group that "... shows all the typical characteristics of a Mafia-type criminal conspiracy that is independent and autonomous from Cosa Nostra".

Agrigento's *Cosa Nostra* is based on the historical “*mandamentale*” division (there would appear to be 7 *mandamenti*: AGRIGENTO, BURGIO, SANTA MARGHERITA DI BELICE, SANTA ELISABETTA, CIANCIANA, CANICATTÌ and PALMA DI MONTECHIARO, around 42 *famiglie* operate in these areas) and it is tied to traditional Mafia rules. It continues to fill a role of supremacy over the area, it is connected with the Mafia counterparts of Catania, Caltanissetta, Palermo, Trapani and the one overseas.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> It has been recorded (from the results of the “Xydy” operation), the meeting held in Favara (Agrigento) between *uomini d’onore* from Sicily and some individuals allegedly from the GAMBINO Mafia family from New York. They supposedly proposed to the Sicilian counterparts “... *launching a profitable and articulated transnational criminal collaboration*”.

*Province of Agrigento*



Taking on this information, in addition to the results of 2021 “Xydy”<sup>99</sup> operation, focused on the *mandamento* of Canicatti (Agrigento), and its previous investigative activities, “...constant and

<sup>99</sup> Investigative activities consist of the continuation of July 2019 “Halycon” investigation, hitting 23 members of both *Cosa Nostra* and *stidda* that, in various capacities, are held liable for Mafia-type organization, external complicity with the Mafia, aiding and abetting, attempted extortion and other crimes committed with the aggravating factor of aiding to Mafia-type organization. Within the recipients of that detention order there is also Matteo MESSINA DENARO. Allegedly, he kept communications active between Agrigento’s *famiglie bosses* and maintained a key role regarding strategic decisions.

*compelling...*” connections came to light. Some members of that *mandamento* linked up with companions from other Sicilian provinces. The connections were aimed to the organization and management of profitable business<sup>100</sup>.

Over time, there would also be evidence of a kind of Agrigento “criminal emigration” towards Europe (Northern European countries, with particular regard to Germany<sup>101</sup> and Belgium<sup>102</sup>) and to the American and Canadian<sup>103</sup> continents, with a tendency to reconstitute, on foreign soil, delinquent clusters that maintain ties with local ones. In this regard, on **March 17, 2023** in Montreal (Canada), a leading member of the RIZZUTO *clan*, whose members would appear to originate from the province of Agrigento, was wounded. This event could be indicative of a feud aimed at controlling economic interests in that state.

During the period under review, there were several criminal police operations related to drug trafficking and racketeering. In this regard, within the scope of the “*Condor*”<sup>104</sup> operation, on **January 11, 2023**, in some of Agrigento’s municipalities (Palma di Montechiaro, Favara, Canicattì, Ravanusa and Licata), Carabinieri officers disrupted a Mafia-type organization committed to racketeering and drug trafficking. The investigation brought to light the strict ties between *Cosa Nostra* and *stidda*<sup>105</sup>. The activities, which also involved individuals from the territories under the

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<sup>100</sup> The investigation revealed that the Canicattì *mandamento* allegedly obtained “... *control and exploitation of the highly lucrative business sector of transactions for the sale of grapes and other fruit and vegetables by entrepreneurs operating in the province of Agrigento.*”

<sup>101</sup> Regarding Germany, the October 2018 operation “*Extra Fines 2*” is recalled.

<sup>102</sup> About a feud developed within 2015 and 2018 on the “Favara - Belgium” axis regarding a criminal group from Favara committed to arms and drugs trafficking. These dynamics are confirmed by the outcomes of the September 2020 “*Mosaic*” operation (OCC no. 5281/2017 RG GIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Palermo on September 2, 2020). During the operation, the Italian State Police and Belgian Police arrested 8 people for attempted double homicide carried out on May 23, 2017, in Favara. On June 30, 2022, operation “*Mosaico 2*” (OCC no. 4516/2020 RGNR and no. 2599/2021 RG GIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Agrigento on June 27 2022), led to the arrest of 4 additional persons in Agrigento’s province and in Piacenza. The individuals are held liable in various capacities of unauthorized possession of firearms, detention of assault weapons and ammunition, in addition to plantation of cannabis-type substance.

<sup>103</sup> In this regard, the November 2019 “*Passepartout*” operation is worth mentioning. It documented the relations entertained by accomplices of *Cosa Nostra* from Sciacca (Agrigento) with *mafiosi* operating in Porto Empedocle (Agrigento), Castelvetro (Trapani), Castellammare del Golfo (Trapani), with certain individuals close to the GAMBINO Mafia *family* of New York as well as with Agrigento *mafiosi* who had emigrated to Canada and the US.

<sup>104</sup> OCC no. 16099/2017 RGNR - DDA and no. 3734/2022 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Palermo on January 4, 2023.

<sup>105</sup> The measure comes as a result of a targeted investigation and elements acquired in the context of similar activities such as the aforementioned “*Oro Bianco*” and “*Xidy*” operations (the arrest of suspects of crime no. 10760/18 RGNR, issued on January 30, 2021, by Palermo’s DDA), which ended on February 2, 2021. The latter operation hit 23 members of both *Cosa Nostra* and *stidda* that, in various capacities, are held liable for Mafia-type organization, external complicity with the Mafia, aiding and abetting, attempted extortion and other crimes committed with the aggravating factor of aiding to Mafia-type organization. Within the recipients of the detention order there was also Matteo MESSINA DENARO. Allegedly, during his time on the run, he maintained communications active between

“jurisdiction” of the Agrigento *mandamento*, put together an attempt by the *Cosa Nostra* of Palma di Montechiaro (Agrigento) to expand its Mafia power to other territories in the agribusiness<sup>106</sup> sector and to face the expansion of a *stidda*-based criminal group: taking advantage of the relentless investigative activities that had led to the conviction of numerous members of *Cosa Nostra*, the *stidda*-based group had so far moved under the radar by implementing its ranks and expanding its criminal activities. The investigation revealed the organization’s ability to take control of the *slot machines* and gaming devices sector, it highlighted solid relationships between the head of the Palma di Montechiaro Mafia *famiglia* and the *’ndrina*<sup>107</sup> from Platì (Reggio Calabria). It also made possible the documentation of the existence of an organization committed to drug trafficking operating in the territories of Palma di Montechiaro, Licata and Palermo and directed by a member of the *stidda*. Finally, it came to light that part of the sums coming from the “*messa a posto*” (racketeering) would be sent out to the detainee’s families.

The “*Levante*”<sup>108</sup> operation, concluded by the Carabinieri officers on **February 15, 2023**, affected the municipalities of Lampedusa and Linosa, Favara (Agrigento), Catania, and Gioiosa Marea (Messina) and led to the arrest of 11 suspected murderers. They are held liable for possession of drugs for the purpose of drug dealing. The measure stems from an investigation launched in July 2022 during which officers found and seized around 25 kg of cocaine. The individuals are held liable for transportation, possession and several drug deals both in Lampedusa and in Agrigento and Catania.

On **February 21, 2023**, the “*Hybris*”<sup>109</sup> operation, completed by the State Police, led to the arrest of 26 individuals, held liable for criminal conspiracy aimed at drug trafficking. The investigative activities, which stemmed from two attempted murders<sup>110</sup> against two persons from Licata, have made it possible to verify the existence and operativity of an armed criminal conspiracy, branching out in

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Agrigento’s *famiglie bosses* and maintained a key role regarding strategic decisions. In that circumstance it had become evident how the *cosche* from Agrigento unanimously recognized Matteo MESSINA DENARO as the only person who had, (also) in that territorial context, the final say with regard to the investiture or revocation of leading positions within the Mafia organization. More in detail, the investigation focused on the *mandamento* from Canicattì able of reaching out to the entire eastern area of the province of Agrigento.

<sup>106</sup> In the so-called “*sensalia*” sector of grape marketing (in this case wine grapes), also identifying the “*sensali*.”

<sup>107</sup> Previous investigative activities have documented stable ties with Calabrian *cosche*, especially for the supply of narcotics. In particular, the “*Kerkent*” investigation (OCC no. 9826/2015 RGNR and no. 9641/2015 RG GIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Palermo on February 21, 2019), unveiled the connections between the *Cosa Nostra* of Agrigento and members of the *’Ndrangheta*. They had a common intent to make agreements to monopolize the narcotics market and increase and strengthen the structure of the organization.

<sup>108</sup> Arrest of suspected murders no. 2533/2022 RGNR, issued by the Public Prosecutor’s office of Agrigento, on **February 13, 2023**.

<sup>109</sup> OCC no. 16990/2020 RGNR, issued by the GIP of the Court of Palermo on **February 10, 2023**.

<sup>110</sup> An attempted murder occurred in Licata (Agrigento) on October 6, 2020, the other in Gela (Caltanissetta) October 8, 2020.



Catania, Caltanissetta and Gela (Agrigento). It is made up of numerous individuals with different roles and tasks, all functional to a methodical, organized and continuous activity aimed at importing, transporting and selling cocaine. The operating base of the partnership was in Licata (Agrigento). The administrative structure was able to guarantee continuity of the criminal activities even when some of its members were arrested. It was also able to reshape itself whenever any operative difficulty arose. In particular, ties between the partnership in question and the *Cosa Nostra* in Licata (Agrigento) were revealed.

On **May 22, 2023**, the State Police of Agrigento arrested a drug mule residing in Realmonte (Agrigento) that was found in possession of over 30 kg of cocaine.

The investigations carried out during the semester have confirmed the interest of the Agrigento *Cosa Nostra*<sup>111</sup> in the area of public procurement and services.

In addition, events of an alleged intimidatory nature<sup>112</sup>, as well as episodes of violence<sup>113</sup>, were recorded during the period under attention.

Regarding Mafia crimes, possible disputes could arise from the return to freedom of some elderly influencing *uomini d'onore* ready to reinstate their lost power.

Substantial institutional cooperation was developed on the administrative prevention aspect. This allowed the Prefect of Agrigento to issue eight prohibitory anti-Mafia measures<sup>114</sup> against as many companies in the first semester of 2023.

Finally, it should be recalled that over time in the territory of the province of Agrigento, the presence of foreign gangs, mostly Maghrebi, Egyptian and Romanian was recorded. They were “tolerated” by the Mafia as they were dedicated to illicit activities not of direct Mafia interest, such as aiding and

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<sup>111</sup> The investigative findings of the “*Condor*” investigation have revealed the rule in force in these Mafia contexts. According to it, the businessmen that want to carry out “off-site” public works would ask the authorization to local criminal conspiracies to carry out the works for a fee to be paid by way of “payoffs”.

<sup>112</sup> To the detriment of an employee of the Municipality of Palma di Montechiaro (Agrigento), the manager of the Archaeological and Landscape Park of the Valle dei Templi in Agrigento, and the school secretary, former councilor for social services for the Municipality of Lucca Sicula.

<sup>113</sup> During the period under review, 3 attempted murders were recorded. However, these were allegedly not related to organized crime. On **February 2, 2023**, in Ravanusa, against a Tunisian man; on **March 6, 2023**, against a person with a criminal record from Palma di Montechiaro; and on **June 4, 2023** in Canicattì against a person from Paternò.

<sup>114</sup> In particular: 4 rejection measures were issued against requests to remain on the list of suppliers, providers and executors of works, against companies operating in the construction and earthmoving business; two prohibitory anti-Mafia notices under Article 91 of the Anti-Mafia Code against two sole proprietorships; and two prohibitory anti-Mafia communications under Article 87 of the Anti-Mafia Code.

abetting illegal immigration<sup>115</sup>, ferrous material laundering, exploiting the prostitution of others and drug dealing.

## Province of Caltanissetta

The *Cosa Nostra* and *stidda* coexist in the Caltanissetta territory, their relations were mostly peaceful. Over the course of the years, they have established a mutual relationship for the division of the criminal activities. *Cosa Nostra* would continue to be divided in 4 *mandamenti* and 18 *famiglie*. The structure has less strict methods than the ones adopted in the past due to the division of local skills of the aforesaid Mafia-type groups: in the northern part of the province the MUSSOMELI<sup>116</sup> and VALLELUNGA PRATAMENO<sup>117</sup> *mandamenti* under the influence of the MADONIA *famiglia*, in the southern side the RIESI<sup>118</sup> and GELA *mandamenti*. Regarding the latter *mandamento*, in addition to the NISCEMI *famiglia*, the local *Cosa Nostra* EMMANUELLO and RINZIVILLO<sup>119</sup> *famiglie* operate. The *stidda*<sup>120</sup> would continue to maintain its influence in Gela and Niscemi territories.

The analysis of the intelligence-led policing, carried out in the semester under review, highlights that the main crimes committed by the operating factions in Caltanissetta remain the same, with a distinct tendency for drug trafficking.

On **February 21, 2023**, within the scope of the operation “*Hybris*”<sup>121</sup>, the State Police of Caltanissetta and Agrigento have dismantled a criminal conspiracy aimed at drug trafficking. They had their head base in Licata and branched out for drug supplies in Gela and Catania. The investigative activities

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<sup>115</sup> As recorded by the “*Charon*” operation (OCC no. 4675/2020 RGNR and no. 3184/2020 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Palermo on June 27, 2022) carried out on July 6, 2022, it led to the arrest of 10 individuals. It was carried out by the Guardia di Finanza of Agrigento, helped by the Guardia di Finanza of Trapani, Caltanissetta, Messina and Siena.

<sup>116</sup> Also known as VALLONE, made up of the MUSSOMELI *famiglia*, the CAMPOFRANCO and SUTERA *famiglia*, the MONTEDORO, MILENA and BOMPENSIERE *famiglia* and the SERRADIFALCO *famiglia*.

<sup>117</sup> It is made up of the VALLELUNGA-PRATAMENO *famiglia*, the CALTANISSETTA *famiglia*, the MARIANOPOLI *famiglia*, the RESUTTANA *famiglia* and the SAN CATALDO *famiglia*.

<sup>118</sup> With the RIESI and BUTTERA *famiglia* and with the respective CAMMARATA and MISURACA *clans*, of the SOMMATTINO and DELIA (LA QUATRA *clan*) *famiglia* and the MAZZARINO (SICILIANO *clan*) *famiglia*.

<sup>119</sup> The supremacy of the RINZIVILLO *famiglia* is confirmed, this is due to the downsizing of the EMMANUELLO *famiglia* caused by the persistent detention of *bosses* and several members.

<sup>120</sup> It appears to be composed of the CAVALLO and FIORISI *clans* from Gela and the SANFILIPPO clan from Mazzarino.

<sup>121</sup> OCC no.16990/2020 RGNR Issued on **February 13, 2023**, by the Public Prosecutor’s office of the Court of Palermo - District Anti-Mafia Directorate.

have unveiled a deal signed by two *famiglie* from Licata and Gela. It was aimed at cocaine and marijuana dealing.

The operation “*Valloon Drug*”<sup>122</sup>, focused on the criminal patterns of a partnership active in Mussomeli (Caltanissetta) and the surrounding areas, ended by Carabinieri officers on **March 20, 2023**, has unveiled thriving cocaine trafficking. The partnership was based in the Municipality of Mussomeli (Caltanissetta) but it was operating in the territory of Agrigento and in several Municipalities of Caltanissetta: Campofranco, Acquaviva Platani, Sutera and Villalba.

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<sup>122</sup> OCC no. 2455/19 RGNR - 1308/20 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Caltanissetta on **March 11, 2023**, upon request of the local District Anti-Mafia Directorate.

# Provincia di Caltanissetta



Province of Caltanissetta

On **March 29, 2023**, the State Police carried out a ruling<sup>123</sup> that became effective on **March 28, 2023**. This regarded the “*Stella cadente*”<sup>124</sup> operation, and it carried out 4 detention orders towards individuals held liable in various capacities of Mafia-type criminal conspiracy and of drug trafficking.

Within the scope of the Police forces’ counter-action in the Caltanissetta province, it is clear how drug dealing is left to foreign individuals, almost always of Nigerian, Tunisian and Gambian nationality. The participation of foreign individuals and Italian nationals in aiding and abetting illegal immigration is worth mentioning. This was highlighted in last semester’s Police operations<sup>125</sup>.

The Caltanissetta province has also been affected by frauds perpetrated against public and private entities<sup>126</sup>. On that matter, on **March 21, 2023**, within the scope of the operation “*Fake cars*”, the State Police of Caltanissetta carried out a pretrial detention order<sup>127</sup> towards 8 persons held liable of criminal conspiracy, fraud, handling stolen goods, laundering false material, possession and manufacture of false documents. The organization retrieved illegally acquired vehicles through scams carried out on financial companies. They used false documents to resell them to unsuspecting third parties in order to make a profit.

On **May 17, 2023**, the State Police carried out a pretrial detention order<sup>128</sup> against 2 persons held liable of conspiracy to defraud and handling stolen goods.

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<sup>123</sup> No. 316/2022 issued on April 6, 2022

<sup>124</sup> In Catania, Ragusa, Gela (Caltanissetta) and Porzano (Brindisi) 37 people were arrested in 2019. They were in various capacities held liable of criminal conspiracy aimed at marijuana e cocaine trafficking.

<sup>125</sup> It concerns the 2022 operation “*Mare Aperto*” carried out on 18 individuals (from Tunisia and Italy). They were held liable of criminal conspiracy aimed at aiding and abetting transnational illegal immigration. They had the aggravating factor of endangering the life of the migrants transported to make a lucrative profit from it. Said partnership, active in several cities located in the Sicilian territory, allegedly employed boats with powerful engines operated by experienced smugglers operating between the Tunisian and Sicilian coasts. It maintained its base of operations in a “farmhouse” located on the outskirts of Niscemi, it was registered under a local agricultural entrepreneur. The latter was reached by the precautionary measure in prison as he is considered one of the leaders of the criminal organization. On September 23, 2022, the State Police, within the framework of the so-called *caporalato* (illegal manpower recruitment), had arrested 9 components of different ethnic groups (Italians, Moroccans and Gambians). They were part of a criminal organization active in the systematic exploitation of agricultural day laborers: agricultural entrepreneurs who employed the laborers on their own plantations were also included in these illegal activities.

<sup>126</sup> In this regard, last semester’s “*Chicane*” operation, carried out by the Carabinieri, together with the Guardia di Finanza, is worth mentioning. The operation had led to the arrest of 10 individuals for criminal conspiracy, fraudulent declaration by issuing and using invoices or other documents for non-existent transactions. The investigative activities had shown how the organization, through the so-called “*frode carosello*” (a certain type of tax fraud), had obtained undue tax savings of more than EUR 2.5 million. They were faking sales of product that never even left the company headquarters’ warehouses that were located in the Municipality of San Cataldo (Caltanissetta).

<sup>127</sup> OCC no. 03/2020 issued on **March 16 2023** by the GIP of the Court of Caltanissetta within the scope of the Criminal measure no. 1499/2019 RGNR. In addition to the precautionary measures, the preventive seizure of 9 vehicles was ordered. The vehicles had a total value of EUR 200 thousand.

<sup>128</sup> No. 2685/2022 RGNR and no. 451/2023 RG GIP issued by the GIP of the Court of Caltanissetta on **May 16, 2023**.

Additional police operations led to the identification of individuals believed to be responsible for criminal events that occurred in the past: on **May 22 2023**, the State Police arrested a person<sup>129</sup> because he and a minor<sup>130</sup> had been responsible for personal injuries to 3 individuals<sup>131</sup>; on **June 16 2023**, the Carabinieri of Gela arrested<sup>132</sup> two persons charged with attempted murder<sup>133</sup> in conspiracy and illegal carrying and possession of a common firearm.

The general tendency of criminal conspiracies that have given up on recourse to violent action like they did in the past<sup>134</sup>, is to infiltrate in the local economic structure “implicating” members of the Public Administration. They do so through corrupt maneuvers, mostly infiltrating those productive sectors that manage the main cash streams through public and private contracting<sup>135</sup>, in order to draw from them illicit profits to be re-injected into legal channels.

Attention remains high at all times with regard to the undue receipt of EU grants for supporting rural development. Over the years, there have been frequent counter-actions against illegal acquisition of public grants for agriculture following false claims and fraud against the EU. In the Sicilian hinterland, the agribusiness sector is the driving force in the economy, consequently attracting the interest of criminal organizations, which would employ the aid of figureheads and obliging professionals. In this regard, on **April 21, 2023**, as part of the operation “*Banca delle terre*”, carried out by the Guardia di Finanza, the owner of a farming company in Niscemi had been found guilty of

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<sup>129</sup> No. 2501/2022 RGNR and no. 848/2023 RG GIP issued by the GIP of the Court of Caltanissetta.

<sup>130</sup> Regarding the minor, on **May 25, 2023**, the pretrial detention orders no.1377/2022 RGNR and no. 825/2023 RG GIP were carried out. They were issued by the GIP at the Juvenile Court of Caltanissetta at a juvenile detention institute.

<sup>131</sup> More specifically, on **October 22, 2022**, while the person was driving the vehicle, the minor seated next to him fired several gunshots towards 3 individuals, striking 2 of them.

<sup>132</sup> OCCC no. 2727/2022 RGNR and no. 791/2023 RG GIP issued by the GIP of the Court of Caltanissetta on June 7, 2023.

<sup>133</sup> Carried out on **June 20, 2020**, most likely due to a fight between the victim’s brother and the son of one of the two arrested individuals.

<sup>134</sup> It is worth mentioning that within the territory of Caltanissetta 5 attempted murders have been reported: **January 1, 2023**, a person arrived at the hospital of Gela with a gunshot wound sustained on a leg. On **March 28, 2023**, a person with a stab wound to the abdomen was being transported at the hospital of Gela. Shortly after the Carabinieri of Gela were arresting the individual with mental problems guilty of the injuries. On **April 29, 2023**, a person with a criminal record for possession of narcotics was shot on a limb. The following **May 17, 2023**, the Carabinieri arrested a person with a record of theft and narcotics. On **June 13 2023**, two persons arrived at the ER in the hospital of Gela. They both had a criminal record, the first with a stab wound to the abdomen, the second, his brother-in-law, was stabbed on the shoulder. They reported being attacked by two unidentified men.

<sup>135</sup> In this regard, it is worth mentioning the “*Sorella Sanità IP*” operation carried out on October 21, 2022, by the Guardia di Finanza of Palermo. In the context of this operation, among the 11 individuals subjected to the pretrial detention order, there was a man from Caltanissetta who was arrested for corruption and disruption of proceedings for the selection of a contractor. The man, in order to facilitate the awarding of contracts in exchange for a cash payment, allegedly had close contacts with the top management of a company involved. It turned out to be the winner of the tender for the implementation of an IT system of the Provincial Health Authority of Palermo.

aggravated fraud for obtaining public funds, having unduly received EU funding from the Agricultural Guarantee Fund from 2018 to 2020.

Also, during this semester, there have been incidents of arson damage, some of which are most likely traceable to extortion and/or private vendettas<sup>136</sup>. These are carried out by criminals who unscrupulously strike businesses, service activities as well as members of the Institutions indifferently. In this regard, on **March 21, 2023**, the State Police identified a recidivist person responsible for the arson of 5 cars that occurred on **February 8, 2023**.

The anti-Mafia investigation department (DIA) has carried out 4 confiscations and one seizure. It was within the scope of the counteractions for accumulation of illicit assets. On February 2, 2023 the permanent confiscation<sup>137</sup> was carried out against an entrepreneur operating on the territory. He was active in the mechanical and installation sector and believed to be “close” to the EMMANUELLO *famiglia* of Gela. The following **February 8, 2023**, the final confiscation<sup>138</sup> of movable and immovable property was executed. The total value of the assets was approximately EUR 750 million. The confiscation was towards an entrepreneur operating in the field of trade and wind power plants considered “contiguous” to the RINZIVILLO *famiglia* of Gela. On **March 14, 2023**, between Caltanissetta and Palermo, the confiscation<sup>139</sup> of real estate and business assets, with a total value of over EUR 9 million was carried out. The assets were attributable to a business owner associated with the Caltanissetta Mafia *famiglia*. The measure, in almost mirrored form, consolidates the seizure<sup>140</sup> made against the same in July 2020. On May 8, 2023, in the territory of Gela (Caltanissetta) and Caltagirone (Catania) the seizure<sup>141</sup> of real estate and business assets, with a total value of over EUR 2 million was carried out. The assets were attributable to a business owner operating in the IT and

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<sup>136</sup> On **January 25, 2023**, a manager of the Anti-racketeering and Usury Association “Rete per la Legalità” reported having received an envelope sent to him. The content was offensive and intimidatory remarks, in addition to that, there was a 38-caliber bullet. On **February 8, 2023**, in Gela, at contrada Borgo Manfria, unknown persons set a minivan on fire with flammable liquid. The minivan was owned by the nonprofit organization A.I.A.S., whose goals are physical rehabilitation and medical care. In addition to the minivan, another two vans parked nearby were damaged. On the same day an engineer reported to the Carabinieri of Milena Station the recovery of a bottle containing flammable liquid with a fabric primer and two undetonated caliber 12 bullets. These were found in a construction site owned by the aforesaid company. On **June 17, 2023**, in Niscemi unknown persons set a vehicle on fire with flammable liquid. The vehicle was property of a State Police officer.

<sup>137</sup> Decree no. 21/2019 issued by the Court of Caltanissetta on March 6, 2019, and judged definitive on September 11, 2019.

<sup>138</sup> Decree no. 49/2021 RD, issued by the Court of Caltanissetta on July 7, 2021, and judged definitive on December 14, 2022.

<sup>139</sup> Decree no. 06/23 RD (mo. 18/20 RMP) on **January 20, 2023**, filed in the records office on **February 27, 2023** - Court of Caltanissetta.

<sup>140</sup> Decree no. 05/20 RS on July 1, 2020 - Court of Caltanissetta.

<sup>141</sup> Decree no. 35/22 RMP on **March 29, 2023**, filed in the records office on **April 14, 2023** - Court of Caltanissetta.

food trade field, at the disposal of the EMMANUELLO *clan* of Gela. On **May 11, 2023**, within the scope of the organized activities of the Prosecutor of Caltanissetta, between Caltanissetta, Ragusa and Varese, the confiscation<sup>142</sup> of real estate and business assets, with a total value of EUR 65 million was carried out. The assets were attributable to 3 local entrepreneurs<sup>143</sup> associated with the Mafia RINZIVILLO *famiglia*. They operated in real estate and mainly in the automotive business, including luxury cars.

Finally, on the administrative prevention front, a prohibitory anti-Mafia measure was issued by the Prefect of Caltanissetta against a company in whose regard suggestive elements of Mafia conditioning were detected.

## Province of Enna

*Cosa Nostra* is still the major Mafia organization actively working in the Ennese territory, as a natural propagation of the nearby Caltanissetta, Messina and Catania criminal groups. Particularly incisive is the latter's meddling, which, taking advantage of the diminished strength of the Ennese sodalities subjected to judicial<sup>144</sup> police action has, over the years, established progressive expansions and operations.

*Cosa Nostra* is still articulated in 5 historical *famiglie* that operate between Enna, Barrafranca, Pietraperzia Villarosa and Calascibetta. Other *gruppi* in the territories of: Piazza Armerina, Aidone, Agira, Valguarnera Caropepe, Leonforte, Centuripe, Regalbuto, Troina and Catenanuova, seem to be connected to the previous mentioned ones.

Even during the period under scrutiny, rulings of conviction and police operations have been carried out against prominent personalities who have made "the history" of Enna's *Cosa Nostra*, with the help of *famiglie* from Catania. Specifically, on **March 22, 2023**, during a previous operation called

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<sup>142</sup> Decree no. 12/23 RD /no. 76/21, 77/21 and 79/21 RMP) on **January 18, 2023** – Court of Caltanissetta.

<sup>143</sup> Within the scope of the 2019 "Camaleonte" operation, the same men collaborated in the Mafia organization operating in Catania, Gela, Vittoria and neighboring territories. They systematically and wittingly contributed to the activities and the achievement of the criminal aims of the organization. The measure, in almost mirrored form, consolidates the seizure made against the same individuals in February 2021 and October 2022.

<sup>144</sup> In the last semester, new convictions have been ruled, which have decimated some of the Enna Mafia *clans*. Such as, the one ruled on July 21, 2022, against 18 defendants of the "Caput Silente" trial, originated from the investigation of the same name, which ended in April 2021. It documented the activities of the LEONFORTE Mafia *famiglia*, within the field of extortions and illicit drug trafficking. Another important ruling is the one on September 7, 2022, against 18 other members of the Barrafranca *clan* already targeted in July 2020, by multiple arrest warrants issued during the "Ultra" operation. The arrest of an individual believed to be the *boss* of Calascibetta (Enna) executed on September 26, 2022, was also of considerable importance.

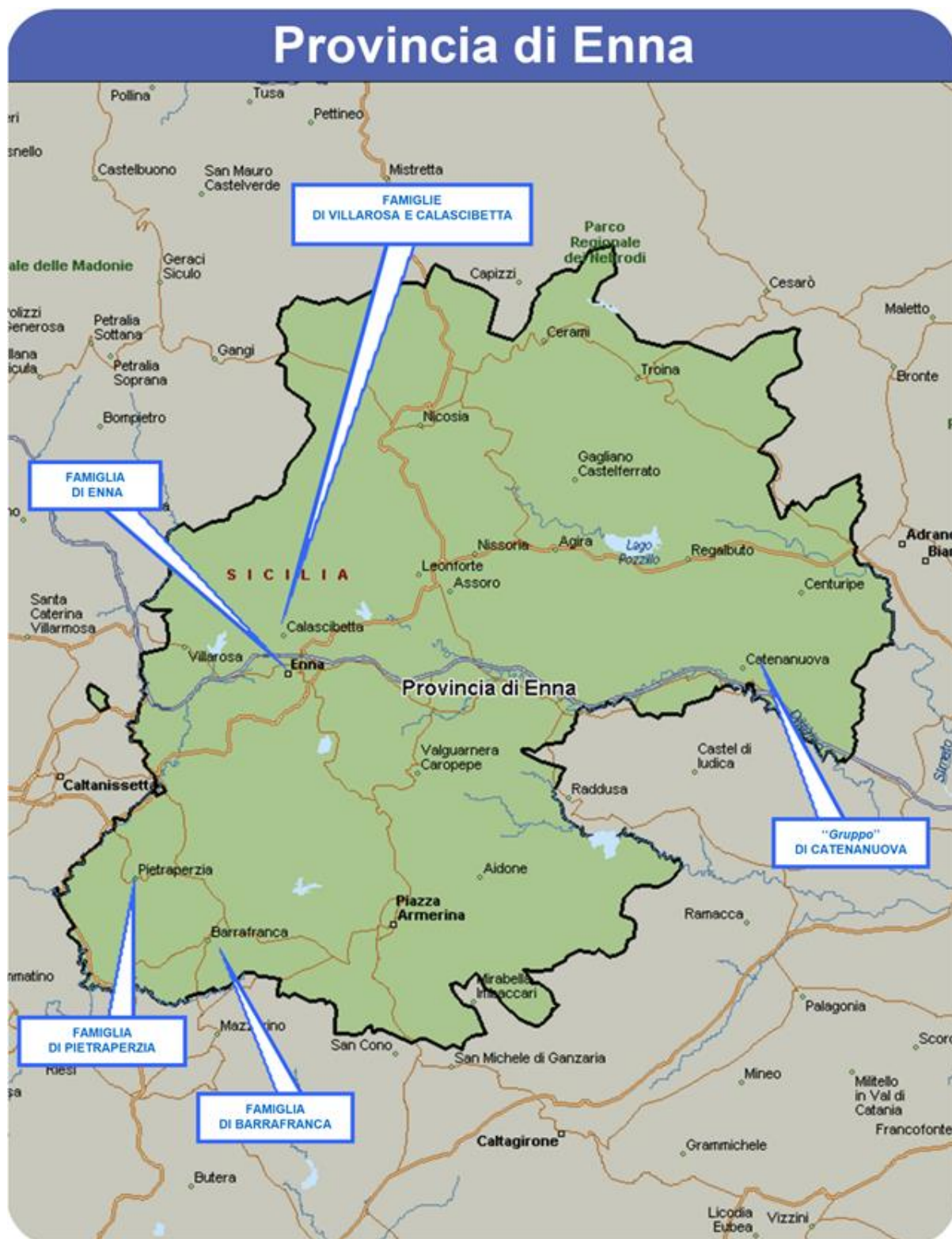


“*Carta Bianca*”<sup>145</sup>, the Guardia di Finanza of Nicosia (Enna) put under an additional prison restrictive measure an individual, already on the *41 bis* prison regime, “*believed to be the regent of Cosa Nostra for the eastern part of the province of Enna...specifically of the unit that controlled the territories of Centuripe and Regalbuto*”, who was under the authority of the SANTAPAOLA *famiglia* of Catania. On **May 25, 2023**, the Supreme Court of Cassation upheld a life sentence against an individual, *boss* of Mirabella Imbaccari (Catania), placed in charge of the Ennian Mafia *famiglia* by the Catanese LA ROCCA *clan*, a historical *consorteria*<sup>146</sup> of the Etna *Cosa Nostra* operating in the *Calatino-South Simeto* side and who, over the years, would have acted as a “hinge” linking the Catania and Enna *clans*.

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<sup>145</sup> OCC no. 375/2018 RGNR-DDA and no. 1330/2022 RG GIP, issued by the GIP (Judge for Preliminary Investigation) of the Court of Caltanissetta on September 1, 2022.

<sup>146</sup> coterie (Translator’s note).



Province of Enna

On **April 5, 2023**, the State Police of Enna arrested<sup>147</sup> a representative of the *Cosa Nostra* in the territory of Aidone (Enna), responsible for Mafia-type conspiracy, robbery and extortion.

It should also be noted that on **May 17, 2023**, a Mafia *boss* from Enna died in a hospital in Milan, where he was being held in custody.

Law enforcement activities carried out during the semester under scrutiny confirm an inclination for drug trafficking<sup>148</sup>, a sector historically prerogative of *Cosa Nostra*, as well as extortion<sup>149</sup> activities. On **March 30, 2023**, the State Police of Enna, following the ruling on the “*Discovery*”<sup>150</sup> operation, executed a detention order against three individuals responsible for extortion, Mafia-type conspiracy, robbery and firearm related crimes.

On **May 15, 2023**, during the “*Scacco Matto*” operation, the Carabinieri of Enna executed a detention<sup>151</sup> order against 7 individuals held liable for conspiracy aimed at the cultivation, production, possession and traffic of illicit drugs, handling stolen goods and damage followed by fire. The association managed a major drug dealing location in the territory of Barrafranca supplying not only the nearby Piazza Armerina, but also Enna and Caltanissetta. Investigative activities led to the recovery of weapons and drugs, as well as a marijuana plantation on the outskirts of Barrafranca. Considering the orographic conformation of the Enna territory, the agro-pastoral sector, which is the only driving force for the economy of the province, continues to be attractive even to individuals not linked to organized crime<sup>152</sup>, who resort to fraud to the detriment of the European Community,

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<sup>147</sup> Enforcement order for incarceration no. 118/2023 SIEP issued by Federal Attorney General’s Office at the Caltanissetta Court of Appeal – Penal Execution Department

<sup>148</sup> On November 7, 2022, during the “*Brother*” operation which begun during the summer of 2021, State Police issued an arrest warrant against 9 individuals believed to be responsible of possession and dealing of illicit drugs, which involved an extensive network of drug dealing linked to a criminal organization operating between Enna, Castel di Iudica (Catania) and Catania.

<sup>149</sup> The results of the “*Full Control*” operation, ended by Guardia di Finanza on November 22, 2022, have shown, besides the commission of numerous economic-financial crimes, extortion and usury. Particularly, two brothers were handing out money to local entrepreneurs facing serious crisis with interest rates much higher than the maximum limit fixed by the law.

<sup>150</sup> No. 101-102-104/2023 SIEP, issued on March 23, 2023, by the Public Prosecutor’s Office at the Caltanissetta Court of Appeal - Penal Execution Department.

<sup>151</sup> No. 183/2020 RGNR and no. 628/2021 RG GIP issued on May 3, 2023, from the GIP of the Court of Caltanissetta upon request by the DDA of the Public Prosecutor’s Office. The measures adopted are four imprisonments, one house arrest and two residency bans.

<sup>152</sup> In this regard, the “*Coda di Volpe*” operation should be mentioned, which ended by the Guardia di Finanza on September 15, 2022, with the execution of a preventive seizure of assets with a total value of about EUR 700 thousand, against 12 entrepreneurs under investigation for money laundering, self-laundering, use of money, goods or utilities of illicit origin and aggravated fraud to obtain public funds. The investigation uncovered a fraudulent system, operated by farmers who were contiguous to criminal circles, in the context of State and European Union funds given to agriculture.

intercepting financial flows in order to illegally receive public subsidies. In this regard, on **March 13, 2023**, during the aforementioned “*Carta Bianca*” operation, (executed last semester against 13 individuals held responsible for Mafia-type association, fraudulent transfer of values, aggravated fraud to obtain public funds, money laundering, self-laundering, fraudulent declarations and issuance of invoices for non-existent transactions, all crimes aggravated by the Mafia method), two individuals who were the owners and custodians of some farms subjected to preventive seizure as a result of the aforementioned operation, were responsible for stealing and/or damaging confiscated properties. On **March 16, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Enna reported<sup>153</sup> a person for laundering and use of money of illicit origin.

As part of the strategy to counter the accumulation of illicit assets, on **January 17, 2023**, the DIA executed a definitive asset confiscation<sup>154</sup> decree against an entrepreneur in the construction and restaurant industry. The measure pertained to the whole social capital and ownership stakes of companies, real-estate holdings and numerous plots, as well as banking relations and insurance policies. The confiscation follows up on a seizure measure carried out in 2019 at the proposal of the DIA Director.

On the administrative prevention front, a considerable institutional synergy has been developed that has enabled the Enna District Officer in the first semester of 2023 to issue 6 anti-Mafia interdiction orders against companies that showed evidence of elements symptomatic of Mafia influence. Finally, regarding the previous commissioning<sup>155 156</sup> of the Municipality of Barrafranca on **May 30, 2023**, following the administrative elections, the new Municipal Council was elected.

## PROVINCE OF CATANIA

The analysis of the evolution of the criminal phenomenon during the period in question shows a picture of an essentially unchanged situation, which confirms the structural and operational characteristics of the *consorterie* existing in the territory as well as their organic composition. In this area of Sicily, *Cosa Nostra* is still being represented by the historic *famiglie* of the SANTAPAOLA-

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<sup>153</sup> Following the activities delegated by Public Prosecutor’s Office of the Court of Enna to the local Guardia di Finanza, Criminal procedure 1134/2022 RGNR.

<sup>154</sup> Decree of Confiscation no. 16/2021 R.D., issued by the Preventative Measures Subdivision of the Court of Caltanissetta on December 23, 2020, which became definitive on December 9, 2022. The measure pertained to the whole social capital and ownership stakes of companies, real-estate holdings and numerous plots as well as banking relations and insurance policies. The confiscation follows up on a seizure measure carried out in 2019 at the proposal of the DIA Director.

<sup>155</sup> Following the “*Ultra*” operation carried out by the ROS Carabinieri in July 2020, which led up to the dissolution for Mafia of the political-administrative body of the Municipality of Barrafranca.

<sup>156</sup> Put under external administration (NDT).

ERCOLANO and MAZZEI<sup>157</sup> in Catania, LA ROCCA<sup>158</sup> in Caltagirone, in the “*Calatino - South Simeto*” district, as well as in Ramacca (Catania). Added to these, it is the presence of the historic *clans* CAPPELLO-BONACCORSI<sup>159</sup>, LAUDANI<sup>160</sup>, PILLERA-DI MAURO<sup>161</sup>, SCIUTO (Tigna)<sup>162</sup>, CURSOTI<sup>163</sup>, PIACENTI and NICOTRA<sup>164</sup>, which although organized according to the typical Mafia model, they turn out to be quite distinct from *Cosa Nostra*. Moreover, the wealth of information obtained from the preliminary injunctions<sup>165</sup> issued in recent years highlights a strong relationship made up of balance and power relations between the *famiglie* and the allied NARDO *clan*, active in Siracusa.

The georeferencing of Mafia presences thus brings out the main peculiarity of the Catania Mafia phenomenon: a variable structure Mafia that sees the coexistence<sup>166</sup> of multiple criminal sodalities,

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<sup>157</sup> The sodality is substantially rooted in the historic district of San Cristoforo and also in the suburban district of Lineri, with articulations in the municipalities of Bronte, Maletto and Maniace. It should be recalled that, in the recent past, the organs of the Municipality of Maniace (Catania) were dissolved due to Mafia interference.

<sup>158</sup> Dominant in Caltagirone, they have extended their influence to neighboring provinces as well.

<sup>159</sup> Operating both in the city neighborhood of San Cristoforo and in neighboring provinces making use of the BONACCORSI component known as the Carateddi. Although some of the affiliates have become collaborators of justice, the sodality appears to be active in drug trafficking and illegal betting. One of the *clan*'s operational offshoots is represented by the CINTORINO *gruppo*, rooted in Calatabiano (Catania) and hegemonic in the entire Ionian coastal strip.

<sup>160</sup> SANTAPAOLA allied *gruppo* with influence over a wide area of the province, from the coastal area to the foothills (Municipalities of S. Giovanni La Punta, Acireale, Acicatenà, Giarre, Riposto and Gravina, Tremestieri Etneo, San Gregorio, Mascalucia, Belpasso, Paternò, Adrano, Piedimonte Etneo, Castiglione di Sicilia, Randazzo, Giarre, Riposto, Mascali and Fiumefreddo di Sicilia).

<sup>161</sup> Historical organization long allied with the Borgo *gruppo* and the DI MAURO “*Puntina*” *clan*, in the 1990s almost totally merged into the LAUDANI *clan*. The *sodality* in the past has had the fervor of certain affiliates active in extortion and usury.

<sup>162</sup> Residual sodality better known as the *Tigna*, possesses articulations in the territories of Militello Val di Catania and Scordia. The component at large would have transited into the CAPPELLO *clan* and, in particular, into the squad headed by the BONACCORSI.

<sup>163</sup> The CURSOTI *clan* takes its name from the Antico Corso area of Catania, the place of origin of most of its affiliates. Violent and accustomed to the use of weapons, it asserts itself through extortion, robbery, gambling and drug trafficking. It is divided historically into two fringes: that of the *Cursoti Catanesi* and that of the *Cursoti Milanesi*. The latter, which is more active in the criminal scene, has contacts with gangs in the province of Enna that are active in drug trafficking.

