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The organisational structure of transnational narcotics trafficking groups in Southeast Asia: a case study of Vietnam's border with Laos

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Abstract

The Golden Triangle—the area where the borders of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar converge—is considered one of the most complicated narcotics-trafficking hotspots in the world. More research is needed, however, to understand the supply and demand resources as well as the overall structure of transnational narcotics trafficking (TransNT) in this area and neighboring regions. The present paper provides an in-depth examination of the organisational structure of TransNT in the borderland between Vietnam and Laos, using multiple qualitative approaches to identify four key aspects of trafficking groups in this area: namely, group size, the relative centrality of lead actors in the trafficking networks, the flexibility and adaptability of network operations, and the personal attributes of traffickers. Depending on the number of drug traffickers involved, TransNT in Vietnam can be separated into small, medium, and large-scale groups; however, drug markets in Vietnam are not controlled by monopolistic groups or 'cartels'. Notably, cross-border networks tend to have a fluid structure characterised by a sophisticated modus operandi from the preparation stages to the later stages of trafficking activity, enabling the criminal networks to achieve their goals.

Keywords Drug trafficking · Organisational structure · Borderland · Law enforcement · Criminal investigation police drug-related crime (CIPDRC) · Golden triangle · Southeast Asia · Vietnam

Introduction

Transnational organised crime (TOC) and its specific criminal activities have been studied from a variety of academic perspectives over several decades. In particular,

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studies of transnational narcotics trafficking (TransNT) networks based on their operational structure have attracted the attention of many governments, policy-makers, and criminologists, in countries that include Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Italy, Mexico, the U.S., the U.K., and the Netherlands (Kenney 2007a, b, c; Matrix Knowledge Group 2007; Paoli and Reuter 2008; Beittel 2011; Vy and Lauchs 2013). More research is needed, however, to understand fully the structure and related connections of these TransNT networks (Andreas and Nadelmann 2006, Andreas 2009; von Lampe 2012). This paper explores as a case study the organisational structure of TransNT networks operating in one region within Southeast Asia—namely, along the border between Vietnam and Laos—where TOC and TransNT have been continuing concerns in recent decades.

In Vietnam, empirical research on the organisational structure of TransNT networks has been severely limited. Few Vietnamese or foreign scholars have researched the illicit trade in narcotics, though several studies provide context for the present investigation. These studies reflect different disciplinary perspectives, including those related to the creation of health or rehabilitative frameworks for drug users (Rapin 2003; Van and Scannapieco 2008); the formulation of drug policy vis-à-vis the treatment of addicts (Vuong, Ali et al. 2012; Thu, Ritter et al. 2018); the legislative implementation by Vietnam of its obligations under the United Nations Drugs Conventions (Hoa 2008); and the suppression of illicit opium production and related intervention policies in Vietnam (Windle 2012; Windle 2016). To date, however, there has been no research on the organisational structure of TransNT across the border between Vietnam and Laos. To close this gap, the present paper utilises criminal profiles obtained from courts and combines them with interviews with police officers to make clear the 'inside' structure of TransNT. As representatives of law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in combatting drug trafficking, the Vietnamese police officers who were interviewed revealed the organisational structure and its related modus operandi used by traffickers in both Vietnam and Laos. The lack of research on TransNT in Southeast Asia generally makes it difficult to draw comparisons between the context in Vietnam/Laos and the larger regional context. To circumvent this difficulty, the study draws on models of drug-trafficking organisations in Mexico and Colombia to identify distinguishing structural characteristics of TransNT in Vietnam.

Regional concerns and national scenarios

The increase in drug trafficking in Southeast Asia

The global synthetic drugs assessment of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2018 recorded a rapid rise in drug seizures in many Asian countries, especially in the region of Southeast Asia. In this region, the amount of detected illegal methamphetamines has risen annually from 6 tons in 2008 to more than 16 tons in 2012, making up about 45% of the total methamphetamine seizures for the region in 2012 (UNODC 2014). Further, the amount of seized crystalline methamphetamine rocketed up by 30 tons from 2013 to 2016 (UNODC 2018). The official data on seizure, manufacture, and use indicate that there is no sign of decline in the expansion of the amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS) market in the region; indeed, activity in this market increased more than five-fold from

2006 to 2015, while heroin seizures rose by only 75% during the same period (UNODC 2017). At the same time, among the 34.2 million people between the ages of 15 and 64 who used amphetamines around the world, the increase of drug users in Southeast Asian nations is particularly troubling. This increase has created intricate behavioral patterns and trends among traffickers as well as users, and has become one of the most severe threats to the region, although a specific estimate of usage rates is not available due to the chronic lack of data (UNODC 2018).

Traditional producer and corridor or transshipment countries for narcotics bound for Europe and the U.S., especially the Golden Triangle countries of Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos, are now themselves significant consumers of illicit substances, from traditional opium and heroin to ATS and their variants. Both opium and heroin use decreased starting in the mid- to late 1990s; conversely, the synthetic drug market in Southeast Asia has expanded and changed rapidly because such substances are easier to transport, in part because they can be more readily concealed. Indeed, such synthetic drugs are an established part of youth entertainment culture in Asia. Just as the increasing number of fentanyl overdoses in Northern America, due to the manufacturing and trading of its related new psychoactive substance (NPS), have been challenging to LEAs there, a growing number of ATS laboratories (around 630) have been dismantled across Southeast Asia, particularly in the Golden Triangle area (UNODC 2017). Yet, illegal narcotics continue to be sold to patrons at social and sporting events; in bars, nightclubs, and other entertainment venues; and, alarmingly, in increasing quantities to students at secondary schools or universities in Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and Indonesia. The flexibility, scope, and dynamics of the trafficking entities involved have all proved increasingly challenging to the capacities of LEAs in the area.