<sup>164</sup> Clan connoted by typical family aggregation. The *clan* is traditionally engaged in drug dealing, extortion, usury and robbery (also outside the province); it is also one of the major operators of clandestine horse racing and related illegal betting. It operates mainly in the city's Picanello neighborhood, where it coexists with the hegemonic territorial articulation of the SANTAPAOLA *famiglia*.

<sup>165</sup> As documented by the outcomes of the operation “*Agorà*” ended by the Carabinieri in June 2022. (OCC no. 12138/16 RGNR, no. 1864/19 RG GIP issued June 1, 2022 from the Court of Catania).

<sup>166</sup> As was confirmed by the results of the “*Tuppetturu*” operation (OCC 2704/19 RGNR 1453/2020 RG GIP issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on October 31, 2022), ended by the Guardia di Finanza of Catania on November 16, 2022 and issued against the BRUNETTO and LAUDANI *clan* part of the SANTAPAOLA- ERCOLANO *famiglia* and the CINTORINO *clan*, ally of the CAPPELLO *clan* and the “*Zeus*” operation (OCC no. 13645/18 RGNR, no.

often in the same territorial spaces, functional to the realization of illicit affairs with interactions that are not necessarily violent. This aspect is confirmed in the results of the investigations ended in the semester, such as “*Slot Machine*”<sup>167</sup> and “*Car Back*”<sup>168</sup>, in which the interactions were found, respectively, between the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglia* and the CAPPELLO *clan* and between the latter and the CURSOTI MILANESI.

The multiple investigative actions and convictions issued over time have resulted in a recurring capacity for the turnover of apical positions, that allows the *clans*’ offensive capacity to remain high. On the other hand, the criminal landscape beyond the *Cosa Nostra* has, in part, the same structural features as the Catania *famiglie*, in other cases alternating a banditry matrix with adaptive and fluid formulas typical of the neighborhoods in which the groups are active.

The judicial outcomes which have taken place over the years have also unveiled the Mafia *famiglie* interest in preferring forms of infiltration into the economic-business<sup>169</sup> and political-administrative fabric through the search for and inclusion of useful reference figures to guarantee the dual strategy of the Etna *Cosa Nostra*, aimed at both the almost total control of economic activities and public tenders and the conditioning of public decision-making processes. However, not to be overlooked is the still-present offensive potential of the *consorterie*, which, in parallel with “business activities”, still exercise control over the territory through traditional criminal activities<sup>170</sup>, which are considered “fundamental elements for their very survival and an indispensable condition for any criminal strategy of wealth accumulation”.<sup>171</sup> There would also appear to be a consolidated tendency for *Cosa Nostra*

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9913/19 RG GIP issued on November 18, 2022), in whose acts it is pointed out that: “*the proceeds of ... clandestine gambling were divided among the four Mafia gruppi operating in Catania, namely the Cursoti Milanese, the Cappello-Bonaccorsi, the Mazzei “Carcagnusi” and the Santapaola-Ercolano, each of which was required to pay a share of the association*” aimed at the sustenance of the higher ranking prisoners, thus highlighting the “mutual aid” even among historically antagonistic Mafia groups.

<sup>167</sup> OCC no. 1904/2019 RGNR and no. 9080/2021 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on January **19, 2023**. The investigation will be better explained afterwards.

<sup>168</sup> OCC no. 11241/2020 RGNR and no. 1856/2021 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on **April 12, 2023**. The investigation will be better explained afterwards.

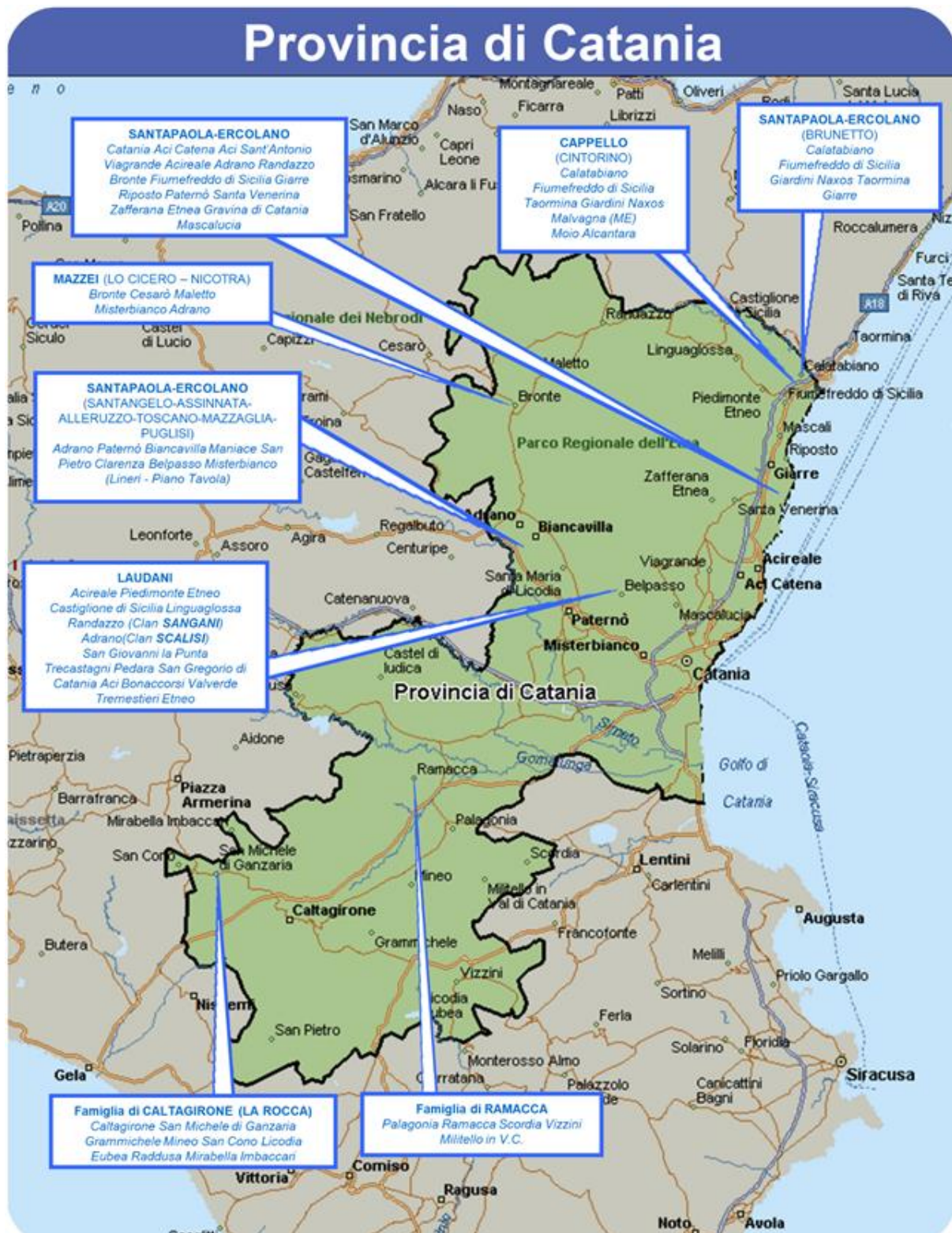
<sup>169</sup> As it was documented, the results of the “*Agorà*” operation ended by Carabinieri in June 2022. In the precautionary measure (OCC no. 12138/16 RGNR, no. 1864/19 RG GIP issued on June 1, 2022, by the Court of Catania), is stated that “*wiretaps show that on numerous occasions entrepreneurs and business owners turned to organized crime not only for traditional “debt collection” activities but also to be protected from theft or block legitimate creditor claims. These requests from the business and commercial world turn into profitable opportunities for Mafia associations, which, in this way, have the opportunity to insinuate themselves into the economic fabric and progressively gain more and more control over the business sectors from which they derive income*” (from page 97).

<sup>170</sup> Extortion, usury, trafficking and drug dealing.

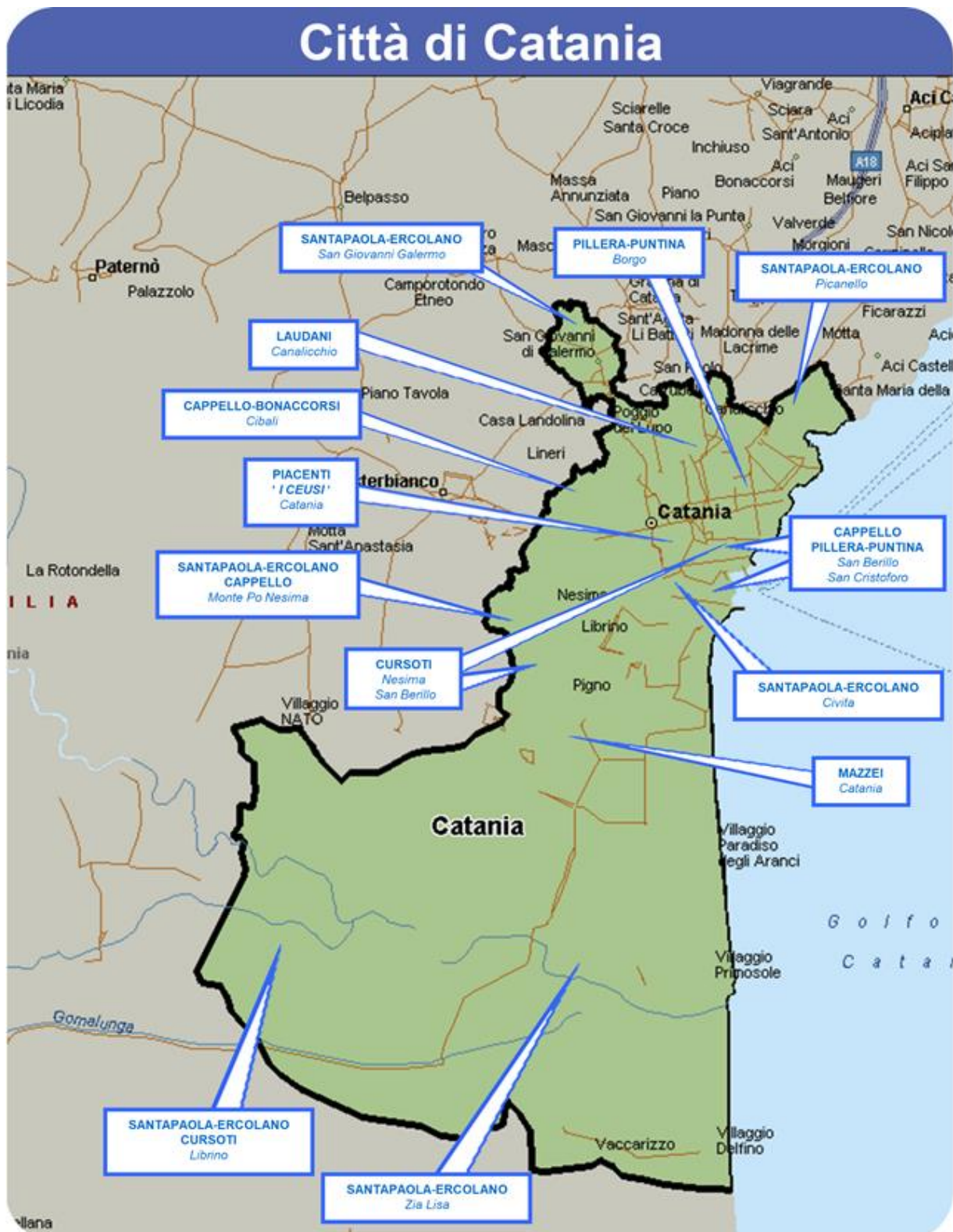
<sup>171</sup> As it was highlighted by the President of the Court of Appeal of Catania, Mr. Filippo PENNISI during the Report for the inauguration of the judicial year 2023.



to delegate secondary criminal activities to satellite structures with a less evolved operational profile, reserving for itself the management of strategic interests in sectors deemed more profitable.



Map of the Province of Catania.



Map of the City of Catania

Hegemonic in the city center, the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglia* continues to be subdivided into *gruppi* or *squads* (*teams*) that take on the name of the neighborhood<sup>172</sup> of reference and are

<sup>172</sup> The main *gruppi* are those of Librino, San Cosimo, Villaggio Sant'Agata, Picanello, San Giovanni Galermo.



granted a certain organizational and decision-making autonomy<sup>173</sup>. In the rest of the province, it imposes itself on the territory thanks to local groups and *clans*<sup>174</sup> that guarantee a plurality of criminal interests and an increasingly capillary control of the territory. Moreover, the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglia* also exerts its influence on Peloritan organizations, maintaining consolidated and functional relationships with the Mistretta, Barcellona and Pozzo di Gotto *famiglie*, as well as with those operating in the *Nebrodi* quadrant.

Although severely affected by the increasingly incisive institutional counteraction, the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *consorteria* would represent the highest expression of *Cosa Nostra* in the Catanese territory, endowed with marked and far-sighted evolutionary capabilities, especially in regards of the rules of affiliation<sup>175</sup>. Operational strategies are always aimed at the search for capital useful for the sustenance of the organization, such as that deriving from the imposition of “*pizzo*”<sup>176</sup> and the management of drug trafficking<sup>177</sup>; these peculiarities are congenial to all criminal *consorterie*. This assumption emerges from the results of the operations carried out by the Police in the period under scrutiny. A peculiar dynamic was the one that happened in December 2022 when two individuals deemed *affiliated* to the fringe operating in Bronte (Catania), threatened a business

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<sup>173</sup> The peculiar structural organization of the *famiglia* arose for the first time from the criminal conviction no. 20/96 issued by the Court of Assize of Catania on October 16, 1996 (related to the “*Orsa Maggiore*” operation) in which it reads: “...around the mid-1980s the Catanese *famiglia*, while maintaining unchanged the traditional and official *Cosa Nostra* offices, gave itself a new, more agile and efficient structure; in fact, sub-groups were born. Indeed, ...omitted ... the articulation of the Catanese *famiglia* into several sub-groups, each headed by a *uomo d'onore* (Mafia member), essentially responded to organizational and operational needs ... omitted ... the group is a spontaneous structure born out of operational necessity rather than an actual formal division. Through these groups ... the organization managed to “take root” more and more in the territory, achieving control of it in a penetrating and widespread way ...”.

<sup>174</sup> In Adrano by the SANTANGELO-TACCUNI *clan* and LO CICERO *gruppo* linked to the MAZZEI *famiglia*, in Paternò by the ALLERUZZO-ASSINNATA-AMANTEA *gruppi* (in the six-month period in question, the ASSINNATA-ALLERUZZO *clan*, already hit in 2021 by the precautionary measures executed as part of the “*Doppio gioco*” operation (Criminal proc. no. 12167/17 RG NR - 3172/19 RG. GIP), was further re-diminished by the outcomes of conviction no. 363/23, issued following an abbreviated rite by the GUP of the Court of Catania on March 30, 2023), in Biancavilla by the TOMASELLO-TOSCANO-MAZZAGLIA. On the territories of the Municipalities of Maniace, Mascalucia, Belpasso and on that of Lineri and San Pietro Clarenza (hamlets of the Municipality of Misterbianco) the PUGLISI-PULVIRENTI *clan*. In the northeast and Jonian strip insist the BRUNETTO (Giarre-Calatabiano-Fiumefreddo).

<sup>175</sup> As was highlighted by the results of last semester’s “*Sangue Blue*” operation (OCC 11008/18 RG NR - 7602/19 RG GIP issued by the Court of Catania on September 22, 2022) ended by the Carabinieri of Catania on September 28, 2022. The investigation established widespread control of the territory through the management of a thriving drug trafficking trade and some extortion activities against local businessmen.

<sup>176</sup> (Translator’s note) fee periodically collected by the Mafia from businesses.

<sup>177</sup> The already quoted “*Sangue Blue*” operation, outlined the evolution of association dynamics of the *famiglia*, identifying the regent defined as *uomo d'onore riservato* (NDT private man of honor). As a matter of fact, some portions of the injunction read: “(...) the *uomo d'onore riservato* is “done” by close family members and is known only to those who have ritually affiliated with him who then decide when and whether to present him ... the reason why a *uomo d'onore riservato* is needed are the most diverse, among others there is also the possibility of using him in a concealed manner while avoiding “burning him” (...).”.

owner with the following words, “...*be good or we’ll have to behave accordingly...*” for the payment of sums of money due “...*since we were all arrested...you have not paid for nine years...*” by way of the so-called “*messa a posto*” (“putting in order”-racketeering). The two individuals held responsible for the crime of extortion were arrested<sup>178</sup> on **January 13, 2023**, by the State Police of Catania. Further confirmation of the operativeness of the *Etna Cosa Nostra famiglia* emerged from the results of the “*Arpagone*”<sup>179</sup> operation that hit the *fringe* operating in the territories of Acireale, Aci Catena and Aci Sant’Antonio. In this regard, on February 7, 2023, the State Police of Acireale (Catania) arrested four individuals<sup>180</sup>, proponents of “...*a criminal association aimed at the design and implementation of multiple crimes against patrimonial property, led by...omitted... and characterized by bond of association in a stable manner, by a structure organized on a “family” level and by a criminal project indefinite over time*”; they were held responsible of conspiracy association aimed at usury and unauthorized use of financial assets. Similarly, on **April 28, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Gravina di Catania arrested<sup>181</sup> three individuals, one of whom was believed to be an apex element of the San Pietro Clarenza *gruppo* - Camporotondo Etneo-Belpasso, for extortion against a deal broker. As premised, another sector of interest for the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglia* is drug trafficking, occasionally carried out in collaboration with other criminal organizations, as it is stated by the results of the already mentioned “*Slot Machine*” operation which, although centered around the CAPPELLO *clan* dynamics, made it possible, among other things, to reveal how the latter *consorteria* used a SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO exponent, believed to be a pivotal element of the *consorteria* under investigation, for the supplying of large quantities of marijuana. Another investigation<sup>182</sup> ended on February 14, 2023, by the State Police of Catania and Andrano (Catania) enabled the discovery of the work of a criminal conspiracy, aimed at trafficking cocaine, marijuana

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<sup>178</sup> Based on the data in the “2022 Annual Report of the DCSA” (Central Division for Anti-drug Services), Catania appears to be among the most significant terminals for large-scale cocaine trafficking. During the semester under scrutiny, the exceptional discovery of a quantity of cocaine never before detected in Italy confirms the trend. On April 17, 2023, in fact, the Guardia di Finanza of Etna made public the discovery and recovery, which occurred the previous March 13, in international waters off the coast of eastern Sicily, of **1,918.06** kg of cocaine divided into 70 drifting packages. The narcotics’ value was estimated at EUR 400 million. This event suggests the significant financial capacity in the availability of organized crime, not excluding the existence of a *joint venture* between criminal syndicates even of different backgrounds.

<sup>179</sup> During the execution of OCC no. 15869/21 RGNR - 5535/22 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on December 27, 2022.

<sup>180</sup> In particular, the figure of a top member of the *consorteria*, who has already been arrested on June 8, 2022 during the “*Odissea*” anti-Mafia operation, has emerged.

<sup>181</sup> Executed *in flagrante delicto* and validated on **May 2, 2023** with OCC no. 4246/23 RGNR - 3493/23 RG GIP issued by the Court of Catania - sector GIP.

<sup>182</sup> During the implementation of OCC no. 3077/2021 RGNR - 1088/22 RG GIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on February 3, 2023, against 5 individuals under investigation, in various capacities, of the crimes of conspiracy of drug dealing, such as heroin, cocaine and marijuana, with article 416 bis of the Criminal Code as the aggravating factor.

and heroin in the Andrano (Catania) territory, believed to be close to the SANTANGELO-TACCUNI *clan* operating in the town of Etna and constituting “territorial articulation” of the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *clan*. The investigation, in addition to reconstructing the internal structure of the criminal group, made it possible to trace the supply channels of the organization, which supplied itself with cocaine and marijuana through some traffickers from Catania who were insiders of the SANTAPAOLAs, while its heroin supplier was a trafficker from Palagonia (Catania). The proceeds of the illicit activity flowed into a “common fund” managed by the promoters of the organization who paid part of the proceeds to the Andrano *clan*’s top leaders.

In such criminal contexts, oftentimes, the illicit proceeds from drug trafficking are a source of reinvestment in business activities located in the territory. This aspect highlights the significant “entrepreneurial” projections manifested by the *consorteria* over time<sup>183</sup>.

In this sense, institutional attention remains high regarding the assault on illicitly acquired assets. In particular, on **January 18, 2023**, the State Police of Catania carried out a confiscation<sup>184</sup> of movable and immovable<sup>185</sup> property, with a total value of EUR 1.5 million, against a convicted criminal believed to be close to the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglia*. The asset investigations carried out made it possible to determine the social dangerousness of the individual who, over time, had managed to reinvest the illicit proceeds accumulated in business activities, polluting, in fact, the circuit of the legal economy. On **June 26, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Etna executed a decree of confiscation<sup>186</sup>, against an individual, characterized by a qualified social dangerousness as already having a record for Mafia-type association, deemed close to the leader of the Acireale and Aci Catena’s Mafia fringe, a branch of the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglia* in those territories. The confiscation was of a total value of about EUR 300 thousand and involved a business activity operating as a venue for *banqueting*, educational farm and children’s summer camp.

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<sup>183</sup> The already mentioned “*Sangue Blue*” investigation, ended last semester, brought out, besides the relevant dangerousness and intimidating force, one of the defining traits of the SANTAPAOLA *famiglia*: the ability to permeate the real economy by infiltrating the business sector. In fact, among the crimes charged against them is the fictitious registration of companies operating in the marketing of used vehicles and wine in which the illegal proceeds from drug trafficking and extortion were reinvested. As a result, movable property, real estate, current accounts and companies worth more than EUR 4 million were confiscated.

<sup>184</sup> During the implementation of Decree no. 119/22 RSS and no. 1/23 R. Seq, issued by the Court of Catania on **January 9, 2023**, and its integration on **January 13, 2023**.

<sup>185</sup> A bar, a game room and a nightclub attached to the game room (located between Catania and Giardini Naxos-ME), a vehicle rental business, 4 properties, 11 vehicles, and numerous financial dealings

<sup>186</sup> No. 46/2022 and no. 212/21 RSS issued by the Court of Catania on **June 9, 2023**.

Even the MAZZEI “Caragnusi” *famiglia*, deeply-rooted in the San Cristoforo neighborhood - and also active in narcotics, extortion, illegal betting, waste and, as recent investigations<sup>187</sup> have revealed, also in the petroleum products business - has operational projections in the municipalities of Adrano, Bronte, Maletto and Maniace, through the LO CICERO *gruppo* and in Misterbianco through the NICOTRA “Tuppi” *gruppo*. Additional ramification is located in Scicli (Ragusa), where the MORMINA *gruppo* works, particularly active in drug trafficking and extortion. However, the MAZZEI *famiglia* would appear to be a weakened organization as a result of the investigations and convictions of *bosses* and associates. Added to this, the current lack of an unambiguous and shared *leadership* would raise concerns about its stability, as revealed by recent criminal events that occurred in the semester<sup>188</sup>. This aspect could lead to internal turmoil undermining points of balance and alliances built over time. Another manifestation of *Cosa Nostra* in this area of Sicily is represented by LA ROCCA<sup>189</sup> *famiglia*, that still has significant influence in the general context of Sicilian Mafia arrangements, extending its activities in the area defined as “*Calatino - Sud Simeto*,” that is, the area that extends from the town of Caltagirone toward the borders of the provinces of Enna, Syracuse, Caltanissetta and Ragusa. The recent outcomes of the “*Agorà*”<sup>190</sup> operation, in addition to highlighting its growing interest in the economic activities of neighboring territories, made it possible to execute the confiscation<sup>191</sup> of movable property, real estate and business compounds belonging to the *boss* and two entrepreneurs believed to be “close” to the *consorteria*. The measure, executed by the Carabinieri of Catania on **April 26, 2023**, involved assets of about EUR 10 million. The same investigative context also highlighted the full operativeness of the RAMACCA *famiglia*, which, after years of being weakened, was once again found to be hegemonic in the territory of its influence, with projections also in the Municipality of Palagonia (Catania). As previously mentioned, other rigidly organized and historically rooted *consorterie* are active in the area, both in the city context and in peripheral areas, with a propensity to extend their operations beyond the province of Etna. The CAPPELLO-BONACCORSI and LAUDANI *clans* appear to be among the most active in Etna’s

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<sup>187</sup> Reference is made to the “*Vento di Sirocco*” operation (OCCC no. 8098/16 RGNR and no. 4999/17 RG GIP from January 2020), which showed relationships between *famiglia* members and entrepreneurs active in the management of fuel distribution facilities involved in operations aimed at tax fraud.

<sup>188</sup> Specifically, on February 6, 2023, a top member of the *consorteria*, following an argument, was wounded with a stabbing weapon, while on the following March 27, 2023, an act of intimidation was carried out against the wife of another top member of the *clan*, who is currently in prison.

<sup>189</sup> Historically connected to the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglie*.

<sup>190</sup> OCC no. 12138/16 RGNR, no. 1864/19 RG GIP issued on June 1, 2022 by the Court of Catania. The operation also reportedly highlighted the full vitality of the RAMACCA *famiglia*, which, after years of being weakened, was now revitalized and once again hegemonic in its home territory with influence even in the Municipality of Palagonia.

<sup>191</sup> Decree of confiscation no. 9/2023/RSS - 4/23 Seq, issued by the Court of Catania.

criminal landscape, by virtue of the number of affiliates and the typically military organization that would characterize them. The CAPPELLO sodality, active mainly in the San Cristoforo neighborhood in the sectors of narcotics, illegal betting and online games, also incorporates within it the team of the BONACCORSI *famiglia*, better known as “Carateddi”. The *clan* also claims significant criminal weight outside the province, particularly in Syracuse and Ragusa, with interests in some municipalities in the Enna area<sup>192</sup> and in the Ionian strip of the province of Messina, where it’s represented by the CINTORINO Mafia *gruppo* active in Calatabiano (Catania)<sup>193</sup>. During the semester, the already mentioned “*Slot machine*” and “*Car Back*” operations, also highlighted the *clan*’s ability, on one hand, to do business with the historic Catanese *Cosa Nostra famiglia*, on the other hand, to overcome historical frictions, even with the CURSOTI<sup>194</sup> *clan*, whenever the businesses appear to be convenient and profitable. In particular, on **February 8, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Catania, during the “*Slot machine*” operation, executed a preventive detention order against an association that allegedly operated a major drug trafficking ring. The investigations, which began on the basis of previous inquiries<sup>195</sup>, would have made it possible to determine “...*the operation over an appreciable and large span of time (including at least from August 2018 to August 2020) of an organic and stable network of individuals...*” led by 4 brothers, linked by a kinship tie to a well-known member of the CAPPELLO-BONACCORSI *clan*. The sodality “...*having control thanks to the brothers ... and stable connections with suppliers in Tuscany, Calabria and indirectly Albania (via Puglia) ...*” allegedly managed “...*a regular, flourishing and organized traffic of narcotic substances of the types of cocaine, marijuana and hashish.*” For the supply of drugs, the *consorteria* would have used two main channels: one based in Tuscany, the other active in the provincial capital of Etna and linked to a well-known member of the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglia*. The drugs, once they arrived in the Etna provincial capital, were allegedly fed into local drug markets run by other associates. The same investigative context also allowed for the confiscation of 11 economic activities, numerous real estate assets and financial relations. The following **May 5, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Catania concluded the “*Car Back*” operation, which identified two Mafia-type associations operating in the Catania area in the sectors of car theft and drug trafficking. The investigation, which began

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<sup>192</sup> Referred to the “*Ultra*” operation (2020).

<sup>193</sup> As confirmed by the outcomes of the previously mentioned “*Tuppetturu*” operation last November.

<sup>194</sup> Already during last semester’s “*Zeus*” operation (OCC no. 13645/18 RGNR, no. 9913/19 RG GIP issued on November 18, 2022) executed on November 29, 2022, by the State Police of Catania, made it possible to prove the existence of several Mafia *summits* between members of the CURSOTI *clan* and high-ranking members of the CAPPELLO-BONACCORSI *clan* aimed at mediating economic frictions and contrasts between the two *consorterie*.

<sup>195</sup> Criminal proceeding no. 5870/18 RGNR (so-called “*La Vallette*” operation) against a branched *consorteria*, consisting of Italians and foreigners operating in Sicily, Calabria and Malta, dedicated to trafficking large quantities of cocaine, marijuana and hashish.

with an analysis of the phenomenon of car thefts aimed at extortion perpetrated through the so-called “*cavallo di ritorno*”<sup>196</sup> method, developed into two distinct lines of investigation. Under the first one, the activity of “...several ‘batterie’ dedicated to car thefts and subsequent extortion, with operational bases found in the San Giorgio, Monte Po and San Cristoforo neighborhoods...” was found. In particular, in the course of the investigation it was found that the three *batterie*, each of which was responsible for a specific area “...the ‘batteria’ of San Giorgio concentrated its interests in the central Catania area, that of San Cristoforo in the area of the city and Etna shopping centers, while that of Monte Po in the villages bordering the City of Catania as well as in the area of San Nullo-Nesima...”, carried out car thefts through sophisticated methodologies that, although they required a greater economic investment by the consortium, were characterized “...by greater discretion and less visibility outside...” guaranteeing, moreover, total security in carrying out the thefts. The investigation also made it possible to identify two “intermediaries” to whom “...the victims of the thefts usually turned, directly or through ‘acquaintances’, in order to receive their cars back in exchange for the payment of a sum of money...”. Vehicles not intended for the extortion phenomenon described were sent to other channels of handling of stolen goods found in different areas of Sicily<sup>197</sup>. The suspects in this strand would turn out to be close to the CAPPELLO-BONACCORSI and CURSOTI MILANESI clans. The second strand of the investigation “...investigated an activity dedicated to the trade of narcotics linked to the Cappello clan of Catania and were identified ...” several dealing squares located in the territory of the capital and one in the territory of Nicolosi (Catania). This aspect, once again, confirms how the consortia present in Etna territory, converge on the same illicit interests and, for the achievement of the same, agree on the division of territories. Indeed, the acts of the precautionary order “...identified ...omissis..., a leading element of the CAPPELLO Mafia clan, and outlined the relations between the same and militants of other Mafia clans.” At the same time, it was understood how the same, together with other individuals “...was the organizer of a substantial drug dealing activity of the ‘cocaine’ type”<sup>198</sup>. The investigative activity also established that the consortia operating in both the illegal activities related to theft, handling of stolen goods, money laundering and extortion, as well as those related to drug trafficking, used a Catania-based car rental company as their operative base. The latter therefore turned out to be “...the central point of the investigative activity in relation to both strands under investigation and, with regard to the activity related to drug trafficking, was the logistical base for negotiations, agreements

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<sup>196</sup> (Translator’s note) “return horse” an illegal practice generally consisting of requesting the payment of a ransom, addressed to those who have undergone a theft, to get back what has been stolen.

<sup>197</sup> Palagonia (Catania), Acireale (Catania), Scordia (Catania), Riesi (Caltanissetta) e Francofonte (Siracusa) were receiving locations for stolen cars.

<sup>198</sup> Among the suspects in said strand are several individuals believed to belong to both the CAPPELLO and CURSOTI MILANESI clans.

and payments...”. The CAPPELLO *clan*’s interest in drug trafficking, often also carried out in collaboration with other criminal organizations<sup>199</sup>, is further confirmed in the six-month period by the outcomes of the “Fox”<sup>200</sup> operation, ended in **May 2023** by the Carabinieri of Marsala (Trapani). The investigation made it possible to establish the functioning of a criminal organization, promoter of a lucrative traffic of cocaine on the Marsala (Trapani)-Catania axis. The narcotics were transported by means of cars and vans rented from two conspiring sales and car rental companies located in Marsala (Trapani), which were subjected to preventive seizures in the same investigative context.

The preventive activity is relevant. It is aimed at attacking the illicit assets, executed over time against individuals regarded as members of the CAPPELLO-BONACCORSI *clan*. On this matter, in the semester, the DIA (Anti-Mafia Investigation Department) of Catania executed a confiscation order<sup>201</sup> of the entire business compendium of two companies active in the reception and handling of the waste sector, numerous properties, a factory, plots of land, vehicles and banking and financial relationships for a value of EUR 18 million, against the lineage of a deceased previous offenders considered as the entrepreneurial face of the CAPPELLO *clan*.

The above highlights how the CAPPELLO *clan*, always equipped with weapons, even assault weapons, represents one of the fiercest *clans* in the area, on the same level as the CURSOTI MILANESI. Regarding the last faction, it is reported that the “Eureka”<sup>202</sup> operation, executed by the Carabinieri of Reggio Calabria in **May 2023**, although based on a substantial cocaine trafficking run by Calabrian *ndrine*, involved a prominent element of the organization in question, who resulted as buyer of a 7 kg batch of cocaine to place later in the various open-air drug markets of Catania. The investigation underlines the *clan*’s ability to maintain stable connections even with other criminal

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<sup>199</sup> As has already emerged from the results of the previously mentioned “Zeus” investigation of last semester, that reconstructed cocaine trafficking on the Campania-Sicily axis, within which the role of some members of the CAPPELLO-BONACCORSI *clan* was outlined, who allegedly acted as cocaine traffickers in *joint venture* with the SAUTTO-CICCARELLI *Camorra clan* of Caivano (Napoli).

<sup>200</sup> OCCC no. 1516/2021 RGNR - 2572/21 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Marsala (Trapani) on **May 4, 2023**.

<sup>201</sup> No. 43/19 RSS - 108/23 RD, issued by District Court of Catania - Preventive Measures Section - on **May 31, 2023**. The assets already subject to seizure in 2020 (Confiscation order no. 43/19 RSS - 19/20 R. Seq, issued on May 25, 2020).

<sup>202</sup> OCCC no. 5886/2022 RGNR-DDA - 2520/2022 RGGIP, issued by the GIP (Preliminary Investigation Judge) of the Court of Reggio Calabria on **March 13, 2023**. The investigation allowed the arrest of 200 individuals, operating throughout the national territory and some EU countries, believed to belong to a global network created by the *ndrine* of Aspromonte to supply European cocaine markets from South America. The ports of Rotterdam (Netherlands), Anvers (Belgium) and Gioia Tauro became real hubs of cocaine. The investigation, further confirmation of how the *Ndrangheta* is able to manage large international drug trafficking, made it possible to seize 23 tons of cocaine for a value of about EUR 25 million, but once “cut” and placed in Italian and foreign open-air drug market, it allegedly guaranteed earnings for the criminal system for about EUR 2 billion.

groups outside their territorial context, as well as the high volume of financial resources at their disposal.

Another *consorteria* that continues to establish itself on the territory thanks to its strong ability of reorganization<sup>203</sup>, despite being hit by numerous police operations<sup>204</sup> and ablative measures, is the LAUDANI *clan*, always allied with the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglia*. Active in the city and the hinterland, where they would prefer the field of drugs, extortion and exploitation, they allegedly extended their criminal interests even in North Italy<sup>205</sup>. Their extra-urban entrenchment is reflected in the Nebrodi territories of Adrano, where the SCALISI *famiglia* is an expression of it, and of Randazzo, where the SANGANI *clan* rules. The existence and the operability of the association SANGANI – RAGAGLIA<sup>206</sup> is confirmed by the results of the “*Terra Bruciata*”<sup>207</sup> operation carried out last semester by the Carabinieri of Catania.

Lastly, the presence of other minor *gruppi* on the Etna territory is noted: the SCIUTO clan (Tigna), at this point relegated to a residual role, whose free members have allegedly moved to the CAPPELLO-BONACCORSI *clan*; the PIACENTI *clan* (Ceusi), rooted in the Picanello neighborhood, where it lives with the SANTAPAOLA *famiglia*, always interested in the organization of illegal horse-racing, illegal betting and arms trafficking<sup>208</sup>; the PILLERA-DI MAURO *clan* (Puntina)<sup>209</sup>, whose members have almost totally merged with the LAUDANI *clan* since the '90s. Last semester they showed their operability in the “*Consolazione*”<sup>210</sup> operation and, during the period under review, from the outcomes of the “*Sotto Traccia*”<sup>211</sup> investigation, executed on **May 16, 2023** by the State Police of Catania against 9 individuals under investigation for aggravated exploitation.

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<sup>203</sup> On January 18, 2021, Carabinieri of Paternò (Catania) arrested (EO prison sentence no. 46/2021 SIEP issued by the Court of Catania – Penal Execution Department) the wife of the head of the RAPISARDA *gruppo*, active in the town of Paternò and local set-up of the LAUDANI *clan*, currently detained. The woman has been held responsible for Mafia-type criminal offenses and extortion aggravated by Mafia method.

<sup>204</sup> Reference is made to the operation “*I Vicerè*” (2016) with the arrest of 109 companions.

<sup>205</sup> It is highlighted a particular attitude to enter the field of legal economy as shown in the “*Follow the money*” operation of February 2021 (OCC 15389/2018 RGNR - 10602/2019 RG GIP), already outlined in the previous six-month report.

<sup>206</sup> Proc. no. 336/1999 RGNR (“*Spiderman*” operation) and proc. no. 2384/1999 RGNR (“*Spiderman2*”).

<sup>207</sup> OCC no. 11080/18 RGNR and no.7652/19 RGGIP issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on **October 7, 2022**.

<sup>208</sup> Some investigations dating back to 2016, placed the *clan* in the international arms trafficking overview (as stated in the Europol/SOCTA report of 2017). The area of interest still results to be the subject of the *clan*’s attentions. In the semester, a representative has been referred to the A.G. (Judicial Authority) for the possession of material suitable for the modification of weapons.

<sup>209</sup> Allied for a long time with the “*Borgo gruppo*” and the DI MAURO *famiglia* called “*Puntina*”.

<sup>210</sup> OCCC no. 568/15 RGNR - 305/16 RGGIP, executed by State Police of Catania on January 11, 2022.

<sup>211</sup> OCCC no. 5900/19 RGNR - 180/21 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on **May 8, 2023**.



From the investigations, the application of usurious rates (even up to 490% annually) at low-value loans emerged.

Moreover, it is pointed out that on the territory of Etna serious criminal incidents often arise from individuals not organically integrated in Mafia-type criminal groups examined hitherto. This has been confirmed by the results of the “9x21”<sup>212</sup> investigation, ended on **February 10, 2023**, by the Carabinieri of Gravina di Catania, that verified the operability of a criminal group dedicated to the commission of multiple crimes against persons and property<sup>213</sup>. Another confirmation came from the “*Medicament*”<sup>214</sup> investigation, which saw the involvement of minors in the commission of similar crimes<sup>215</sup>. However, in a high-density Mafia territory like Catania, it cannot be excluded the concealed control of the best structured criminal organizations of Etna, in the use, as “laborers”, of said *gruppi*.

Another event often observed in the territory of Catania is corruption, that sometimes shows the symbiotic involvement of local administrators, public officials and individuals contiguous to historical criminal groups. On this matter in the semester in question, although no direct Mafia interest has been found, two investigations are pointed out. The first, ended on **January 16, 2023**, by the Carabinieri of Catania<sup>216</sup>, reportedly brought out the illicit interferences that a local former politician performed on the previous sole administrator of a company under full public ownership. The crimes charged against the suspects are undue inducement to give or to promise advantages, embezzlement, corruption, counterfeiting and use of public seals. The other complex investigation<sup>217</sup>, ended on **April 29, 2023** by the Carabinieri of Catania, made it possible to uncover illicit procedures, enacted by some public officials<sup>218</sup>, representatives of regional politics, together with private professionals, aimed at manipulating and predefining the content of public calls to tender regarding some projects

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<sup>212</sup> OCCC no. 1127/22 RGNR - 10035/22RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on **January 26, 2023**.

<sup>213</sup> The investigations allowed the arrest of 9 individuals and 8 more have been referred at-large because all suspects, in various capacities, of crimes of aggravated robbery acting jointly, carrying of weapons or other harmful objects, kidnapping acting jointly, forgery committed by P.U. (public officials) acting jointly and determined by the deception of others, sale of drugs, production, sale, possession, carrying and trade of clandestine weapons and receiving stolen goods.

<sup>214</sup> OCCC no. 8612/22 RGNR - 10406/22 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on **February 9, 2023**, and OCC no. 144/23 RGMR - 267/23 RGGIP, issued by the Juvenile Court on **February 13, 2023**.

<sup>215</sup> Fifteen individuals, of which 5 subject to restrictive measure, investigated, in various capacities, for aggravated robbery, committed and attempted, possession of stolen goods, attempted extortion and distribution of drugs.

<sup>216</sup> In execution of OCC no. 14241/19 RGNR - 5090/20 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on December 17, 2022.

<sup>217</sup> OCCC no. 7229/2020 RGNR - 4030/2022 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on **April 28, 2023**. Overall, 17 individuals, in various capacities, are held responsible for crimes of bid rigging, interference with the tender process and corruption for contrary acts to the duties of office or service.

<sup>218</sup> Of universities, hospital authorities and medical associations of Catania and Palermo.

financed by the State, even in terms of scholarships frequently assigned to individuals linked by family ties, kinship and friendship to the promoters of the illicit activity.

Moreover, it shall not be understated the Mafia's ability to influence the administrative machinery of local bodies. Attention remains high towards events that could suggest a Mafia infiltration in the apparatus of the Public Administration often perpetrated through the corruption of public officials who to that end act as *trait d'union* between criminal groups and public authorities. In this regard, because of verified Mafia infiltrations, "receivership" of the Municipality of Calatabiano (Catania)<sup>219</sup> remains. In this perspective, the inspection, placed last semester by the Prefect of Catania<sup>220</sup> at the Municipality of Castiglione di Sicilia and ended on **February 28, 2023**, highlighted "*la sussistenza di concreti, univoci e rilevanti elementi su collegamenti diretti e indiretti degli amministratori locali con la criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso e su forme di condizionamento degli stessi*"<sup>221 222</sup>. The prefectorial activity is carried on in the semester with the inspection<sup>223</sup> of the Municipality of Randazzo, in order to "...*verificare l'eventuale sussistenza di elementi concreti, univoci e rilevanti su collegamenti diretti o indiretti con la criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso...*"<sup>224</sup>.