Vietnam's challenges with complex drug-trafficking operations

The 'Renovation Period' has brought about a general increase in living standards in Vietnam since 1986. However, while economic growth and regional integration have brought many positive changes, such as an increased mobility of goods, services, people, and money, they have also provided opportunities for TOC to threaten human security and challenge the rule of law in Vietnam. Furthermore, improvements in infrastructure, communication, and transportation have created new opportunities for traffickers to operate transnationally. Being located near the Golden Triangle, with porous borderlands and a long coastline, Vietnam offers advantageous conditions for trafficking illicit drugs. In addition, the transit of illegal drugs into Australia, the U.S., Europe, and West African countries through Vietnam has increased considerably over the last two decades. Thus, although drug -trafficking organisations (DTOs)—that is, complex organisations with highly defined command-and-control structures that produce, transport, and/or distribute large quantities of drugs (Beittel 2015)—do not exist per se in Vietnam, concerns about drug trafficking across the borders of Vietnam have captured the attention of LEAs.

Of all its borderland areas, Vietnam faces the greatest challenge in grappling with the complex drug-trafficking activities that are moving drugs across the country's borders

with Laos in its northwestern and central-northern regions. The Vietnam-Laos border region stretches for approximately 2340 km through 10 Vietnamese provinces that are adjacent to 10 southern areas of Laos, where the topography is marked by mountain ranges and lowland tropical forests (National Border Committee 2010). This border region's populations are diverse, comprised mostly of ethnic minorities living in widely dispersed villages. Transport and travel between the two sides of the border areas are complicated, since almost no motorised traffic can negotiate the terrain, except at a few densely populated border-crossing points. In these remote mountainous areas, many villagers have exploited these conditions to produce a sizable proportion of Southeast Asia's poppy crop. Ethnic minority groups, including Hmong, Thai, and Laotian Hmong populations, are spread across nation-state borders, and some within these groups have turned to commercial poppy cultivation to earn cash income (Rapin 2003). Traditionally, these local minorities grew poppy crops for self-use, for medicinal purposes and recreation; however, cultivation expanded rapidly during the colonial era, creating the conditions for today's drug-trafficking problems (McCoy 1972, McCoy 2003).

Methodology and data collection

This study uses mixed-methods approaches, including case studies, in-depth interviews, and attendance at an anti-narcotics police workshop, to present the first detailed analysis of the nature of TransNT between Laos and Vietnam. To collect the data used for the study, the researcher 1) analysed court records from multiple court cases involving drug traffickers; 2) interviewed high-ranking police officers who had worked on these cases, to obtain further information; and 3) participated in a workshop where the researcher met police officers and gained an understanding of the national context for drug-trafficking activities in Vietnam.

The research was guided by informal conversations and dialogue with criminal-investigation police, i.e., drug-related crimes (CIPDRC) officers, who have a firm understanding of the geographical distribution of drug sources as well as first-hand knowledge of the variety of TransNT cases throughout Vietnam's borderlands with neighboring countries. Regarding the number of selected cases, Robert Yin suggested adjusting that number in accordance with a study's research aims and objectives (Yin 1984; Yin 2009). According to (Stake 1995), the following question constitutes a preliminary basis for selecting cases: 'which cases are likely to lead us to understandings, to assertions, perhaps even to modifying of generalizations?' (p. 4). With drug-related cases spread out across Vietnam, it was impossible to cover everything in the current study. Consequently, the researcher 'hand-picked' cases based on whether they corresponded to an established criterion for drug-related crimes of this sort (Champion 2006). In the Vietnamese context, the established criteria include 1) complex drug-trafficking cases that involve diverse parties; 2) cases defined as 'particularly serious criminal drug offenses' under the current criminal code of Vietnam; 3) cases involving both Vietnamese and Laotian offenders; 4) cases for which the final courts' sentencing recommendations have been implemented, so that any conflict of interest or ethical impropriety on the part of the researcher can be avoided.

These criteria were supplemented with information obtained during the researcher's conversations with CIPDRC officers, who highlighted the geographical distribution and main types of drug-related offenses. The Northern region (Dienbien), Central Northern coastal region (Quangbinh, Quangtri, and Nghean), and Southern region (Ho Chi Minh City) are considered to be three of the most complicated drug-trafficking areas in the borderland between Vietnam and Laos. Although the Southern region does not share a border with Laos, most illegal drugs are transported there after being trafficked into the country from Laos. An application was made at all the relevant courts to view the court transcripts associated with each case. During the data-gathering process, many cases were excluded from the final sample because they did not meet the criteria just described. In all, the researcher selected two cases from Nghean, and one example each from Dienbien, Ho Chi Minh City, Quangtri, and Quangbinh. These six case studies provided data from the period 2003–2013. In analysing these data, the researcher used 'CS' to abbreviate 'case study' and 'No.X' to indicate the specific ordering of the defendants in each case. To respect defendants' and others' privacy rights, all real names in each case study were replaced with the numeric listing for the defendants and with initials for related actors. All cases were extracted from these courts after both the trial and appeal stages had been completed, and they were compared with the interviews with police officers concerning drug-trafficking activities. (See Appendix for details.)

In the policing system used in Vietnam to investigate drug-trafficking cases, the highest-ranking officer plays a critical role in allocating duties to members of investigative teams, while remaining directly involved in all activities as the team leader. In other words, if team members have occasion to respond to or deal with traffickers, they are required to provide the team's leader with as specific a report about their activities as possible. Instead of interviewing all the officers who played a role in the selected cases, therefore, the researcher engaged in in-depth interviews with only the six highest ranked CIPDRC officers, ranging in rank from major colonel to senior colonel, at the provincial areas of the borderland Vietnam shares with Laos. Most of the interviews were semi-structured interviews, with several open-ended questions designed to elicit interviewees' 'inside stories' about each case study, without any restriction being placed on the length or content of their response. Each interview lasted around one hour, and, because of the sensitive nature of the issues discussed, Vietnam's ministry of public security did not allow the interviews to be recorded by electronic equipment. Hence, note-taking was used to collect the data—along with, where possible, transcription of the respondents' responses.

In addition, as one part of the triangulated approach to data collection, the author attended a workshop involving the anti-narcotics police force, titled 'Experiences and Exchanges in September 2014' (hereafter referred to as 'police workshop'); this workshop was hosted by the People's Police Academy of Vietnam (PPA). At the workshop, held over two days in September 2014, a total of 45 CIPDRC officers came to the PPA to exchange ideas about how to combat drug trafficking. All the participants, from police captains to lieutenant colonels, work at the CIPDRC headquarters in Hanoi as well as at other provincial stations, including some located in the borderlands shared with Laos, such as Dienbien, Nghean, Quangtri, and Quangbinh. While being monitored by the chairman and

secretary of the meeting, they split into two sub-groups to discuss specific themes relating to the structure of TransNT, with one presenter then delivering their final opinions for the benefit of the whole group.