On **April 21, 2023**, it was registered the outcome of the prefectorial access at the Municipality of Palagonia, already established last semester by the Prefect of Catania<sup>225</sup> in order to verify potential Mafia interferences<sup>226</sup>.

Moreover, the law enforcement actions in combating organized crime developed in terms of administrative prevention. In the semester, the Prefect of Catania issued 9 prohibitive orders against companies recognized to have symptoms of Mafia influence.

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<sup>219</sup> Presidential Decree of October 18, 2021, and following extension of **February 21, 2023**.

<sup>220</sup> Prefect of Catania's Decree no. 1147/22R/SDS NATO EU of October 21, 2022.

<sup>221</sup> Pending formal Presidential Decree, the municipality was brought to an end with Council of Ministers' Decree on **May 23, 2023**.

<sup>222</sup> "*the existence of concrete, unambiguous and relevant elements on direct and indirect connections of local administrators with Mafia-type organized crime and forms of conditioning thereof*".

<sup>223</sup> Prefect of Catania's Decree no. 1256/R/2023/SDS NATO EU of **March 16, 2023**.

<sup>224</sup> "...*verify the potential existence of concrete, unambiguous and relevant elements on direct or indirect connections with Mafia-type organized crime...*"

<sup>225</sup> Prefect of Catania's Decree no. 1243/22R/SDS NATO EU of November 14, 2022.

<sup>226</sup> Although outside the reporting period, it shall be reported that such interferences were verified, and the municipality was brought to an end with the Presidential Decree of **August 9, 2023**.

Special emphasis will be placed on the presence of foreign criminal groups<sup>227</sup> in the Catania territory, mainly dedicated to the exploitation of the prostitution of others, of undeclared work and of labor exploitation (Caporalato), as well as to the trade in counterfeit goods and to the distribution of drugs. Instead, more structured associations are the ones of Nigerian origin, based on *cultism* and identified by different initials<sup>228</sup>, whose operability was discovered from the outcomes of the “*Family Light House of Sicily*”<sup>229</sup> operation of 2020 and confirmed, last semester, by the arrest<sup>230</sup> of a Nigerian responsible for Mafia association aimed at drug trafficking and for the support of a Mafia association called EIYE or *The Supreme Eiye Confraternity* (SEC). In the period under review, it was verified the presence and the operability of some African criminal groups, mainly of the *Sahel* area, considered to be implicated in human trafficking. On **April 19, 2023**, the State Police of Catania, under the “*Landaya*”<sup>231</sup> operation, executed a detention of crime suspects crime against 17 individuals believed to be responsible for conspiracy aimed at the facilitation of illegal immigration aggravated by transnationality. The following investigations<sup>232</sup> discovered an articulated criminal association consisting of many operating groups in Africa (Libya, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Tunisia and Morocco), in Italy (Genoa, Turin, Asti, Cuneo and Ventimiglia) and in France, dedicated to the crime of facilitation of illegal immigration in favor of clients (women, men, children and even newborns) who paid considerable amounts of money to reach Europe, France in particular.

## Province of Syracuse

In the city of Syracuse, the presence of Mafia groups that use their influence on well-defined territories is significant. In the northern part of the city is shown the activity of the SANTA PANAGIA *gruppo*, a city division of the widespread NARDO-APARO-TRIGILA *gruppo* connected, in turn, to the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglia* of Catania’s *Cosa Nostra*. In the city there is also the BOTTARO-ATTANASIO *association*, linked to the CAPPELLO *clan* of Etna and active in

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<sup>227</sup> Often, there are dangerous links of involvement with the most structured local criminal groups.

<sup>228</sup> MAPHITE, EIYE, VICKINGS, BLACK AXE, etc.

<sup>229</sup> In Catania, Palermo and Messina, the State Police executed OCC no. 6906/19 RGNR - 3642/20 RG GIP issued by the Court of Catania, allowing to persecute 28 Nigerians believed to be responsible for Mafia-type association, drug trafficking and sale, exploitation of the prostitution of others, counterfeiting and falsification of documents for the purposes of illegal residence on the State territory.

<sup>230</sup> In execution of OCC no. 8463/18 RGNR and no. 3848/20 RG GIP of February 7, 2022.

<sup>231</sup> Detention of suspects of crime in the criminal procedure no. 3492/21 RGNR.

<sup>232</sup> Concluded with the execution of the OCC no. 3492/21 RGNR - 1406/22 RGGIP, by the GIP of the Court of Catania on **August 1, 2023**.

extortions and distribution of drugs, which in the semester was affected by the execution of an asset seizure of the value of about EUR 1 million<sup>233</sup>.

Generally, the illicit interests of the *clans* are allegedly guaranteed through a logic of peaceful allocation<sup>234</sup> of territory for their independent management, even though there are sometimes criminal episodes linked to plausible territorial overlaps or late or non-payment of drug batches as shown by the attempted murder of a believed member of SANTA PANAGIA<sup>235</sup> group, which took place in Syracuse on **February 7, 2023**.

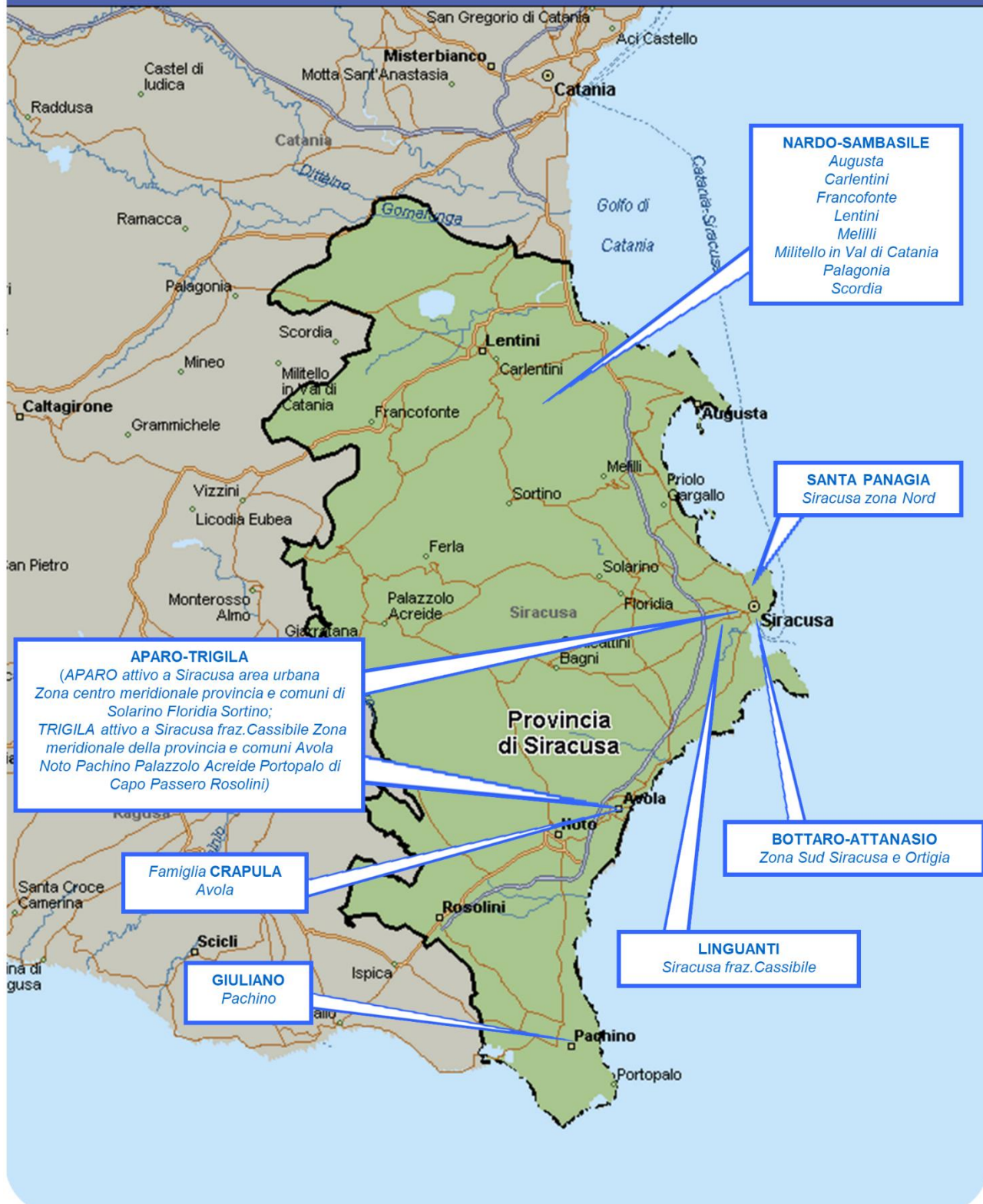
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<sup>233</sup> Seizure order no. 146/2022 RSS and no. 18/2022 R. Seq. issued by the Court of Catania on December 22, 2022 – Section MP and executed by Guardia di Finanza of Syracuse. The preventive seizure measure examined immovable property, business activities and economic relations, for a value higher than EUR 1 million, headed by a believed member of the BOTTARO-ATTANASIO *clan*.

<sup>234</sup> The outlined scenario is confirmed by the “*Demetra*” investigation (2020) which highlighted the operability of two criminal groups in Syracuse dedicated to the distribution of drugs, mainly supplied by Etna associations, both with structural and operational autonomy in the area management, as well as the head of one of the criminal groups recognized in a member “close” to the BOTTARO-ATTANASIO *clan*. The management of the open-air drug market took place taking advantage of subgroups based on an allocation of territory criteria. Previous investigations highlighted the existence of an alliance project between city factions of the BOTTARO-ATTANASIO and of the SANTA PANAGIA. Satellite groups emerge: the so-called “*Gruppo della Borgata*”, connected to the BOTTARO-ATTANASIO *clan* and the “*Gruppo della Via Italia*” connected to the SANTA PANAGIA.

<sup>235</sup> The State Police implemented a decree of crime suspect detention against 2 previous offenders for attempted murder against another previous offender believed to be a member of the SANTA PANAGIA *gruppo*. The latter, who was under house arrest and had escaped for a few days, was arrested in execution of a judicial measure which had the aggravation of the protective measure, replaced by pretrial detention in prison. Suspects were charged with illegal carrying of weapons and possession of stolen goods.

# Provincia di Siracusa



\*Province of Syracuse

SANTA PANAGIA (Syracuse northern area)

APARO-TRIGILA (APARO active in Syracuse urban area, the south-central area of the province and the Municipalities of Solarino, Floridia, Sortino; TRIGILA active in the Syracuse Cassibile locality, southern area of the province and Municipalities of Avola, Noto, Pachino, Palazzolo Acreide, Portopalo di Capo Passero Rosolini)

CRAPULA *famiglia* Avola

BOTTARO-ATTANASIO southern area Syracuse and Ortigia

LINGUANTI Syracuse Cassibile locality

The northern part of the province, specifically the municipalities of Lentini, Carlentini, Francofonte and Augusta, are supposedly affected by the influence of the NARDO-SAMBASILE *famiglia*, which, taking advantage of the support of the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglia* and having a well-known intimidating force<sup>236</sup>, would exercise full territorial control through the imposition of extortion, the management of distribution of drugs as well as the direct and indirect control of local businesses operating in different economic sectors<sup>237</sup> until the monopolization of entire divisions<sup>238</sup>.

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<sup>236</sup> As noticed in the investigation's results (OCC no.7472/2020 RGNR and no. 5159/21 RGGIP issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on October 31, 2022), started in 2020 and ended last semester by the Carabinieri with the arrest of 5 people. The investigation furnished proof of how the suspects, "close" to the NARDO *clan* of Lentini and SANTA PANAGIA *clan* of Syracuse, both connected to the SANTAPAOLA *famiglia* of Catania, "...they executed acts of violence and threatening competition against ... (owner of the namesake funeral homes, one located in Syracuse ... and the other in Sortino ...) firstly to prevent the opening of the activity in the Municipality of Sortino and, after the opening, to prevent the concrete exercise..." A participating businessman is also among the suspects, who was under the protection of the NARDO *clan*.

<sup>237</sup> This was found in previous investigations "Chaos" and "Mazzetta Sicula" and was confirmed by the recent "Agorà" operation (OCC no. 12138/16 RGNR and no. 1864/19 RGGIP issued by the Court of Catania on June 1, 2022), executed by Carabinieri on June 16, 2022 against 55 people believed to be responsible, in various capacities, of Mafia-type association, drug trafficking association, extortion, unlawful competition, fraudulent transfer, bid rigging, all aggravated by the Mafia method. In the operation, 9 companies were under preventive seizure. They were operating in the sectors of construction, logistics and funeral service, as well as current account and banking relationships for a value of about EUR 12 million. The territory control from the NARDO faction, would be functional to a parasitic logic for the acquisition of financial resources useful to the consolidation of Mafia interests. Moreover, the "Agorà" operation registered the interest of the Catania *Cosa Nostra* (SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglia*, NARDO *gruppo* and LA ROCCA *famiglia*) in the distribution mechanism of the contract related to the cemetery services management of the Municipality of Vizzini. It was also verified the management, by the NARDO and SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglie*, of a thriving drug trafficking, which led to the seizure of 108 kg of marijuana.

<sup>238</sup> It is recalled the confiscation of property (no. 106/R.S.S. and no. 207/22 R.D., issued by the Court of Catania on October 7, 2022), for a value of about EUR 50 million, executed by a major member of the NARDO *association*, although a lifer confined in special detention, they allegedly were able to manage their companies, active in the sector

The southern part of the province, specifically the Municipalities of Noto, Pachino, Avola and Rosolini, would be under the control of the TRIGILA *clan* whose interests include drug trafficking, extortion<sup>239</sup> and infiltration in economic activities often thanks to the mediation of complacent entrepreneurs<sup>240</sup>. The TRIGILA *clan* is allegedly connected to other criminal groups operating in the province. In Cassibile (Syracuse) the LINGUANTI *association* would be active, while in Pachino and Portopalo di Capo Passero territories the GIULIANO *clan* would work, as indicated in previous investigations, “close” to the CAPPELLO of Catania<sup>241</sup>.

The foothill area of the province is supposed to be influenced by the APARO criminal group, dedicated to extortions, usury, and drugs<sup>242</sup>.

The outlined criminal scenery would include other criminal associations. Even though they don’t follow the structural model of *Cosa Nostra*, they would equally have significant roles towards any illicit activity: from drug trafficking and distribution<sup>243</sup> to extortion, from usury to gambling<sup>244</sup>. This

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of transport, under a substantial monopoly. With the preventive seizure measure, special surveillance of the State Police was ordered for 3 years.

<sup>239</sup> As evidence of the operability exercised by the faction in the extortions sector, on December 22, 2022 in Noto and Avola, the Carabinieri, in execution of OCC no. 4326/21 R.G. Mod. 21 and no. 2702/2022 R.GIP, issued by the Court of Catania on December 19, 2022, arrested two previous offenders connected to the TRIGILA *clan* as responsible of attempted extortion against an entrepreneur of Avola, which profits were allegedly destined to the court costs for the defense of a head member of the *association*.

<sup>240</sup> Reference is made to the “*Robin Hood*” operation executed, in January 2021, by 13 alleged members of the TRIGILA *clan*. It made it possible to verify how the *clan* was able to pollute the local economic structure, besides managing the distribution of drugs and through extortion on the area of competence.

<sup>241</sup> “*Araba fenice*” operation of July 2018.

<sup>242</sup> The faction operability is reflected in the outcomes of the “*San Paolo*” operation of July 2020, already described in the previous Reports. Part of the profits of the criminal activities was invested in the purchase of important batches of drugs supplied by members of the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO *famiglia* and later placed in the open-air drug market of Solarino and Floridia.

<sup>243</sup> On **January 17, 2023**, in Syracuse, the State Police arrested a person for possession of drugs with intent to distribute drugs. Inside the residence, during the search more than 1 kg of cocaine, more than 1 kg of marijuana and about 824 grams of hashish divided in blocks and fragments were found, as well as a significant amount of material used to break down the drug into various doses and quantities. A blank gun was also found and seized, modified by hand, brand Bruni mod. 32, with its magazine and ammunition. On **May 30, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Syracuse arrested an individual for possession with intent to distribute drugs and possession of illegal weapons. During the personal and domestic search, more than 3 kg of cocaine and two guns were found. More than 4 kg of cocaine and various amounts of marijuana and hashish are the basis of the operation ended in Syracuse by the Carabinieri with the arrest of two people and the denunciation of another two people in execution of a search order on **June 12, 2023**. During the activity, two rifles were also found, one with an abraded serial number, and more than EUR 140 thousand in cash was seized, profit of the illicit activity.

<sup>244</sup> The “*Ludos*” investigation of the State Police (OCC no. 4455/20 RGNR and no. 967/21 RGGIP of Court of Syracuse dated September 28, 2021), ended with the arrest of 11 individuals responsible of conspiracy aimed at the illegal practice of game activities and online betting on illegal websites, as well as illegal practice of credit activities and usury; it made it possible to dismantle a transnational association active in Augusta (Syracuse), with ramification in Catania and Malta, dedicated to the illegal practice of gaming and online betting on non-registered websites in Italy.

is confirmed, in the semester, by the outcomes of three different investigations carried out in the field of drugs. The “*Gemini*”<sup>245</sup> operation, ended on **March 2, 2023**, by the State Police of Avola, allowed to the arrest of six individuals believed to be responsible for cocaine and heroin production, trafficking and possession. Particularly, the investigation found out how the criminal group provided for the supply of drugs, delegated to two different individuals, and provided for the following dealing handed by *pushers* active “24/7”. The investigations verified a widespread organization and showed how the two individuals responsible for the supply, had a real “*partnership*” aimed at making a dense sale network, not only to attract local customers, but also those coming from the south-central area of the Syracuse province.

Another investigation<sup>246</sup>, ended on **March 2, 2023**, allowed the Carabinieri to arrest three individuals, promoters of a systematic activity of cocaine and crack dealing based in Syracuse. During the activity it was shown how the association committed serious acts of intimidation against shops linked to debtor customers to obtain the payment of unpaid drug debts.

On **May 11, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Catania and the Palermo Penitentiary Police Investigation Unit executed the “*Alcatraz*”<sup>247</sup> operation which made it possible to find a criminal association, promoted and managed by two prisoners, dedicated to drug supply and distribution, mainly hashish, inside the Augusta (Syracuse) house of detention. The criminal activity was possible thanks to the use of illegally introduced cell phones, which were the main tool for communications inside and outside of the penitentiary. The investigation highlighted “...*la sussistenza di una struttura organizzativa a carattere permanente, con una chiara e ben individuata ripartizione dei compiti tra gli associati in merito alla realizzazione di un programma indeterminato di reati in materia di stupefacenti, con la correlativa gestione dei proventi...*”<sup>248</sup>.

As well as in the remaining regional territory, even in Syracuse, episodes of corruption, that is abuse of public officials’ power, continue to occur, even if they aren’t always linked to Mafia crime dynamics, aimed at the pursuit of undue benefits. In the previous semester, the outcomes of an

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<sup>245</sup> On **March 2, 2023**, in Avola (Syracuse) the State Police executed OCC no. 501/2022 RGNR and no. 5067/2022 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Syracuse on **February 27, 2023**.

<sup>246</sup> On **March 2, 2023**, in Syracuse, the Carabinieri executed OCC no. 6654/21 RGNR and no. 2844/22 RG GIP issued by the Court of Syracuse on **February 24, 2023**, against 5 investigated people, in various capacities, for crimes of damage to property, illegal carrying of an explosive device, extortion, kidnapping, robbery, illegal possession of drugs with intent of dealing.

<sup>247</sup> OCC no. 10221/22 RGNR - 6760/22 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Catania on April 19, 2023.

<sup>248</sup> “...*the existence of a permanent organizational structure, with a clear distribution of tasks between the members concerning the creation of an indeterminate program of crimes in the field of narcotics, with the proceeds management...*”.



investigation<sup>249</sup> of the State Police and Guardia di Finanza led to the arrest of an administrator of the Municipality of Priolo Gargallo (Syracuse), investigated for bribery, incitement to corruption, attempted bribery and forgery. Consequently, because of the fall of the entire Municipal Council, on **February 13, 2023**, the President of the Sicily region nominated<sup>250</sup> an extraordinary commissioner for the management of the institution until new elections which took place in **May 2023**. Similar episodes also occurred in the Municipality of Syracuse, where the State Police arrested<sup>251</sup> two individuals, including a municipal official, investigated for such crimes<sup>252</sup> committed in relation to the illegal buying and selling of burials in the Syracuse cemetery. On March 30, 2023, in Pozzallo (Ragusa), an official of the Municipality of Pachino (Syracuse) together with a regional official were arrested *in flagrante delicto* for bribery and for releasing some municipal authorizations<sup>253</sup>.

The outcomes of previous investigations made it possible to verify the constant presence of active foreign associations on the province territory, especially in the exploitation of the prostitution of others, human trafficking and facilitation of illegal immigration. On this matter, on **February 14, 2023**, the State Police executed a restraining order<sup>254</sup> against a Nigerian woman, who lived in the Foggia province, involved in human trafficking between Nigeria, Libya and Italy. The investigation originates from the complaint of a young Nigerian woman disembarked in Augusta (Syracuse) in July 2016. It showed the existence of a Nigerian criminal group which managed the trafficking of young compatriots, lured to Italy with empty promises but aimed at fomenting the prostitution market.

## Province of Ragusa

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<sup>249</sup> OCC no.3836/2021 RGNR and no. 1872022 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Syracuse on September 30, 2022, and executed by the State Police and by the Guardia di Finanza on October 3, 2022.

<sup>250</sup> Decree no. 513/Gab of **February 10, 2023**.

<sup>251</sup> Criminal procedure no. 9113/19 RGNR and no. 2833/21 RG GIP of January 31, 2023.

<sup>252</sup> Undue inducement to give or to promise advantages to others, abuse of office, suppression of corpses and forgery in public acts.

<sup>253</sup> The operation, ended by the State Police of Ragusa, originates from a complaint of a Ragusa entrepreneur, interested in Pachino territory, after the request for money received for the positive outcome of some administrative practices.

<sup>254</sup> OCC no. 244/22 RGNR and no. 259/2022 RG GIP issued by Court of Catania on **January 10, 2022**. In the indicated judicial measure they are charged with crimes of human trafficking, enslavement, aggravated crimes by also acting to the detriment of minors and exposing people to a serious danger to life and limb, facilitation of illegal immigration, exploitation of the prostitution of others and self-laundering of the criminal activity's proceeds. The woman under arrest allegedly managed the transport of different girls and their prostitution, also monitoring different work stations of street prostitutes. During the investigation they found numerous money transactions from Italy to Nigeria thanks to intermediaries offering a service of remittances abroad through an untraceable financial system.

In the province of Ragusa two different Mafia organizations coexist: the *stidda*, rooted in the Vittoria, Comiso, Acate and Scicli territories and the *Cosa Nostra*, influenced by Catania factions and active in the remaining provincial area.

In Vittoria, where the PISCOPO *famiglia* works, linked to the EMMANUELLO *clan* of the Caltanissetta *Cosa Nostra*, the *stiddara* organization maintains a substantially stable structure in which the DOMINANTE-CARBONARO *clan* confirms itself as the association of greater influence despite the leader's<sup>255</sup> detention. The current operability of the *association* was verified in the semester by some investigations that allowed to carry out repressive and preventive measures. In this regard, on **January 10, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Ragusa arrested<sup>256</sup> some individuals belonging to or contiguous to the criminal association, believed to be responsible for extortion against a restaurant. Investigations made it possible to verify how the acts of extortion were preparatory to collecting funds to later allocate to the maintenance of the members of the Mafia *clan*. On the following **January 28**, the State Police of Ragusa arrested<sup>257</sup> an individual linked by family ties to a head member of the *clan*, for attempted extortion against the owner of a beauty salon in Vittoria.

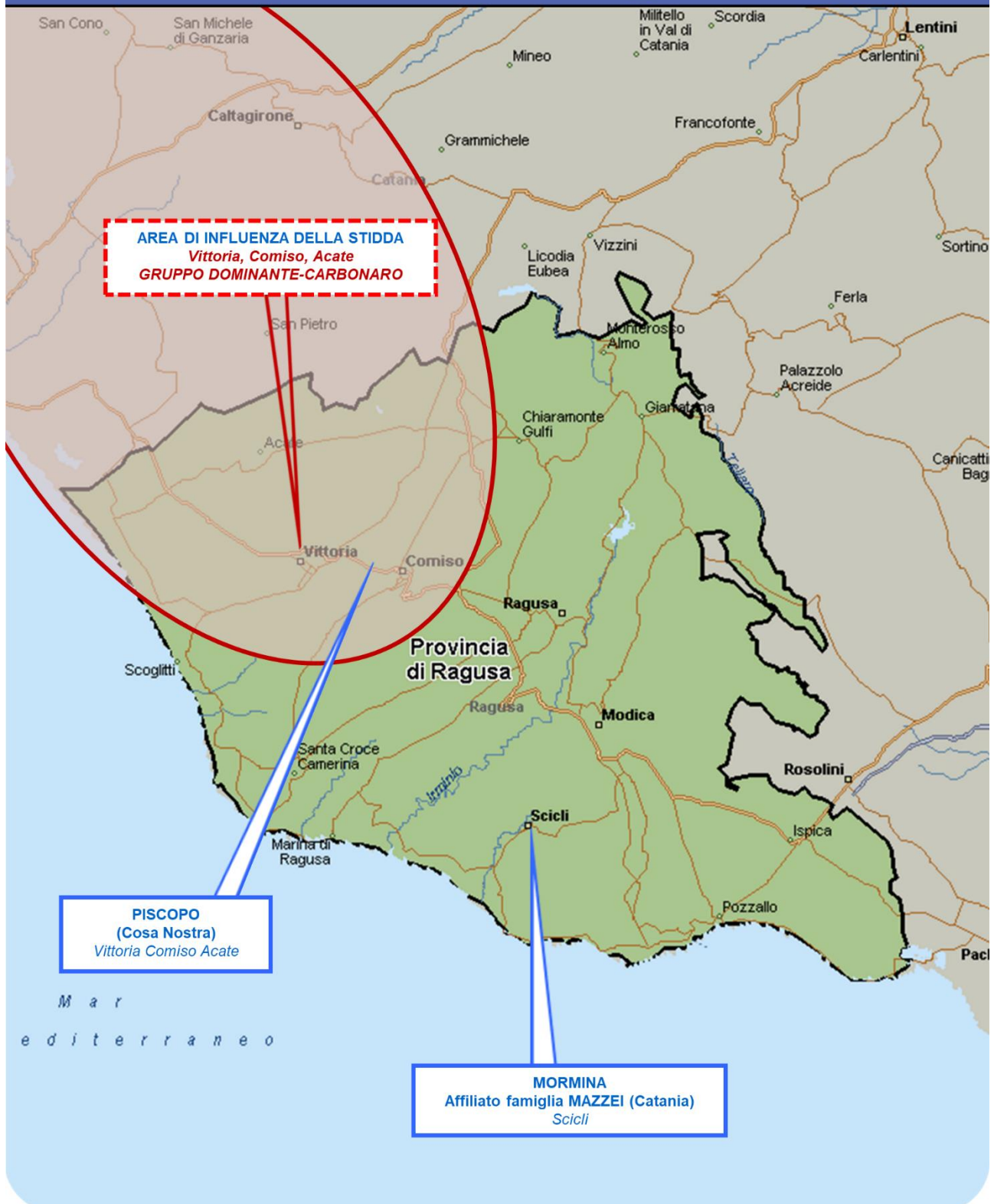
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<sup>255</sup> Affected by the “Reset” operation in 2016 which also involved other related apical members.

<sup>256</sup> In execution of OCCC no. 9711/2020 RGNR and no. 493/2022 RG GIP of December 27, 2022.

<sup>257</sup> In execution of OCCC no. 14318/22 RGNR and no. 9120/22 RG GIP issued by Court of Catania on **January 25, 2023**.

# Provincia di Ragusa



\*Province of Ragusa

STIDDA AREA OF INFLUENCE Vittoria, Comiso, Acate DOMINANTE-CARBONARO  
GRUPPO

MORMINA MAZZEI (Catania) famiglia affiliate Scicli

In Vittoria it is recalled the great importance of the fruit and vegetable market, main *hub* for the harvest and the sorting of the agricultural production in a large part of Sicily. It is in this context that the Mafia factions continue to infiltrate themselves, as highlighted in the semester by the confiscation order<sup>258</sup> of “registered” movable property, executed by the DIA of Catania on **February 8, 2023**. It is connected to an entrepreneur, already under previous protective and preventive seizure measures<sup>259</sup>, believed to be a member of the DOMINANTE-CARBONARO *Stidda clan*, working in different sectors, including the one of the harvest and sorting of the agricultural greenhouses’ plastic of the Vittoria territory. Another confirmation of the faction’s presence in the sector is seen from the outcomes of the asset seizure<sup>260</sup> linked to a leading member of the Vittoria *stidda*, already convicted for Mafia-type association and murder. Among the assets subject to the preventive seizure measure there are 2 companies dealing with the packaging of fruit and vegetables, located in Vittoria.

In the remaining provincial territory, where there is the existence of connections with other Mafia organizations<sup>261</sup>, criminal groups would continue to work, influenced by better structured associations like the Catania ones. In one investigation<sup>262</sup>, ended last semester by the State Police, it was found how some individuals “...*sfruttando la capacità di intimidazione derivante dalla vantata appartenenza a una famiglia potente, che comanda a Catania*”<sup>263</sup>, had attempted an extortion against

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<sup>258</sup> Confiscation order no. 149/20 RSS issued by the Court of Catania- MP Sec. on November 23, 2022, and registered on **February 7, 2023**. With this measure, it was also ordered the personal preventive measure of the Special Surveillance of public security with residency requirement.

<sup>259</sup> In May 2019, the entrepreneur was arrested for a proceeding regarding different crimes of fraudulent bankruptcy through diversion. With the participation of his parents, his wife and his sisters, he enacted a criminal project to retrieve and hold as a reserve non-dangerous plastic waste with the use of different specially-made companies. The subject was involved in the “*Plastic free*” operation of 2019, which made it possible to verify how the *clan* acquired the activity’s monopoly for the reuse of the plastic in agriculture. With Decree no. 149/2020 RSS - 32/2020 R. Seq, issued by the Court of Catania on November 27, 2020, against the entrepreneur, executed on December 3, 2020, it was ordered the seizure of his assets, including two companies working in the clothing industry, two cars and bank balances, worth about EUR 2 million. With a subsequent decree issued by the same Court on January 13, 2021, it was ordered the lifting of the seizure of one of the companies; likewise with a further decree of July 5, 2021, the aforementioned JA (judicial authority) returned the other company to those entitled. Finally, on November 23, 2022, the Court of Catani ordered the entrepreneur the preventive measure of the Special Surveillance of public security for 2 years and 6 months and the confiscation of property executed on February 8.

<sup>260</sup> Seizure order no. 216/2021 RSS issued by the Court of Catania - MP Sec. on **May 25, 2023**.

<sup>261</sup> Reference is made to Scicli (Ragusa) territory where, even though there aren’t current investigative confirmations, there would be the influence of the MORMINA *gruppo*, ramification of the MAZZEI *famiglia* of Catania, mainly dedicated to drug trafficking and extortion.

<sup>262</sup> (OCC no. 397/2022 RGNR and no. 7403/2022 RGGIP issued by the Court of Catania on October 25, 2022),

<sup>263</sup> “...*taking advantage of the ability to intimidate originating from the boasted membership to a powerful famiglia which leads in Catania*”.

a businessman of Modica (Ragusa). Within the same process, on **February 13, 2023** the State Police arrested<sup>264</sup> a previous offender from Catania, believed to be participating in attempted extortion.

Some investigations showed that in Ragusa drug trafficking still represents one of the most profitable illicit businesses<sup>265</sup>, also committed by foreign individuals embedded in the local crime scenario. On this matter, on **January 10, 2023**, the State Police of Ragusa arrested<sup>266</sup> an individual of Romanian origin for possession of 44.5 kg of marijuana with intent of dealing. In **May** and **June 2023**, in two different circumstances, 4 people were arrested<sup>267</sup> and it was discovered a plantation of more than 400 cannabis plants for an amount of more than 145 kg of marijuana and 55 kg of hashish.

## Province of Messina

The territory of the province is the meeting point of illicit trafficking where it was found the presence of other Mafia sources, like *Cosa Nostra* from Palermo and Catania and the *'Ndrangheta cosche*, as well as the local associations. This aspect, on the one hand, allows alliances to be woven, on the other hand, it makes the Messina Mafia take on changeable characteristics depending on the different territories of the province where it acts. Consequently, in the northwest areas, the factions' characteristics have *modus operandi* similar to the Palermo *Cosa Nostra*<sup>268</sup>, while in the capital, on the Ionian strip and in the south of the province, Messina associations are influenced by criminal groups from Etna<sup>269</sup>. Moreover, the criminal concentration of the neighboring the Calabrian *'ndrine*, main connection for the supply of drugs<sup>270</sup>, is constant in the Messina territory.

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<sup>264</sup> In accordance with the order, equal number, of the house arrest measure implementation.

<sup>265</sup> On **May 18, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Modica (Ragusa) arrested three people *in flagrante delicto* for distribution of drugs and illegal possession of ordinary firearms. They also seized more than 1 kg of hashish, 93 grams of cocaine, a semi-automatic gun with its ammunition illegally possessed. On **June 14, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Scicli (Ragusa) arrested a previous offender from Ragusa for possessing 1 kg of hashish with intent of dealing.

<sup>266</sup> Executed *in flagrante delicto* and communicated by the Questura di Ragusa (Police Headquarters, Ragusa) - mobile operational team on **February 2, 2023**.

<sup>267</sup> On **May 25, 2023**, the State Police of Ragusa arrested 2 persons *in flagrante delicto* for distribution of drugs who were previous offenders for specific crimes. During the activity it was found a plantation of 438 potted plants of cannabis for a gross weight of more than 146 kg and more than 5 kg of marijuana. On **June 23, 2023**, the State Police arrested a previous offender from Vittoria and one from Albania for possessing drugs with intent of dealing, aggravated by the large quantity. During the intervention, 55 kg of hashish were seized.

<sup>268</sup> With respect to the Palermo *mandamento* of San Mauro Castelverde, even individuals from Messina play a major role, as confirmed by the numerous restrictive measures issued against as many members of the “Alastra” operation (2020).

<sup>269</sup> As documented by the outcomes of previous investigations (“Beta” of 2017 and “Beta 2” of 2018, “Isola bella” of 2019, “Dinastia” of 2020, “Cesare” of November 2020, “Red Drug” of 2021).

<sup>270</sup> As documented by the “Aquaris” operation, ended on March 29, 2022, with the execution of OCC no. 3053/19 19 RGNR and no. 5340/19 RG GIP, issued by Court of Messina on February 8, 2022 against 22 people believed to be responsible, in various capacities, for conspiracy aimed at drug trafficking, illegal sale of drugs, possession of stolen goods and illegal possession of firearms.

However, the geographical differences aren't an influence on the criminal view of the groups, which show interest both in traditional Mafia crimes<sup>271</sup> and in the interference in the central sectors of the economy<sup>272</sup> and finance, thanks to collusive behaviors of entrepreneurs, professionals and local public officials. On this matter, an investigation<sup>273</sup> ended by the Guardia di Finanza in Mojo Alcantara (Messina) and Malvagna (Messina) in 2022, made it possible to verify the “*mala gestione*”<sup>274</sup> of the administrative activity of the local bodies. The inspection access ordered by the Prefect of Messina ended in the semester with the dissolution of the Municipality of Mojo Alcantara (Messina)<sup>275</sup>. It was aimed at verifying the existence of Mafia-type influences on the regular development of the local administrations in question. In the order of the body dissolution, it is highlighted that.... “*il contesto territoriale nel quale è inserito il territorio di Mojo Alcantara è di rilevante interesse per le associazioni a delinquere di tipo mafioso, i cui gruppi locali sono collegati alle più ampie e pericolose famiglie catanesi di Cosa Nostra. Difatti, le attività info-investigative hanno confermato l'esistenza in quel territorio di un clan criminale che, avvalendosi della forza d'intimidazione, si è imposto come cellula decisionale ed operativa autonoma, di matrice prevalentemente affaristica, in grado di ingerirsi, condizionandole, nelle dinamiche elettorali e politiche del Comune di Mojo Alcantara, gestendone nei fatti anche l'attività amministrativa...*”<sup>276</sup>.

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<sup>271</sup> Extortion, usury, drug trafficking and distribution that continue to represent the primary source of economic support of the *clans*, as well as an important instrument for the control of the territory.

<sup>272</sup> The outcomes of the “*Apate*” operation ended in 2021 by the DIA of Catania, although centered on the province of Etna, made it possible to identify an extensive network of betting and gaming agencies – located in Catania, Messina and in other provinces of Sicily – directly or indirectly linked to Mafia members. In the given circumstance, 38 agencies were seized for a total estimated value of about EUR 30 million.

<sup>273</sup> The operation led to the arrest of 7 people (OCC no. 4941/19 RGNR and no. 3961/20 RG GIP issued by Messina Court on May 12, 2022) investigated, in various capacities, for Mafia-type association, corruption by breach of official duties and undue inducement to give or to promise advantages, with the involvement of some local administrators. The investigations reportedly documented how a member of the Cintorino *clan* from Catania (linked to the Catania *Cosa Nostra* but with area of influence along the Messina Ionian strip), from the place of detention and through their relatives, managed to send “*unequivocal solicitations*” to some members of Mojo Alcantara (Messina) and Malvagna (Messina) municipalities for the assignment of government procurement to companies close to the *clan*.

<sup>274</sup> Bad management.

<sup>275</sup> Presidential Decree of **February 3, 2023**, which entrusted the management of the institution to an extraordinary commission for the duration of 18 months.

<sup>276</sup> ... “*the context where the territory of Mojo Alcantara is placed is of relevant interest for Mafia-type conspiracies, whose local groups are connected to the widest and most dangerous Catania famiglie of Cosa Nostra. In fact, the investigations confirmed the existence of a criminal clan on the territory. The clan, taking advantage of its acts of intimidation, established itself as an independent decision-making and operating unit, predominantly business-oriented; also capable of interfering with and influencing the electoral and political dynamics of the Municipality of Mojo Alcantara, managing its administrative activity as well...*”.

The territorial context analysis carried out in the reference period, upholds the distribution of areas of interest of groups from Messina. The BARCELLONESE<sup>277</sup> *famiglia* appears to be active in the northern part of the municipality. It is a deeply rooted association in the area, endowed with a threatening power, whose *core business* is drug trafficking. In this regard, there is evidence of Mafia associations that are highly qualified, such as those from the Calabria region and Catania. The *famiglia* seems to still uphold a strong reorganization ability aimed at handling lucrative criminal activities in the area<sup>278</sup>, under the protection of a single *director*. The BARCELLONESE *famiglia* appears to prefer, similarly, the intrusion into legal economy channels also by involving accommodating entrepreneurs who, sometimes, become fully-fledged members of the association<sup>279</sup>. The activity of the *famiglia* was reported during the semester thanks to the findings of an investigation<sup>280</sup> carried out by the DIA (Anti-Mafia investigation department). The investigation confirmed how a leading representative of the barcellonese faction, though under a special detention regime, could be able to manage, during the interviews in prison, thanks to his relatives, some trade

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<sup>277</sup>Whose organizational chart – as things stand – still reports the activity of 4 *gruppi*: that of the BARCELLONESI, MAZZARROTI, MILAZZO and TERME VIGLIATORE. The *famiglia* has been targeted by the “*Gotha*” operation in 2018, on its seventh execution stage. The operation pointed out how the Barcelonese *gruppo* reached a degree of organization and operational methods resembling those of the *Cosa Nostra* of Palermo. The “*Dinastia*” investigation (2020) then reported how, due to the fact that the long-standing association *leaders* were under detention, the control of the *famiglia* was taken over by some relatives of the leading representatives.

<sup>278</sup> The findings of 3 converging investigations completed in February 2022 by the Carabinieri with the execution of 86 personal and in rem precautionary measures have shown that on the February 22, 2022, in the Municipalities of Messina, Reggio Calabria, Siracusa, Modena and Reggio Emilia, the Carabinieri have implemented OCC no. 341/2020 RGNR and no. 546/21 RG GIP issued by the Court of Messina on January 31, 2022 (“*Alleanza*” operation), OCC no. 2806/18 RGNR and no. 2182/18 RG GIP issued on February 7, 2022 (“*Furia*” operation), OCC no. 7486/16 RGNR and no. 5031/17 RG GIP issued on February 8, 2022 (“*Montanari*” operation). The 3 individuals targeted by the precautionary measures have been deemed responsible, in various capacities, of Mafia-type association, extortion, political-Mafia exchange vote, fraudulent transfer of assets, illicit possession and carrying of weapons, fire, drug trafficking association and exploitation of the prostitution of others, with the aggravating circumstance of the Mafia approach.

<sup>279</sup> On December 2, 2022, the Carabinieri executed a seizure order against an entrepreneur *member of the Barcellonese Cosa Nostra* from 2002 to 2013, who was given a definitive sentence for Mafia association in the framework of the criminal proceedings in relation to the “*Gotha 4*” investigation in 2013. The activity of the criminal group was further confirmed by the findings of an investigation (OCC no. 1008/2018 RGNR DDA - 353/2019 RGGIP, issued by the examining judge of the Court of Messina) completed on December 16, 2022 by the State Police of Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto (Messina) with the arrest of 4 people deemed responsible for conspiracy to commit extortion and usury in order to benefit a branch of the BARCELLONESI. The investigation revealed how the aforementioned, between 2018 and 2021, seem to have obliged professionals and local entrepreneurs to pay a considerable amount of money allegedly required for the livelihood of prisoners. Furthermore, it was found how the extortion claims had debts at issue, agreements with the *clan* representatives concerning *online* betting made on illegal platforms, to which heavy usurious interests were charged. In addition, those under investigation seem to have taken over the control of the Barcellonese fresh produce market, imposing to retailers both prices and goods to buy.

<sup>280</sup> Carried out on **January 20, 2023**. OCC no. 6868/20 RGNR - 5192/2021 RG GIP, issued by the examining judge of the Court of Messina toward 6 people under investigation for the crimes in accordance with article 110 of the Criminal Code and 76 provision 5 of Legislative Decree no. 159/2011, art. 512ba of the Criminal Code and art. 416ba 1 of the Criminal Code. The action has been taken by the Operational Section of Messina and by the DIA Operational Centers of Catania and Reggio Calabria.

business in the hospitality sector that were already subject to seizure and judicial administration in 2018. Afterwards, the seized business has been rented to another company that has been set up *ad hoc* by a figurehead. This situation seems to have enabled the convict's relatives, through him, to reclaim the companies' ownership. The investigation activity enabled, moreover, to seize the *ad hoc* set up company's shares.

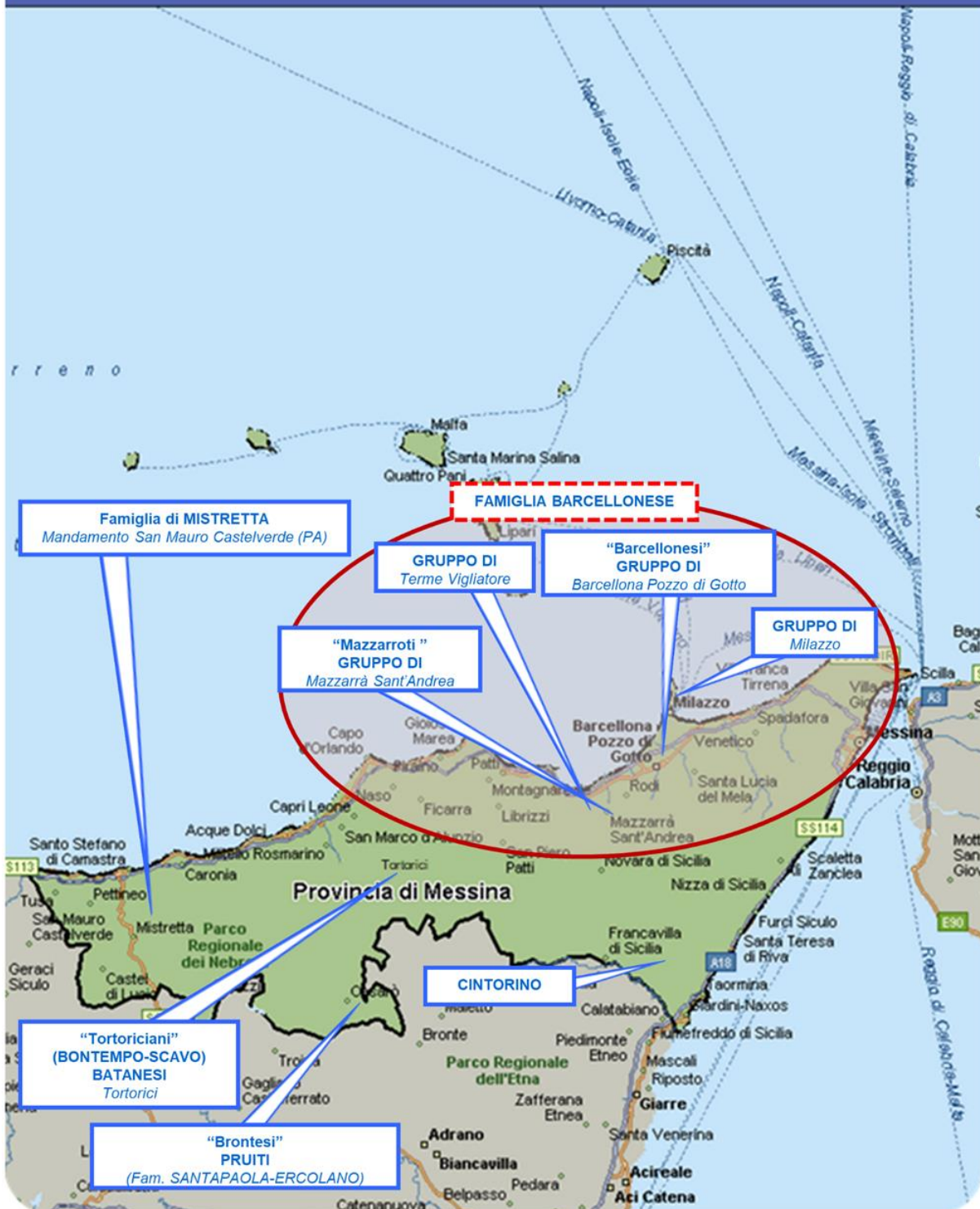
Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the ablative measure conducted by the Carabinieri of Messina on the **May 3, 2023**, towards a well-known representative of the BARCELLONESI Mafia *famiglia* who is currently imprisoned<sup>281</sup>.

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<sup>281</sup> Seizure order no. 3/23- 55/21 RGMP, issued on **April 24, 2023**, by the Court of Messina.

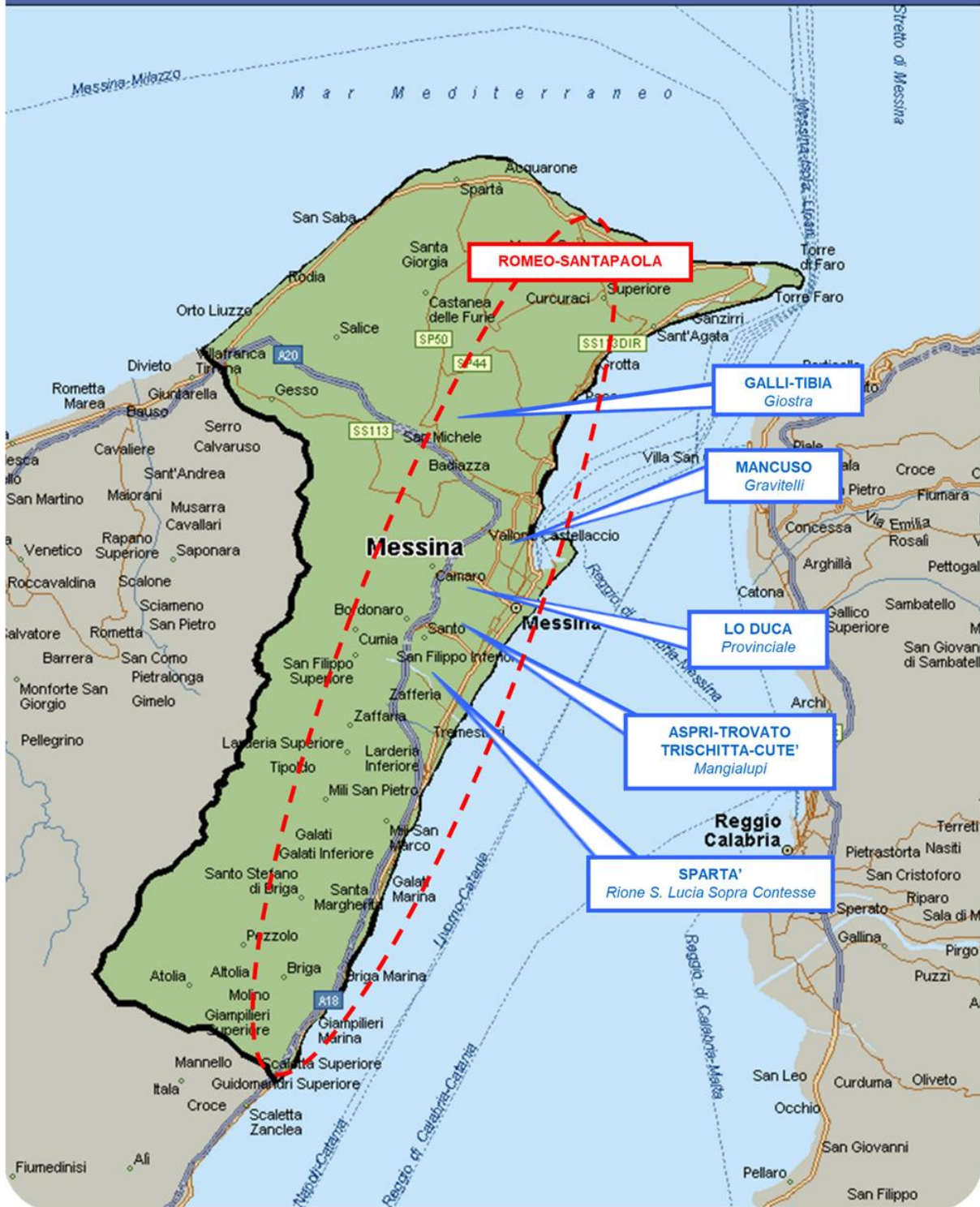


# Provincia di Messina



Municipality of Messina - the BARCELLONESE FAMIGLIA - the MISTRETTA FAMIGLIA – Terme Vigliatore group – “Barcellonesi” group of Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto – Milazzo group

# Città di Messina



City of Messina

In the *Nebrodi*<sup>282</sup> mountains area there seems to be established *gruppi* such as the TORTORICIANI, the BRONTESI<sup>283</sup>, the MISTRETTA<sup>284</sup> *famiglia* and the BATANESI. The latter appear to have taken over the area over time, as confirmed in a recent conviction<sup>285</sup>, following the “*Nebrodi*”<sup>286</sup> proceedings. The TORTORICIANI and the BATANESI still appear to show interest, in addition to mainstream sectors, such as drug<sup>287</sup> trafficking, mainly in the illicit accumulation of public finance intended for agropastoral<sup>288</sup> development, perpetrated also through the involvement of professionals. The *Ionian strip* has always been an area of interest of active Mafia organizations from the Etna region, mainly in drug trafficking<sup>289</sup> and in the laundering of illicitly accrued capital<sup>290</sup>.

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<sup>282</sup> Which are located in a rather broad area up to the border with the municipalities of Palermo, Catania and Enna.

<sup>283</sup> Active group in the area of Cesarò (Messina) and Bronte (Catania), associated with the *famiglia* from Etna of SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO.

<sup>284</sup> It is considered to be related to the Palermo district of San Mauro Castelverde and it is thought to have an impact on the area adjacent to the municipalities of Palermo and Enna.

<sup>285</sup> Issued on October 31, 2022, by the Court of Patti (Messina), upon conclusion of the first court instance of the above-mentioned proceedings against 91 out of the 101 defendants, while providing the seizure of assets for approximately EUR 4 million.

<sup>286</sup> The “Nebrodi” operation (criminal proceeding. no. 890/16 RGNR revealed how, after a highly conflictual period between the early and mid-1990s until January 2020, the *Tortoriciani* and *Batanesi* factions systematically shared out EU funding intended for agro-pastoral development in the area. Moreover, a substantial agreement between the Tortorici criminal organizations has also led to further consolidation in the area, also with the power to affect the smooth running of the local administration, which, as is known, has then resulted in the dissolution of the Municipality of Tortorici (Messina) for *Mafia* action with the Presidential Decree of December 23, 2020. The receivership of the aforementioned local authority then ended on November 13, 2022, with the local elections being held.

<sup>287</sup> An operation completed on July 19, 2022, by the Carabinieri of Messina shed light on a lucrative drug trafficking. The investigation, resulting from the statements of a *pentito*, (someone who turns State evidence, receiving a reduced sentence), made it possible to discover a structured association made up of 18 members, active in the southern part of Messina and in Tortorici (Messina). The members were involved in cocaine trafficking procured in San Luca (Reggio Calabria), through a Calabrian representative of the NIRTA '*ndrina*, for subsequent introduction into the Messina and Tortorici (Messina) drug-dealing hotspots.

<sup>288</sup> The illicitly accrued assets over time by the factions on the subject were targeted by various ablative measures. Among these was the seizure (seizure Decree no. 87/19 RG MP and no. 44/22 issued by the Court of Messina on March 30, 2022) executed on May 26, 2022 by the DIA of Messina. Then, the Supreme Court finalized the aforementioned seizure with the verdict R.G. 06075/2022 of September 28, 2022, in relation with the already seized assets, which were estimated over EUR 6.8 million, belonging to an entrepreneur from Naso (Messina) already convicted for usury in 2005 and in touch with certain leading members of the TORTORICIANI.

<sup>289</sup> In this regard, mention is made of previous investigation activities including “Good Easter”, “Fiori di Pesco” and “Isola Bella” and “Alcantara”. Last semester, the “Pitagora” operation (OCC no. 5698/19 RGNR-DDA-4562/2020 RGGIP, issued by the examining judge of the Court of Messina on September 30, 2022) concluded by the Guardia di Finanza of Messina and launched on the basis of the reports made by a *pentito*, revealed the existence of a criminal association (contiguous to the Catanese Mafia *clans* CINTORINO, LAUDANI and CAPPELLO), active in the Municipalities of Catania and Messina, involved in the supply and sale of considerable amounts of drugs and whose boss was a multiple convicted criminal from Giardini Naxos associated with the CINTORINO *clan*.

<sup>290</sup> The Ionian area is a very touristy area. Here the risk of laundering capitals of illicit origin, also from Eastern Europe, is high.

Recent investigations carried out in the territorial context, that is well suited, thanks to tourism flows, to be the core of major drug-dealing hotspots, have proven once again how the drug business promotes forms of synergetic criminal cooperation, that are able to transcend even the long-standing rivalries between *clans*<sup>291</sup>.

According to the findings of two separate investigations, concluded during the semester, there is evidence of criminal interest in the sector. In the framework of the “*Cotto e Crudo*”<sup>292</sup> operation, on **February 8, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Taormina (Messina), have uncovered the activity of a criminal association which is involved in trafficking and trade of cocaine and crack in the area between the Municipalities of Furci Siculo (Messina) and Santa Teresa di Riva (Messina). The “*Ambrosia*”<sup>293</sup> operation, concluded on **April 5, 2023**, by the Carabinieri of Messina, has shown the presence of 2 particularly active crime groups involved in cocaine trafficking in the Tyrrhenian and Peloritani mountains area.

According to the distribution of the neighborhoods, in the city of Messina, with the exception of the “Giostra” district, a “cell” of *Cosa Nostra* from Catania seems to be active; this one supersedes local groups and can be identified with the ROMEO-SANTAPAOLA<sup>294</sup>. In the “Giostra”<sup>295</sup> district, on the

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<sup>291</sup> The “*Tuppetturu*” operation (OCC no. 2704/19 RGNR and no. 1453/2020 RGGIP, was issued by the examining judge of the Court of Catania on October 31, 2022) of the Guardia di Finanza of Catania. Despite being addressed to the *clans* from Catania of BRUNETTO of Giarre (Catania) and CINTORINO of Calatabiano (Catania), the operation proved the impact of the associations from Etna in the area of Messina and, in particular, in Taormina.

<sup>292</sup> OCC issued by the Court of Messina on **January 30, 2023**, in the framework of the criminal proceeding no. 7455/20 RGNR and no. 2774/21 RG GIP towards 9 people deemed responsible for crime of Mafia association aimed at drug trafficking and sale.

<sup>293</sup> OCC no. 2240/19 RGNR and no. 2391/2019 RG GIP issued by the Court of Patti (Messina) on March 28, 2023, towards 11 individuals deemed responsible for detention aimed at drug dealing.

<sup>294</sup> The judgment was announced on December 2020 22, upon conclusion of the first court instance regarding “*Beta*” and “*Beta 2*” investigations, respectively of 2017 and 2018, shows how such association, “*existing in Messina since the '90s,*” although formerly related to the “*Santapaola-Ercolano*” clan of Catania, “*still had its own organization made up of many members active in various sectors of the economy in which it would reinvest capital coming from illegal activity.*” Moreover, it was capable of “*sneaking into every level of the social context, thanks to the mutual interests in common with entrepreneurs, professionals and public officers*” with “*privileged sector...that of gaming and betting.*” On May 29, 2022, the appeal judgment was announced, downgrading the sentences imposed in the first instance by the Court of Messina: 8 convictions compared to the 21 issued in the first court instance.

<sup>295</sup> The criminal presence in this territorial context is constantly evolving. Indeed, the “*Predominio*” investigations of December 2019 (OCCC no. 7952/17 RGNR - DDA and no. 5114/18 RG GIP issued on December 16, 2019, by the Court of Messina) shed a light also on the birth of a new Mafia *clan* headed by two former *pentiti* interested in controlling economic activities and in opposition to the historical GALLI *clan*. The two, as attested by the findings of “*Plaza*” operation of February 2021 (OCCC no. 829/2020 RGNR and no. 402/2021 RG GIP, issued by the Court of Messina on February 17, 2021), circumventing legal provisions regarding capital prevention measures, have allegedly falsely assigned the ownership of a public business, *de facto* in their possession, to an accommodating figurehead. In addition, the area was the scene of violent criminal acts in the past that have taken place on July 26, 2018, and on

other hand, the historically powerful *clan* of GALLI-TIBIA, involved in the organization of illegal horse<sup>296</sup> races, drug trafficking together with the factions from Catania and Calabria<sup>297</sup>, illegal betting and in business management, seems to be active.

As recent investigations<sup>298</sup> have shown, criminal phenomena linked to predatory crimes and to drug trafficking are still occurring.

Many criminal entities still seem to be active in the city centre. According to the findings of the “*Provinciale*” operation in 2021<sup>299</sup>, there have emerged, namely, forms of cooperation between three different criminal groups for the distribution of the profits gained through illegal<sup>300</sup> activities. The LO DUCA *clan*, indeed, seems to be supported by the activity of an active faction in the “Maregrosso” district and another one is active in the area of the so-called “Fondo Pugliatti”.

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August 25, 2018, towards individuals historically belonging to the *clan* in question, then traced back to disputes within the Mafia association headed by the GALLI-TIBIA.

<sup>296</sup> The assumption was confirmed by the “*Cesare*” operation (OCC no. 8885/15 and 5559/16 RG GIP of the Court of Messina) that in November 2020 attested the importance of such criminal sector for financing the association. The investigation, which allowed the seizure of two businesses run “*de facto*” by one of the suspects, reported the relationships between the GALLI *gruppo* and some members of the SANTAPAOLA *famiglia* aimed at organizing horse races among stables from Messina and Catania. Moreover, the investigation pointed out the leading role of an individual who allowed meetings for the organization of illegal competitions to take place in whose grocery store.

<sup>297</sup> Reference is made to the “*Festa in maschera*” and “*Scipione*” operations carried out in February and March 2020. In the “*Scipione*” investigation it was discovered that regular suppliers were related with the MORABITO-BRUZZANITI-PALAMARA ‘*Ndrangheta cosca* of Africo Nuovo (Reggio Calabria).

<sup>298</sup> Reference is made to the investigation concluded on July 20, 2022, by the Guardia di Finanza of Messina, whose findings proved the existence of a *gruppo* involved in theft, extortion and handling stolen goods also by resorting to the practice of the so-called “*return horse*”. The “*Smart*” investigation (OCC no. 764/20 RGNR DDA-3962/20 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Messina), concluded on October 19, 2022, by the Carabinieri of Messina, dismantled an association involved in marijuana trafficking in the northern part of the capital city. This also attested the use of minors to conceal drugs. Further evidence of Mafia interest in the specific sector was shown by the findings of the “*Impasse*” operation (OCC no. 6611/19 RGNR-2365/21 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Messina), concluded by the Guardia di Finanza of Messina on December 13, 2022. Thanks to the statements of an informer (*pentito*), such operation proved the existence of a structured organization that would sell huge amounts of drugs, procured from certain people from Catania in the Etnean neighborhood of *San Cristoforo* and from Calabrian networks, also using emergency vehicles to transport the drugs.

<sup>299</sup> OCCC no. 4892/17 RGNR and no. 3374/18 RG GIP issued by the Court of Messina on March 30, 2021, and carried out on April 9, 2021, by State Police, the Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza of Messina.

<sup>300</sup> Drug trafficking (often procured through Calabrian networks), extortions and business activities management, mainly in the sector of gaming, betting related to sport events and hospitality. During the aforementioned “*Provinciale*” investigation, indeed, long-standing relationships between the faction and some Maltese managers of well-known *brands* related to gaming and betting have been attested. The investigation developments led to the seizure of two hospitality activities located in the city center, formally owned by figureheads but actually run by the *clan boss*.



In the “Camaro-Bisconte”<sup>301</sup> neighbourhood the activity of the VENTURA-FERRANTE<sup>302</sup> *clan* seems to have been downsized. Despite being weakened by previous investigations<sup>303</sup>, the “Mangialupi” *clan*, embodied by the historical *famiglie*<sup>304</sup>, still seems to have criminal control over the homonymous neighbourhood.

As revealed from the “*Montagna Fantasma*”<sup>305</sup> operation, concluded in the last semester, in the surroundings of the city centre, in the “Gravitelli” district, the MANCUSO *clan* seems to be active.

In this territorial context, on **March 28, 2023**, the DIA of Messina executed the arrest *in flagrante delicto*<sup>306</sup> of an individual related to a leading member of the MANCUSO *clan*, who was already subjected to a precautionary measure in the framework of the aforementioned “*Montagna Fantasma*” operation.

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<sup>301</sup> In this framework, much bloodshed was recorded over time, among the incidences: the double murder of two people with criminal records, on January 2, 2022, whose perpetrator was arrested on April 29, 2022, by the State Police of Rosarno (Reggio Calabria) pursuant to OCC no. 9/22 RGNR - 41/22 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Messina on January 8, 2022.

<sup>302</sup> Heavily weakened by the findings of the “*Matassa*” investigation (OCC no. 7220/2011 RGNR), carried out in 2016 with the arrest of the respective *bosses*. In addition, the investigation reported “voting agreements”, during the elections of 2013 to elect the mayor of Messina, between a local politician and some representatives of the Spartà and Ventura *clans*, with the objective to gain votes in his favor and in favor of other persons running for office in Parliament.

<sup>303</sup> That revealed how the *clan* committed to trafficking of drugs procured in Calabrian networks, the Netherlands and the Balkan region. We recall, for instance, the following investigations: “*Doppia Sponda*” in 2017, “*Tunnel*” and “*Fortino*” in 2019; as well as the investigations on illegal betting and gambling, “*Dominio*” in 2017 and “*Last Bet*” in 2019.

<sup>304</sup> We are referring to the Mafia *famiglie* ASPRI, TROVATO, TRISCHITTA and CUTÈ.

<sup>305</sup> OCC no. 72/19 RGNR - 3148/19 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Messina on October 5, 2022. In October 2022, the Guardia di Finanza of the Peloritani mountains area had proven that the clan had shown strong interest in the waste sector. The investigation, launched in 2019 after the seizure of an area used as an illegal landfill site in “Gravitelli”, unraveled a structured criminal organization headed by the individuals related to the MANCUSO *clan*. These, despite previous actions taken by the Judicial Authority, kept on trafficking and illegally handling special waste. The investigations also revealed that among the “regular customers” of the suspects there was also a large circle of building contractors from Messina affected by interdiction measures in the same proceeding.

<sup>306</sup> Following a house search, a 7.65 caliber pistol with an abraded serial number was found inside the house.

In the southern part of the capital city, more particularly, in the neighbourhood of “Santa Lucia sopra Contesse”, the activity of the SPARTÀ<sup>307</sup> *clan* has been attested. The findings of the investigation<sup>308</sup> concluded last July 2022 by the Carabinieri of Messina confirmed that this clan is able to stay in touch with associations from Calabria that aim at procuring drugs to be sold in the local drug-dealing<sup>309</sup> hotspots. In addition, the investigation brought to light a flourishing drug trafficking on the Calabria – Sicily route.

The findings of the “*Chanel*”<sup>310</sup> operation, concluded by the State Police of Messina on **March 3, 2023**, confirmed, during the period under review, the tendency of the *clan* to interact with the neighboring Calabrian *cosche* in the specific sector. The investigations, started during 2021 also thanks to the statements of a *pentito*, confirmed the existence of an association, involved in large-scale cocaine, marijuana and hashish trafficking coming mainly from the Calabria region and the Municipality of Catania having headquarters in the neighbourhood of Santa Lucia sopra Contesse. Large amounts of drugs were sold in the urban drug-dealing hotspots located mainly in the southern and central part of Messina, where the leading representatives of the *clan*<sup>311</sup> lived.

In addition, the phenomenon of the corruption in the sector of public procurement<sup>312</sup> and in the proceedings to access public finance involves entrepreneurs, public officers and, in some cases,

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<sup>307</sup> The constant activity and dangerousness of the clan has been confirmed by previous investigations, including the “Agguato” operation of October 2020 (OCC no. 2947/19 RGNR and 5687/19 RG GIP of the Court of Messina), which, among other things, shed light on an assault in January 2016 targeting the relatives of a former boss, who later became a *pentito*, attributing the cause to a conflict between crime groups. More recently, a further investigation has led to the dismantling of a criminal faction, contiguous to the aforementioned clan, active in the regional capital of Pelorno and in that of Etna, with offshoots in Rome and Pescara, involved in the marketing of huge amounts of drugs. The investigation, in addition to having dismantled drug trafficking on the Rome-Pescara-Messina route, highlighted the SPARTÀ clan’s ability to interact with other criminal factions by maintaining a consolidated and stable criminal relationship with a clan from Pescara and elements contiguous to the SANTAPAOLA-ERCOLANO of Catania.

<sup>308</sup> OCC no. 1810/21 RGNR - 4754/21 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Messina on July 12, 2022.

<sup>309</sup> As resulted from the recent “Know Down” investigation, concluded in 2022, triggered by an assault for past debts linked to drug trafficking, it revealed the existence of a criminal association active in the Santa Lucia sopra Contesse district and specialized in the management of drug trafficking (cocaine and marijuana) to be sold in the Messina market. The operation ended with the execution of a restrictive measure against 11 individuals deemed responsible for criminal association for the purpose of drug trafficking, theft, robbery, extortion, aggravated personal injury and aggravated theft. Furthermore, the “Aquaris” operation, concluded in the same timeframe by the State Police, targeted an association involved in large-scale trafficking of cocaine, hashish and heroin procured in Calabria (OCC no. 3053/19 19 RGNR and no. 5340/19 RG GIP, issued by the Court of Messina on February 8, 2022).

<sup>310</sup> OCC no. 1833721 RGNR and no. 4906/21 RG GIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Messina on **February 27, 2023**.

<sup>311</sup> While the activities were underway, EUR 180 thousand in cash were found and seized in the house of one of the suspects.

<sup>312</sup> The interference of organized crime (also common) in the framework of public procurements was already discovered in the “*Beta*”, “*Concussio*” criminal proceedings that, on March 28, 2019, led to the dissolution of the Municipality of Mistretta. During the last semester, the operation of the Guardia di Finanza (OCC Nn. 4941/19 RGNR and no. 3961/20 RG GIP issued by the Court of Messina on May 12, 2022) led to the aforementioned dissolution of the Municipality of Mojo Alcantara (see footnote no. 7).

representatives of organized crime. During the semester, an investigation carried out by the DIA of Messina<sup>313</sup> was concluded with the arrest of 4 individuals deemed responsible for obstructing a public tendering procedure in the framework of a competitive bidding process concerning the Consortium for Sicilian highways. In particular, during 2020, the suspects behaved in such a way as to disrupt the procedure for the preparation of the announcement concerning the execution of the “...*service of fire-fighting assistance...in the tunnels of the highway A18 Messina-Catania and A20 Messina-Palermo*”. Among the suspects, a public official and an entrepreneur with a criminal record in personal relationships, as verified by previous investigations, with leading members of the Mafia in the Municipality of Messina.

The illegal acquisition of public funds is a widespread phenomenon even outside Mafia contexts. Already in the last semester, an investigation<sup>314</sup> of the Guardia di Finanza of Messina had made it possible to dismantle a “criminal system”<sup>315</sup> developed by an administrator of the Municipality of Montagnareale (Messina) and by 9 members of his family for the fulfillment of numerous economic-financial crimes.

The “*highly sophisticated system*”, in addition to bankruptcy and the reuse of fraudulently misappropriated assets, was aimed at detecting, among other things, the public finance granted by the Municipality of Montagnareale (Messina) and that of Librizzi (Messina). In this regard, **on January 16, 2023**, the DIA executed an asset<sup>316</sup> seizure order worth EUR 12 million<sup>317</sup>, against a well-known accountant of Mistretta (Messina). The investigation activities reported the reuse of the illicitly obtained financial resources accrued by the individual as a result of several criminal actions aimed at defrauding and unduly receiving public funds. The professional, despite being rooted in the Nebrodi

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<sup>313</sup> OCC no. 4223/21 RGNR and no. 4172/22 RG GIP, issued on **January 25, 2023**, by the GIP of the Court of Messina.

<sup>314</sup> OCC no. 869/2020 RGNR-1375/2022 RGGIP, issued by the GIP of the Court of Patti (Messina) and carried out by the Guardia di Finanza on October 20, 2022. The establishment of a dense corporate network consisting of 7 companies active in a variety of business sectors, 3 of which were led to bankruptcy and gradually emptied of assets in favor of other companies belonging to the same group, was challenged. As it is evident from the custodial order ... “*These companies act as pawns in a single chessboard, cleverly moved to achieve criminal objectives to the benefit of only one famiglia, which has operated and continues to operate according to established patterns, making use of a dense network of loyal collaborators close to the criminal association, ready to support the group’s aims*”.

<sup>315</sup> The complicated economic-financial investigation also led to the seizure of movable and immovable assets for a total amount of approximately EUR 3.5 million.

<sup>316</sup> Seizure Dec. no.19/2022 RGMP - 15372019 RGMP and no. 1723 Seq., issued by the Court of Messina on **January 5, 2023**, carried out by the DIA department of Messina and by the DIA operational centers of Catania and Palermo on **January 25, 2023**.

<sup>317</sup> In particular, the DIA investigators seized seven entrepreneurial activities operating in the sectors of professional accountant offices, ceramics and glass manufacturing, construction and assistance to the elderly and disabled, 25 buildings (including two luxurious flats in the historical center of Palermo) and lands, one car, as well as various financial relations at the disposal of the proposed defendant.



mountains territory, over time, had broadened his range of action not only on a regional level but also nationwide and abroad, in this way confirming a social danger as revealed by many precautionary measures as well as in some convictions against him. In this regard, it should be noted that on **April 12, 2023** the Carabinieri executed a precautionary<sup>318</sup> measure against 2 entrepreneurs in the Nebrodi mountains area of the Municipality of Peloritani mountains, deemed responsible for aggravated fraud aimed at the illegal acquisition of public funds allocated for the agricultural sector and provided by AGEA. The unlawful conduct was developed through the submission of a single payment application where the management of 120 hectares of land, actually belonging to the State property of the Sicily region, was reported.

Moreover, the counter-action of organized crime was developed in terms of administrative prevention as well. During the semester, the prefect of Messina issued 7 interdiction orders against companies mainly operating in the agro-pastoral sector, for which evidence of Mafia involvement was found.

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<sup>318</sup> OCC no. 47/2022 RGNR EPPO and no. 1607/2022 RG GIP issued by the Court of Enna on **March 14, 2023**. This provision also established the seizure for the same amount of money and real estate worth approximately EUR 239 thousand as gain of the crime.

## - TUSCANY

During the semester under review, as in the previous one, in the territory of the region the presence and activity of contiguous elements to Italian and foreign Mafia organised crime is confirmed.

In relation to Mafia *gruppi* of Italian origin, the presence and activity on the regional territory mainly involve those from Calabria and Campania, greater in number, if compared to the factions from Sicily, which are less rooted.

Ethnically motivated crime, apart from drug trafficking, is engaged in extortion and predatory crimes as well, in particular by Albanians, Romanians, Chinese, Maghrebi and North Africans to a great extent, who take advantage of the “manpower” of people in need or illegally residing in the national territory.

The illegal activities of *Camorra* groups observed recently are mainly focused in the sector of extortions against individuals from Campania and from Tuscany, in the illegal management of trafficking and disposing of waste but also in that of drug trafficking, money laundering and the reuse in real estate or entrepreneurial activities, with particular attention to the hospitality sector.

The activity of *'Ndrangheta* clans keeps emerging in the territory of Tuscany, as confirmed by the investigation activities carried out in the past, mainly in the sectors of extortion, drug trafficking and illegal disposal of waste and tax fraud. With reference to Calabrian organized crime, on **January 19, 2023** the Carabinieri of Florence, in the framework of “*Kirmata*”<sup>1</sup> operation arrested 6 individuals, one of whom was from Isola di Capo Rizzuto (Crotone), for tax fraud through companies active in the construction industry mainly in the Municipality of Pisa. The latter seems to have channelled part of his interests in Tuscany and appears to be deemed representative of *'Ndrangheta famiglie* from Isola di Capo Rizzuto (Crotone) outside Calabria.

Another investigation worth mentioning, with reference to the presence and investments of the *'Ndrangheta* in Tuscany, is the “*San Galgano*” operation already carried out by the DIA of Florence at the beginning of 2022.

Moreover, on **May 25, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Florence executed a personal and patrimonial<sup>2</sup> prevention order against an individual from Calabria residing in Tuscany and “close” to the MAMMOLITI *cosca* from Oppido Mamertina (Reggio Calabria). The measure regarded the seizure of more than 60 properties located in the Municipality of Livorno, for a total amount of over EUR 6

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<sup>1</sup> Criminal procedure 6213/2014 RGNR mod. 21 DDA of Catanzaro, 5205/2014 RG GIP and 20/2022 RMC.

<sup>2</sup> Provision no. 3/2023 RG MP (already 4/22 RG MP) issued on **May 11, 2023**, by the Court of Florence and subsequent integration issued on **May 17, 2023**.

million and movable assets in relation to securities deposits and bank accounts in the Principality of Liechtenstein, located between Switzerland and Austria, amounting to more than EUR 5 million to the proposed subject and his family members.

As far as crime in the Tuscany region is concerned, in recent periods, it appears to be mainly involved in drug<sup>3</sup> trafficking and dealing, in addition to extortion activities. With specific reference to the city of Florence, following the investigative developments already mentioned in the previous semester, in the framework of the “*Revenge*”<sup>4</sup> operation, which consisted in the execution of 12 precautionary measures against individuals believed to be part of the CUOMO *Camorra clan* of Nocera Inferiore (Salerno), on **May 9, 2023**, the Court of Florence sentenced<sup>5</sup> 3 Italian citizens, all from Nocera Inferiore (Salerno), who were accused of being the instigators of acts of intimidation against a Florentine business<sup>6</sup>. On **May 10, 2023**, in the same investigation, the State Police notified another citizen from Campania of a decree of 3 years of mandatory residence and confiscation of assets<sup>7</sup> issued by the local Court.

In Tuscany, the presence and entrenchment of individuals related to *Camorra* organised crime networks are, however, to be reported in large parts of the region: from Valdarno (Arezzo) to Valdinievole (Pistoia), from Maremma (Grosseto) to Versilia (Lucca). No municipality can be considered excluded except from the actual entrenchment, at least by the long-standing presence of individuals related to active *clans* in Campania.

For instance, reference is made to the arrest made by the Carabinieri of Siena on February **15, 2023**, of an individual from Campania residing in Monteroni d’Arbia (Siena) for many years, in execution of a definite provision issued by the JA (Judicial Authority) of Santa Maria Capua Vetere (Caserta)<sup>8</sup>. Among the crimes, underlying the conviction is that of criminal conspiracy aimed at illegal drug trafficking with the aggravating circumstance of having acted for the purpose of Mafia facilitation. These crimes, which took place in Mondragone (Caserta) and Naples, date back to 2012 and 2013.

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<sup>3</sup> “*Golden whale*” operation, concerning drug trafficking managed by individuals from Campania in Viareggio (Lucca) of 2022.

<sup>4</sup> OCC no. 12441/20 RGNR and 3258/21 RG GIP. The activity was carried out on September 9, 2021, by the State Police and by the Guardia di Finanza of Florence.

<sup>5</sup> Judgment no. 625/23 Reg. Sent. by the Court of Florence - Office of the Prosecutor for preliminary investigations and hearing, in the framework of Criminal procedure 8501/22 and 5211/RG GIP.

<sup>6</sup> The facts date back to February 23, 2021, when an I.E.D. blew up in Florence during a feud between rival clans in front of a restaurant in the neighborhood of Porta al Prato.

<sup>7</sup> No. 58/2021 RG MP.

<sup>8</sup> Execution no. 144/2023 SIEP of **February 14, 2023**, in connection with the judgment 6171/2019 RG of November 12, 2019 to serve the sentence of 26 years and 8 months.

As far as foreign associations are concerned, the most present ethnic groups in Tuscany are those from Romania, China and Albania, besides Maghrebi and Nigerian groups mainly involved in drug trafficking and dealing.

In particular, Albanian organised crime is highly dangerous and highly influential in illegal activities, with special regard to drug trafficking: these are well-structured associations with a solidarity component, enhanced on the inside by kinship ties.

Within this framework, the port of Livorno has consolidated itself for many years now as a major hub for Albanian crime to smuggle drugs in Italy. However, the seaport under discussion constantly undergoes close scrutiny by law enforcement who made considerable seizures of drugs. In this regard, on **January 23, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Livorno seized 180 kg of cocaine that was hidden in the inside of a *container* refrigerator filled with bananas which had sailed a month before from a South American port coming from Albania. Subsequently, on **April 1, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Livorno arrested 3 Albanians while they were retrieving a 53 kg load of cocaine worth more than EUR 10 million, from inside a container coming from South America.

As repeatedly pointed out, foreign organizations, primarily Albanians, that in central and northern Italy have a consolidated *leadership* in international trafficking, are willing to engage in criminal alliances with members of Italian associations.

A recent acknowledgement is shown by the activity concluded on **April 21, 2023**, by the State Police of Bologna with the execution of a pretrial detention order in prison<sup>9</sup> against 8 people, Italians and Albanians, held liable for association aimed at drug trafficking. The activity, which allowed the investigation of 48 individuals, focused on an Albanian *gruppo* headed by two brothers and a compatriot, residing in Santa Croce sull'Arno (Pisa) and in Massa and Cozzile (Pistoia) that would periodically procure large amounts of cocaine from the Netherlands intended for drug dealing hotspots of north-central Italy. The investigation made it possible to shed a light on the whole supply chain, from the inside men to members able to detect and arrange means to transport drugs, to the representatives in Italy in charge of drug distribution. The group's leaders were in touch with two individuals from Salerno, previous offenders for cocaine dealing in the Municipalities of Salerno and Avellino.

In the same way, with reference to contrast investigations against Albanian criminality, reference is made to the "*Black Eagle*"<sup>10</sup> operation concluded on March **29, 2023**, by the DIA in Florence, Padua,

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<sup>9</sup> Criminal procedure 505/2021 RG mod. 21 DDA and 5029/21 RG GIP of **April 5, 2023**.

<sup>10</sup> Criminal procedure 10/2022 RGNR of DDA of Florence - ID 63941/HV of the Belgian Federal Police.

Genoa and Catanzaro (in partnership with the Belgian Federal Police) against Italian and Albanian individuals. The investigation led to the seizure of a property worth over EUR 100 thousand and more than EUR 30 thousand cash intended for drug trafficking and laundering.

Criminal bosses of Central and North African ethnic groups, present in almost all the municipalities of Tuscany, are mainly involved in drug trafficking as well as aiding and abetting prostitution and the sale of counterfeit goods.

In this regard, the various operations that took place in Tuscany during the semester were effective. Among these, that of **March 6, 2023**, when the Guardia di Finanza of Montepulciano (Siena) executed a precautionary measure issued by the local Court<sup>11</sup>, against 11 individuals (3 Italians) 8 of which are under investigation for the crime of aiding and abetting illegal immigration, in its aggravated case, as well as the preventive seizure of the shares of a corporation. The operation was carried out in the municipalities of Siena, Florence, Arezzo, Mantua, L'Aquila and Viterbo and the business used by the members was seized as well. This latter had its headquarters in the Municipality of Siena, in the towns of Chianciano and Montepulciano. The investigations made it possible to confirm the hiring of 347 house cleaners, of which only 58 were actually employed.

On **March 28, 2023**, the State Police of Turin executed a pre-trial detention order in prison<sup>12</sup> against 16 Nigerian individuals, deemed members of the Mafia association EIYE, related to a wider association rooted in Nigeria and spread in various European and non-European States.

One of the *bosses* of the association, Nigerian as well, was tracked and arrested in the Municipality of Livorno, where he apparently resided with his family.

The criminality of Chinese origin still holds a paramount role in many economic activities, mainly in the sector of textile-clothing that involves the municipalities of **Florence, Prato and Pistoia**.

The most widespread forms of crime are still confirmed to be those of the manufacturing and trade of counterfeit goods or goods that are not compliant with the Community legislation goods. Related to this are the aspects of tax evasion, aiding and abetting illegal immigration and the exploitation of illegal manpower, as well as extortion and predatory crimes mainly against fellow compatriots.

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<sup>11</sup> Criminal procedure 2050/2021 RGNR and 276 /2022 RG GIP of the Court of Siena.

<sup>12</sup> OCC no. 11820/2019 RGNR and 11452/2022 RG GIP issued by the Court of Turin on January 24, under request of the local Prosecutor's office.

In particular, on March **15, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza executed a detention order<sup>13</sup> against 13 individuals of Chinese origin, residing in Florence and surroundings, for criminal conspiracy aimed at illegal activities regarding provision of payment services and fraud. The suspects seem to have set up an “illegal” bank inside an electronics shop of Tuscany’s capital. In this way, offering to compatriots (often entrepreneurs in the textile-clothing and leather processing sectors) the possibility to transfer their money to China, for a 2.5% commission, through illegal financial channels that prevented the tracking of flows.

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<sup>13</sup> CCC no. 7166/21 RGNR and 4178/2022 RG GIP issued by the Court of Florence under request of the local public prosecutor’s office.

## - TRENTINO ALTO ADIGE/SOUTH-TYROL

The strategic geographic position, central and nerve junction for the ingoing and outgoing transit of goods and people from Central Europe, along with a lively economic fabric<sup>1</sup> also open to investments<sup>2</sup> both in the primary sector and in services, make this region particularly sensitive<sup>3</sup> to the assault attempts from criminal formations which tend to settle residentially within the territory. Indeed, the regional wealth – currently fed also by the important investment plan brought in under the context of the PNRR – may represent a “preferential” channel to the crime organizations that have always been ready to settle within channels of the real economy, being able to create, in addition, stable residential centers. The aforementioned matter has been proven, in time, by some investigative activities that made it possible to note the presence of criminal coteries in Trentino Alto Adige which were deemed real projections of historical and structured Mafia-like criminal groups, such as the *'Ndrangheta* and the *Camorra*<sup>4</sup>.