All of the data collected through the means just described have been approved by RMIT University's Research Ethics Committee and also by the PPA's Scientific Research Board.

Findings

Group size

The size of a network is considered one of the most fundamental factors in research on criminal networks in general and TransNT entities in particular. Depending on whether the drug-trafficking activities involve a single shipment or multiple shipments, the size of the group will be established by the number of group members and network density rather than by the scale of activity (Morselli 2009; Vy 2013; Dijk and Spapens 2014). Accordingly, to put the matter in relatively simple terms, the density of a TransNT network is measured by the actual number of ties between actors and by the possible number of nodes, i.e., the possible total number of actors within the network (Morselli 2009). The assumption is that there will be 'more than one relationship in a social network dataset' and that such datasets will reveal 'multi-relational networks, which could include both directional and non-directional relations' (Wasserman and Fraust 1994). In other words, network density refers to the portion of the potential connections in a network that consists of actual connections, as best as can be established with the available information (Lemieux 2003).

TransNT groups can be classified into three general sizes: small, medium, and large. Small groups are created by at least one principal offender and their related actors (associates). Given the small size of the group, the leader of the network establishes and manages his/her organisation by himself/herself, by connecting with both the 'input' and the 'output' sources of the network. In this situation, in the terms afforded by his 'group hazard hypothesis', the presence of two or more offenders is likely to increase the number of potential mistakes as compared with the number of potential mistakes created by one person acting alone; in turn, this heightened potential for mistakes also increases the possibility of detection and arrest by the police (Hindelang 1976). Co-offenders might betray each other in a manner that leads to arrests, or they might disclose incriminating information to police after having been arrested (McCarthy, Hagan et al. 1998; Morselli 2009). The formation of any criminal group involves a decision about whether the benefits of cooperation outweigh the risks.

In the Vietnamese context, organisers not only communicate directly with narcotics suppliers in Laotian markets but also have direct contact with drug buyers or customers in Vietnam's retail markets, as was reported by one of the presenters at the police workshop. Adaptability is thus vital to group survival, and even when group sizes are small, networks, if involved in exchanges between

Vietnamese and Laotian traffickers, are often fluid and loosely organised. As one of the investigators, who oversaw CS3, explained to me,

Although we only prosecuted and arrested one defendant with fully legal evidence, other related actors (N. T. in Laos and T. in Ho Chi Minh City's retail market) have continued to operate…thus, I think that the size of this case is a small one, but still, the group's dense network ties have been used many times to collect and integrate shipments of narcotics from Laos to Vietnam. (Interview #3).

A medium-sized group, meanwhile, ranges from six to ten participants in the Vietnamese context. Apart from potential partnerships with Laotian drug suppliers, groups of this size are often established with one organiser/leader and his or her associates focusing on their operations in Vietnam. In this way, the organiser finds it easier to control and guide the drug-trafficking supply-chain process. For example, in CS4, apart from the so-called Mr. Big Boss (N. C. H), who is still at large, all of the five offenders had to comply strictly and fully with their leader's requirements (CS4-No.1). Further, because the offenders were 'fellow-countrymen' born near each other, and thus shared the same slang and culture (e.g., CS4-No.2 and CS4-No.3) or even family relatives (e.g., CS4-No.4 and CS4-No.5), they created a closed circle for sharing information about their operations. In addition, almost all their activities involved internal interactions among group members, with minimal external assistance.

These mid-sized groups were likely to change over time the modus operandi they used to obtain drugs from Laos, using sophisticated tricks to avoid the police. As the officer in charge of CS4 put it,

> With this close-knit form, they can maintain their activities for a long time. Thus, although it took at least five years of monitoring to break this case, I think that N. C. H and his accomplices have transported and traded substantial quantities of drugs in the past. (Interview #4).

Information sharing in groups of this size can be quite effective, particularly, as one of the presenters in the police workshop noted, if they come from the same local community and have grown up together. Traffickers prefer to use simple codes in their communications, and so group stability is essential (Morselli 2009; Benson and Decker 2010). Thus, with respect to CS5, the investigator stated that,

> Although this case was not a big one, with a large number of group members, it was established and operated by one 'close knit group', with six out of the seven defendants having grown up and shared their childhood in the Thanhyen commune, Dienbien district. I think that this made their network more confident and interactive, as the group undertook drug-related activities. The process of information sharing was carried out only with the local language or short slang words such as *gạo* (which means *heroin*), *túi* (which means *packages*, and hence is short for *quantity*), or *cơm thiu* (means heroin of a *poor quality*). (Interview #5).

Groups in the third category, large groups, comprise over ten persons. The scale of the network is often controlled and managed by an organiser or core organising

group, similar to the 'wheel network' in Kenney's typology (Kenney, 2007a, b, c; Kenney, 2007a, b, c) and the 'criminal network' in Williams' classification (Williams 1998; Williams 2001a, b). Furthermore, this group's size is divided into multiple subgroups, with individual sub-group heads under the management and control of one leader/organiser. For example, in CS1, there were three subgroups with 29 defendants, who were prosecuted directly in court, and at least 24 related actors who avoided arrest, all of them under the supervision of bosses with respect to their particular duties. The sheer number of members in the network made this case the most massive case during the period 2003–2013 in Vietnam. As an investigator in CS1 put it,

> Until I was required to join this operation, I could not possibly imagine the real size of this organisation. The members came to the group with diverse backgrounds and professional criminal profiles, such that it became one of the most significant and most complicated transnational drug-trafficking operations in the 2000s. (Interview #1).

Accordingly, given the size of the group, a functional division of labour was necessary – one overseen by a 'Mr. Big'. Functional roles covered all the required stages of the trafficking operation, from the purchase and delivery of drugs to their re-packaging, blending, and distribution. Although in the terms set out in UNODC's (2002) typology the group did not establish itself as a formal hierarchical structure, with precise levels of authority specified in either a vertical or a horizontal organisation, the central actor in this large group maintained several kinds of control. As the investigator stated,

> In my opinion, I assume that the more crowded the offenders in the criminal network, the more complicated and sophisticated a structure it will have. In this case, the structure was divided as clearly as possible into three subgroups, including suppliers, re-packagers and deliverers, and distributors and commanders. Of course, CS1-No.1 played a central role in controlling the whole of his network for over five years. (Interview #1).

In short, depending on the size of a group of traffickers and the composition of its members, its structure will vary. However, one main similarity among the different sizes of groups is that their organisational structures prioritise the power of the organiser/leader as well as the effectiveness of each drug-trafficking transaction. To some extent, therefore, group size or network density does not strictly determine the structures and modus operandi of TransNT activities. Furthermore, while traffickers and their co-offenders in a given network will often be assigned specific duties and roles in the process of drug transportation, some group members might also be part of other trafficking networks, making their activities difficult for police to monitor comprehensively: their roles may change when they shift among the various groups with which they are engaged. It is the flexibility of these TransNT entities, what with their different methods of working, variable organisational scales, and strong influence on peers, that makes the task of law enforcement so challenging, especially at the cross-border and regional levels. As Reuter (2014, p.359) notes, 'since drug markets are so large…the nature of the

enterprises in drug markets varies greatly across countries, drugs, and levels of distribution [with respect to] their size, durability, and relation to other criminal activities.' Thus, to map more precisely the nature of a trafficking organisation and detail its structural characteristics, we need to identify the central actors involved as well as their group boundaries, focusing on the role of leader.

The central actors

Similar to the graph approach in social network analysis, in criminal network analysis, the aim is to identify the most important actors within a criminal network. Wasserman and Fraust (1994, pp.169,172) assert that actors who are the most important or the most prominent are usually located in strategic locations within the network, such that 'the ties of the actor make the actor particularly visible to the other actors in the network.' Concerning criminal networks, Sparrow (1991, pp.263–264) argues that seeking the center of a criminal organisation helps to identify those offenders who are 'vital, key, or pivotal, and target them for removal or surveillance'; hence, 'centrality is an important ingredient (but by no means the only one) in considering the identification of network vulnerabilities.' In defining such centrality, Morselli (2009, p.12) stresses that 'at the individual level, [it] could be measured simply as the number or proportion of contacts with whom a participant is directly connected within a network.' However, determining centrality in TransNT networks is often very difficult because the central actors prefer to disguise their identities, even in small networks with only one leader.

Instead of modelling criminal network with a view to determining the centralitiy of an actor based on various multi-relations between nodes in a system, this research extrapolated the central actor's impacts through identifying the role of leaders in TransNT activities. A leader, in definition, is the participant with the 'highest cognitive load' or the network member who manifests the largest number of qualities associated with leadership potential, such as prior experience, cognitive ability, resourcefulness, openness to new skills, and willingness to delegate tasks (Morselli 2009). Accordingly, based on the case studies used for the present paper, connections/ties between the leader(s) and their trafficking accomplices in the whole of the operation, including recruitment, stockpiling, delivery, drug extraction, and distribution, are examined in order to assess their degree centrality, closeness, and betweenness centrality.

Degree centrality is often reflected in a leader's ties with their accomplices in the network. In particular, they not only want to exercise strong influence but also affirm their role as a leader throughout the trafficking process (Jankowski 1991). Either they are 'the big boss with ultimate power' (interview #5), or they 'are closely aligned with a big boss as that leader's first anchor, who protects the boss and looks out for them' (interview #6). An influential leader will control the trafficking process from start to finish, either directly or indirectly (police workshop). In CS1, CS3, CS4, CS5, and CS6, the leaders/organisers were the central actors who sought to manage their network with the most significant degree of centralisation. They checked the send-and-receive process to ensure both the quality and quantity of drugs being shipped (Interview # 3, 4). Another way to

assert leadership was to organise the shortest possible connections between suppliers and other network actors. As an investigator in CS1 states:

> The offender CS1-No.1 acted appropriately given his position in this case, as the 'boss of the boss'. His role in the organiser's group was to connect directly to CS1-No.4, not only to trade heroin but also to urge him to find beneficial partners when he wanted to expand his presence in the domestic drug market. With respect to the supplier's group, to maintain an adequate supply of drugs, he teamed up with CS1-No.2 to purchase heroin and ATS from Cambodia, but he also cooperated with both T. V. H (a related actor), who shipped 515 blocks of heroin, and CS1-No.7, who over 12 trips from Laos smuggled in 892 bricks of heroin. With respect to the drug courier's group, he required sub-coordinators to carry drugs for his partners, including CS1-No.12, who transported 919 blocks of heroin for T. V. H as well as CS1-No.7, and CS1-No.15, who shipped 80 blocks from X (a related actor) in the borderland between Cambodia and Vietnam. Further, he relied on his ties with couriers to distribute drugs for his retail bosses, such as CS1-No.13, who transferred 710 block to V. T. N. B (a related actor), and CS1-No.15, who delivered 81 bricks to P. V. C and 102 blocks to CS1-No.4. As for the group's accommodation of demand for drugs, just like an octopus's tentacles, he connected with his most consistent customers (CS1-No.4, V. T. N. B, and H. T. T) to supply their needs immediately. It may seem incredible that he himself established all of these ties directly, but it is true. (Interview #1).

One of the common features of small, medium, and large drug-trafficking groups in Vietnam is that the leader very rarely makes an appearance in any drug transactions. One explanation for this pattern is that degree centrality is not relevant in criminal networks, where leaders generally have fewer direct connections than other network members in order to avoid LEA monitoring and minimise the chances of detection (Lemieux 2003). As a police officer in CS2 put it,

> Though P. T. T (Ms. Big Boss) did not live in Vietnam and always stays overseas, mostly in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom, she still played a lead role in managing her drug-trafficking network. Some of her co-offenders (CS2-No.2 and CS2-No.5) also made it a point to be between international locations, such as Thailand, Laos, Australia, and the United Kingdom; others (CS2-No.3, CS2-No.7, and CS2-No.8) wait in Vietnam for her directives via telephone conversations. I want to stress that they explicitly implemented their plans as a kind of 'journeying to and fro' (*con thoi*) to avoid detection and investigation. In doing this, they traveled extensively and even changed their regular routes for trips in Vietnam… we were exhausted from trying to keep on their trail during an extended period, in our attempts to investigate the routes of around 1000 blocks of heroin and 5000 tablets of ATS. (Interview #2).