Outside their areas of origin and in an area like Trentino, the *Mafias* are also ready to take advantage of new opportunities for *business* that are useful for recycling and reinvesting their own unlawfully gained assets<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The economic trend for the period addressed, despite the inflation and the Russian-Ukrainian crisis having stressed the business world, registers a positive mark of 9.4% more than the same period of last year, as p. 6 of “*The conjuncture in the Province of Trento – first quarter 2023*”, published by the Studies and Research Office of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Artisanry of Trento documented.

<sup>2</sup> The particularly favorable tax system is relevant, too. It is reserved, other than to residing citizens, also to the businesses that establish their headquarters in this territory.

<sup>3</sup> The regional wealth, currently fed also by the important investment plan brought in under the context of the PNRR, may represent a “preferential” channel to the criminal organizations that have always been ready to settle within channels of the real economy, through both significant laundering procedures and the intrusion within the call for tenders’ procedures for the awarding of contracts.

<sup>4</sup> Some references to the following procedures: “*Perfido*” (OCC no. 2931/17 RGNR - 14/16 DDA - 1888/18 RG GIP (Giudice per le Indagini Preliminari: Preliminary Investigations Magistrate) issued by the Court of Trento on October 15, 2020), which made it possible to note the existence of a *locale* of the *'Ndrangheta* in the province of Trento; “*Freeland*” (OCC1474/18 RGNR - 9/18 issued by the GIP of the Court of Trento on May 25, 2020), managed in June 2020 for account of a criminal partnership made of 20 people, among which 2 Calabrian, father and son, close to the ITALIANO-PAPALIA *'ndrina* of Delianuova (Reggio Calabria), and active in among other things, extortion and drug trafficking and dealing; “*Serpe*” (OCC no. 10381/10 RGNR and 2692/11 RG GIP issued on March 31, 2011 by the Court of Venice), managed by the DIA of Padua in 2011, through which a criminal organization that is “close” to the CASALESI *clan* was unveiled. Through a financial society which is located near Vicenza, such organization attempted to acquire the businesses of Trentino that were facing difficulties, by taking advantage of the work of an accountant from Rovereto (Trento).

<sup>5</sup> On the matter of laundering, it has to be remembered the investigation led by the Guardia di Finanza (Italian finance police) of Trento. It ended on February 17, 2022, after the arrest for laundering of the owner of a commercial activity in Pinzolo (Trento).

In addition, the strategic geographical position of this region constitutes a factor which helps criminal formations of foreign origin to settle, active mainly, but not only<sup>6</sup>, in drug trafficking and dealing. The investigation activities recently brought about on the area have highlighted, among other things, that cocaine and heroin trafficking is above all the prerogative of better structured ethnic groups, such as the Albanian and Nigerian ones. The Romanian and Maghrebi groups, less organized, are active in hashish trafficking, or rather to the retail dealing of every kind of drug, as laborers of more structured multiethnic organizations.

## Province of Trento

The economic fabric of the province of Trento, especially thriving, is not immune to some kind of interference by *Mafia*-like crime organizations. In this regard, it has to be mentioned the “*Perfido*” investigation (2020), that has highlighted the connivance, among some politicians, representatives of local entrepreneurs and a Calabrian *gruppo*, aiming at taking control of the economic activities in the porphyry extractive industry. The members of this *gruppo*, manifestation of the SERRAINO *cosca* of Reggio Calabria, despite having left their territories of origin, maintained bonds with the representatives of the main *clans* in Calabria<sup>7</sup>. In fact, in time, they were able to build a *locale* of the ‘*Ndrangheta*<sup>8</sup> in the Val di Cembra area, in Lona Lases (Trento)<sup>9</sup>.

Such *modus operandi* has been noticed, more recently, also in the occasion of the “*Black Fog*”<sup>10</sup> operation of last year that made it possible to pinpoint 2 professionals from Trentino, considered to be *figureheads* for some companies actually managed by an individual which was “close” to the IAMONTE *cosca* of Reggio Calabria.

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<sup>6</sup> Such criminal groups, other than in drug trafficking and dealing, are active in the commission of the most common acquisitive offenses, smuggling cigarettes, as well as in aiding illegal immigration, whose aim often is the exploitation of the prostitution of others and illegal labor.

<sup>7</sup> Especially in the Locride region.

<sup>8</sup> Manifestation of the SERRAINO *cosca* of Reggio Calabria.

<sup>9</sup> Right after the “*Perfido*” investigation on the ‘*Ndrangheta* infiltrations, at the City Hall a special commissioner was appointed. Since then, several rounds of administrative voting have not led to the election of the mayor because of the scarce turnout or the lack of candidates.

<sup>10</sup> OCCC no. 14269/20-21 RGNR - 7375/21 RG GIP issued by the Court of Bologna on March 29, 2022. The investigation supported the existence of counterfeit companies, one of whom is located in Trento, other than multiple bank accounts in Switzerland through which the organization was able to reinvest their illicit funds with investments in Belgium and in the United States. It was also able to take control of and therefore manage the profits of 2 companies that owned hydroelectric power plants in Romania. Moreover, thanks to this judgment, more than EUR 4 million were seized.



Not to omit, also, is the everlasting interest of the crime organizations in drug trafficking followed, sometimes, by the reinvestment of that capital unlawfully gained. In this regard, on **May 30, 2023** the *Guardia di Finanza*<sup>11</sup> of Trento ended the “*KI*”<sup>12</sup> operation, during which it came to light that some Colombian and Mexican partners, by selling drugs to claim to national crime organizations<sup>13</sup>, aimed at sending the compensation in cash to South America, used a specific net of international “*brokers*” in order to recycle those amounts and turn them into goods and services. Basically, the laundering operations were organized by the partnership through multiple phases that involved, therefore, assigning drugs to claim by South American *cartels* to the Italian partners, who, through dealing, made money, which later proceeded in being delivered to the so-called *money collectors* (smugglers). The smugglers, then, through an operation known as *money pick-up*, moved the amount of money to the so-called *money mules* (pick-up people). After the deposit of money on the bank accounts, bank transfers in dollars were made to companies dealing in electronic products and luxury goods, previously identified by the *brokers*’ net, and deployed in the United States, Turkey, China and Hong Kong. Multinational corporations, in turn, sent products to South American customers who, once they received their goods, made the pesos payment, directly, to the *brokers* who allowed them to keep clean cash in their local currency, by giving back to the Colombian *cartels* the amount of money. The investigation identified 42 episodes of collection of money aka *money pick-up* for around EUR 18.5 million, amount submitted to seizure, because of it being an unlawful profit.

On the subject of drugs, the “*Sciamano 2*”<sup>14</sup> operation has to be mentioned. Ended on **January 31, 2023** and led by the Carabinieri of Cavalese (Trento), it focused on the multiethnic partnership operating in Trentino Alto-Adige and active in drug trafficking, with investigated people also in Trento.

## Province of Bolzano

Considered an important industrial pole and center of the tertiary sector, South Tyrol has also always sparked the interest of crime Mafia-like organizations, ready to infiltrate into the thriving economy of the province. Concerning this, although during the semester no criminal events characterized by

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<sup>11</sup> With the support of the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation EUROJUST and the help of officials from the EUROPOL Agency.

<sup>12</sup> Hinged in the criminal proceeding. 1964/19-21 RGNR - 8/21 DDA - 4054/21 RG GIP of the Prosecution Service of Trent.

<sup>13</sup> On the basis of pre-existing agreements with the Sicilian and Calabrian organized crime and other organizations.

<sup>14</sup> The operation is better described further in this text, in the section addressing the Province of Bolzano.

Mafia-style elements emerged, it must be remembered how the 2020 “Freeland”<sup>15</sup> investigation confirmed the steady functioning of the *’Ndrangheta*<sup>16</sup> in Alto-Adige.

The strategic geographical position of the province, located on one of the most heavily trafficked routes for freight road transport, eases the criminal coterie to organize and manage profitable drug trafficking. Meaning, the above mentioned “Sciamano 2”<sup>17</sup> investigation, other than unveiling the cocaine trafficking carried out by the multiethnic partnership between the Trento and Bolzano provinces, made it possible to identify, among the investigated people, a Lucanian person with a criminal record considered to be “...*head promoter of the partnership active in drug trafficking mainly in the Bolzano and province area...*”. In particular, it has emerged that he was the one coordinating the illicit activity of the other partners, “...*aiming at the reallocation of narcotics that he got from the smugglers, with whom he maintained direct relationships...*”, using a popular café in Bolzano, which he managed himself, as “...*operating base in which the drug supplies were planned, the accounting was updated, the recovery of debts activities were organized, and a restricted place where single selling episodes took place*”. The commercial activity was submitted to seizure at the end of the investigation.

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<sup>15</sup> OCC no. 1474/18 RGNR - 9/18 RG GIP issued by the Court of Trento.

<sup>16</sup> In detail, the ITALIANO-PAPALIA *’ndrina* of Delianuova (Reggio Calabria),

<sup>17</sup> OCC no. 2498/ 2019 RGNR - 23/20 DDA - 3902/2019 RG GIP issued by the Court of Trento on November 7, 2022. The investigation is the progression of the previous “Sciamano” inquest which unveiled similar criminal events.

## - UMBRIA

The Umbrian area, marked out for its thriving economic-productive fabric, does not display any fixed rooting of Mafia-like criminal structures. Nevertheless, previous investigation activities<sup>1</sup> have confirmed the existence of projections of the *'Ndrangheta*<sup>2</sup> and the *Camorra*<sup>3</sup>, which infiltrated the local entrepreneurial fabric, while also watching out for potential economic-financial opportunities in order to recycle illicit capital. The existence of prisons in Spoleto and Terni has facilitated, through the years, the settlement of entire family units, from Calabria or Campania, married into individuals constricted in a special detention regime.

Within the field of opposition actions against the infiltration of criminal organization in the area, also considering the funds for the seismic rebuilding (2016 earthquake) and the ones for the PNRR project, on February 15, 2022 a Memorandum of Agreement between the Civil Government and the Prosecution Service of Perugia in order to strengthen the prevention and the opposition to Mafia crime through monitoring activities and through the analysis of possible attempts of criminal organizations to infiltrate the legal economics.

The fruitful institutional synergy on administrative prevention in the first semester 2023 allowed the Civil Governor of Perugia to issue 3 anti-Mafia prohibitive measures against societies (proven to be working in the fields of automobile and clothing trade, as well as in bar and food service) on behalf of which symptomatic features of Mafia conditioning were noticed. Especially, it is portrayed that one of the above-mentioned anti-Mafia measures was issued to prevent attempts of infiltration of the *'Ndrangheta* and the another one against *Camorra* infiltration.

The action of opposition against criminal organization was pursued through ablative decrees. In this regard, on **January 25, 2023** the DIA executed a confiscation decree<sup>4</sup> towards a *famiglia* from Cutro, member of the Grande Aracri *'Ndrangheta* clan. Particularly, the final confiscation of goods concerned money and companies already seized, for a total amount of EUR 13 million, in Perugia, Reggio Emilia, Modena, Parma, Crotone and other foreign bank accounts in Lithuania and Romania.

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<sup>1</sup> Reference is made to the “Enterprise”, “Enterprise II”, “Quarto Passo”, “Stige”, “Core Business” and “Infectio” operations.

<sup>2</sup> With associates of the MANNOLO, ZOFFREO and TRAPASSO *'ndrine* of San Leonardo di Cutro (Crotone) and of the COMISSO *'ndrina* of Siderno (Reggio Calabria).

<sup>3</sup> With individuals tied to the CASALESI, FABBROCINO and TERRACCIANO clans.

<sup>4</sup> No. 15/2020 RMSP and 20/2021 of the Court of Appeal of Bologna, First Sec. Criminal Court of April 13, 2021. The proceeding started after the proposal of a preventive measure drafted by the DIA in the field of analysis of the infiltrations of organized crime groups from Calabria in Emilia-Romagna.

The investigations brought about with time also have shed light on the functioning of foreign partnerships, mainly made of Nigerians<sup>5</sup> and Albanians<sup>6</sup>, interested in drug trafficking, acquisitive offences, and procurement<sup>7</sup>. In regard to drugs, heroin arrives mainly thanks to Nigerian<sup>8</sup> individuals, cocaine thanks to Albanians<sup>9</sup>, while the activity of drug dealing is generally managed by North African individuals.

### Province of Perugia

In this provincial Seat individuals, “close” to some Calabrian *‘ndrine*, which would be proven to be operating for the infiltration in the economy and in drug trafficking, have been recognized, as proven by the outcome of some of last semester’s preventive actions<sup>10</sup>.

Drug dealing is also managed by foreigners and, in this regard, on **June 6, 2023**, according to the Interpol report, a Tunisian individual (extradited from Italy on **June 14, 2023**) was arrested in Munich because he was guilty of handling, ID counterfeiting and drug dealing in Perugia.

### Remaining Regional Area

On **February 1, 2023**, the Guardia di Finanza of Perugia arrested, as execution of the European arrest warrant<sup>11</sup>, a Turkish individual, based in Terni, believed to be the head of an international group active in the unlawful collection of sport betting and gambling, as well as the laundering of illicit money. The investigation, started in 2019 in France, made it possible to identify a group belonging to the Turkish community, “operative” in the management of slot machines and other tools for the access to illegal gambling and online betting platforms, managed by unauthorized individuals. The electronic

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<sup>5</sup> Mentioning here the “*Pusher 3-Piazza Pulita*” and “*Nigerian Cultism*” operations of July 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Meaning the “*Quarantena*” and “*White Bridge*” (OCC no. 773/2020 RGNR - 850/2020 RG GIP and 2200/19 RGNR and 393/2020 RG GIP of the Court of Terni) investigations.

<sup>7</sup> The “*Nigerian cultism*” operation (2019) made it possible to arrest the head (a.k.a. *ibaka*) of the local cultist brotherhood SUPREME EIYE CONFRATERNITY engaged in the drug business, as well as the exploitation of compatriots threatened and psychologically subjugated by “*voodoo*” and “*ju ju*” doctrines.

<sup>8</sup> We name here also the previous “*Pusher 3-Piazza Pulita*” operation (2018).

<sup>9</sup> Meaning, on December 10, 2022, the State Police disrupted a conspiracy made of Albanians and aimed at drug trafficking. The investigation, which involved the cities of Perugia, Terni, Rimini and Bologna, made it possible to identify the roles of its members and the *modus operandi* of both provision of drugs and following retail selling. The illicit money, according to the outcome of the investigation, were multiple millions of euros. They were supposed to be reinvested, other than in businesses in Umbria and Albania, also in accommodating activities of famous holiday resorts. Moreover, the “*Quarantena*” and “*White Bridge*” investigations are also named here.

<sup>10</sup> Proceeding Criminal procedure 121/2021 RGMP of January 24, 2022, issued by the Court of Catanzaro.

<sup>11</sup> No. 1/23 MAE issued by the French Judicial Body. The proceeding was executed in the wider context of an operation which brought to the execution of supervision measures for 26 people that were members of the criminal group, and to the seizure of money, pocketbooks, movable and immovable properties, worth EUR 500 thousand.

equipment, rented in Switzerland, was placed in businesses believed to be influenced by the criminal group, not only in France, but also in Germany, Moldavia and Romania.

## - VALLE D'AOSTA

In the last few years, in Valle d'Aosta multiple investigations<sup>1</sup> have been concluded. They have highlighted the existence of Mafia-like criminal dynamics, immediately ascribable to *'Ndrangheta* contexts.

The “*Geenna*”<sup>2</sup> operation, ended in January 2019 with the execution of 16 supervision measures<sup>3</sup>, noticed the functioning of a *locale* of the *'Ndrangheta*, with rebounds also on a political administrative level, given the dissolution of the Municipality of Saint-Pierre<sup>4</sup> for Mafia infiltration. With references to some trial progressions<sup>5</sup>, it is worth mentioning the judgment<sup>6</sup> of the Court of Cassation regarding the simplified proceeding which confirmed that “*a criminal group, whose roots were based in the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta, was operating in Aosta, during the protest years*”. The judgment taken into consideration, therefore, stated permanently the existence of the above-mentioned *locale* of *'Ndrangheta*, and the crystallization of the sentences for Mafia association of some indicted, while indictments for vote-buying and extortion towards one of those were also cancelled with deferral to a new process.

During the time taken into consideration, of interest are the progression of the investigation of another well-known inquest, the “*Aemilia*” operation (2015): in detail, on **April 17, 2023** the Guardia di Finanza of Aosta confiscated<sup>7</sup> the shares of a group of merchant businesses in the field of houses and motorway

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<sup>1</sup> Main investigations on the Mafia phenomenon in:

- “*Lenzuolo*” investigation - Crim. Proc. 16579/01 RGNR DDA of Turin.
- “*Tempus Venit*” investigation - Crim. Proc. 32386/10 RGNR DDA of Turin.
- “*Hybris*” investigation - Crim. Proc. 17841/12 RGNR DDA of Turin.
- “*Gerbera*” investigation - Crim. Proc. 31325/06 RGNR DDA of Turin.
- “*Minotauro*” investigation - Crim. Proc. 6191/07 + 9689/08 RGNR DDA of Turin.
- “*Geenna*” investigation - Crim. Proc. 33607 /14 RGNR DDA of Turin.

<sup>2</sup> Crim. Proc. 33607/14 RGNR of the Court of Turin.

<sup>3</sup> Whose judicial evolution is still in progress.

<sup>4</sup> With the Presidential Decree of February 10, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> The Supreme Court issued the judgment (judg. no. sect. 223/2023 January 24, 2023) for the quashing of the judgment of second instance, with committal for a new trial in another section of the Court of Appeal of Turin, regarding the appeal brought by the accused and by the General Prosecutor before the Court of Appeal of Turin. It also declared that the appeal of the General Prosecutor was inadmissible. Recently, on November 15, 2023, the trial of Appeal bis before another Section of the Court of Appeal of Turin.

<sup>6</sup> Judgment no. 1243 of **April 20, 2023**.

<sup>7</sup> Judgment 6036/2020 R. Judg. - 7692/2019 RG CABO - 8843/2015 RGNR and 555/2016 RG Court Reggio Emilia issued by the Court of Appeal of Bologna, whose positions became final on May 7, 2022.

construction located in Saint Vincent (Aosta), ascribable to two brothers, entrepreneurs, considered to be close to the GRANDE ARACRI *cosca* of Cutro (Crotone).

## - VENETO

The Veneto area is characterized by a consolidated and ever growing economic and production system<sup>1</sup>. It is able to attract both State and private investments<sup>2</sup>, intended to an additional strengthening of the infrastructural and logistic allocation of the region. As regards the local factor, it has to be highlighted here that Veneto is crossed by important communication paths<sup>3</sup>, that support the commercial growth of industrial areas. These infrastructures are of the utmost importance to give businesses immediate access to the major trafficking backbones, and to the many multimodal centers active on the territory. It also allows the most isolated areas to catch up with the economic and social fabric of the region, because of the implementation of the network connections<sup>4</sup>. This economic livelihood strongly draws the attention of the criminal groups that believe the versatility of the Veneto productions to be a solid source of income, within a context which helps, due to multiple reasons, the criminal “opportunism”.

The *'Ndrangheta* was the most successful, in time, in increasing its illicit interests in the region, by also creating some residing groups, as projections of the Calabrian *cosche*, whose interests are not limited to drug trafficking, but also involve operations of laundering and reinvesting of illicit assets, like some previous investigations<sup>5</sup> and the outcome<sup>6</sup> of trials for the “*Isola scaligera*”<sup>7</sup> and “*Taurus*”<sup>8</sup> operations, ended in 2020, have proven.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the Covid-19 pandemic and the following Russia-Ukraine war really tested the entrepreneurial industry, between the uncertainty of the supply/demand, and the raw materials and energy increase.

<sup>2</sup> In the discussed semester, the consequences of the planning linked to the PNRR, that sees Veneto as the beneficiary of resources beyond a total amount of EUR 9.5 billion, are noted.

<sup>3</sup> This is a clear reference to the two “European TEN-T Corridors” (trans-European transport, energy, and telecommunications network - *Tran-European Networks - Transport no. 1 and no. 6*), respectively Berlin-Palermo and Lyons-Budapest.

<sup>4</sup> In the semester, to finish constructions in the Veneto *Pedemontana*, a new construction site was opened, mainly used for the insertion between the toll highway and the A27, near Spresiano (Treviso). Today, about 82 km over the total 94 km of the motorway link road under examination are accessible, with 13 functioning toll booths. At the same time, the construction for the Verona-Padova railway project “*Alta Capacità/Alta Velocità*” carry on, as part of the larger transportation development project from Venice to Turin.

<sup>5</sup> Mention is made to the “*Fiore Reciso*” (2014-2018), “*Terry*”, “*Camaleonte*”, “*Avvoltoio*”, “*Hope*”, “*Taurus*”, and “*Isola Scaligera*” operations, which proved the action of the *'Ndrangheta* in the drug trafficking, extortion, and laundering sectors. In conclusion, the following investigation “*Valpolicella2*”, performed on October 18, 2022, by the DIA, together with the Guardia di Finanza, made it possible to disrupt the *'Ndrangheta*-like criminal partnership, based in Verona, and active in ordering economic-monetary multiple crimes.

<sup>6</sup> It will be better discussed in the paragraphs dealing with the respective provinces.

<sup>7</sup> Criminal procedure 4964/17 RGNR - 3343/21 RG GIP of the State Counsel’s Office - DDA of Venice.

<sup>8</sup> Criminal procedure no. 1510/14 RGNR - 3958/21 RG GIP of the State Counsel’s Office - DDA of Venice.



The regional territory is also interested in the illicit actions of the criminal groups from Campania which, in years, have proven their functioning, mainly in the sectors of drug trafficking and laundering. In this regard, the “*Piano B*”<sup>9</sup> operation was relevant. It was led by the DIA of Trieste, which had shed light on the investments of illicit assets by the IOVINE *famiglia*, from the CASALESI *cartel*.

Previous investigations pointed out that there were also individuals close to Sicilian *famiglie* inclined to recycling illicit assets, through property investments mainly in the Venice area. More recently, coteries in Palermo tried to infiltrate the legal economy channels through the commission of important tax frauds<sup>10</sup>. Further proof was also given by the outcome of the “*Al Pacino*” operation (2021), which revealed the existence of a conspiracy aiming at the commission of swindling, made of an individual already known in other investigations, because of their relationship with the MAZZEI *famiglia* from Catania.

The organized crime of Apulia pushed its interests in this area thanks to the *cellula* of the DI COSOLA *clan* from Bari, operating in drug trafficking<sup>11</sup>, while for the commission of predatory crimes it has been pointed out the work of people with a criminal record from Foggia and Brindisi. Within the “*Levante*” investigation, led by the DIA of Bari in February 2022, individuals belonging to a criminal conspiracy, close to the PARISI *clan* of Bari, were found. This conspiracy aimed at laundering, self-laundering, fraudulent transfer of assets, embezzlement and extortion.

Along with the judicial activity, the fight against organized crime has developed also in the field of administrative prevention, thanks to some prefectorial proceedings issued against the companies that are operating in the car rental, railway equipment, waste, construction, and transportation sectors, ascribable to ramifications both in the *'Ndrangheta* and the *Camorra*.

As mentioned above, the economic livelihood of the area represents a good opportunity also for the criminal groups that, despite operating outside Mafia contexts, have always been interested in pursuing

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<sup>9</sup> The DIA investigation ended in December 2018 with the issuing of a precautionary measure against 8 people.

<sup>10</sup> The “*Pupari 2.0*” operation highlighted that an individual from Palermo, living in the province of Padua was leading a conspiracy aimed at the commission of an important fraud to the VAT, through fake finances and the interposition of multiple fraudulent societies.

<sup>11</sup> We name here the “*Maestrale 2017*” operation, ended in May 2019 with the execution of an OCC against 19 people for Mafia conspiracy, worsened by the availability of weapons and drug trafficking, as well as threats and extortion.

their aims through the infiltration in the economic-productive fabric, mainly through economic-monetary crimes and swindling, aiming at the illicit collection of public contributions<sup>12</sup>.

Furthermore, in this area foreign criminal structures have been found. They are mainly active in drug trafficking, illegal immigration, human trafficking and procurement. Recently, after the judgment issued by the Court of Verona<sup>13</sup> regarding the “*Karakatitza*”<sup>14</sup> operation of 2014, other than in this area, also in the provinces of Vicenza, Venice, Bologna, Modena, Reggio Emilia and Brescia, the *Russian Mafia–Vor v zakone – Ladri nella legge (Thieves in the law)* was found. It is a criminal group that uses Mafia-like methods, observed both in the intimidating strength based on the availability of weapons, among other things, and in the resulting subjugation and code of silence conditions, to which their compatriots themselves undergo<sup>15</sup>. Further validation of the presence of ethnic Mafias in the Veneto area comes from the arrest, in October 2022, of a Nigerian citizen who was exponent of the homonymous Mafia of the *Maphite Cult*, acknowledged within the judicial domain by the Court of Turin, in the premises of the trial named “*Maphite – bibbia verde*”<sup>16</sup>.

## Province of Venice

Relevant investigative and judiciary validations, succeeded over time, also highlighted that this province is particularly interesting not only for native crime groups<sup>17</sup> but also for the ones of South Italy and abroad, that have always looked for new areas where they can expand their illicit trade.

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<sup>12</sup> As some investigations ended in this semester and that will be described in the paragraphs focused on the other provinces have highlighted.

<sup>13</sup> Judgment no. 558/22 Reg. Judg. of the Court of Verona, 2888/2009 RGNR DDA of the Court of Venice, 923/2018 RG Dib. issued in September 2022. The Judgment traces the hierarchical nature of the criminal structure, at the top of which there are individuals that are active in Italy under the name of “*Vor*”, also known as “*Hotii di Lege*” (*Ladri nella Legge: Thieves in the law*). They are chosen and named by the members of the organization, which is based abroad and, mainly, in the country of origin (in this case, in Moldova). Each “*Vor*” has a solid number of associates called “*bratva*” (brothers) under them. They are gathered in groups/factions, deployed all over Italy. Each group/faction is managed by individuals that are appointed “*smotrascii*” (observers), who coordinate and supervise the illegal activities, while keeping relationships with the higher rankings, called “*polojenez*” (supervisors). They retrieve and ensure the delivery of a percentage of the profit of the activities of the head of the organization, even if they are imprisoned, contributing to the so-called “*obsciack*” (some kind of “*shared fund*” of the association considered in a unified way).

<sup>14</sup> Operation ended on January 22, 2014, organized by the DDA of Venice. The investigations allowed the arrest of 35 people, all coming from Moldova except for a Russian citizen. They were all members of a large and transnational association for a Mafia-like criminal conspiracy, from Moldova, active in North Italy, based in the Provinces of Verona, Venice, Padua, Milan, Brescia, Modena, Reggio Emilia, Piacenza and Bologna.

<sup>15</sup> See p. 12 of the above-mentioned judgment.

<sup>16</sup> OCCC no. 21522/17 RGNR - 4046/19 RG GIP DDA of Turin, issued on July 17, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> The a.k.a. *mala del Brenta*, born in Veneto at the beginning of the '70s and active in the North-East of Italy. Heavily hit in the '90s because of the capture and cooperation of its boss, a “new” restoration (*mala del Tronchetto*) had been hypothesized on the basis of the outcome of the “*Papillon*” investigation (OCC no. 9426/16 RGNR - 6844/17 RG GIP issued by the Court of Venice on November 16, 2021). Nevertheless, in the semester under consideration, the preliminary

In fact, in Venice and in the hinterland, Calabrian criminal groups have been found. They are active, above all, in the acquisition of businesses dealing with liquidity crises, through usury and extortion. This aspect was pointed out by the “*Tetris*” operation, ended by the Guardia di Finanza of Venice and by the Carabinieri of Padua last year, in which some acts extortion and usury were pieced together. These actions were committed by individuals belonging to the BOLOGNINO *clan*, close to the GRANDE ARACRI *cosca* of Cutro (Crotone), damaging local entrepreneurs.

Over time, the interest of the *Camorra* has been acknowledged, and notably that of the CASALESI *clan*, whose presence has emerged since the '90s. In this sense, it is worth highlighting the “*At Last*” operation (2019) ended in Venice by the State Police, which made it possible to piece together the ability of the *clan* to permeate the legal economy of the province, through the typical Mafia method<sup>18</sup>, despite the fact that the outcome of the trial<sup>19</sup> did not confirm the Mafia-like action of the group in the semester.

Outside Mafia contexts, in the semester the outcome of the “*Black delta*”<sup>20</sup> operation, ended on **January 24, 2023**, by the Carabinieri of Venice against 6 individuals, revealed a tried and tested system of corruption. It also involved entrepreneurs and public officials, aimed at the issuance of the so-called “building permits”. Moreover, the investigation noticed the “*malaffare*” (crime) regarding the distribution of huge amounts of masks during the Covid-19 health emergency from, highlighting the remarkable “speculation” brought about by the criminal group.

Furthermore, previous investigations documented that there are foreign criminal partnerships within the Venice area and other Veneto provinces<sup>21</sup>. In this regard, on **January 10, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Venice executed a precautionary measure with the “*Hope*”<sup>22</sup> operation against 8 people, considered to be responsible for cocaine trafficking and dealing and illegal possession of weapons. Within the same

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hearing against those who had chosen the abbreviated proceedings took place, and on that occasion, the GUP of Venice did not confirm its Mafia nature, despite pointing out the existence of a criminal group.

<sup>18</sup> In fact, in this situation, with abbreviated proceedings verified by the Court of Appeal, the activity of the Mafia partnership close to the Casalesi *clan* was pointed out. This partnership was also responsible for Mafia-like association, electoral trade between politics and the Mafia, personal aiding and abetting, fraudulent bankruptcy, laundering, counterfeit interposition of people, clandestine gun permit and illegal possession, fraud, extortion, usury, robbery, monetary counterfeiting and drug trafficking.

<sup>19</sup> Sent. No. 1037/2020 RG DIB. - 10106/2019 RGNR of **June 5, 2023**, issued by the Court of Venice, Second Criminal Sec.

<sup>20</sup> Issued within Criminal proc. 9819/2019 RGNR - 4320/2020 RG GIP of the Court of Venice.

<sup>21</sup> Mention to the court order, already fully described in the regional framework, issued by the Court of Verona. It proved the existence of “cellule” considered to belong to the so-called “*Russian Mafia - Vor V zacone - Ladri nella legge*” (Thieves in the law), also in the Venice area.

<sup>22</sup> OCC issued by the GIP of the Court of Venice within Criminal proc. 2904/19 RGNR - 6401/21 RG GIP.

investigative context, the seizure of goods and money for a total amount of about EUR 500 thousand was disposed.

The following **June 6, 2023**, the Carabinieri of Venice and Mestre, within the “*Spiderman*”<sup>23</sup> operation, disrupted a multiethnic partnership active in heroin dealing, pointing out the existence of a real laboratory assigned to the drug cutting, splitting up and packaging.

### **Province of Belluno**

In Belluno, where the presence of coteries “close” to Mafia contexts is not recorded, the attention towards the prevention of infiltration attempts by criminal groups is high, mainly because of the next *2026 Olympic and Paralympic Games of Milan and Cortina D’Ampezzo*.

### **Province of Padua**

In the provincial area, headquarters of important multinational corporations, there is the port of transshipment, which is an intersection of handling and storage of goods, more and more focused on the major National and North European harbors. An infrastructural system that feeds a strong economic income and that, along with the huge investments<sup>24</sup> and loans aiming at the creation of the “*Alta Capacità/Alta Velocità*” (*High Capacity/High Speed*) railway project Verona-Padua (integral part of the major Venice-Turin route), represents a potential interest for Mafia-like criminal groups.

In fact, for years individuals “close” or associated to the *’Ndrangheta*<sup>25</sup> and *Cosa Nostra*<sup>26</sup> have been identified. Proof of meetings and reports between the local enterprises<sup>27</sup> and the representatives of note of the *’Ndrangheta* have been provided, as well as of episodes of violence, damage and extortion, that were all aggravated by the Mafia method, committed by people belonging to the Calabrian *cosche*<sup>28</sup>. Although the semester did not have any operations certifying criminal activities led by the judicial

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<sup>23</sup> Issued by the GIP of the Court of Venice within Criminal proc. 10387/2018 RGNR - 5387/19 RG GIP.

<sup>24</sup> Also taking into account the assets for the RRP which, according to the resolution of the Regional Executive, will produce more than EUR 8 billion in Veneto, thus producing more than 43 thousand responsible parties.

<sup>25</sup> Mention to the “*Fiore reciso*”, “*Camaleonte*”, “*Malapianta*”, and “*Hope*” operations, ended between 2018 and 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Mention to the “*Pupari 2.0*” in 2020, and the “*Al Pacino*” in 2021 investigations.

<sup>27</sup> In this regard, the Guardia di Finanza of Este (Padua), on October 27, 2022, within Criminal Proc. 3437/21 RGNR - 2181/22 RG GIP of the Court of Rovigo, executed a precautionary measure against a criminal group devoted to fraud and tax evasion, brought about in the trade of wood and pellets. An individual from the province of Crotone is involved in this partnership, as someone close to *’Ndrangheta* environments, as the “*Fiore reciso*” investigation proved. The GIP, in the examination of the proceeding, points out that “...the investigations proved that there is a wide and well-structured fraudulent system, created in a professional and accurate way, most likely involved in the laundering of assets coming from criminal groups...”.

<sup>28</sup> How the “*Ermes*” (2021) investigation showed. The father of the main investigated person is convicted for Mafia conspiracy, as a leading figure of the TEGANO *cosca* of Reggio Calabria.

police, the entrepreneurial fabric of Padua is being closely watched by *Calabrian* organized crime. Meaning, on **March 13, 2023**, the Civil governor of Padua issued a prohibitive proceeding against a company active in the construction field and believed to be part of a complicated corporation “...subjugated, if not organic, to the cosca of Cutro...”.

The same proceeding was issued on **May 29, 2023**, against an association active in the collection, transportation and disposal of waste, that made it possible to prove both the commercial relationship with enterprises already involved in *anti-Mafia* prohibitions by the Civil Government, and the involvement, among the employees, of people close to and/or contiguous to organized crime and in particular to the FALANGA *clan* of Torre del Greco (Naples).

Moreover, recent investigations<sup>29</sup> have proven that *Cosa Nostra* also showed important abilities to infiltrate the Euganean legal economy channels, through the commission of considerable tax frauds and scams to the detriment of many people working in the legal economy displaced all over the national territory.

Common crime episodes are still registered in the area, as proved by the outcome of an investigation of this semester, ended by the State Police of Padua on **March 27, 2023**, against a partnership held accountable of conspiracy aimed at the exploitation of illegal immigration. The main purpose of this coterie was to create and release upon payment, documents that were issued by expressly created companies, which were not actually active, in order to attain residency permits for foreigners who were not entitled to them. Among the investigated people, there would be also some freelance professionals.

In conclusion, a mention of the foreign partnerships that are operative in the area, mainly in drug trafficking and dealing<sup>30</sup>. On **January 10, 2023**, the State Police of Padua, within the “*Hermanos*”<sup>31</sup> operation dismantled a multiethnic partnership, made of Italians and Albanians, well rooted in the area,

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<sup>29</sup> As the outcome of the following operations proved: “*Pupari 2.0*” (OCC no. 3238/19RGNR - 857/20 RGGIP issued by the Court of Rovigo) against the habitual offender from Palermo (already convicted for Mafia conspiracy and willful murder), with the resulting seizure of movable and immovable property, for a total value of EUR 3 million (Decr. no. 3238/19 RGNR - 857/20 RG GIP of June 25, 2021 issued by the Court of Rovigo); “*Al Pacino*” (OCC no. 3354/2020 RGNR - 561/21 RG GIP issued on September 10, 2021 by the Court of Rovigo), ended in September 2021, with a follow-up in March 2022, which dismantled a criminal group aimed at committing fraud, and designed by an individual which was already known in other investigations, because of his alleged relationship with the MAZZEI *famiglia* in Catania. How the documents read, he: “*had a strong relationship with the Mazzei-Carcagnusi clan; such relationship seems stronger than the blood relationship with his parents*”.

<sup>30</sup> Mention goes to the “*Alpha dog*” (2021) operation within the dismantling activity of a partnership between Tunisians and Italians, active in cocaine and hashish trafficking. The investigation, started in November 2018 after the injuring of a Tunisian, proved the cruel nature of two drug dealers’ groups in opposition to each other for the partition of the dealing squares in the city of Padua.

<sup>31</sup> Criminal proc. 1829/20 RGNR - 6139/20 RG GIP of the Court of Padua.

and active in an extended international cocaine, marijuana and hashish trafficking. The investigations, other than proving that the coterie was focused on the expansion of its own illicit interests also in Spain, shed light on an attempt of murder that took place in Ibiza in 2021 to the detriment of a Neapolitan individual involved into the dynamics regarding the control of the local cocaine market. On the following **March 21, 2023**, within the “*Express 2018*”<sup>32</sup> operation, led by the Carabinieri of Ferrara, a Chinese crime partnership active in international drug trafficking was found. Drugs, produced in Spain, were sorted in the Northeast (where production sites existed as well) and, in the end, sent to the Netherlands, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and the USA<sup>33</sup>. The investigation highlighted for the first time the ability of Chinese organized crime – usually dedicated to other illicit businesses – in the Northeast, to manage drug trafficking on a vast scale. It also shed light on news, which might change the crime scenario in such area. In conclusion, on **June 19, 2023**, the State Police dismantled a steady group, made of Nigerians and Spaniards, also dedicated to cocaine and heroin trafficking and dealing. On this matter, the Nigerian Mafia being active in the province, especially from the VIKINGS-AROBAGA Nigerian *cult*, must also be mentioned. This has been proven by the judicial conviction<sup>34</sup>, issued during the trial regarding the “*Signal*”<sup>35</sup> operation (2020).

## Province of Rovigo

In this province, an area based on an agricultural economy, there has been no proof of individuals being associated or “close” to the historic Mafia-like organizations over the years.

However, in Rovigo there are also criminal partnerships active in drug trafficking and dealing. In this semester, an operation<sup>36</sup> led by the Guardia di Finanza of Turin, was completed. It was focused on lucrative international cocaine trafficking, carried out by a multi-ethnic partnership in the provinces of Turin and Asti, and with ramifications in Lombardy, Veneto, Tuscany, Sicily and Sardinia, which led to the detention of the Albanian head of such partnership, residing in the area of Polesine, near the Po River.

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<sup>32</sup> OCC no. 2761/19 RGNE - 729/20 RG GIP issued on November 10, 2022, by the Court of Venice.

<sup>33</sup> During the investigation, 353 kg of inflorescences of cannabis, 19 kg of hashish, 15 kg of MDMA crystals (ecstasy), 2 kg of ketamine, 4 kg of cannabis seeds and more than 5 thousand plants were seized.

<sup>34</sup> No. 859/21 RG GIP issued on June 10, 2021, by the Court of Bologna.

<sup>35</sup> The investigation (led by the State Counsel’s Office of Bologna) dismantled the Nigerian “*cellule*” mainly scattered in the North of Italy which, taking on multiple roles within the group, were focused on the lucrative activities of drug trafficking. Regarding these partnerships, on October 2, 2022, in Padua, a fugitive Nigerian belonging to the CULT of the MAPHITE was tracked down and arrested, convicted within the trial linked to the “*Maphite-Bibbia verde*” operation, which led to the arrest of 37 people.

<sup>36</sup> OCC no. 9954/2022 RGNR - 8187/22 RG GIP issued on **9 February 9, 2023**, by the Court of Turin.

## Province of Treviso

In Treviso, although in this semester there is no investigative proof verifying the existence of typical criminal groups, previous investigations made it possible to document the criminal interests of the Calabrians that are associated with the GRANDE ARACRI of Cutro (Crotone) and the BELLOCCO of Rosarno (Reggio Calabria)<sup>37</sup> *cosche*. Such matter was verified, in this semester, by the outcome of the anti-Mafia prohibitive actions, issued by the Euganean Civil Governor, on the basis of the elements discovered by the DIA of Padua during an analysis within the “*Doppio binario*”<sup>38</sup> investigation of the DDA of Milan, ended in January 2021. The proceeding, which hit the company active in the railway equipment field, highlighted that such company was exposed to concrete and existing risk of Mafia infiltration, because of its employment of labourers coming from other companies that had already been hit by previous and comparable proceedings, while also maintaining, among other things, relationships with businesses assigned to front men, but actually being ascribable to the *'Ndrangheta* GIARDINO and ALOISIO *famiglie*.

## Province of Verona

In the province of Verona, for a long time there has been evidence of operations conducted by gangs mainly belonging to Calabrian criminality<sup>39</sup>. The results of the “*Valpolicella 2*” operation<sup>40</sup>, accomplished by the DIA section of Padua together with the Guardia di Finanza of Verona in October

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<sup>37</sup> Mention goes to the investigation (natural progression of the “*Camaleonte*” one, recalled more than once) ended in November 2019 with the arrest of 54 people, close to the GRANDE ANACRI *cosca* of Cutro (Crotone), in multiple Italian provinces, and the “*Hope*” operation, still in November 2019, ended with the execution of a proceeding of detention against 9 people belonging to a partnership linked to the BELLOCCO *cosca* of Rosarno (Reggio Calabria).

<sup>38</sup> Led by the DDA of Milan and, on January 27, 2022, ended with the execution of a precautionary proceeding against 15 people, and the preventive seizure of goods for a total value of EUR 6.5 million.

<sup>39</sup> Mention goes to the investigations carried out between 2016 and 2017 in the Veronese territory, called “*Premium Deal*”, “*Good Fellas*” and “*Usual Suspects*”. Said investigations have seen, among the others, as main suspects, some members of a family from Isola di Capo Rizzuto (Crotone), settled in the Scaliger province almost thirty years ago, accused with serious evidence of robbery, extortion and exploitation committed in the hinterland of Verona. The most recent investigation, called “*Ciclope*”, was closed by the Guardia di Finanza in 2018 with the arrest, between Crotone and Verona, of 17 people, for which on January 10, 2022, the Court of Verona issued the sentence no. 2012/001989 RGNR and 2014/002389 RG DIB. Moreover, mention goes to the precautionary measure for asset protection issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria and carried out in September 2021 by the Guardia di Finanza of Verona against an entrepreneur from Reggio Calabria, who had already been arrested for Mafia association, settled in the province of Verona and operating in the logistics sector. He turned out to be involved in the “*Porto franco*” operation (2014), carried out against a local *'Ndrangheta*, mainly active in Gioia Tauro. A further seizure of goods was accomplished on February 11, 2022, against the aforementioned entrepreneur. After the investigations, in March and May 2022 the prefect of Verona issued two anti-Mafia precautionary measures against two companies operating in the road freight transport sector.