In contrast with leaders in small groups, leaders' activities in medium and large groups participating in TransNT networks can be ambiguous or hard to distinguish, due to their interchanging roles in practice. This issue arose in the interview with an investigator who worked on CS5:

> Of course, we recognised the offenders CS5-No.1 and CS5-No.2 as Ms. Bosses in this case, but they did not control the whole of the network. How can I assert that? Because in some situations, both of them had to work as drug couriers; in other cases, they served as brokers to find new partners and markets for trading. CS5-No.1 even worked as an organiser of storage logistics to keep heroin while they connected with new customers. (Interview #5).

Regarding betweenness centrality in TransNT, to achieve the highest effectiveness in connecting with traffickers (*nodes*) in Laotian markets, leaders/organisers in Vietnam commonly seek out intermediaries with track records of involvement with Laotian drug rings. These intermediaries or brokers are persons known through prison contacts, known as 'friend-in-prison bonds', or are people who grew up with them in their home commune, known as 'fellow-countrymen'. Both offender CS1-No.1 and offender CS1-No.7 are from Nghean province and spent time in prison together. In CS2, the core offender (Ms. Big Boss only choose to work with her fellow-countrymen (CS2-No.2, CS2-No.3, and CS2-No.8) and fellow-countrywomen (the related actors N. T. Th and N. T. M) to run operations in Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and China. As the investigator of this case told me, 'No selections outside her [Ms. Big Boss's] village, nothing more, nothing less!' (Interview #2).

Further, to establish connections involving Vietnamese nodes and their Laotian partners more efficiently, leaders designate sub-heads for this purpose. Accordingly, those subheads have to 'understand geographical locations and [have the necessary] expertise to connect with drug suppliers' (Interview #5). In this way, they can contribute more effectively to the process of collecting and transporting drugs from Laos to Vietnam and assist their network in avoiding detection before the final steps of sending and receiving 'goods'. An investigator in CS4 spoke to these issues:

> It was a sound modus operandi to ship drugs from Laos to Nghean via ethnic minority groups who are living in the borderland connecting the two nations. Since she was born and grew up in the mountains and forests close to Laos, furthermore, (CS4-No.6) more readily took advantage of geographical characteristics of both sides to transport illegal drugs to internal Nghean areas. (Interview #4).

A central leader's direct involvement in all aspects of a group's operations is likely to place that leader at a higher risk of detection. Thus, to minimise this risk, primary actors make only limited 'appearances' and instead exercise control at a distance from the actual operations. This tendency is particularly evident in larger trafficking groups, in which leaders can delegate responsibility to trusted confederates.

The flexibility and adaptability of the operations

The process of drug trafficking involves different stages, including seeking and negotiating drug suppliers from Laos for Vietnam's market and then transporting, storing, and distributing the drugs. Depending on the type and quantity of the illegal narcotics involved, traffickers create flexible, adaptable operations in order

to implement their plans. To some extent, these adaptations by traffickers are impacted by improvements in policing techniques as well as changes in the domestic drug market.

On the one hand, changes in police strategies commonly impact the adaptations by drug traffickers. In particular, when CIPDRC officers adjust their techniques for drug searches and arrests, these adjustments also influence drug traffickers' activities (Scott 2010). This point was discussed during the police workshop. As the participants noted, when local police officers cross the borderland between Vietnam and Laos, they follow a 'stir the grass, startle the snake' strategy. In other words, the police have to shift from arresting only Vietnamese offenders in residential areas to searching Laotian suspects at the border with Laos via cooperation with the Laotian police. As a presenter at the workshop put it, 'We only arrest all criminal at one time, after we have already determined all the members of a network, both Vietnamese and Laotian'. However, in some cases, traffickers also change their operations when they realise that their syndicates are being surveilled and investigated by police. Reviewing the process used for an investigation that took nearly two years in CS1, a detective noted that.

> When we focused our particular strategies on targets in one area (Ho Chi Minh City), they shifted their activities immediately to a different domain (Dongnai and other provinces in Vietnam's Southern region). To cope with our campaigns, almost all of the core subjects, particularly the Big Four Godfathers, including the offenders CS1-No.1, CS1-No.2, CS1-No.3, and CS1-No.4, frequently changed their residences and vehicles. Our task force had never before faced such difficult challenges posed by criminals' adaptations and changes. (Interview #1).

Because there is no jury system in Vietnam, if a person is arrested and prosecuted for drug-related offenses, the chance of conviction is very high (Nicholson and Truong 2008). With the severest punishment for drug trafficking being the death penalty under the current criminal law, cross-border traffickers and wholesale distributors in Vietnam's domestic markets are therefore particularly careful to adjust their strategies and movements in order to avoid such harsh sentences, as one of the participants in the police workshop noted. Accordingly, many drug-trafficking groups tend to downsize as much as possible to maintain their flexibility and adaptability. As stated by a high-ranking anti-narcotics police officer in Quangbinh province who worked on CS2:

> One of the consistent policies of Vietnam's Communist Party and Government has been intolerance for the existence of organised crime groups or drug cartels. Consequently, leaders/organisers will be extra cautious in their efforts to maintain their drug-trafficking organisation and operation continuously when police start their campaigns. Between our intelligence operations and information from local people, we will hear something about their illegal drug activities. By using informants who help us meet and investigate the 'potential players', eventually, we will infiltrate their ring. (Interview #2).

On the other hand, with respect to changes in drug-market conditions, traffickers also seek to adjust the flows of supply to match demand (Reuter and Haaga 1989, Decker

and Chapman 2008). Thus, although CIPDRC officers aim to reduce the volume of drugs flowing in the domestic drug market, by applying their special operations to combat drug trafficking, cross-border traffickers always look for alternative routes for transport (Benson and Decker 2010). As a result, when police eliminate one group of dealers in this marketplace, the number of drugs in circulation is not reduced but rather shifted elsewhere (Interview #6). Explaining this situation in more detail, a police officer involved in CS4 remarked:

> It is sometimes called the 'balloon effect'. As you can imagine, when you pinch a balloon in one area, the air in the balloon moves to a different part of that balloon. Similarly, when we increased drug enforcement in one district (Quephong), the other branches of this drug network moved out into different areas (Tuongduong or Kyson). All of these zones are in the borderland with Huaphanh province in Laos; they feature a vast number of small roads and rocky hills, which are suitable for drug couriers delivering drugs from Laotian territories to locations in Vietnam. How can we enforce and control all these porous points? (Interview #4).

To complete all the operations associated with various stages of drug trafficking from Laos to Vietnam, TransNT entities, to remain covert, have to be as adaptable as possible in their activities and plans. These adaptations demonstrate flexible responsiveness to police strategies as well as changes in market conditions. To overcome LEA pressures and maintain connections with their counterparts across the border, Vietnamese traffickers adjust their plans of action and re-arrange their accomplices' roles in the TransNT, in order to stay one step ahead of the police.

Traffickers' personal attributes

To ensure the process of concealment and the delivery of illegal drugs from Laos to Vietnam, drug traffickers need to acquire the kinds of attributes necessary for successful operations. Within the scope of this study, such attributes include requisite skills, connections, abilities, and knowledge, which not only support drug-trafficking activities but also help the traffickers evade police investigations. Across all the cases in Vietnam, traffickers take advantage of legal business activities, commercial exchanges, and the import-export trade to facilitate delivery. At least four out of the six case studies (CS1, CS2, CS3, and CS6) involved this adaptation. Accordingly, drug traffickers establish an official cover using a legitimate business or company, in which they take on a central role as executive director or manager (e.g., CS3-No.1 and CS6-No.1). In this way, traffickers enjoy freedom of movement between Laos and Vietnam as they contact drug lords in connection with potential partnerships. Vietnamese traffickers also liaise with Laotian partners to discuss, exchange, and negotiate price and transportation. The cleverer a trafficker is at concealing his or her true identity, the more difficult it is for police to intercept drug shipments. As one officer put it, 'they were very hard to recognise precisely because the boundaries between a successful businessman and a dangerous criminal are not always apparent' (Interview #3). A senior police officer elaborated further, in connection with CS6:

> Through creating covert missions as part of an international business that imported wood from Laos to Vietnam, (CS6-No.1) established circumstantial cover for all of his activities related to purchasing, transporting, and trading drugs over a five-year period. He established many business activities in commercial services to to provide a rationale or motive for his frequent travel abroad. This was a smart way to ensure his operations remained hidden and to avoid our concentrated effort0…that's why we called him 'wood' (*gỗ* in Vietnamese)! (Interview #6).

Similarly, in CS3, the primary offender (CS3-No.1) was thought to be a Vietnamese businessperson, well-informed about Laotian culture and society. He was fluent in the Laotian language, making it easy for him to connect with Laotian trading partners. To make it easier still, he also legally registered a cooperative partnership with Laotian enterprises in the travel business and hotel trade. As one of the investigating officers put it, 'He took advantage of bilateral cooperation in economic activities between the two countries to make frequent trips to Laos and find a suitable partner (N. T.) for drug trafficking' (Interview #3).

Other offenders chose to establish themselves in an 'ordinary lifestyle and career' to avoid suspicion. One such offender was 'Ms. Big Boss' in CS5 (Interview #5). Unlike big bosses CS3-No.1 and CS6-No.1, CS5-No.1 created a profile as a 'peasant farmer', who was a poor and simple-minded woman. In this disguise, she effectively directed major drug-trafficking activities. As a 'peasant farmer' she was able to adapt her plans to stockpile, transport, and trade drugs for six years without being detected, until her arrest in 2012 (Interview #5).

Thus, by taking advantage of a legal business 'front', offenders were able to smuggle narcotics into Vietnam. In CS1, in 12 roundtrips driving from Laos to Vietnam, CS1-No.7, one of the most critical drug couriers in his network, concealed 890 blocks of heroin by blending them with recyclable wastes being transported via long-bed trucks. Specifically, as investigator in the case noted, 'He (CS1-No.7) designed and invented extra "secret trays" in fuel cells and equipment-containing boxes to disguise the heroin inside'. To accomplish this ruse, he used authorised certifications for trade that had been established under bilateral trading agreements between the two nations.

Discussion

The evidence suggests that TransNT entities in Vietnam work in groups that are hierarchically structured. That said, traffickers operating across Vietnam's borderland with Laos are often fluidly structured, with small, medium, and even large-scale groups that are loosely organised rather than having a centralised form. This contrasts with DTOs in Colombia and Mexico, which comprise numerous actors collaborating in a vast supply chain. The actors in these chains collude to create tightly knit groups before transporting illicit drugs to the demand chain (Astorga and Shirk 2010). Accordingly, DTOs are controlled and managed under the

supervision of leaders at each stage of the trafficking process via centralised authority structures, where leaders make almost all strategic decisions about production, marketing, and operational security (Williams 1998, Kenney, 2007a, b, c, Williams 2010). Thus, in Colombian trafficking groups, 'leaders have the final say on drug production levels, shipment size, methods of conveyance and concealment, wholesale prices, customers, money laundering and repatriating methods, along with a host of other business-related issues' (Kenney, 2007a, b, c). In the Mexican DTOs, these groups often operate in separate, specialised, and even more hierarchical networks in the U.S. wholesale market to exert control over the production of illegal drugs and their transportation into the U.S. (Astorga and Shirk 2010, Beittel 2011, CRS 2019). Furthermore, using bribery, corruption, and violence as complementary tactics, these groups are gaining control of the U.S. retail distribution by forming alliances with local U.S. gangs (Beittel 2013, CRS 2019).