<sup>40</sup> OCC no. 1391/2018 RGNR DDA -1376/19 RG GIP issued by the Court of Venice on October 4, 2022, against suspects of belonging to *'Ndrangheta* criminal gangs in the province of Verona.

2022, confirmed such assumption. This investigation made it possible to expose a criminal organization linked “... to the cosche known as *GRANDE ARACRI of Cutro (Crotone)* and *ARENA-NICOSCIA of Isola di Capo Rizzuto (Crotone)* ...” involved in the silent attempt to infiltrate the Veronese socioeconomic structure thanks to the complacency of a local entrepreneur, damaging companies operating in the area of preparation and staging of sets intended for the Arena di Verona, “... with the aggravating factor of acting with Mafia methods, in order to facilitate the activity of the Mafia organization known as *'Ndrangheta* as well...”<sup>41</sup>. During the investigation, the precautionary seizure of goods worth more than EUR 4 million was carried out. Already in the past, the outcomes of the “*Isola Scaligera*” operation<sup>42</sup> of June 2020 had confirmed the existence of an offshoot of the *'Ndrangheta locale* of Isola di Capo Rizzuto (Crotone)<sup>43</sup>, settled in the province and represented by the *GIARDINO famiglia*. In this regard, on **March 1, 2023**, the court of Verona issued<sup>44</sup> a first instance judgment<sup>45</sup>, recognizing the existence of a *'Ndrangheta locale* on Veronese territory as extension of the *ARENA cosca* and identifying its leader as well. For the same investigation, on **May 3**, the Court of Appeal of Venice concluded the second instance for the defendants who, differently from the first ones, chose the abbreviated proceeding, hence they were convicted at first instance<sup>46</sup>. Although the sentence was reduced, it confirmed the prosecution’s case, recognizing the responsibility of a former manager of a municipal company, active in the municipal solid waste collection, held responsible for interference related to illegal gambling by facilitating Mafia association and increasing its operational capability and intimidation<sup>47</sup>.

At the same time, on **June 16, 2023**, the Court of Verona, in the course of the first instance trial related to the “*Taurus*” investigation<sup>48</sup> of July 2020, acknowledged the existence within the region of Veneto,

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<sup>41</sup> The investigations revealed how the suspects acted in the interests of local *'Ndrangheta* of the *RILLO*, *NAPOLI*, *VERSACE*, *GRANDE ARACRI* and *ARENA cosche*.

<sup>42</sup> OCC no. 4964/17 RGNR - 3460/18 RG GIP of the Court of Venice.

<sup>43</sup> The *ARENA-NICOSCIA cosca* of Isola di Capo Rizzuto (Crotone), *famiglie* once opposed to one another.

<sup>44</sup> Sentence no. 838/23 - 4964/17 RGNR DDA of Venice - 2906/21 RGT.

<sup>45</sup> Pertaining to the ordinary procedure.

<sup>46</sup> No. 863/21 GUP issued by the Court of Venice on November 2, 2021.

<sup>47</sup> See charge reported at page 27 of the aforementioned first instance judgment of February 2, 2021.

<sup>48</sup> The investigation made it possible to dismantle “a Mafia association of *'Ndrangheta* origin settled in Veneto, in particular operating in the province of Verona and independent, compared to the organization residing in Calabria where it came to light, but in any case, linked to it. It managed to conduct several criminal activities in different sectors (weaponry, extortion, exploitation, robbery, drugs and money-laundering), with methods characteristic of the Mafia one”. Moreover, the investigation had a company undergo a precautionary measure of the judicial administration. This company turned out to be managed and represented by individuals close to prominent members of Calabrian criminality, operating in the province of Verona, and linked to well-known *'Ndrangheta* families, active in the provinces of Crotone, Vibo Valentia, Reggio Emilia, Brescia and Mantua.



and in particular in the province of Verona, of *'ndrine* from Gioia Tauro, an expression of unlawful interests of the Calabrian GERACE-ALBANESE-NAPOLI-VERSACE<sup>49</sup> *famiglie*.

The precautionary activity as well, implemented during the period under consideration, pointed out the attempts of Calabrian criminality to infiltrate the provincial economy. As a matter of fact, in that semester two ablative measures regarding one company operating in the construction industry and another one in the transport sector, both linked respectively to the ARENA-NICOSCIA *cosca* of Isola di Capo Rizzuto (Crotone) and to the *'Ndrangheta* of Filadelfia (Vibo Valentia), were issued. In Verona, despite the absence of events traceable to Sicilian criminality, it is worth mentioning the precautionary measure issued by the Prefect of Verona last semester against a company managed by entrepreneurs from Messina, considered close to *Cosa Nostra*. Previous investigations<sup>50</sup> confirmed the establishment of a Mafia “cell” of Apulian organized crime in the province of Verona, linked to the DI COSOLA *clan* of Bari and operating in profitable drug trafficking between Apulia and Veneto. The criminal interest, driven by the economic strength of the area, can also be found outside Mafia contexts, as the outcome of two different investigations of the Guardia di Finanza of Verona, during the semester under consideration, proved. Both revealed the presence of as many criminal gangs dedicated to the misappropriation of public funding pertaining to tax relief promoted by the State and European funds, as well as crimes of money-laundering and self-laundering. The first operation, called “*Cantieri fantasma*”<sup>51</sup>, closed on **April 13, 2023**, discovered how a criminal gang, by managing a number of companies, implemented artifices aimed at altering the use of the facilitating measures for construction projects promoted by the “*Decreto Rilancio*” (Relaunch Decree). During the difficult economic and financial investigations, movable and immovable property and company shares worth more than EUR 114 million have been seized. Similarly, the second investigation, called “*Compañeros*”<sup>52</sup>, closed on the following **May 23**, provided evidence of the existence of an association aimed at committing fraud<sup>53</sup> for misappropriation of state contributions, the so-called “*bonus facciate*” (building façades bonus), by using fake tax credits, which, once monetized, would have been laundered to take

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<sup>49</sup> During the period under consideration, the appeal trial as well was closed for the same investigation for the defendants, already sentenced, with abbreviated proceeding. In fact, on April 18, the Third Section of the Court of Venice, with measure no. 1426/22, confirmed the prosecution’s case outlined by the first instance judgment, which recognized the existence of the aforementioned Calabrian criminal gang.

<sup>50</sup> In reference to the “*Maestrale*” operation (2019).

<sup>51</sup> Criminal process no. 419/2023 RGNR - 2074/23 RG GIP of the Court of Verona.

<sup>52</sup> Lodged in the Criminal proc. 6862/22 RGNR - 7816/22 RG GIP of the Court of Verona. The investigation in question emerged from another Criminal procedure already registered at the Public Prosecutor’s Office of Agrigento, regarding the bankruptcy of a company, whose documents have been sent to the Office of the Court of Verona.

<sup>53</sup> Implemented by individuals from Sicily, who had rooted their economic interests in the territory of Lake Garda, in particular between the provinces of Verona and Brescia.

businesses over in Lake Garda. Moreover, the investigation was compounded by the transnationality, given the fact that the suspects operated in Italy as well as abroad. Within the same investigation, the precautionary seizure of movable and immovable goods, companies, businesses and tourist activities worth more than EUR 5 million was issued.

On the territory, also the presence of foreign criminal gangs<sup>54</sup>, involved in several crimes, has been confirmed over the years: from illegal immigration to drug trafficking.

### **Province of Vicenza**

Over the years, the province of Vicenza has also been subject to investigations<sup>55</sup>, which brought out activities of *'Ndrangheta* gangs linked to the GRANDE ARACRI *cosca*<sup>56</sup>. Last semester, the “Levante” operation<sup>57</sup>, carried out by the DIA of Bari, discovered the presence in Vicenza of members of criminal associations apparently close to the PARISI *clan* of Bari, aimed at money-laundering, self-laundering, fraudulent transfer of values, misappropriation and extortion. Furthermore, the provincial territory was not free from forms of common crime intended to breach the productive economic system by committing several economic and financial crimes. In this regard, mention goes to a criminal conspiracy aimed at committing a significant tax fraud by using invoices of nonexistent operations that led to more than EUR 100 million seized.

Eventually, in Vicenza as well the presence of foreign criminal gangs involved in many crimes has been registered over the years.

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<sup>54</sup> Mention goes to the conviction no. 558/22 of the Court of Verona, already described, issued by the Court of Verona who registered the presence, in the Veronese territory as well, of “cells” apparently belonging to the so-called “*Mafija Russa - Vor V zacone - Ladri nella legge*”.

<sup>55</sup> Mention goes to the “Camaleonte” and “Terry” operations of 2019 and a seizure of goods conducted within the “*Default*” operation (still in 2019), which dismantled a money-laundering activity in the province of Vicenza from Calabrian *cosche* on the Tyrrhenian side.

<sup>56</sup> Mention goes to the operation by the DIA of Padova in December 2019, which led to the seizure of goods, in the province of Vicenza as well, worth more than EUR 500 thousand and traceable to a Calabrian entrepreneur apparently “close” to the GRANDE ARACRI *cosca*.

<sup>57</sup> OCC no. 6513/16 RGNR - 11568/19 RGGIP issued on January 21, 2022, by the Court of Bari.

## **b. Foreign countries**

As we know, Mafia projections have no borders, and over the years have spread outside Italy as well, showing the capability of interpreting and taking advantage of the possibilities of trade and investments, even internationally. Police operations carried out abroad during the semester, which involved Italian Mafia *famiglie*, will be described below.

### **EUROPE**

#### **- Spain**

In Spain, the presence of Italian Mafia projections has long been registered, since it represents a strategic hub for international drug traffic, also considering the political and cultural links with Latin America. The Iberian territory is one of the main drug entry routes in Europe and a storage point for the subsequent transport in the countries of destination. Indeed, it is located in the middle of two important international routes: one for cocaine from South America, the other for hashish from Morocco.

However, some investigation results – mainly in Costa del Sol – detected a new phenomenon involving criminal organizations in Eastern Europe. Some of their members move for short periods to the Iberian Peninsula to grow cannabis there, so that its quality is particularly high thanks to the favorable weather conditions. Thereafter, it gets transported in the respective home countries, thus reducing brokerage costs.

Instead, the cocaine seized in Spain mainly comes from Colombia, but also from Brazil, Peru and Bolivia. This drug is shipped from South America by sea *containers* with direct and intermediate routes in other harbors of Central and South America towards Europe, such as the Caribbean countries and Ecuador. The Spanish harbors (especially Valencia, Barcelona and Algeciras) are the main entry points of cocaine for European markets. In addition to huge loads of narcotic substances through *containers*, cocaine reaches Spain in smaller quantities on board sailing ships and recreational vessels. Recent investigations have shown that Albanian criminal groups have established strong ties with Spanish gangs of the Mediterranean coast, as confirmation that cocaine trafficking is currently managed by criminal organizations from Eastern Europe, who can count on their brokers living in South America and in direct contact with Colombian *cartels*.

Concerning drug traffic, Calabrian organized crime still plays a crucial role in Spain, where it is carrying out money-laundering activities of illicit capital. In this regard, on **May 30, 2023**, the “*Aspromonte Emiliano*” operation was closed. It was coordinated by the DDA of Bologna, which managed to confirm the existence of a transnational gang headed by a *'Ndrangheta* representative of the ROMEO-STACCU *clan* of San Luca (Reggio Calabria), arrested in Spain in March 2021 after

a period of absconding, during which he handled significant drug loads through ties with South American drug dealers, such as *Primeiro Comando da Capital brasileiro* and Colombian, Peruvian, Mexican and Bolivian criminal organizations, as well as Italian fugitives. The investigations, started in 2019, revealed a sophisticated delivery mechanism of large amounts of money, included in the payment or the deposit of drug loads concerning Emilia-Romagna as well, on behalf of Calabrian individuals residing in the province of Reggio Emilia.

On **April 18, 2023**, the investigation known as “*Sporca Alleanza*” of the DDA of Catanzaro confirmed the capability of some members of the BEVILACQUA-PASSALACQUA *clan* of Catanzaro, considered the operating terminal of the *'Ndrangheta cosche* from Crotona, of dealing supplies of cocaine and heroin directly with international drug traffickers, who in turn, bought from Spain and the Netherlands.

Once again, in the field of drugs, on **May 3, 2023**, during the implementation of restrictive measures issued by the Judicial Authority of Reggio Calabria, part of the “*Eureka*” operation, which will better be described below in the part concerning Belgium, the Iberian territory was involved in several activities of members of the following *cosche*: PELLE, STRANGIO *alias* “FRACASCIA”, NIRTA “VERSU”, GIAMPAOLO, MAMMOLITI *alias* “FISCHIANTE” and GIORGI, apparently responsible, in various ways, for Mafia associations and organizations aimed at international drug traffic. Simultaneously to the development of the operation under consideration and linked to it, the DDA of Genoa closed the “*Sunset*” investigation, focused on an association, traceable to the *'Ndrangheta* from Reggio and operating in Liguria, which, in contact with a South American group represented by Balkan citizens, turned out to be involved in at least two imports of large amounts of cocaine from Spain, as well as its distribution in Italy.

On **May 15, 2023**, the “*Filo di Arianna 2*” operation of the District Attorney’s Office of Lecce confirmed the activities of an association linked to the local organized crime that handled the drug supplies intended for the market of Lecce through suppliers operating in Spain. This group was in contact with members of the MAMMOLITI-FISCHIANTE *'Ndrangheta cosca* as well, active in Apulia and other Italian regions, with direct ties to South American suppliers and international drug smugglers.

Finally, on **June 27, 2023**, the DDA of Milan, in regards to the “*Crypto*” operation, identified an association of drug traffickers who, thanks to the complicity and support of members of a well-known *'Ndrangheta famiglia*, long operating in Lombardy as well (BELLOCCO of Rosarno), sourced significant lots of hashish and cocaine from Spain and South America, intended for the market of Milan after passing through the harbor of Gioia Tauro.

It is reported that on **February 3, 2023**, at the Malpensa airport, Spanish authorities extradited a Greek citizen, who at first escaped the precautionary measure issued during the so-called “*Banksy*” operation, focused on an association dedicated to drug supplies from abroad through *brokers* linked to organized crime from Campania.

Spain remains one of the places chosen by Italian criminality, where some of its affiliates can hide, as the arrest of one of the leaders of a criminal gang on **March 15, 2023**, at the airport of Madrid, shows. This association settled in Rome’s hinterland with the aim of managing a drug traffic of cocaine, hashish and marijuana. The traced individual, after one year on the run, during the “*Spongebob*” operation was affected by a precautionary custody order, together with other members of an Albanian mob.

#### **- France**

France, thanks to its geographical and cultural closeness to Italy, records a strong Mafia presence - especially the Sicilian and the Calabrian organized crime groups - which uses that territory to facilitate the absconding of affiliates, to reinvest in the legal economy of illicitly accumulated capital, and to create bases for the narcotraffic management. Drug-trafficking and dealing continues to represent one of the main sources of income for Italian groups, who nurture the import of significant amount of hashish and marijuana along the land route from Morocco through Spain and France to reach Italian territory. On a particular note, the land border of Ventimiglia continues to represent an important traffic hub for local and foreign partnerships, as is shown by the numerous confiscations of addictive substances hidden by local or non-European - usually African - drug smugglers, inside means of transport or swallowed in ovules.

On **May 3, 2023**, the French territory was subject to the enforcement of the restrictive measures issued by the Judicial Authority of Reggio Calabria, within the framework of the already described “*Eureka*” operation (in the section referring to Spain) towards numerous members of Calabrian gangs for association finalized at international drug traffic.

In particular, the results of the investigation also made it possible to ascertain that the partnership had reinvested the illicitly accumulated sums in funding a company whose headquarters are in Menton (France); said company was linked to a restaurant in the same city, falsely in the name of a front person. The latter was arrested on **May 17, 2023** at the border of Ventimiglia, following the extradition agreed upon by the French and Italian governments, since he had already been arrested in France.

Calabrian organized crime uses the French territory as a place where some of its affiliates hide as is shown by the arrest, on **February 2, 2023** in Saint Etienne (France), of an affiliate of the PERNA-PRANNO ‘*ndrina* dominant in Cosenza and surroundings who had been a fugitive since 2006. The same was the recipient of a prison order issued by the General Prosecutor’s Office at the Catanzaro Court of Appeal for the execution of a life sentence, as he was held responsible for a number of

murderous crimes committed in 1991 during the Mafia war between the PINO-SENA and PERNA-PRANNO gangs that bloodied the Cosenza area in the early 1990s.

### **- United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom has attracted Mafia-style organized crime because of the possibility of laundering money through financial companies and businesses and because of the flexibility of the Anglo-Saxon market, which extends from the City of London to banking havens in the Cayman Islands. Despite Great Britain's commitment to anti-corruption, there is a tendency in the United Kingdom for organized crime to send, through offshore companies, flows of money that are then cleaned up and put back into the circle of the economy.

As for Calabrian organized crime, on **January 25, 2023**, the DDA of Catanzaro concluded an operation, against the BONAVOTA cosca of Sant'Onofrio (Vibo Valentia). This operation stems from the complex investigation "*Rinascita Scott*", when in 2019 the Judiciary had highlighted how the MANCUSO *famiglia* of Vibo Valentia, using sophisticated mechanisms suggested by colluding professionals, had carried out several money laundering operations in the United Kingdom, through the creation of corporate networks. The investigation documented how an affiliate of the aforementioned territorial articulation of '*Ndrangheta* active in Sant'Onofrio, in order to facilitate money laundering activities, had set up a series of foreign companies (most of them in Hungary) fictitiously registered in the name of third parties.

### **- Belgium**

Individuals related to Italian crime and Albanian syndicates active in drug dealing are still present on the Belgian territory.

Drug trafficker s' searches for new routes and new harbors to experiment to elude Police Forces checks made Belgium a hub for numerous transnational illicit activities, mainly regarding the harbor of Antwerp. In particular, following the anti-drug operations focused on the port of Gioia Tauro, the '*Ndrangheta* delocalized the drug loads arriving in ports in northern Europe.

Italian crime is traditionally focused on the traffic of cocaine, which is imported via land within the national borders through the main European distribution routes, since it can count on individuals who, for this purpose, are settled in northern Europe close to the main cargo ports where, over time, they managed to sneak in over the years.

In the drug-trafficking sector, the Calabrian Mafia maintains a major role, as is shown by the already mentioned anti-drug investigation "*Eureka*", which the Reggio Calabria Anti-Mafia Prosecutor's Office closed on **May 3, 2023**, with the execution of restraining measures towards various leaders of the PELLE, STRANGIO alias "FRACASCIA", NIRTA "VERSU", GIAMPAOLO, MAMMOLITI alias "FISCHIANTE" and GIORGI *cosche*, allegedly responsible, in different capacities, for Mafia association and association aimed at international drug trafficking. The investigation led by the

Judicial Authority of Reggio Calabria was developed in the field of two “Joint Investigation Teams-JIT”, one with the Prosecutor’s Offices of Munich I, Koblenz, Saarbrücken and Düsseldorf, the other one with the magistrate’s office of the Limburg Court and the Federal Prosecutor’s Office of Brussels, which have been coordinated by Eurojust. The “Joint Investigation Teams-JIT” tool allowed investigations in different countries to be carried out at the same time and in a coordinated way, acquiring in real time some circumstantial evidence which resulted in the separate investigations. Belgian and German authorities are indeed carrying out numerous restraining orders, simultaneously with operation “*Eureka*”, issued by local authorities against other suspects charged with allegations of drug trafficking and laundering.

Investigations made it possible to ascertain how the coteries used to stock up directly from Colombian, Ecuadorian, Panamanian and Brazilian organizations, making it possible to manage a drug importation channel from South America to Australia. Contacts with leaders of “*Clan del golfo*”, a Colombian leading para-military organization focused on international drug trafficking, have been registered. Many importations by sea have been documented among the ports of Gioia Tauro, Antwerp and Rotterdam. On a more detailed note, the investigations made it possible to ascertain that, between May 2020 and June 2022, over 6 tons of cocaine were moved, of which more than 3 are under seizure. The money flows related to the purchase and sale of drugs were managed by organizations of foreigners, specialized in *pick-up money*, or by *spalloni* (mules), who moved cash within the European continent. Money handling affected Panama, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Furthermore, in the above-mentioned anti-drug “*Aspromonte Emiliano*” operation, closed thanks to the Bologna Anti-Mafia directorate on **May 30, 2023**, it has been ascertained that the ‘*Ndrangheta* ROMEO-STACCU coterie of San Luca (Reggio Calabria), relying on relations with South American *cartels* such as the “*Primeiro Comando da Capital brasileiro*” and Colombian, Peruvian, Mexican and Bolivian criminal organizations, managed vast drug trafficking which, after occasional calls in Africa (Ivory Coast), arrived at the ports of Hamburg, Rotterdam and Antwerp, and then brought to Italy and sold on the entire national territory.

#### **- The Netherlands**

The Netherlands have strengthened some infrastructures for commercial trade, especially the Rotterdam harbor and the Schiphol commercial airport, and this favored the integration of the Netherlands in the drug-trafficking routes. This is shown by the mentioned “*Eureka*” and “*Aspromonte Emiliano*” operations, already explained in the sections dedicated to the other European countries, and of which mention goes to the investigative outcomes previously discussed.

On **April 18, 2023**, the investigative action of the Prosecutor’s Office of Catanzaro called “*Sporca Alleanza*” allowed the acknowledgement of the ability of some affiliates of the BEVILACQUA-PASSALACQUA *clan* of Catanzaro, which is considered the operative terminal of the ‘*Ndrangheta*

*cosche* of Crotona, to deal with cocaine and heroin supplies directly with the international drug traffickers who bought, in turn, from Spain and the Netherlands.

On **April 19, 2023**, a seizure order was issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria against an entrepreneur considered a member of the **BELLOCCO** *cosca* of Rosarno, whose criminal profile had emerged during the “*Magma*” operation, which made it possible to dismantle a criminal organization active in international drug traffic, which also reached the Le Havre harbor (France), in addition to those in Rotterdam and Gioia Tauro.

On **February 23, 2023**, a seizure of goods was issued by the Court of Santa Maria Capua Vetere against two brothers, both entrepreneurs linked to the ZAGARIA *clan*, accused of about ten shipments of significant amounts of cocaine and heroin from the Netherlands.

### **- Switzerland**

Switzerland, thanks to its flourishing economy and pursuant to the opportunities offered by the banking system, represented one of the favorite destinations for the transfer of capital for Mafia criminal organizations.

In the semester, it has been noted that on **March 22, 2023**, a definitive seizure order was issued by the Court of Appeal of Bologna against a construction entrepreneur linked to the GRANDE ARACRI *cosca*, on whose behalf he laundered money in Switzerland.

### **- Germany**

Germany, thanks to its prosperous economy, represents a center of attraction for the Italian Mafia organizations mainly active in the western and in the southern parts of the country, especially in the richest regions such as Baden-Württemberg, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Bavaria and Hesse.

Italian partnerships, in addition to the traditional illegal activities such as drug trafficking, have tried to settle progressively into the legal economy over time, through the acquisition of business activities such as restaurants and pizzerias as a “cover” of various illicit affairs. Furthermore, recent investigations carried out alongside the German Authorities, showed that businesses related to Italian organized crime have also been used as logistic bases for “*summits*” and for the management of illegal activities.

However, the establishment of the collaboration between international police organizations and the German investigative structures made it possible to proceed to a precise phenomenological analysis of the criminal organizations in Germany and to make an efficient repressive action.

The outcomes of the “Eureka” and “Aspromonte Emiliano” operations, well described before, are recalled.

Moreover, on **June 27, 2023**, regarding operation “*Glicine Akeronte*”, a *'Ndrangheta* structure has been found and recognized as *locale* of Papanice, a hamlet of the Municipality of Crotona, which,



based on the investigation, has criminal interests also in Germany, where the Prosecutor's Office of Catanzaro led its investigations in accordance with the local Prosecutor's Office of Stuttgart.

Regarding the ablative measures, it is noted that on **May 29, 2023**, the measure of preventive seizure of goods was carried out. It was issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria, against three entrepreneurs, whose criminal profiles have emerged during the "*Andrea Doria*" operation, when an articulated tax fraud system was revealed, created in the oil products trade sector, focused on false business trilateralations, aimed at evading VAT and excise duties. The judicial order, with a total amount of EUR 80 million, dealt with the whole business compendium of 20 enterprises, 3 of which established their headquarters in Germany, and were mainly active in the sectors of roadside transportation of goods, oil products trade and non-hazardous waste disposal.

Recently, it may seem that also the *'Ndrangheta* from Crotona and Cosenza have settled in the flourishing German territory to sneak into the economic sector.

In this regard, it is noted that on **June 5, 2023**, as part of the "*Gentleman 2*" operation by the Prosecutor's Office of Catanzaro, it has been revealed that the FORASTEFANO-ABBRUZZESE *'ndrine*, operating in the upper Jonio Cosentino hinterland, were active in Germany as well through some "Coriglianesi" who had settled there and who resulted fully included in the international drug traffic sector. In particular, one of these, who was the owner of a pizzeria in Frankfurt, granted the logistic support to the affiliates every time they went to Germany to discuss face-to-face about their illicit affairs.

## **- Austria**

Austria plays a crucial role in the illicit traffics managed by criminal organizations, especially from countries in the Balkans. It has been recorded the presence in the Country of transits of loads of heroin, opioids, and cannabis-based products, often managed by criminal organizations from the Balkans, especially Serbian. Regarding Italian organized crime, no stable presence in the Austrian territory has been recorded, which is desired by many coteries, especially Calabrian, who are present in the territory for laundering and reinvestments of illicit capital.

On **May 18, 2023**, an asset prevention of the seizure of goods has been executed, issued by the Court of Reggio Calabria against two entrepreneurs from Reggio Calabria, operating mainly in the betting sector. The criminal profile of the suspects emerged during the "*Galassia*" operation, when a high-remunerative criminal system was found, aimed at the illicit recollection of online bets, with its headquarters in Reggio Calabria as well as branches abroad through companies whose headquarters are in Malta, Romania, Austria and Spain. Said companies may have acted through a "drop-down" earning system, starting from the master, at the summit of the pyramid and promoter of the organization, to the end user, the final player. Said association may have had links with

the *'Ndrangheta*, to which it granted a part of the revenue in exchange of protection and diffusion of the online brands and local commercial businesses. Lastly, the affiliates moved the collected sums to the headquarters of the association abroad, avoiding Italian taxation.

Regarding companies with legal headquarters in Austria and Malta, they may have operated in Italy thanks to a stable organization, consisting of various business points around the territory and focused on the collection of stakes on bets and games through unauthorized websites, among which are those managed by the individuals presented.

## **- Albania**

The geographic and, above all, port proximity between Italy and Albania has, over time, greatly facilitated the creation of direct channels between Apulian criminal organizations (particularly the Bari and Ionian-Salentine gangs) and Albanian ones, and this with particular reference to the supply, storage and marketing of cannabinoids. However, Albania also serves as an intermediate port of call in the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan.

Moreover, the Apulian partnerships showed a tendency to make investments of illicit capital accumulated in the Albanian territories, realizing in the case also the objective of laundering the proceeds of illegal activities.

The Foggia component, the so-called “*società*”, also allegedly forged well-established ties with the Albanian partnerships imposing itself authoritatively in the management of the trafficking of soft drugs from the mentioned country.

During the semester under review, a number of Judicial Police operations were concluded that confirm the assumption. In fact, on **January 26, 2023**, an investigative activity by the Bergamo Public Prosecutor’s Office unveiled the relations between criminal partnerships, Albanian and Italian, that acted between the Balkan country and the national territory in order to get heroin to two refineries in Milan and Cremona.

In addition, on **April 5, 2023**, the DDA of Florence disarticulated a criminal partnership, composed of men of Albanian origin, dedicated to the importation from Albania of large quantities of marijuana, which were then resold in the national territory.

Finally, on **May 31, 2023**, the arrest of suspected criminals issued by the Potenza Public Prosecutor’s Office was carried out against a number of suspects, mainly Albanian, held responsible for setting up, on the Metapontine strip, an association aimed at drug trafficking that also had connections in Albania.

At the trial level, on **January 20, 2023**, the Bari Court of Appeal filed its second-degree ruling on the “*Blue Box*” operation, by which a criminal group that was permanently involved in importing large quantities of narcotics from the Albania by sea had been dismantled.

At the judicial level, a number of activities conducted by the DIA in cooperation with the Albanian Authorities during the six-month period registered interesting developments:

- within the framework of the “*Shefi*” operation, on **January 23, 2023**, following the delegation of the General Prosecutor’s Office at the Court of Appeal of Bari, a notice of provisional deferment of the execution of the prison sentence was served against a convicted citizen, while on the following **January 27, 2023** the Court of Appeal of Timisoara (Romania) ordered against another defendant the execution in Romania of the sentence imposed by the Italian Judicial Authority.
- with reference to the “*Shpirti*” operation, on **February 9, 2023**, the Court of First Instance of Tirana issued the sentence of conviction of several defendants accused of cultivation and international drug trafficking.

### - Romania

Romania, located in the so-called “*Balkan route*”, suffers from the heroin loads transits coming from Turkey heading to Europe.

However, the Romanian territory would be exploited by Italian crime for procurements and possible attempts of Mafia infiltrations as well, and the investigations carried out recently confirm that, among the most present Mafia groups in the Romanian territory, the *'Ndrangheta* stands out, focusing mostly on financial felonies. In particular, the GRANDE ARACRI *cosca* seems to be the most infiltrated Calabrian syndicate in that socio-economic fabric.

Evidence show how also Campanian crime seems to settle in Romania in the gambling and illegal betting sectors, online as well, in some cases even in synergy with the *'Ndrangheta* and *Cosa Nostra* groups.

On **January 25, 2023**, the same ablative measure, issued by the Bologna Court of Appeal, was notified to a Cutrese family belonging to the GRANDE ARACRI *'Ndrangheta clan*, concerning, among other things, bank accounts in Romania and Lithuania.

Lastly, on **June 30, 2023**, goods were confiscated to a businessman connected to the LABATE *cosca*, since his criminal profile emerged in the framework of the “*Petrolmafie Spa*” operation. During this operation, the significant interests of the various Italian Mafias in the management of oil products emerged, whose illicit revenues would be reinvested also in foreign bank accounts linked to Romanian, Bulgarian, Croatian and Hungarian shell companies, to be then again available for the same organization.

To conclude, on **March 17, 2023**, the Judicial Administration issued a measure towards a well-known brand working in the food mass distribution sector, settled in Calabria. The business derives from acquisitions emerged during the “*Planning*” operation, where it was confirmed that some economic mutual interests between some businessmen and *'Ndrangheta cosche* in Reggio Calabria became

object of laundering in Romania and Slovenia, headquarters of two companies, one in each country, which were seized during the investigation.

#### **- Malta**

Geographical proximity and the possibility of avoiding custom checks since it is a member of the European Union facilitated the “migration” of Italian Mafias in the Maltese territory. Moreover, its privileged tax system, alongside the corporate law facilitations, are further factors which encouraged the syndicates to start laundering in this territory.

The investigations carried out during the last years testify that one of the criminal fields of the syndicates is online betting, where the presence of *'Ndrangheta* syndicates prevails.

During this period, on **May 18, 2023**, an assets prevention measure on the seizure of goods was issued, set by the Court of Reggio Calabria, towards 2 local businessmen, working precisely in the gambling and betting sector. The criminal profiles of these 2 individuals emerged during the “*Galassia*” operation, when they created a mechanism aimed at the illicit collection of *online* bets with headquarters in Reggio Calabria, as well as branches abroad through the activity of businesses based not only in Malta, but also in Romania, Austria and Spain. The identified criminal association would have had links with the *'Ndrangheta*, guaranteeing part of the revenue in exchange for “protection”. Indeed, the affiliated outlets transferred the collected sums to the association’s headquarters located abroad, avoiding Italian taxation.

### **OTHER CONTINENTS**

#### **- Canada**

Illicit drug traffic, in its different forms, invests in Canada successfully, highlighting numerous transnational criminal organizations’ interests.

The cocaine trade is run by the Mexican and Colombian *cartels* and by criminal syndicates of Italian origin that manage part of international traffic and a share of the national market. The Canadian *Cosa Nostra* is operative in the area of Montreal (Quebec), where it would benefit from a collaboration of the *Hells Angels* (motorbike rider gangs) for the management of drug traffic and gambling. In this context, the attempted murder in **March 2023**, against a leader of the RIZZUTO *clan*, analyzed in light of other recent murder events, might be a symptom of a feud aimed at the control of the region’s economic interests.

In Canada, the presence of the *'Ndrangheta* is traceable in the metropolitan area of Toronto (Ontario), and particularly rooted in the *Greater Toronto Area*, with extensions in the areas of Ottawa and Thunder Bay.

The main Calabrian *famiglie* would be able to manage significant cocaine traffics, also pursuant to the branches in Europe, South America, and in the USA. Furthermore, there would be functional links

between Canadian *'Ndrangheta locali* and Canadian *locali*, which would guarantee structural endorsements for illicit activities, including drug trafficking and illicit revenue laundering.

The Canadian territory is used by Calabrian coteries also to promote some of its affiliates' absconding, as it is proved by the arrest, on **March 13, 2023**, of an individual who migrated there to avoid arrest in the "*Rinascita Scott*" operation, when in 2019 the judiciary highlighted how the MANCUSO *famiglia*, dominant in the province of Vibo Valentia, through sophisticated mechanisms suggested by highly-skilled professionals, carried out many laundering operations in the United Kingdom thanks to the creation of business networks. The fugitive, member of the Sant'Onofrio (Vibo Valentia) *locale*, was found exactly in Canada.

### **- United States**

Over time, the American *Cosa Nostra* has become an international organization operating in drug and guns traffic, extortion, fraud, corruption and in the infiltration in different business and finance sectors.

The Calabrian Mafia, thanks to its role in drug traffic, is present in the American territory, where, together with the Colombian and Mexican *narcos*, represents a threat even for the consistent laundering activities.

In the six-month period, on **February 2, 2023**, a goods seizure order issued by the Judiciary Authority of Reggio Calabria against two brothers included a company in Florida (United States). The two, working in the construction sector and in the real-estate brokerage, were drawn from the precautionary measure in prison regarding the "*Libro Nero*" operation, as they were considered "*reference entrepreneurs*" of the LIBRI *cosca*, working in the Calabrian capital, whose work was aimed at acquiring the management and control of various economic businesses.

### **- China**

The reflections of Italian crime in China happen mainly thanks to the Chinese citizens present in the Italian territory. The Campanian *Mafias*, for a long time, have been settling their own logistic headquarters in that Country, referring especially to the Zhejiang region, for the production and manufacturing of counterfeit products and for the consequent distribution of those in other countries, including the American continent.

The *'Ndrangheta* as well plays its role, in the said criminal sector, which consists in promoting the importation of counterfeit products in Italy. Moreover, there are criminal groups working in online counterfeiting, including organizations linked to the Campanian *Mafias* or other foreign groups, especially Chinese, who are present in the national territory and are preferred in the counterfeiting

traffic by criminal organizations in the Balkans, in Eastern Europe, and by Maghrebi, Nigerian and Senegalese criminal groups.

The analysis of the investigations concluded in the semester of reference leads to the consideration that the Chinese territory is used by the organized crime settled in Italy also for financial felonies.

On March 22, 2023, to conclude the “Cash Express” operation, a structured international laundering network was documented, formed by Italian individuals who result related with various companies to launder the revenues coming from tax frauds. In particular, the suspects would have approached some Chinese affiliates settled in Rome, able to receive the illicit supplies and to transfer them in China through bank channels and then to hand them over to the Italian customers, in form of cash, through a compensation system based on trust. By the inspections carried out, it has emerged that said laundering system could have been used also to “clear” the revenues coming from the felonies made by the leaders of Mafia associations.

Lastly, on April 7, 2023, the investigation activity named “Fast & Clean” due to the speed with which the illicit operations ended, made it possible to identify articulated branches of a well-structured system, which guaranteed to numerous recipients, Italian and Chinese businessmen, the ability to evade taxes, to launder money through the transfer in China, which was then given back to the Italian syndicate in cash through “couriers”. Illicit phenomenology, assured by the Ancona Prosecutor’s Office, would be related to the so-called “underground bank”, that is the system of a hidden bank, at the service of an illegal economy which, thanks to a complex and organized structure, is able to transfer and launder billions and use cash supplies, non-traceable for the return to the false bill receiving company, of part of the amount reclaimed by the company itself.

#### **4. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FOR TACKLING ITALIAN ORGANIZED CRIME ABROAD**

Italian organized crime has managed to interpret and use the best possibilities for international trades and investments offered by globalization to its advantage. The tendency for such illegal business requires a prompt and effective action by the Authorities which should be able to constantly update the countering actions and facilitate the sharing of cutting-edge intervention models with other countries as much as possible, in order to foster a “harmonization” of the anti-Mafia legislation.

During the “*High Level Operational Conference- HLOC*”<sup>1119</sup> held on **May 23 and 24, 2023** at the Europol Headquarters in The Hague, the shared intention to boost any activity related to international, judiciary and law enforcement cooperation emerged. It is a need that stems from the transnational

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<sup>1119</sup> Organized by “*Rete @ON to tackle Top Level OCGs and Mafia style structures*” on “*The threat by High Risk OCGs in the UE: their transnational dimension, main features and the LEA approach*” Other than the director of DIA, the delegates of European Commission, of EPPO, of Eurojust, of Interpol and other delegates from judicial authority and LEAs of the EU Member States took part in the event.

trait of the organized crime groups (OCGs), which act increasingly in “cross-border” criminal networks. Furthermore, “Mafia-style” partnerships are extremely interested in cyber environments and in “Hi-tech finance”, seizing the opportunities offered by digital and technological development, but also taking advantage of the difficulty in promptly updating the relevant laws.

However, drug trafficking, thanks to its profitability, still figures among the traditional illicit activities which organized crime is interested in. The Italian Mafia shows a great interest in this sector, taking advantage of the vast presence of affiliates in the drug-producing and transit countries. Thanks to the advancement of technological and IT knowledge, the network could be a possible platform for facilitating contacts and financial exchanges between brokers and suppliers. The areas of greatest interest for the Italian groups in this field are the ones in South America, in particular Colombia and Mexico, the main sites of cocaine production, but also Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Guyana and Dominican Republic as territories of transit. In the last years, “Sahel” and West Africa have been increasingly involved in a pivotal route for drug trafficking and in this regard Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau and Ghana represent important logistical bases.

The illegal sector of gambling, “*gaming and betting*” too, has shown how criminal organizations have managed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by technology, e.g. through the creation of letterbox companies (the so-called “shell companies”) with legal office in “tax havens”, functional not only to increase profits, but also to facilitate the laundering of other illicit capital.

The business of the smuggling of energy products (lubricating oil and base oils) has been an interest for Mafia organizations, offering a great economic advantage through the establishment of a market “parallel” to the legal one. These are mainly energy products and fuels from Eastern Europe which are then introduced on the national territory with false invoicing made by usually “ad hoc-established” companies.

In such a framework, international LEAs and judiciary cooperation is pivotal for effectively tackling these criminal actions which involve various territories, together with the implementation of legal instruments and common regulations, as well as a wider and faster sharing of information and exchange of best practices procedures.

*“Italy is a model in Europe and has the responsibility to inspire common work at community level, in particular through Europol, which is the common home for LEAs”*. These are the flattering words pronounced on **February 15, 2023** by Europol’s Deputy Executive Director of Operations, Jean Philippe Lecouffe, during an international panel aimed at tackling the increase of criminal assets to which members of the LEAs from 19 European Countries and other delegates of various organizations, such as the European Commission, the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO), Eurojust, Olaf, Interpol and Cepol took part.

Furthermore, on **June 21, 2023** the first panel of experts on money laundering and asset recovery was held at the office of Eurojust. It was aimed at gathering the largest group of specialists in order to develop a common approach to the detection and recovery of illicit capital. In this regard, Ladislav Hamran, President of Eurojust, stated: *“Organized crime groups have developed a multitude of methods to launder illegal proceeds and hide their criminally gained assets. Tackling money laundering at the source and depriving criminals of their assets is therefore an essential part of the fight against cross-border organized crime.”* Moreover, regarding asset confiscation, on **June 9, 2023**, the Ministers of Justice of EU countries agreed on the project of a directive proposed by the Council, aimed at easing the procedures of cross-border cooperation for asset recovery and confiscation. It is a law inspired by the arrangements of Italian law (the so-called *“The Italian Approach”*<sup>1120</sup>) which will allow ablative measures even without any criminal conviction, if the fact that the asset is the product of illicit behavior is ascertained.

Ever more evident are the results of the new forms of law enforcement cooperation (Joint Investigation teams, EPPO, etc.) which shall be considered the prelude for a real anti-Mafia law shared by the Nations. In this regard, on **June 14, 2023**, the 4th evaluation report of the *“Joint Investigation Teams – JIT”* was presented at the office of Eurojust, demonstrating the main results and the best investigative experiences obtained through this institute. In this regard, on **April 24, 2023**, The Council of EU approved the establishment of a common digital platform in order to make the coordination and management of the JIT easier through quickly exchanging operational information and granting the traceability of the evidence obtained during the activities.

#### **a. Arrangements and bilateral cooperation**

Bilateral cooperation, a crucial law enforcement tool, makes it possible to precisely and meticulously analyze the presence of Mafia organization abroad, focusing on their ability to develop autonomously and in relation with other foreign crime organizations. In this regard, the DIA has always promoted and fostered cooperation activities, developing and strengthening relations and the involvement of foreign liaison offices in Rome and Italian “Experts on Security” abroad. International cooperation Task Forces make it possible to accurately monitor Mafia organized crime groups through a continuous cooperation between Italian and foreign LEAs, in particular the German, Austrian, Dutch and French ones. The Task Forces and the steady information exchange allowed the implementation

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<sup>1120</sup> In this regard, during the “The Italian Approach” *symposium* held in Rotterdam (Netherlands) on October 4 and 5, 2022, funded by Rete@ON, a delegation of Italian LEAs shared the best practices in different sectors for tackling organized crime, explaining “The Italian Approach”.



of operational strategies which made it possible to discover important contexts of criminal entrepreneurship.