Drug markets in Vietnam are not controlled by monopolistic groups or 'cartels' as in Mexico and Colombia. Some of the features of the drug trade in Mexico and Colombia (e.g., hierarchical organisations, collusion with LEAs, violent behaviors, the use of political influence, and so forth) do not apply to the drug trade in Vietnam. The data show that drug cartels do not exist in Vietnam, and no drug-related group is powerful enough to declare a particular drug route exclusively their own or to charge other groups a 'toll' in the manner of the DTOs in Mexico (Campbell 2009). One of the main reasons for this difference is the leadership of the Communist Party; the state monopoly does not permit a drug trade inside in Vietnam, nor cross-border trade between Vietnam and its neighbors. Thus, under the Government and Ministry of Public Security requirements, all the major roads connecting Laos and Vietnam are heavily guarded by Vietnamese police stationed at checkpoints. There is a similar situation in China, where trafficking groups that cross China's border with Myanmar have not had the opportunity to become institutionalised (Chin and Zhang 2007, Zhang and Chin 2015). There is no evidence to suggest that TransNT entities in Vietnam could exist as paramilitary organisations capable of confronting the government, as in Mexico and Colombia.

Rather, depending on the number of drug traffickers involved, the size of TransNT networks in Vietnam operate at various scales, small, medium, and large. Among these groups, mid-sized groups feature predominantly in the current study. This type of TransNT entity is comprised of six to ten members with a clear division of labour based on the traffickers' past experience, age, and charisma. Smaller sized groups have one leader and his or her partners, who are related actors of either Vietnamese or Laotian origin. These smaller groups are similar to the drug-trafficking groups in West Africa, which are also are composed of small, compartmentalised cells with two or more members (Mazzitelli 2007). Groups of this size, for reasons of security, often limit members' access to information about drug-trafficking operations or the larger context of the tasks for which they are responsible. As a result, small groups' organisational structure is also loose, lacking cohesion among the participants. In large groups, by contrast, there are over ten participants, who are often steered by a single person or by a core group with close relationships to the sub-groups.

However, TransNT groups in Vietnam and DTOs in Colombia differ with respect to the number of members typically involved. For example, in CS1, the TransNT involved at least 53 traffickers, including Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian offenders, who transported and traded over 2354 blocks of heroin from 2000 to 2002 with a significant proportion being transported from Laos to Vietnam and a smaller proportion transported from Cambodia into Vietnam. This is a very small-scale operation compared with the actions of DTOs in Colombia, which involve very large, sophisticated armed networks, including paramilitary and guerrilla groups controlling all the links in the drug chain from production to retail (Kenney 2010; Williams 2013, Dijk and Spapens 2014). For example, the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) was at one time the largest paramilitary organisation in Colombia; it was a nationwide network of paramilitary groups formed in the 1990s with around 35,000 soldiers at its height. For its part, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia guerrillas (FARC) is the oldest and most crucial guerrilla group in the Western Hemisphere, with an estimated 8000 fighters and 30,000 militia members (Dudley 2010; Dudley 2011, McDermott 2013).

It should not be assumed, however, that just because of these differences of scale Vietnamese groups are unsophisticated. As noted previously, these groups operate under the supervision of a leader (defined as *the central actor* in this study), who participates, either directly or indirectly, in one part or all of the TransNT activities in Vietnam and Laos. In the terms afforded by social network theory, those leaders often carry the 'highest cognitive load' and have the prior experience and resources needed for them to control and manage complex tasks (Carley, Lee et al. 2002; Morselli 2009). In Vietnam, they comprise both recidivists (in CS1 and CS2) and non-recidivist offenders (in CS3, CS4, CS5, and CS6). The structure of these groups is different from that afforded by the core groups in the 'wheel network' of Colombian DTOs; those core groups consist of 'veteran traffickers that have the contacts, capital, and knowledge to fear, charisma, managerial acumen, or some combination of such attributes' (Kenney, 2007a, b, c). This charisma and experience are essential to the coherence of large-scale trafficking where core groups often rely on multiple peripheral nodes simultaneously to facilitate communication and coordinate relations between them and their sub-nodes (Williams, 2001a, b, Kenney, 2007a, b, c). By contrast, in Vietnam, TransNT transactions are likely to be implemented by individual traffickers each of whom is fully responsible for making decisions about the location of and communication with drug suppliers in Laos, and also about shipment sizes and methods of concealment and retail distribution. In CS3, for example, the offender CS3-No.1 operated as a multi-functioned leader when he connected with his counterpart (N. T., a Laotian drug lord) to collect heroin and ATS for delivery to Vietnam. In this case, the delivery was accomplished by concealing these drugs inside bedframes and hotel cupboards before tourist vehicles were hired to transport them elsewhere. However, leaders in the Vietnamese groups bear the the largest risk, for which reason they prefer to limit direct personal involvement in trafficking operations (Morselli 2009). Instead, they manage or direct from a safe distance, through proxies, with the consequence that visible organisers are often

not the principal or leader of the crime group in question. Many offenders in the TransNT cases, including CS2 (CS2-No.2 and CS2-No.5) and CS4 (CS4-No.1 and CS4-No.2), occupied 'leader' roles, as 'right-hand' managers responsible for sub-stages and special duties in the drug-trafficking process. Also, as in CS5 (the related actors L. A. H and L. A. T), participants are likely to act on behalf of their leader to communicate with foreign contacts (e.g., Laotian drug suppliers) in order to deliver drugs into Vietnam.

Conclusions

Drug trafficking usually occurs through distributed networks of small-scale producers who supply raw materials to drug dealers for sale to affluent young users in Asian metropolitan centers as well as countries in North America, Western Europe, Africa, and Oceania (Jenner 2014; Reuter 2014). Cross-border networks tend to have a fluid structure characterised by a sophisticated modus operandi from the preparation stages to the later stages of trafficking activity, enabling the criminal networks to achieve their goals. The evidence suggests that these groups use practices similar to those employed by TransNT groups in Latin America, but the organisations in the Asian region belong in a different category (Broadhurst and Vy 2013; Chouvy 2013). Indeed, although some scholars still recapped the concerns about 'samples drawn from these agencies [*police, the DEA, courts, prisons*] are subject to well-known bias, even if the precise nature of the bias will vary with the specific agency involved' (Natarajan et al. 2015), CIPDRC officers in Vietnam did at least reveal the 'inside' stories about the organisational structure of TransNT cases. Therefore, by combining the examination of court documents with notetaking based on interviews with police investigators as well as on comments made during a police workshop, this study sheds light on the distinguishing characteristics of TransNT entities in Vietnam. In focusing on the facets of group size, the relative centrality of actors, flexible and adaptable networks, and traffickers' covert identities, the study lays groundwork for further research. Specifically, the structure of TransNT groups should be compared within the broader context of geographical regions, and the topographical, cultural, and institutional commonalities and differences among those regions.