Recalling the strengthening, proposed by the DIA since 2015, of the bilateral Italian-Swiss collaboration with the signing of the “*Memorandum of Understanding on Tax Matters for the Mutual Exchange of Financial Information*” and the 2021 promotion, again by the DIA, of training carried out in favor of Albanian investigators of the NBI (National Bureau of Investigation) on the subjects of common interest and, in particular, on the fight against drug trafficking, it is highlighted that also in the six-month period under review, numerous contacts were initiated with representatives of the LEAs of foreign countries in order to initiate the exchange of useful information. Among other events, the one held on **April 28, 2023** at the office of the DIA stands out, during which the Director of Argentina’s newly created “*Departemento Investigaciones Antimafia*”, inspired by the Italian model, spoke. The meeting was aimed at establishing future informative and operational cooperation regarding anti-Mafia action between the aforementioned Argentinian *Departemento* and Italian LEAs.

## **b. Multilateral cooperation**

The experience in the sector of the many successful investigative activities highlighted the importance of a synergistic approach in tackling Mafia groups and showed just how necessary and pivotal the exchange of information and expertise between the actors involved in law enforcement activities is.

In the last years, complex cooperation activity on the international level has been carried out by the DIA through an efficient and effective cooperation with liaison offices in the diplomatic offices in our country and through the “*Network of experts on Security*” coordinated by the International Police Cooperation Service.

In tackling Mafia activity, the DIA is internationally considered as the reference for all the LEAs of EU Member States and non-EU countries. An organization with great operational and relational skills, which was a pioneer in understanding the phenomenon of the “globalization of crime”, a new context of criminal operativity which can be addressed by investigators only using a multi-lateral approach.

Over the years, the importance of cooperating with the “Liaison Officers” of the European Union and the ones of United States, Switzerland, Australia, Canada and Germany – countries with well-established entities ascribable to the Italian Mafia – has emerged thanks to the several successful investigations which had international results.

Among other instruments of multilateral international cooperation, the “*I-CAN project*” established in July 2020 through an agreement between the Department of Public Safety and the General

Secretariat of the International Criminal Police Organization-INTERPOL<sup>1121</sup>, had the merit of developing a network for tackling Mafia-like criminal organizations, with a particular focus on international branches of the 'Ndrangheta. The goal is to increase and share the knowledge on the phenomenon, not only on the matter of the structure of the criminal organizations, but also on the way in which the 'Ndrangheta acts, in order to detect the illicit capital used globally and to locate and arrest the dangerous members of this criminal organization.

A hub has been established at *Direzione Centrale della Polizia Criminale* in order to fulfill such goals. It includes LEAs, *Direzione Investigativa Antimafia* and *Direzione Centrale dei Servizi Antidroga*. The activities of the project are geographically oriented towards European, American and Australian territory, in addition to Italy.

Within the framework of the I-CAN project, multilateral cooperation aims at creating an operative network to easily share information on investigations which uses the most up-to-date analysis tools for locating, confiscating and seizing those financial assets ascribable to 'Ndrangheta criminal groups.

During the first semester of 2023, the I-CAN project continued to obtain important operational results, thanks to a steady and active communication between Rome, INTERPOL's General Secretariat and the other 18 countries which take part in the project<sup>1122</sup>.

Thanks to the important goals reached over time, the project's duration<sup>1123</sup> has been extended by the Steering Committee until December 31, 2024 with the funds not used during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this semester, the international investigative activities had an important role and, supported by the project, ended with the arrest of 32 'Ndrangheta members in many European and Asian countries<sup>1124</sup>. Moreover, other 10 fugitives were located and arrested abroad<sup>1125</sup>. They were extradited thanks to the operative support of the Countries which take part in the project.

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<sup>1121</sup> With its 194 member states (all the EU Member States are part of Interpol). The International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) is the world's largest intergovernmental criminal police organization. It aims at facilitating the cooperation between LEAs, allowing the exchange of data on Law enforcement activities. Interpol reached several cooperation agreements with many international organizations in areas of shared interest.

<sup>1122</sup> Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, UK, Uruguay and the USA. In this regard, within the I-CAN project, on June 15 and 16, 2023 a delegation of the German BKA met with the DIA in order to exchange information and best practices regarding law enforcement against the 'Ndrangheta.

<sup>1123</sup> It should have initially ended on the first semester of 2023.

<sup>1124</sup> Specifically, 9 in Germany, 9 in Italy, 7 in Belgium, 3 in France, 1 in Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Romania, Hungary, Malta, Georgia, Lebanon, EAU and Indonesia.

<sup>1125</sup> Specifically, 3 in Spain, 1 in France, Switzerland, Malta, Georgia, Lebanon, EAU and Indonesia.

## - EUROPOL's role as an instrument of cooperation

A notably effective instrument in tackling the menace of transnational organized crime in Member States is the EUROPOL agency, which assists EU countries in fighting international organized and Mafia-like crime. It is one of the most up-to-date support centers for LEAs in criminal police operations, a true exchange and information analysis center which, thanks to cutting edge evaluation tools on criminal organizations and behaviors is able to better address law enforcement activities.

EUROPOL manages and coordinates EU and third-party countries' LEAs and represents a pivot for European security, enabling a fast and effective global information exchange.

Thanks to ever-evolving cooperation activity, non-EU and geographically far countries can participate in investigative activity coordinated by EUROPOL. Brazil, China, Colombia and EAU, through specific agreements with the agency, can contribute to the investigation they are involved in<sup>1126</sup>.

Moreover, the international cooperation that passes through EUROPOL's action in the fight against transnational organized crime also involves other supranational bodies, such as the International Criminal Police Organization-OIPC-INTERPOL, also responding to the request of the EU Commission, which, in its "Recommendation for an EU Council Decision" of April 14, 2021 (COM2021) 177 FINAL, sought to pursue deeper and more effective cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

The DIA has established a steady and effective cooperation with EUROPOL, particularly with the European departments "*for tackling organized crime*" (ESOCC - *European Serious Organised Crime Center*), "*for tackling Financial and Economic crimes*" (EFECC - *European Financial & Economic Crime Center*) competent for financial and economic crime and tracing, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds obtained through crimes committed on the EU territory and with EUROPOL's "European Cybercrime Center – EC3" which publishes the "IOCTA - Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment".

Such departments, thanks to their ever-evolving expertise, are able to share information with LEAs, policymakers and regulatory bodies, allowing them to tackle Cybercrime in an effective and concerted way.

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<sup>1126</sup>

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/partners-collaboration/agreements>.

EUROPOL, in its programmatic approach, has established the “*Europol programming document 2024-2026 project*”<sup>1127</sup> presented to the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on **January 31, 2023**. In this regard, programmatic and regulatory initiatives at the European Union level that are in the process of being adopted or implemented are considered, among others, including the plan “*on police information exchange, action plans on drugs and arms trafficking*” cybercrime proposals and policies on financial crime.

In the last part of the programmatic project, the 2024 work plan is found, with reference to the development of information technology and ability of information management, operational coordination, tackling severe and organized crime, tackling cybercrime and tackling financial crimes.

Moreover, with particular reference to criminal activities linked to IT technology, the European Cybercrime Center (EC3)<sup>1128</sup> has planned improvements in 2024 for the operational and technical support in the investigations on cryptocurrency through a dedicated web portal.

### **c. @ON Project**

Within the context of international police cooperation, it is important to highlight the role of the “@ON Anti-mafia Operational Network”, of which the DIA is creator and *Project Leader*. At the international level, the network is considered a useful tool for promoting a fast and efficient exchange of information for tackling Mafia-like organizations in Europe and outside Europe. The main goal of this cutting-edge project is to promote the operational information exchange and the best practices, aiming at tackling “*Mafia-style*” crime organizations which are to be considered a severe danger to the EU’s social and economic security.

The @ON Network has been operatively established in November 2018, through the signing of a direct financing between the DIA and European commission (*Grant Agreement*) amounting to EUR 600 thousand (ISFP-2017-AG-IBA-ONNET Project no. 817618), for a 24-month period, then prolonged to 36 months because of the Covid-19 emergency.

Starting from February 1, 2022 and for the next two years, the European Commission financed the Network’s activities with an additional EUR 2 million with the ISF’s Direct Grant<sup>1129</sup>, through the “ISF4@ON” project (ISFP-2020-AG-IBA-ONNET-nr.101052683).

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<sup>1127</sup> RI024.pdf (camera.it)

<sup>1128</sup> This is the Europol sector that coordinates cross-border law enforcement activities against cybercrime. (<https://www.europol.europa.eu/about-europol/european-cybercrime-centre-ec3>).

<sup>1129</sup> *Internal Security Fund* for the cooperation of the EU’s LEAs. A first financing project (ISFP-2017-AG-IBA-ONNET-NR.817618) was launched for the first time in November 2018 with a 38-month timeframe, amounting to EUR 600 thousand.

As of the current Semester, the @ON Network, initially established by a *Core Group* made up of France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy, together with Europol, is comprised of 42 LEAs, representing 37 countries. The expansion of the network continued, and in the semester – other than the partners such as Hungary, Austria, Romania, Australia, Malta, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland, Croatia, Georgia, Norway, Albania<sup>1130</sup>, Portugal, the USA, Sweden, Canada, Latvia, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria and Montenegro – other law Enforcement Agencies from 8 more countries joined<sup>1131</sup>, in particular Ukraine, Cyprus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ireland, Kosovo, Finland, Greece and Moldova.

The Network, in synergy with EUROPOL and SCIP (International Police Cooperation Service), is in talks with several South American police force agencies to promote their membership and achieve “coverage” of a strategic geographic area in the fight against organized crime and international drug trafficking.

Italy is represented by the DIA as Project Leader, and by the Carabinieri, Guardia di Finanza and State Police as partners<sup>1132</sup>.

In the semester in question, the network supported investigative units of @ON Member States in 134 investigations and financed 488 missions for 2,039 investigators which led to the arrest of 869 people, including 9 fugitives and the seizing of more than EUR 200 million, drugs, vehicles, luxury goods, commercial premises and weapons.

The *Network* aims at developing a more structured integration in tackling criminal networks through a stronger relation with EMPACT (*European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats*). The @ON Network indeed aims to strengthen the LEAs cooperation and to share the best practices between the LEAs, to spread a greater knowledge on how the Mafia phenomenon is intrusive, in order to arrange a more effective activity to combat it and provide a more precise and thorough analysis on the most dangerous criminal networks.

The European Commission (pursuing “*EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025*” - “*Assessing Serious and Organized Crime Threats in the European Union: Looming Threat to Member States SOCTA 2021-25*”<sup>1133</sup> where the aims and goals of the @ON Network and of the related

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<sup>1130</sup> From March **20 to 24, 2023**, a delegation of Albanian prosecutors from the *Special Anti-Corruption Structure (SPAK)* was guest at the DIA to understand how it works in order to identify the fields of cooperation. In continuing this collaboration, on **July, 2023** the Albanian National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) joined the @ON Network as well (after the Albania Criminal Police Department which had already joined in 2020).

<sup>1131</sup> The work of the DIA to involve other countries in the project are put into practice through the start of international contacts with the authorities of those countries where collaboration is functional for anti-Mafia actions. In this regard, on **March 13 2023**, the DIA met with a delegation of Dubai Police from UAE which was in Italy, creating the basis for proposing the adhesion of this country to the @ON Project.

<sup>1132</sup> The coordination, on a national level, is assured by the International Police Cooperation Service (SCIP) of the Central Directorate of the Italian Criminal Police.

<sup>1133</sup> “*Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment SOCTA - 2021-25*” licensed by Europol on April 12, 2021.

financing project ISF4@ON) highlights how the “*the current @ON Network should be strengthened by welcoming all Member States and developing best practices, as well as establishing a stronger link with EMPACT in its work to combat criminal networks.*”

In the semester under review, the @on Network funded the organization of these projects:

- **February, 16, 2023**, Rome “*4th Core Group Meeting (CGM-4) of the @ON Network – ISF4@ON project*” “*THEMATIC SESSION ON THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE ON THE ILLICIT ACTIVITIES OF OCGS*”. On this occasion, in the presence of the Top Authorities of the Italian LEAs and Core Group countries, the EU Commission and the Europol Agency, membership in the Ukrainian Collateral Network was formalized, allowing participants to focus the attention on the repercussions of the war in Ukraine and the illicit activities of transnational criminal organizations;
- **March 19-20, 2023**, Brussels (Belgium) “*5th Core Group Meeting (CGM-5) of the @ON Network*”, on “*HARBOURS: CRIMINAL TERRITORIES FOR OCGS, INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRAFFICKING, CORRUPTION AND VIOLENCE*”<sup>1134</sup>. Based on the *European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addition* description of corruption (“*used by drug-traffickers to enter ports, to gain access to drugs hidden in containers, to create or secure control over businesses used as a cover for smuggling activities, ...and also to facilitate money laundering and so on...*”) corrupting activities were investigated in depth to support the investigative activities of LEAs (Law Enforcement Agencies) and to overcome the concerning issues that emerged. The @ON Network supported these thematic meetings in order to effectively contribute to developing the awareness of the dangerousness of criminal organizations as well as to improve the knowledge on them and to share such information acquired by the different countries and by Europol. The ports in Europe and all over the world have become pivotal hubs in commercial routes, acquiring such a large size to become efficient logistic hubs used by organized crime for illicit transports such as drug-trafficking (specifically, cocaine) moving goods from producing countries to consumer markets, with Europe being among the main destinations;
- **May 23-24, 2023**, The Hague (NL), EUROPOL HQ “*High Level Operational Conference (HLOC) The threat posed by High Risk OCGs in the EU: their transnational dimension, main features and the LEA approach*”. The purpose of this conference was to disseminate recommendations on how to best counter high-risk organized crime groups so that decisions can be priority-oriented. The

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<sup>1134</sup> Section “Negative consequences: corruption in EU ports” pp. 40, Issue “European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addition” titled “*EU DRUG MARKET: COCAINE*” ed. 2022 and “*Maritime threat assessment of illicit flows across the Atlantic*” created for the *Global Illicit Flows Programme of the EU- GIFF* by MASIF – *Monitoring and Support Project for the Global Illicit Flow Programme* and SEACOP – *Seaport Cooperation Programme*” report, published on **February 6, 2023**, *Maritime threat assessment of illicit flows across the Atlantic – Global Illicit Flows Programme*.

main findings of the event were brought to the attention of Police Chiefs prior to the 2023 European Police Chiefs Convention organized at Europol in late September 2023. The conference also emphasized the need to update the framework of the current major threats concerning organized crime groups, to strengthen the common European and global fight against criminal organizations through the @ON Network by defining a unified vision at both the investigative and strategic levels, and by providing support to EU institutions for regulatory initiatives on organized Mafia-type crime groups and high-risk criminal networks;

- **June, 6-8, 2023, The Hague (NL)** “*Head of homicide Unit - Second Operational oriented meeting HRCN*” in relation to *High-Risk Criminal Network* of EMPACT (HRCN). It is a specific focus on the homicide committed by criminal organizations in a transnational context, which meets the hopes of the EU Commission in terms of complementarity of the Network with the other available European instruments.

## 5. PUBLIC PROCUREMENTS

### a. Monitoring companies involved in performing contracts for public works

In compliance with the Anti-Mafia Code (Legislative Decree 159/2011), the DIA constantly monitors those companies that are involved in performing contracts for public works, supplies, and services. The monitoring activity is carried out in close cooperation with Prefects and has a leading role within the Interforce Provincial Units, as reaffirmed in the latest Decree by the Ministry of Interior of October 2, 2023<sup>1135</sup>, which will be further discussed in the next Report.

The Department has a pivotal role<sup>1136</sup> and works in support of the prefectural Authorities by contributing to analyzing, elaborating and managing the informational circuit. Over the years, the investigation experience has shown that organized crime groups have constantly tried to influence public procurement procedures even from the early planning and designing stage of public works. Such influence can be implemented by adjusting contract notices for those parties that must be supported, or by drafting such notices with particularly general eligibility requirements and general working conditions that do not enable efficient checks. Other improper practices involve signing “below-threshold” contracts on which the legislation on transparency and advertising is not as

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<sup>1135</sup> Article 5(3) of the Decree states: “*Considering the institutional mission and the informational asset of the Department, the DIA serves as a center for preliminary checks, as set up by article 95(3) of the Anti-Mafia Code. The results of such checks shall be immediately notified to the relevant Prefect for subsequent notification to the contracting authority*”.

<sup>1136</sup> The pivotal role of the DIA is clearly stated in article 7 of the Ministerial Decree of March 21, 2017: “*Considering the pivotal role of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Department with regard to the circular flow of information relating to the fight against organized crime, the Department is credited, at a centralized level, with anti-Mafia monitoring activities falling under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior relating to priority infrastructures and installations for the Country’s development*”.

restrictive. This makes it *de facto* possible to narrow down the number of candidates. Organized crime groups can also rely on company groups that will determine the bid limits as well as the winning bidder. Organized crime groups can also threaten and intimidate other candidates, cause the ruling out of undesired candidates or affect the bid-checking procedures thanks to disloyal public administrators.

Therefore, influencing procurement procedures is an objective pursued through exceptionally elaborate methods. It aims at obtaining substantial funds, often by bribing representatives of the contracting authority as well as the professionals involved in such procedures. In many cases, the winning company draws up the working plan intending to amend it while the public work is being carried out, and this aims at raising costs and generating greater revenue.

The infiltration of organized crime can also take place after a contract has been awarded: contractors may be directly blackmailed and forced to subcontract services to subsidiaries<sup>1137</sup>. In other cases, to name just a few of the various paths that organized crime groups go down to infiltrate public procurement competitions, these groups might conclude agreements providing a sort of shift<sup>1138</sup> in securing a public contract for related companies. In doing so, they can manipulate the bids and limit the competition, thus bringing out a remarkable capacity for adjusting their approach to circumstances and specific situations.

During the period under consideration, the DIA kept collecting informational data gained over the course of access operations and checking operations for public works through its Monitoring Center for Public Procurements (*Italian abbreviation: O.C.A.P.*)<sup>1139</sup> and its decentralized units. It also carried out an analysis of the access to the guaranteed credit and to contributions on which there is no need to reimburse<sup>1140</sup>, to data on the granting of the abovementioned benefits as well as to persons under prohibitive conditions. All of this is implemented for the ultimate purpose of combating the infiltration of organized crime.

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<sup>1137</sup> Through major or minor subcontracts; especially through contracts with an “ordinary equipment rental” or with “an operational equipment rental”, or through contracts for construction supplies, for earthworks, for construction site guarding and for waste transfer into landfills. Such activities are normally territory-related, and are of particular interest to the organized crime in terms of direct control.

<sup>1138</sup> The so-called “*Siino method*”: a person would serve as link connecting entrepreneurs, local authorities and *Cosa Nostra* representatives (Parliamentary Investigation Committee on Mafia-style phenomena and on similar criminal groups, January 27, 1998: the winning company should pay a percentage to politicians, to the Mafia crime family responsible for a given area, and to public monitors).

<sup>1139</sup> It exercises the functions provided for in the Interministerial Decree of March 14, 2003, and in the latest Ministerial Decree of March 21, 2017. The O.C.A.P. employs a specific computerized tool to maintain a permanent link to the Interforce Units. The task is to acquire and exchange data related to the monitoring in construction sites. It is also listed among those institutional entities that, in compliance with article 91(7bis), are notified by Prefects with regard to issued prohibitive orders.

<sup>1140</sup> Because of the European funds for the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) in Italy, it is not unlikely that organized groups will show a higher and more targeted involvement.



During the six months concerned, the DIA carried out in-depth checks on the actual execution of public works as well as on various related activities. Among these, a significant example is the access to construction sites by prefectural Authorities. The latter carry out *in situ* checks for any irregularity in terms of workforce employment and working procedures.

AREA	1 <sup>st</sup> SEMESTER OF 2023	
	COMPANIES	PERSONS
North	175	4,007
Center	89	541
South	761	7,004
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,025</b>	<b>11,552</b>

*Checks by geographical macro-areas*

As to such procedures, over the six months under consideration, **1,025** checks were carried out on the same number of companies, as shown in the table on the previous page.

In the same period, **11,552** checks were carried out on natural persons linked to the abovementioned companies on a variety of grounds.

As regards requests for anti-Mafia checks submitted by the Organization for Anti-Mafia Prevention of the Ministry of Interior<sup>1141</sup>, the O.C.A.P. has proceeded to in-depth functional checks on the registration in the Anti-Mafia Register of executors of economic operators involved in the interventions that followed the earthquake in 2016<sup>1142</sup>. As summarized in the table below, the implemented informational circuit has led to **4,548** anti-Mafia checks for **5,814** companies and **22,279** natural persons linked to these companies on a variety of grounds.

1 <sup>st</sup> semester of 2023	Submitted requests	Checked companies	Checked persons
January	586	658	2,771
February	894	1,122	4,496
March	939	1,315	4,560

<sup>1141</sup> It was established by article 30 of Decree-Law no. 189 of October 17, 2016 (formerly *Organization for the Anti-Mafia Mission*) as part of the Ministry of Interior; it is chaired by a Prefect.

<sup>1142</sup> Under article 8 of Decree-Law no. 189/2016 and article 9 of Decree-Law no. 205/2016, the Organization has the task of preventing and combating Mafia infiltrations in the awarding and execution of public contracts or private contracts benefiting from public funding for works, services and supplies that are related to reconstruction interventions in different areas affected by earthquakes.

As set up by article 14(6bis) of Law no. 74 of June 21, 2023, the Organization was also credited with the task of preventing Mafia infiltrations into public contracts and concessions related to works for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Milano-Cortina 2026.

April	624	756	2,926
May	809	1,130	4,212
June	696	833	,314
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,548</b>	<b>5,814</b>	<b>22,279</b>

*Summary table for the informational checks*

## **b. Interforce Provincial Units**

Interforce Provincial Units are a core component of the anti-Mafia monitoring system for public procurements. The Units are composed of representatives of the Police Forces and the DIA, one representative of the Interregional Administrative Office for Public Works, and one representative of the Local Labor Directorate. Also, they are chaired and coordinated by the Prefectures, and work to examine those companies which are awarded a public contract or a subcontract for public works. Their objective is to pinpoint signs or attempts of Mafia infiltration.

In this regard, the Directorate has an active role as it cooperates with the O.C.A.P. and with the representatives of its decentralized units, which attend meetings called by the Prefecture having jurisdiction over the local area.

## **c. Access to construction sites**

Anti-Mafia laws are not only enforced in the stages prior to contract notices, but they are also enforced in the later stages, including those related to the actual execution of the works.

Access to construction sites, set up by Prefects as in article 93 of Legislative Decree no. 159 of September 6, 2011, is one of the checking procedures carried out by the Interforce Provincial Units, and is an efficient tool to register any kind of Mafia infiltration during the operational stage of a public work.

In summary, carrying out a check implies *in situ* verifications on natural persons and the operating companies, on the machines and equipment used as well as on the contractual documentation concerning the relation between contracting authorities, contractors and any third parties involved in subcontracts. The collected data is then sent to the relevant Prefectures and is used for expanding the Construction site Access Detection Computer System (*Italian abbreviation: S.I.R.A.C.*), which is managed by the DIA.

Based on the collected data by the Police Forces during the inspections on the construction sites, Prefects can also intervene during the execution stage, and issue anti-Mafia bans, and can thus amend, if necessary, the authorization documentation previously issued. Therefore, this procedure is an actual hindrance to the Mafia infiltration up to the completion of the public work.

The table below summarizes every access carried out by the DIA in the first semester, involving **46** construction sites. This included contextual checks on **1,065** natural persons, **340** companies and **831** items of equipment.

Area	Intervention Region	Number of Access	Natural persons	Companies	Equipment
North	Valle d'Aosta	-	-	-	-
	Piedmont	-	-	-	-
	Trentino-South Tyrol	-	-	-	-
	Lombardy	3	122	44	91
	Veneto	4	108	22	54
	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	2	89	27	65
	Liguria	3	50	8	33
	Emilia-Romagna	3	39	16	24
	<b>TOTAL North</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>267</b>
Center	Tuscany	1	12	12	9
	Umbria	-	-	-	-
	Marche	11	218	76	102
	Abruzzo	10	119	35	76
	Lazio	4	40	12	15
	Sardinia	-	-	-	-
	<b>TOTAL Center</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>202</b>
South	Campania	2	38	9	25
	Molise	-	-	-	-
	Apulia	-	-	-	-
	Basilicata	-	-	-	-
	Calabria	1	75	26	140
	Sicily	2	155	53	197
	<b>TOTAL South</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>362</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>46</b>	<b>1,065</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>831</b>

*Summary table for the access to construction sites in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of 2023*

#### **d. Anti-Mafia documentation**

The functioning of organized crime groups is manifested through increasingly intricate strategies. On the one hand, they aim at preventing the illegal activities from coming to the surface; on the other hand, they try to cover up the transfer of illegally acquired assets to financial markets. Organized crime has become highly skilled in infiltrating legal economical and financial circuits<sup>1143</sup> as they launder money and generate substantial revenue from this. Their skill at adapting to the open national and global market can significantly damage sound companies<sup>1144</sup>, making this a major threat to the

<sup>1143</sup> Such as sporting associations and clubs, sponsorships, the construction sector, the organized wholesale distribution, coffee shops, restaurants, real-estate operations, transport companies, tourism, etc. Organized crime groups use highly qualified professionals (e.g. lawyers, managers, tax advisors, etc.).

<sup>1144</sup> Illegal incomes on EU markets have been estimated to be about EUR 110 billion per year as a result of yearly earnings within well-known individual sectors (considering 28 EU Member States), such as drug dealing, illicit tobacco trade, counterfeiting, illicit trade in firearms, intra-EU “carousel” fraud and cargo theft. It is estimated that between 10% and 25% of the revenue from the sale of cocaine in Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom (between EUR 1,160 and EUR 3,160 billion) has been invested, after deduction, in the legitimate economy

economy. Additionally, organized crime groups aim at gaining a competitive advantage and at generating substantial revenue in the medium and long term. At times they will even sustain a loss if this is effective for weeding out the competition.

In order to prevent organized crime groups from infiltrating public procurements, it is crucial that the relevant Authorities efficiently and promptly point out any irregularity found in the awarding procedures for public contracts. Today's criminal groups are similar to corporate trusts<sup>1145</sup> that are polluting the legal economy by often using violence and illegally acquired assets.

The anti-Mafia documentation<sup>1146</sup> issued by Prefectures is the highest level of administrative prevention and has the purpose of preventing Mafia-infiltrated companies<sup>1147</sup> from bidding for public contracts. The administrative procedure starts when a contracting authority consults the National Database for Anti-Mafia Documentation<sup>1148</sup> (*Italian Abbreviation: BDNA*). The BDNA is expanded by the Prefectures and is conceived in such a way as to facilitate a faster automatic sharing of anti-Mafia notices and anti-Mafia clearance background checks with the public Administration, with public Authorities and with those companies directly monitored by the State. The anti-Mafia documentation issued by the BDNA must be obtained prior to concluding, approving or authorizing contracts or subcontracts for public works, supplies and services.

In order to provide a rapid procedure, the BDNA cooperates with a reasonable number of national databases for a comparison and a check of the information.

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(*Joint Research Centre on Transnational Crime* - Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano - University of Trento).

<sup>1145</sup> Corporate trusts that are capable of “*putting at the economy disposal (...) their relational capital with power, violence and, last but not least, their illegally acquired assets*” (Parliamentary Investigation Committee on Mafia-style phenomena and on similar criminal groups, including foreign criminal groups, February 7, 2018).

<sup>1146</sup> The anti-Mafia documentation includes an anti-Mafia notice and an anti-Mafia background check.

The anti-Mafia notice certifies whether or not there is any ground for revocation, suspension or prohibition, as in article 67 of Legislative Decree no. 159/2011. Such notice targets those persons who are imposed a final judgement - or a judgment that was upheld on appeal - for major crimes, or those who received a final preventive measure, as stated in the aforementioned Anti-Mafia Code. Hence, the prohibition of concluding public contracts, of revocation for licenses, permits, concessions, etc.

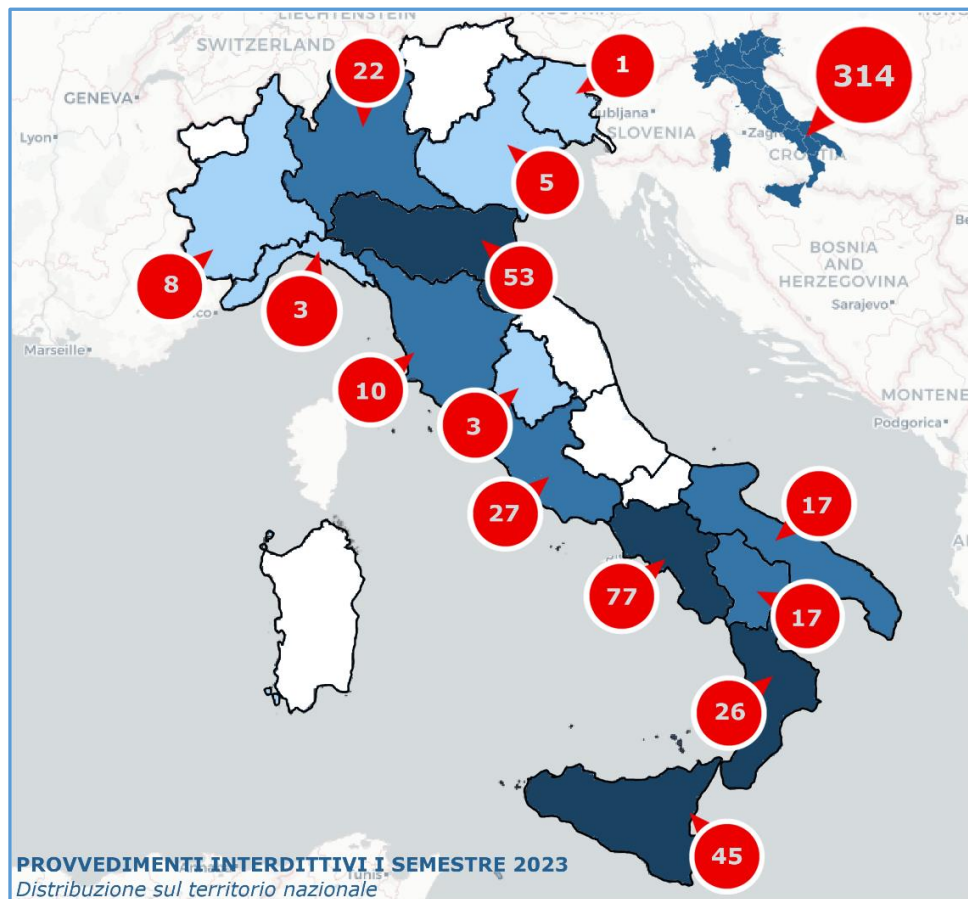
The anti-Mafia background check proves whether organized crime groups have attempted at infiltrating with the purpose of biasing the choices and directions of companies and businesses, and also determines whether or not it is possible to conclude contracts with the public Administration. As opposed to the anti-Mafia notice, the background check also includes the conditions for such activity, and draws on a widely discretionary assessment of the attempted infiltration. The latter is based on the analysis and the highlighting of specific facts, which are objective signs of connection and correlation to criminal groups.

<sup>1147</sup> As also stated in articles 84 (4), 91(6) of Legislative Decree no. 159/2011, these articles refer to those companies whose activities “*can, even indirectly, facilitate criminal activities, or can somehow be influenced by them*”.

<sup>1148</sup> The BDNA has been operational since January 7, 2016. It is managed by the Department for the Policies of the Civil Administration of Human Resources and for Instrumental and Financial Resources of the Ministry of Interior. The informational system and the associated technological infrastructure have been implemented by the Office IV - Technological Innovation for the General Administration within 12 months following the implementing Regulation introduced by the Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers no. 193 of October 30, 2014 (published in the Official Journal of the Italian Republic - General Series - 4, January 7, 2015). The Regulation provides the methods for operation, access and consultation.

As part of the anti-Mafia prevention system, the DIA plays a pivotal role in monitoring public projects and public procurements, thus ensuring a rapid elaboration for the anti-Mafia check requests submitted by the Prefectures. This has the objective of assessing a company's involvement and the crime infiltration risk; though, it does not slow down the execution of the works.

In this regard, a graphic representation of the anti-Mafia bans is provided below. These are divided by Region and refer to those measures that have been issued by Territorial Government Offices in the first semester of 2023. All these measures refer to the activity of the Department's Centers and Operational Sections within Interforce Provincial Units.



**Bans in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of 2023**

*Distribution at the national level Data on the Operational Activity 2.0.<sup>1149</sup>*

#### **e. Representation in Interministerial Bodies**

The DIA has a representative in the *Coordination Committee on High-level Monitoring of priority Infrastructures and Installations* (Italian abbreviation: CCASIIP)<sup>1150</sup> and continuously cooperates

<sup>1149</sup> Statistical detection system of the DIA activity.

<sup>1150</sup> The Committee is made up of representatives from the Ministry of Interior, the Committee on Economic Planning within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, as well as representatives from the National Anti-corruption Authority, the National Anti-Mafia Directorate and the Anti-Mafia Investigation Department.

with it. The DIA is also included in the system for “*Financial Monitoring of Large-scale Works*” (*Italian abbreviation: M.G.O.*)<sup>1151</sup>.

The Interministerial Committee on Economic Planning (*Italian abbreviation: CIPE*), acting on a proposal from the CCASIIP and by decision no. 15/2015, made the financial monitoring of all strategic infrastructures and priority installations mandatory. This monitoring implies obligations for all the parties involved in the planning and execution process of public works; it does not only apply to the contractor or the concessionaire.

The financial monitoring hinges on making it mandatory for every industry operator to open one or multiple bank accounts exclusively for each project, and implies a check on the cash flow through a strict tracking. Through a National Project Code (*Italian abbreviation: CUP*)<sup>1152</sup>, the tracking ensures automatic recording of all financial transactions among the companies involved.

In order to ensure a correct implementation of such operational procedures, a Working Group has been established at the Department for Economic Policy Planning and Coordination within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (*Italian abbreviation: DIPE*). The Group functions as a support for the CIPE and has DIPE representatives, which manage the operations of the DIA, the Technical Secretariat of the CCASIIP, the Italian Bank Association, the Consorzio CBI<sup>1153</sup> within the scope of the Italian Bank Association, and the IT managers of the database.

#### **f. National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) - Computerized anti-Mafia check procedures operated by the BDNA - Initiatives by the DIA**

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) is a significant package for investments and reforms currently under implementation. Because of the high overall value of the funds it offers, organized crime groups could potentially be interested in such funds, and this may increase the number of infiltrations in the legal economy.

In order to efficiently combat attempted infiltrations, the Ministry of Interior has adopted a prevention strategy that focuses on the anti-Mafia documentation, and that carefully considers the data provided by the Prefectures. The computerized system of the BDNA has a pivotal role in protecting PNRR

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<sup>1151</sup> The M.G.O. is the operational extension of a pilot project called “*progetto C.A.P.A.C.I.*” - “*Creation of Automated Procedures Against Criminal Infiltration in public contracts*”. The DIA has actively joined the project, and has cooperated both in the implementing phase of the automated procedure and in the disclosure phase with the European partners. The cash flow monitoring of large-scale works was firstly provided for in article 176 of the “*Procurement Code*” for Large-scale Works, and subsequently applied to all works related to strategic infrastructures and priority installations, as set up in article 36(3) of Decree-Law no. 90/2014, transposed into Law no. 114/2014.

<sup>1152</sup> Under Law no. 3/2003, which entered into force on February 4, 2003, every project for public investments must be marked with a CUP. The code is associated with a project from the moment the person in charge decides on its implementation to the moment the project is completed. Even once the project has been closed, the code is stored in the database.

<sup>1153</sup> Corporate Banking Interbancario. This company is monitored by the Bank of Italy, and is joined by approximately 400 banks and other intermediaries. It develops infrastructures and innovative services within an eco-system (<https://www.cbi-org.eu/CBI/>).

investments, and has been updated to include new specific categories<sup>1154</sup>: “*Every category refers either to individual contracting cases for works, supplies and services (public contracts, concessions, assignments, piece-work pay schemes or otherwise) or to cases where public funds are made available*”.

In the case of any infiltration risk factors becoming apparent, sharing and tracking such data makes it possible to monitor the actions of prefectural Authorities to those economic operators that are involved in the execution of PNRR projects.

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<sup>1154</sup> Circular of the Ministry of Interior no. 11001/119/7(3) of Protocol no. 0038877 - Office II - Public Security, dated June 13, 2022.



The table below provides the number of requests for ordering anti-Mafia preliminary investigations; every request is listed by grounds.

Code Request Grounds	GROUNDS OF THE REQUEST	No.
1	(PNRR) PUBLIC CONTRACTS FOR WORKS special sectors (Legislative Decree No. 50/2016, article 114 et seq.) (Temporary clearance background checks for Works/Services and Supplies, as in article 3(2), Decree-Law no. 76/2020)	526
2	(PNRR) ASSIGNMENTS (article 91(1) Legislative Decree no. 159/2011)	2
3	(PNRR) CONCESSIONS ON PUBLIC WATER OR STATE-OWNED PROPERTIES, OR FOR AID GRANTS FOR LOANS/OTHER PAYMENTS (article 91(1) Legislative Decree no. 159/2011)	5
4	(PNRR) CONCESSIONS ON STATE-OWNED AGRICULTURAL AND LIVESTOCK LANDS BENEFITING FROM THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY, OR AGRICULTURAL LANDS BENEFITING FROM EUROPEAN FUNDS, REGARDLESS THE NATURE OF THEIR PURCHASE	28
5	(PNRR) PIECE-WORK PAY SCHEMES (article 91(1) Legislative Decree no. 159/2011)	10
6	(PNRR) PAYMENTS, GRANTS, FUNDS	1,958
7	(PNRR) SUPPLIES AND SERVICES FOR CENTRAL AUTHORITY ADMINISTRATIONS (Temporary clearance background checks for Works/Services and Supplies, as in article 3(2), Decree-Law no. 76/2020)	641
8	(PNRR) SUPPLIES AND SERVICES FOR SUBORDINATE AUTHORITY ADMINISTRATIONS (Temporary clearance background checks for Works/Services and Supplies, as in article 3(2), Decree-Law no. 76/2020)	1,764
9	(PNRR) SUPPLIES AND SERVICES special sectors (Legislative Decree no. 50/2016, article 114 et seq.) (Temporary clearance background checks for Works/Services and Supplies, as in article 3(2), Decree-Law no. 76/2020)	309
10	(PNRR) SENSITIVE SUPPLIES (article 91(7) Legislative Decree no. 159/201, as also identified in article 1(53) Law no. 190/2012)	115
11	(PNRR) PUBLIC WORKS AND CONCESSIONS (Temporary clearance background checks for Works/Services and Supplies, as in article 3(2), Decree-Law no. 76/2020)	4,508
12	(PNRR) REQUESTS (Article 100 Legislative Decree No. 159/2011 submitted by a local Authority that has been removed from office, as set up in article 143 of the Legislative Decree no. 267/2000)	1,512
13	(PNRR) SOCIAL SERVICES	180
14	(PNRR) SOCIAL SERVICES special sectors (Legislative Decree no. 50/2016, article 114 et seq.)	9
15	(PNRR) SUBCONTRACTS (article 91(1) Legislative Decree no. 159/2011)	323
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>11,890</b>

*Number of PNRR by grounds of request (Data source: BDNA)<sup>1155</sup>*

<sup>1155</sup>

Out of the **11,890** requests at the national level, **3,435** have come from the North (29% of the total), **5,089** from the Center (43% of the total), and **3,366** from the South (28% of the total). The table below shows a detailed overview by Region:

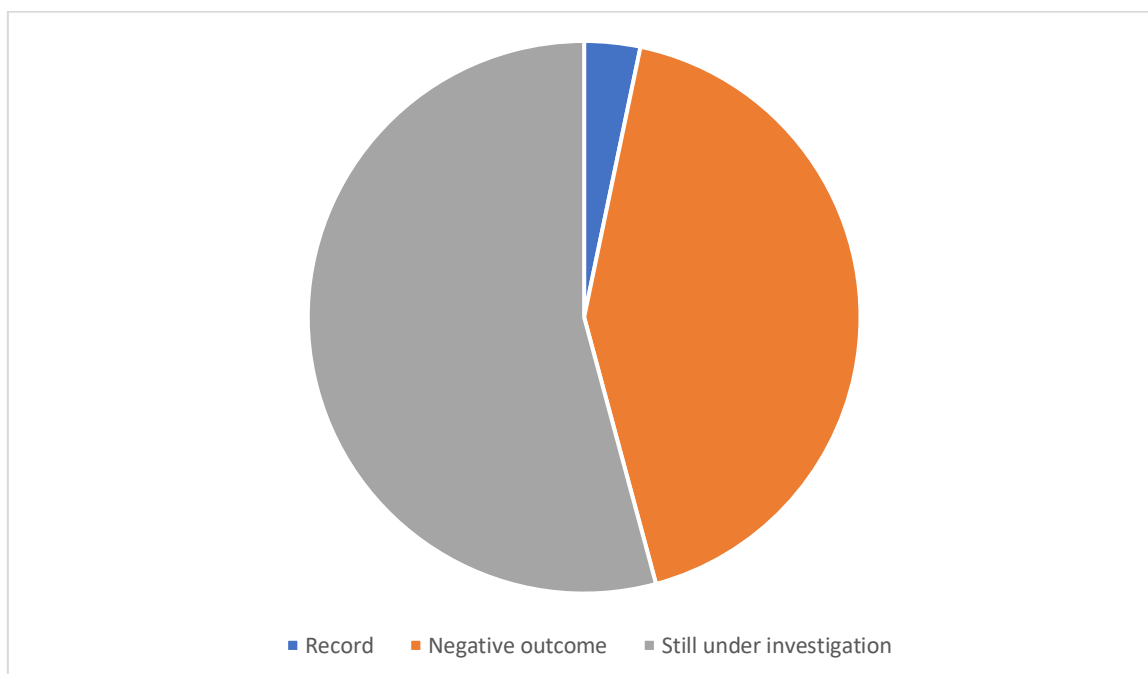
Area	Region	No. Preliminary investigations
North	Valle d'Aosta	11
	Piedmont	726
	Lombardy	1.158
	Veneto	592
	Trentino-South Tyrol	127
	Liguria	189
	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	164
	Emilia-Romagna	468
<b>Subtot</b>		<b>3,435</b>
Center	Marche	404
	Abruzzo	234
	Tuscany	681
	Sardinia	199
	Lazio	3,427
	Umbria	144
<b>Subtot</b>		<b>5,089</b>
South	Campania	949
	Molise	32
	Apulia	706
	Basilicata	44
	Calabria	800
	Sicily	835
<b>Subtot</b>		<b>3,366</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>11,890</b>

*Table of PNRR preliminary investigations by macro-area and region of the request*

In the framework of PNRR public contracts and funds monitoring, anti-Mafia checks are a critical phase of the institutional system aimed at protecting the economy and the society. Cooperating with the DIA and jointly using databases are two pivotal elements for assessing and further exploring the data collected through the consultation of different sources. It reveals corporate structures and governance, operational dynamics of the companies that have been checked, as well as any connections to other companies being subject to bans, or other relevant data on corporate issues, such as assets, human resources, contracts, and so forth.

During the monitoring phase, the Interforce Units consider construction site access reports to check the compliance with labor laws and safety measures of workers.

The chart below represents the processing status of anti-Mafia check requests.



*Processing status of anti-Mafia check requests<sup>1156</sup>*

It is also noticed that in the period under examination **8** preliminary investigations with positive outcome have been completed, i.e. that led to anti-Mafia bans.

<sup>1156</sup>

**LEGEND:**

**Record:** The procedure has been completed without a clearance check or a ban, and has been placed on record. This is when a person is addressed with requests to further complete their documentation, and they do not do so, or there is no longer any interest.

**Negative outcome:** The person under investigation has been cleared.

**Under investigation:** The Prefecture takes charge of the administrative procedure.

## 6. PREVENTIVE MEASURES ON THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM'S USE FOR MONEY LAUNDERING

Strategic lines of law enforcement service for economic-financial organized crime identify an important investigative turning point to start preventive and punitive inquiries, within the framework of preventive measures to combat the financial system's use for money laundering.

Within this framework, different facts are prescribed by legislation, which has been delegated to the DIA for the prevention of money laundering on a national level, as announced by Legislative decree no. 231 of November 21, 2007. Indeed, thanks to the analysis of the copious flows and financial data transmitted by the Bank of Italy's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and connected investigative detailed studies, conducted for crime-related profiles, the DIA reinforces the judicial police inquiries delegated by the Judicial Authority, aimed at repressing criminal organizations, especially the Mafia type, as well as confronting illegal properties, reinvested in the legal economy of the "country system".

### a. Analysis and detailed studies on the reporting of suspicious financial operations

The well-established process phases of suspicious financial operations (*Italian acronym: SOS*), transmitted by the FIU, defined the inquiries of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Department (DIA) in a specific sector during the test semester.

Three of these strong procedures of analysis enhanced, as usual, the so-called "Massive analysis", characterized by the complex process of matching the biographical data of reported individuals and the evidence of the databases used by the Anti-Mafia Investigation Department (DIA). This process has been capable of shutting off a large number of reported transactions amenable to organized crime.

**Risk analysis** and **phenomenological analysis** are two complementary procedures respectively arranged on "*Risk sections of money laundering*"<sup>1157</sup>, which appeared because of institutional activity, and on special investigation events, obtained by the observation and tendency lines which are features of mafia organizations. Furthermore, they permitted the development of detailed studies conducted in relation to specific targets of operational interest.

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<sup>1157</sup> Amenable to financial use.

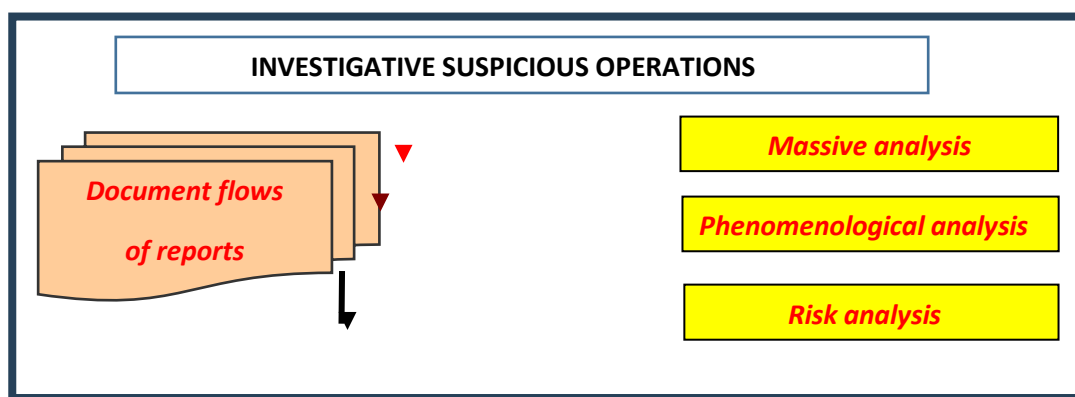


Figure 1

At the same time, the constant reengineering of the E.L.I.O.S. (*Italian acronym* for: Investigative Processing of Suspicious Operations), system, consisting of a computer application of reference, has been ongoing. This action allowed it to become more suitable to the changing requirements felt in the institutional activity of reference, related to an exponential growth of document flows that imposes a greater recourse to the automation of the report selection process concerning operational reports, which are likely to be developed routinely.

The efficiency of in-depth analysis phases regarding reporting data is related to the necessity of maintaining an appropriate standard of security within the scope of information exchange, with other main authorities like the Anti-Mafia Investigation Department (DIA). In this regard, during the period under review, and on the initiative of National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor (*Italian acronym*: PNAA), a technical roundtable was set up to define new agreements aimed at the use of a single IT platform that would allow the mutual transmission of the information flow with greater immediacy and with even higher confidentiality protocols. Related works ended with a new Memorandum of Understanding among the DNA, the Department of Public Security, the Guardia di Finanza and the Financial Intelligence Unit of the Bank of Italy. These tasks have been discussed during the semester following the one considered, moreover further, details will be discussed in the next semestral Report.

Constant IT adaptation of E.L.I.O.S. permits an immediate selection from the large number of alerts<sup>1158</sup> transmitted by the *Italian Financial Intelligence Unit* (FIU). Used for pointing out marked cases of potential organized crime, *ex-lege*, of dutiful evidence to the aforementioned High Magistrates' Body for the purpose of investigative coordination in progress made by the competent *Anti-Mafia District Directorates*, or of the exclusive powers of article 371-bis of the Code of Criminal

<sup>1158</sup> SOS are received by the DIA nearly every day and in electronic format, through a dedicated FIU portal. The corresponding flows are decrypted by the DIA's qualified personnel, which is certified for supplying the E.L.I.O.S. digital platform.

Procedure<sup>1159</sup>.

In the same context, with priority importance for investigative purposes, the information exchanges of the data pertaining to the SOS, related to “*biographical data...*”<sup>1160</sup>, of every reported or connected individual...”, that the FIU transmits to the DNA, through the DIA and the Special Currency Police Nucleus of the Guardia di Finanza are considered, which is necessary for the examination of their possible connection with judicial proceedings in course<sup>1161</sup>.

In this framework, on the basis of the positive results of the *matching* between the data analyzed and elements related to the databases used by the DIA, the PNAA delegated to the DIA in-depth investigations on a large number of SOS. The relative activities are characterized by positive investigative developments and are entrusted to the personnel of the Centers and Operative Sections for the profiles of their respective competence.

As regards the constant implementation of E.L.I.O.S., it was decided to release new functions for digitalization of the communications relative to the initiation and conclusion of in-depth studies, with positive repercussions also at the level of statistical surveys and orientation of the operative activity in specific sectors.

The urge of an increasing use to the computerization of SOS process phases is linked not only to the necessary streamlining of the methodologies adopted, but also to the exponential growth of a large number of reports. Even in the semester under consideration, the **77,466** SOS analyzed are higher than respective elements of the previous three years: approximately **7%** more during the first semester than **2022**, **13%** more during the first semester than **2021** and **46%** higher during the first semester than **2020**<sup>1162</sup>.

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<sup>1159</sup> Article 371-bis of the Code of Criminal Procedure:

1. *The National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor exercises powers related to proceedings for the offences indicated in article 51 (3-a and 3-c) and in relation to anti-Mafia and anti-terrorism prevention proceedings ...omitted...*
2. *The National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor exercises functions on District Prosecutors in order to render effective the coordination of the investigative activities, to guarantee the functionality of the employment of the Investigative Police in its various articulations and to ensure the completeness and timeliness of the investigations ...omitted...*

<sup>1160</sup> In anonymity.

<sup>1161</sup> Referred to the provisions introduced by Legislative Decree nos. 90/2017 and 125/2019 by which EU Directives 2015/849 and 2018/843 (the so-called Fourth and Fifth Anti-Money Laundering Directives) were transposed.

<sup>1162</sup> SOS analyzed by the DIA are **53,177** during the first semester of 2020 and **68,787** during the first semester of 2021 and **76,652** during the first semester of 2022.

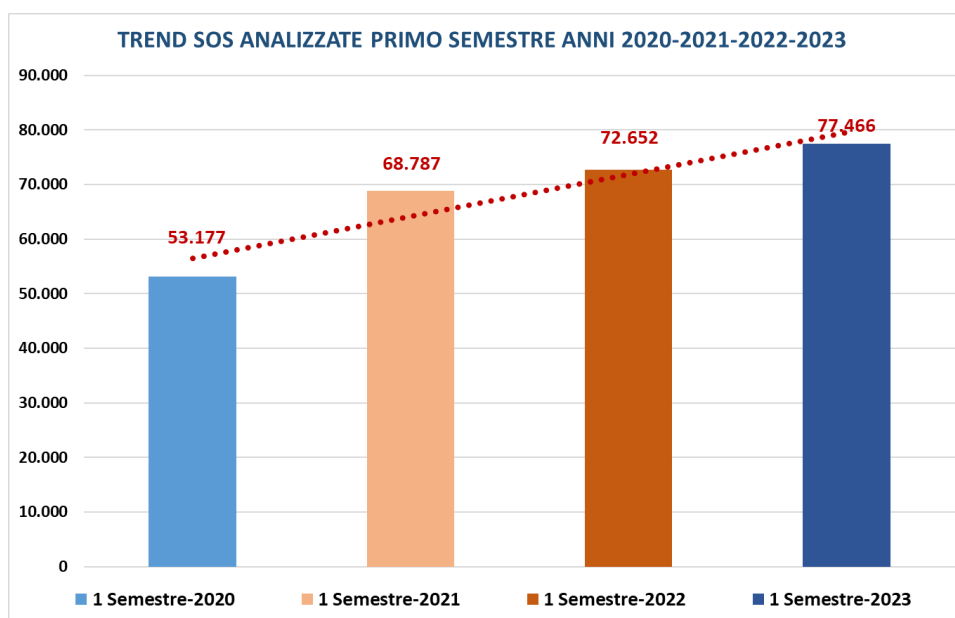


Figure 2 "Trend of SOS analyzed during the first semester years 2020-2021-2022-2023" -First semester 2020; -First semester 2021; -First semester 2022; -First semester 2023.

As part of the analysis conducted in connection with the **77,466** SOS analyzed above, the positions of **771,500** reported persons have been examined, of whom **487,365** are natural persons. During the operation, characterized by several matches with the main databases used by the DIA, **26,544** SOS, corresponding to approximately **34%** of the document flow processed, became relevant for the DIA's profiles of interest and were duly reported to the PNAA (Figure 3).

Specifically, **20,378** SOS have turned out to be potentially related to organized crime on the basis of imputability to reported individuals of previous inquiries related to the offence of article 416a or to so-called "spy-crimes"<sup>1163</sup>. The remaining **6,166** SOS turned out to be connected<sup>1164</sup> to organized crime, due to significant recurrences (individuals connected among themselves, individuals involved in the same inquiry, connected operativity or similar operating methods, similar subject(s), additional information and detailed reports in the same technical report).

Within the document flow under examination, referred to attributable reports of current operational interest, there are **668** SOS linked to the *Covid-19* phenomenon<sup>1165</sup> and **151** SOS "referred to anomalies connected to the implementation of the PNRR".

<sup>1163</sup> These are indicative crimes amenable to Mafia-type crimes, for example: *use of money; usury; extortion; damage followed by fire, etc.*

<sup>1164</sup> Directly by the FIU.

<sup>1165</sup> Specifically, referred to the health emergency under consideration the following classes of phenomenon: "*Covid-19*" (**192** SOS), "*Covid-19 Withdrawals*" (**3** SOS), "*Covid Funding: Abnormalities requested*" (**210** SOS) "*Outlier use of Covid fundings*" (**263** SOS).

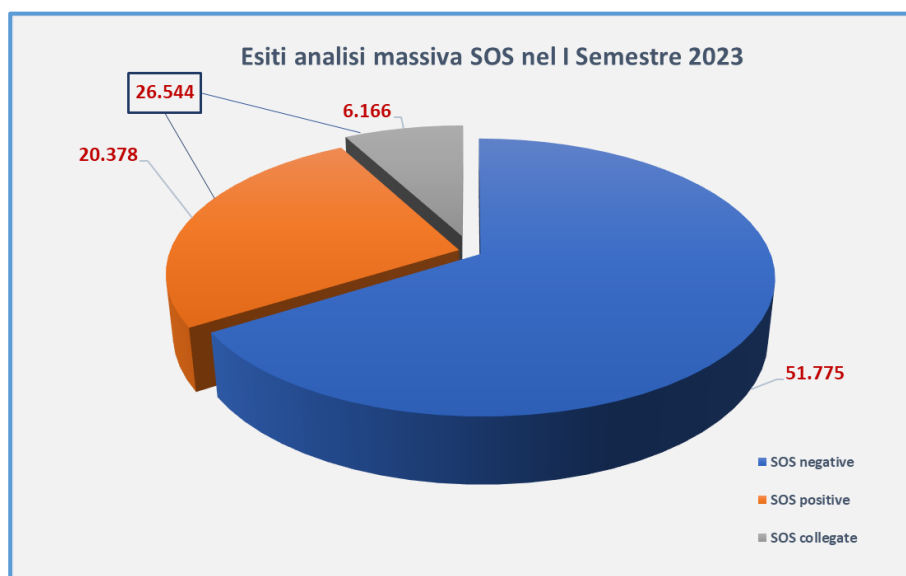


Figure 3 - "Outcome of massive analysis of SOS in the first semester 2023" -Negative SOS; -Positive SOS; -Connected SOS.

From the list of the aforementioned **26,544** SOS, carried out on the basis of the *obliged entity's* categories, it has emerged that the main part of them (more than **80%**), corresponding to **21,407** SOS, is amenable to banking and financial intermediaries<sup>1166</sup>. Followed at a considerable distance by the **2,784** SOS attributable to *other financial operators* and others sent by *non-financial operators* and by gambling and betting operators, both in the range of **3%**. At the end, a small number of SOS related to *professionals* and other operators complete the flow under examination (Figure 4).

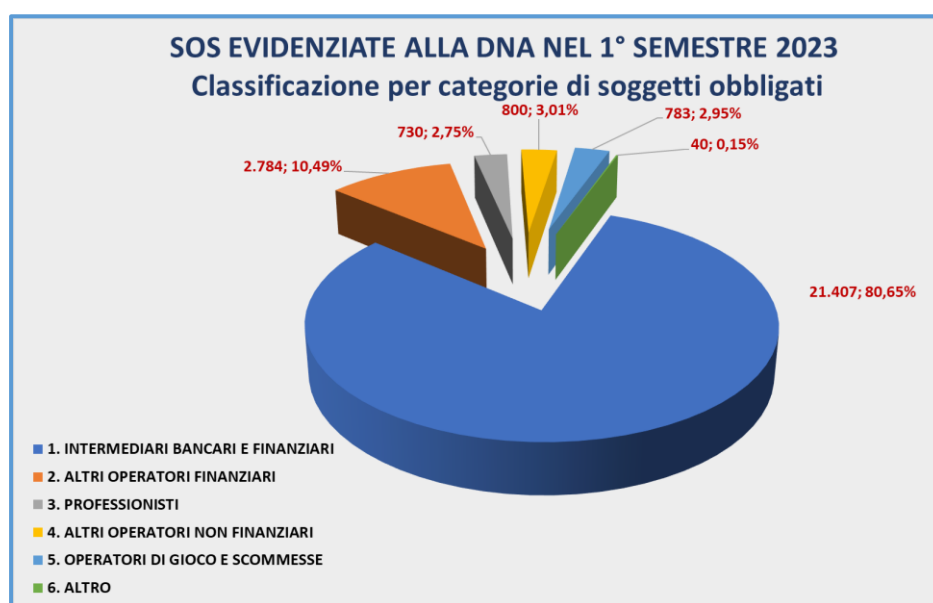


Figure 4- "Highlighted SOS to the DNA first semester 2023"; Rating of categories of obliged entities. -1. Banking and financial intermediaries; -2. Other financial operators; -3. Professionals; -4. Other non-financial operators; -5. Gambling and betting operators; -6. Other.

<sup>1166</sup> In the range of predominant category of obliged entities, i.e. banking and financial intermediaries, the majority of SOS turn out to be attributable to banks and electronic money institution. In particular, 13,235 SOS (about 62%) for the former and 6,745 SOS (more than 31%) for the latter.



The **26,544** SOS transmitted to the DNA were related to an overall **632,591** suspicious financial operations, concerning a total amount of EUR 20 million, most of which were amenable to “*credit transfers*”<sup>1167</sup> and for “*payment card top-ups*”<sup>1168</sup>, respectively 38% and 28%. This was followed, in terms of frequency, by transactions involving the following “*reasons*”<sup>1169</sup>:

- The “Inflow/outflow availability through money remittance”<sup>1170</sup>, to which a total of **100,232** transactions can be attributed, equal to **16%**.
- “Deposits and cash withdrawals”, involving a total of **41,695** operations, corresponding to **7%** (Figure 5).

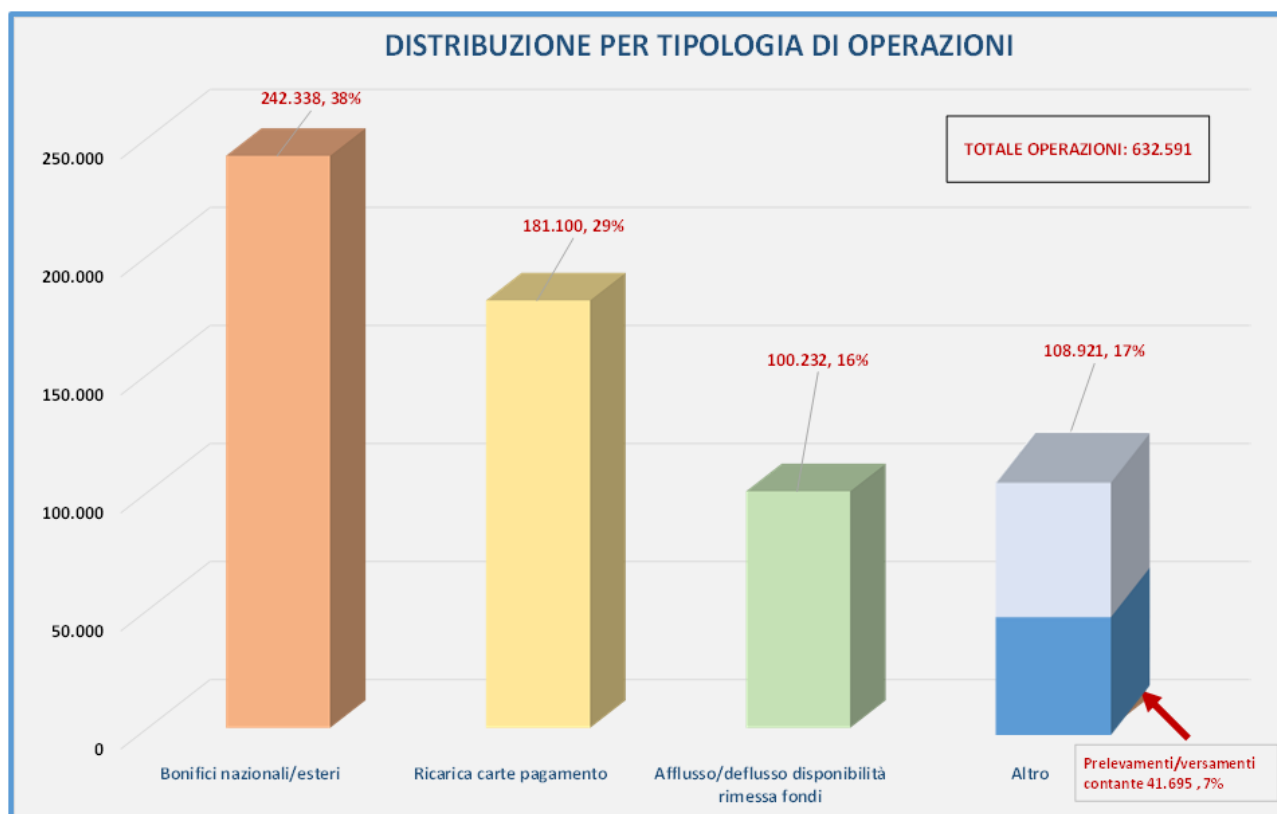


Figure 5 "Distribution by type of operation"; -Total operations: 632,591; -Domestic/ foreign transfers 242,338, 38%; -Payment card top-ups 181,100, 29%; -Inflow/outflow availability through money remittance 100,232, 16% -Other 108,921, 17% (Cash Withdrawals/deposits 41,695, 7%).

The distribution by geographical areas of the total **632,591** reported suspicious operations<sup>1171</sup> points out the recurring record of “North Italy” where **224,923** operations were carried out, amounting to **35%** of those under consideration. In “Central Italy” and “South/Islands”, on the other hand, **160,671**

<sup>1167</sup> Referred to **242,338** amenable operations, for the following reasons: “Foreign credit transfer”, “incoming credit transfer”, “outgoing credit transfer” and “national cash transfer”.

<sup>1168</sup> Referred to **181,100** amenable operations, for the following reasons: “charge from other credit card”, “charge made at ATM” and “charge made at the point of sale”.

<sup>1169</sup> For different motivations encoded from The Bank of Italy, related to obligated entities for pointing the operation of suspicious nature.

<sup>1170</sup> Operations of transfer through a financial intermediary among natural persons from and towards other countries, without using payment accounts.

<sup>1171</sup> Additionally, 92,006 operations, corresponding to 14.54% for which the E.L.I.O.S. system does not show a specific georeferencing, are included in the calculation.

and **154,991** transactions were carried out, respectively, accounting for approximately **25%** of the total (Figure 6).

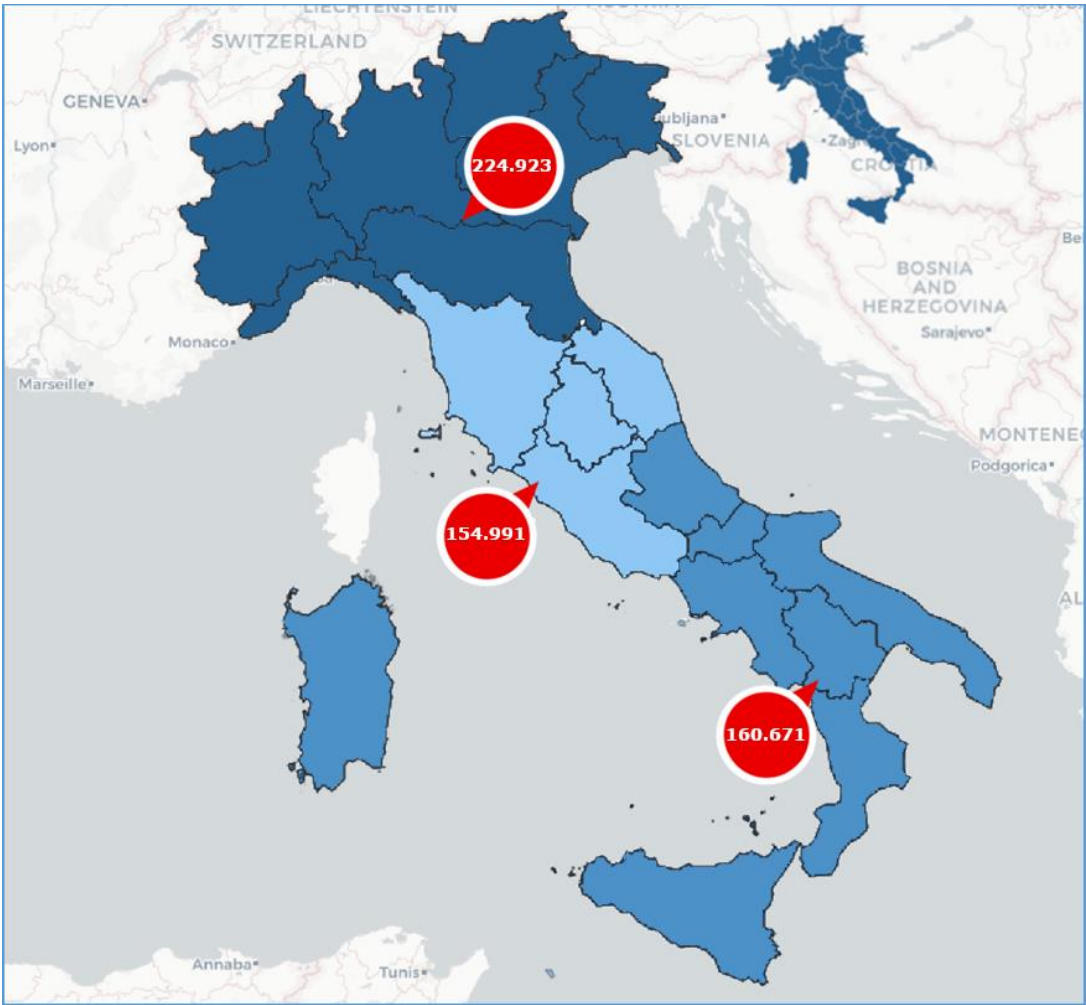


Figure 6

Starting from the distribution of these operations on the regional basis, shown in the table below, a prevalence of financial operations made in Lombardy emerges, corresponding to **16%**. Following are Lazio and Campania, with 14% and 12%, and the more distant regions of Emilia-Romagna, Sicily, Marche and Calabria.<sup>1172</sup> As usual, a minor number of operations were made in Valle d’Aosta, Molise and Basilicata (Figure 7).

<sup>1172</sup> With percentage between 7% and 3%.

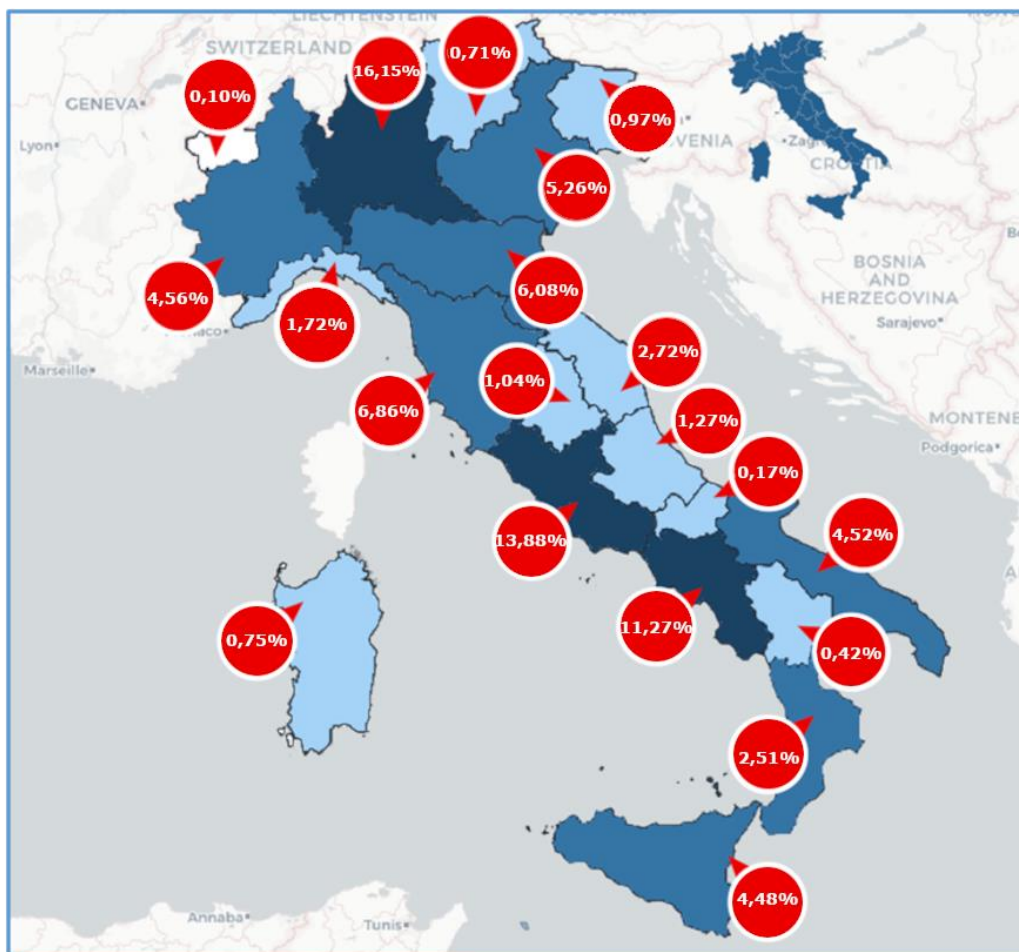


Figure 7

Regarding the home territories of the main Mafia-type criminal organizations<sup>1173</sup>, the number of suspicious financial operations amounts to **144,094**, corresponding to a higher percentage of over 22.78%. In detail, the main part of these is performed in Campania (**71,294**), followed by Apulia, Sicily and Calabria.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Total Operations</i>	<i>Total Amount</i>	<i>%</i>
Campania	71,294	2,753,646,252	11.27
Apulia	28,576	825,471,108	4.52
Sicily	28,355	733,444,070	4.48
Calabria	15,869	603,141,986	2.51
<b>Total</b>	<b>144,094</b>	<b>4,915,703,416</b>	<b>22.78</b>

Within the scope of the flow of reports transmitted to the PNAA in relation to potential profiles related to organized crime, designed, first of all, for the coordination of inquiries conducted by the District Anti-Mafia Prosecutor's Office, the SOS have created an objective of targeted, in-depth

<sup>1173</sup> Reference is made to Sicily, Calabria, Campania and Apulia, where the origins of the organized crime groups *Cosa Nostra*, *'Ndrangheta*, *Camorra* and *mafie pugliesi* are historically traced.

investigative studies, which were carried out by the DIA on demand of General Affairs (AA.GG.). Analogous in-depth investigations have been conducted in connection with the contents of further SOS selected for institutional activity referred to subjective connections, or to contexts of criminal groups; i.e. traceability to ongoing inquiries or investigations.

In the aforementioned recurrences, the launch of investigative activities, weather of a preventive or judicial nature, was the subject of a specific communication to the PNAA and consecutively, in compliance with the information linkage procedures<sup>1174</sup> with other competent Authorities, the Special Currency Police Unit of the Guardia di Finanza and the FIU were also informed, for aspects of their respective interest.

The results of these activities have defined, during the semester examined, the confluence of the contents of 312 reports of suspicious transactions in judicial police activities or in investigations of a financial nature aimed at the formulation of proposals in order to be applied as a preventive measure.

As part of more detailed investigative studies conducted by the DIA, there are also those conferred by the PNAA related to many reports connected to the health emergency linked to the spread of *Covid-19* selected by the FIU<sup>1175</sup>. Referred to same phenomenon, also among the **26,544** SOS emphasized by the DIA to the PNAA, which were related to potential organized crime profiles that emerged during the massive analysis, **265** of them were linked to the pandemic (Figure 8).

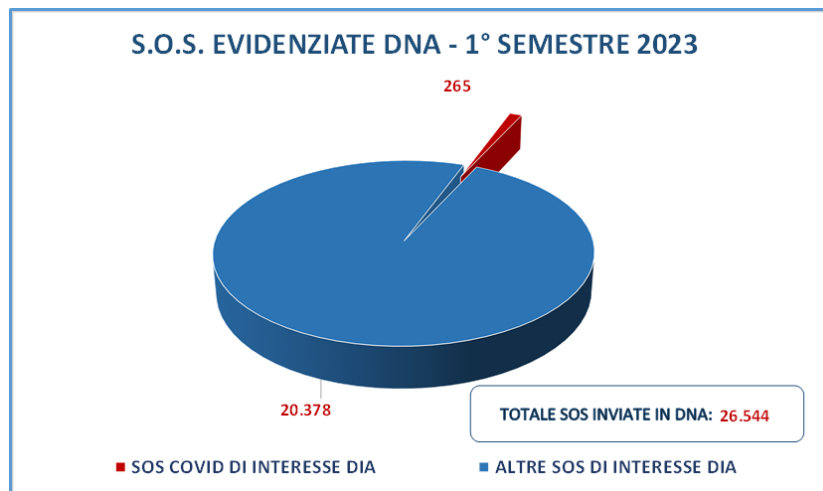


Figure 8 - "SOS Highlighted by the DNA - First semester 2023"; -Total SOS sent to the DNA: 26,54 ; -Covid SOS Covid of DIA interest; -Other SOS of DIA interest.

## b. The power of access and inspection of the DIA Director

<sup>1174</sup> Defined through Memoranda of Understanding.

<sup>1175</sup> As a consequence of risks and the impact of the phenomenon on the economy, the FIU disseminated clear indications with the document "Prevention of criminal actions linked to the Covid-19 emergency", directed toward all financial intermediaries. *To survey relevant situations and create SOS (distinct by an identifier code).*

The clear money-laundering prevention action conducted by the DIA is based on the greater requirement for protecting the production and business system of the country and, more generally, for saving the legal economy from the possible dangers of Mafia infiltration.

In this framework, the research for the illegal origin of capital accumulated by criminal *holdings* is of paramount importance. These are designed *in primis* for growing further criminal activities as well as to support the maintenance costs of criminal structures, which are introduced into the economic circuit to create apparently lawful profits and to promote complex camouflage processes and overlay on a social and financial level.

Within the scope of the defined containment action of the DIA against organized crime, there is the exercise of the powers of access, inspection, request for data and information, as well as survey, provided by *articles 1, subparagraph 4, and 1 bis, subparagraphs 1 and 4, of Decree-Law no. 629 of September 6, 1982*<sup>1176</sup>, delegated on a permanent basis to the DIA Director by the Minister of the Interior.

For the operative aspect, the recourse to such powers implies, first of all, to verify the possible inserting, also directly, of persons with Mafia criminal records in corporate, management and monitoring bodies of subjects obliged to observe the anti-money laundering provision<sup>1177</sup>. Their use could be directed to control, within such subjects, the financial cooperativeness of reports opened by third parties suspected of connections with the Mafia.

The same powers might be applied even for the preventive use of the financial system for the purpose of laundering the income of criminal activities. Specifically, paragraph 7 of article 9 of Legislative Decree no. 231 of November 21, 2007 provides that the DIA may appeal for investigative in-depth studies, related to organized crime, on reports of suspicious financial operations transmitted by the FIU and on information received for international cooperation.

During the first semester of 2023, 64 reasoned measures of access and investigation have been issued by the DIA Director. The execution of these orders, allocated to the competent territorial branches, has been made under the coordination of I Preventive Investigations Department.

The aforementioned measures, were designed to acquire data and news on individuals linked to crime groups, as well as to verify the possible imputability of different corporate and real estate transactions to Mafia infiltration phenomena. These involved: 42 banks, 18 money institutions, 1 company, 1 mutual fund and savings bank, 1 notary's office, 1 accounting firm.

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<sup>1176</sup> Converted into Law no 726 of October 12, 1982.

<sup>1177</sup> Concerns reported individuals Title I, Leader I, of Legislative Decree no. 231 of November 21, 2007, defining "Implementation of Directive 2005/60/EC regarding prevention of financial system use for money-laundering activities and financing of terrorism, as well as 2006/70/EC which includes implementing measures".

During the exercise of the powers in question, especially in cases where the scope of application relates to the aforementioned in-depth investigations of suspicious transaction reports, cases of non-compliance with the obligations laid down by the money-laundering prevention regulations set out in the aforementioned Legislative Decree 231/2007 often arise.

There is a need to highlight that *in subiecta materia*, the DIA is also in charge of the detection and notification of these violations<sup>1178</sup>. Especially, under the terms and conditions established by Law no. 689 of November 24, 1981<sup>1179</sup>.

### **c. Other activities for the protection of the preventive system on the use of financial systems for money laundering and financing of terrorism.**

In conjunction with constant evolution of the international political and economic scenario, even during the semester under examination, the DIA has been involved in the participation in the work of the *Financial Security Committee* (F.S.C.). It has been set up<sup>1180</sup>, as is known, for the purpose of countering international terrorism and later extended also for the laundering of the proceeds of criminal activities and for the activities of countries that threaten peace and international security<sup>1181</sup>. The related activities mainly concerned the implementation of freezing measures ordered by the European Union against Russia for the attack on Ukraine, which have been added to the ones adopted since 2014, as a result of the annexation of Crimea and the failed implementation of *Minsk* agreements<sup>1182</sup>.

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<sup>1178</sup> Article 9, paragraph 7, of Legislative Decree no. 231 of November 21, 2007:

“*Anti-Mafia Investigation Department ensures and criticizes, under the terms and conditions of Law no. 689 of November 24, 1981, i.e. communicates to supervisory authority, infringement of the obligations set out in this decree detected in the exercise of its powers and carries out investigative detailed studies, related to organized crime, of the information received pursuant to article 13 and of the suspicious transactions reports transmitted by FIU pursuant to article 40. The provisions of articles 1, paragraph 4, and 1-bis, paragraph 1 and 4, of Decree-Law no. 629 of September 6, 1982, converted, with amendments by Law no. 726 of October 12, 1982*”.

<sup>1179</sup> Concerning “*Variations on criminal convictions*” Published on GU Series Gen. no. 329 of 30.11.1981 - Suppl. Regular.

<sup>1180</sup> Decree-Law no. 369 of October 12, 2001, concerning “*Emergency Action to repress and contrast financing of international terrorism*”, converted, with changes, into Law no. 431 of December 14, 2001 (G.U. 14/12/2001, no. 290).

<sup>1181</sup> Reference is made to the following Legislative Decrees:

- no. 109 of June 22, 2007, concerning “*Measures to prevent, contrast and repress financing of terrorism and activities of countries which threaten international peace and security, during the realization of Directive 2005/60/EC*”,
- no. 231 of November 21, 2007, concerning “*Implementation of Directive 2005/60/EC regarding the use of financial system for money laundering of criminal activities and financing of terrorism as well as Directive 2006/70/EC, which has implementing measures*”.

<sup>1182</sup> During February and June of the analyzed semester, the tenth and eleventh package of sanctions have been implemented by the EU for Russia’s assault on Ukraine.

Similar measures concerned, to a lesser extent, the application of international sanctions against Belarus and Iran.

Even the proceedings conducted by the *Experts Network*<sup>1183</sup>, to which the DIA participates with its representatives, are of particular importance. The Committee relies on the activities carried out by the *Experts Network* for the analysis, coordination and synthesis of the issues of the agenda, as well as for the collection of information to support these activities and for the examination of queries relative to the application to restrict financial economic measures by means of European regulations<sup>1184</sup>. Referring to the many instances submitted to the Financial Security Committee (C.S.F.) for release authorizations for the transfer of funds, guarantees, measures of exemption from the freezing of economic resources, the DIA's contribution in the period under review involved the examination of **227** natural or legal persons.

In this context, there is even the DIA participation in task forces and/or technical tables set up within the competent Ministerial Directorate of the Department of the Treasury, in order to carry out specific sector-related tasks. In this framework, the beginning for an upgrade of the National analysis of money laundering and financing of terrorism risk has been identified, which is currently underway.

#### **d. Analysis of information lines of reporting from foreign Financial Intelligence Units**

On the international cooperation side, even during the first semester of 2023 the intensity of information exchanges between the DIA and the Financial Intelligence Unit for Italy (FIU), has shown how effective the profitable institutional relationships woven between the respective authorities were within the framework of the regulatory dispositions which control the subject<sup>1185</sup>.

Specifically, activity conducted by the DIA had as object **811** reports amenable to foreign *Financial Intelligence Units* (FIU.)<sup>1186</sup>, consisting of **242** enquiries of information exchanges and **569** transmissions of information, with a consequent activity of data analysis and monitoring, which

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<sup>1183</sup> Paragraph 1, pursuant to article 2 of the aforementioned Decree no. 59 of April 22, 2022, states: *To develop its own activities, the Committee shall be assisted by a group of experts belonging to the administrations represented therein, designated by them, called the "Experts Network"*.

<sup>1184</sup> The "Regulations governing the functioning of the Financial Security Committee and the categories of documents drawn up or otherwise available to the Committee" was adopted by the Minister of Economy and Finance by Decree no. 59 of April 22, 2022.

<sup>1185</sup> The amendments made to Legislative Decree no. 231/2007 by Legislative Decree no. 90/2017, as amended by Legislative Decree no. 125/2019, are relevant in the context of the provisions under review. Mention should be made, in particular, of articles 13, 13-bis and 13 term of Legislative Decree no. 231/2007 relating, respectively, to 'International Cooperation', to 'Cooperation between the FIU for Italy and other FIUs' and to 'Cooperation between the sectoral supervisory authorities of the Member States'.

<sup>1186</sup> Financial Intelligence Unit "centralize the tasks of receiving and analyzing suspicious transaction reports and the related information exchange activities with foreign counterparties. The latter function is essential for the analysis of financial flows that increasingly cross national borders, involving a plurality of jurisdictions" (extract from the official website of the Financial Intelligence Unit for Italy).

concerned several reported or connected natural and legal persons. Within the framework of the transmission of information, there were 25 information exchanges linked to the financing of terrorism and/or information exchanges concerning anomalous profiles of financial movements and transactions related to the Covid-19 epidemiological emergency.

The criticalities resulting from the attempts of Italian Mafia entrepreneurship to further extend its own irregular traffic beyond national borders have been mitigated, as always, under the investigative point of view, for the profiles of interest to the DIA, through the instrument of international police cooperation, at a bilateral and multilateral level. Within this framework, the DIA has been nominated as fundamental *partner* thanks to its own *know-how*.