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Compliance with ethical standards

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Ethical approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Appendix: Case study's extractions from Court Judgements

Table 1 Case Study 1 (CS1): N.V.H and his accomplices

Name Case	Offender Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Role	Related Actor(s)	Drug Type	Drug Quantity	Source Drug
N.V.H and his accomplices refers to Article 194, 230, 266, and 154 *Trial* Judgement on 11 January 2005 *Appeal* Judgement on 25 May 2005	1. N.V.H 2. N.V.D 3. T.V.L 4. P.V.H 5. H.A.T 6. T.A.T 7. N.D.H 8. N.X.H 9. N.D.N.A 10. N.H.N 11. T.X.T 12. H.V.L 13. C.M.T 14. N.V.H 15. L.N.A 16. H.N.H 17. P.K.Q 18. L.V.T 19. N.V.Hg 20. T.V.P 21. N.V.K 22. N.V.T 23. N.T.B 24. P.V.X 25. H.V.T	Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male Male	42 37 37 47 37 29 50 43 33 22 32 39 42 32 36 31 38 34 29 29 32 29 31 56 33	Vietnamese Vietnamese	- Leader - Leader - Leader - Leader - Drug courier and helper (re-packer) - Supplier - Broker and courier - Drug courier and re-packer - Drug courier and retailer - Courier - Drug courier and logistic - Drug courier - Drug courier - Drug courier - Drug courier and re-packer - Drug courier - Drug courier - Drug courier	1. T.V.H 2. P.H.V 3. P.V.D 4. N.V.T 5. T.V.Hg 6. H.D.T 7. H.T.T 8. V.T.N.B 9. T.T.H 10. N.V.C 11. L.N.H 12. V.X.T 13. N.T.T 14. V.A.T 15. P.V.C 16. N.D.H 17. N.H.L 18. L.V.A 19. D.S.S 20. N.K.H 21. X (Cambodian) 22. T.V.T (Cambodian and Vietnamese) 23. N.T.Th (Ms. Big Boss	- Heroin - ATS	- 2354 blocks,[1] equivalent with 823.90 g in which be purchased from Lao's areas with 2129 blocks and 225 blocks from Cambodia's borders - 1000 tablets of amphetamine - 103 tablets of WY, around 10,5077 g	- Lao PDR - Cambodia

Table 1 (continued)

Name Case	Offender Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Role	Related Actor(s)	Drug Type	Drug Quantity	Source Drug
	26. T.D.P	Male	36	Vietnamese	- Drug courier and abettor (re-packer)	24. T.T.H			
	27. N.V.Dg	Male	41	Vietnamese					
	28. H.T.A	Male	30	Vietnamese	- Drug courier and abettor (re-packer)				
	29. H.Y.P	Male	28	Cambodia	- Drug courier				
					- Drug courier				
					- Drug courier				
					- Intermediate and logistic courier				
					- Dealer retail				
					- Drug courier				
					- Abettor (Re-packer)				
					- Transformer				

[1] One block/cake/brick of heroin in Southeast Asia region, mostly at Myanmar, is weight around 350 g (Kramer, Jelsma, and Blickman 2009, 46–47). This estimation is also applied into all six case study's jurisdictions in this thesis

Table 2 Case study 2 (CS2): N.M.T and his accomplices

Name Case	Offender Name	Age	Gender	Nationality	Role	Related Actor(s)	Drug Type	Drug Quantity	Source Drug
N.M.T and her accomplices refers to Article 194, 154, 230, and 266, the 1999 CCV *Trial* Judgement on 25 November 2006 *Appeal* judgment on 6 April 2007	1. T.V.H 2. L.M.L 3. N.M.T 4. N.V.C 5. T.T.H 6. H.V.T 7. K.B.N 8. N.T.T	32 44 36 71 45 45 38 41	Male Male Male Male Female Male Female Male	Vietnamese Vietnamese + the U.K. Vietnamese Vietnamese + Laotian Vietnamese + the UK Vietnamese Vietnamese Vietnamese	- Executor (Drug courier) - Organizer and executor (Drug Supplier) - Drug supplier and broker -Instigator - Broker - Drug supplier and courier - Helper (Broker) - Helper (Drug courier)	1. P.T.T (Vietnamese): Leader (Ms. Big boss) 2. N.D.H (Vietnamese): Broker in Lao PDR 3. N.V.T: Helper 4. P.T.Th: Drug courier in P.T.T's network 5. N.T.M: Drug courier in P.T.T's network 6. L.H.V: Drug courier in P.T.T's network 7. N.V.T: Drug courier in P.T.T's network	- Heroin - ATS	- 970 blocks, equivalent with 339.843 g in which 199 blocks, the equivalence of 70.155 g is direct evidence - 5040 tablets of Methamphetamine, the equivalence of 462,5 g	Lao PDR

Table 3 Case study 3 (CS3)

Name Case	Offender Name	Age	Gender	Nationality	Role	Related Actor(s)	Drug Type	Drug Quantity	Source Drug
D.X.D and his accomplices refers to Article 194 *Trial* Judgement on 5 September 2012 *Appeal* Judgement on19 December 2012	D.X.D	53	Male	Vietnamese	Organizer and executor	1. N.T (Laotian) Co-organizer and supplier 2. D (Vietnamese) Wholesaler	Heroin	- 8 blocks, the equivalence of 2.808,46 g of heroin	Lao PDR

Table 4 Case study 4 (CS4): V.D.M and his accomplices

Name Case	Offender Name	Age	Gender	Nationality	Role	Related Actor(s)	Drug Type	Drug Quantity	Source Drug
V.D.M and his accomplices refer to Article 194 *Trial* Judgement on 13 December 2013 *Appeal* Judgement on 31 July 2014	1. V.D.M 2. T.T.H 3. N.T.H 4. N.H.T 5. N.T.N 6. N.T.C	48 37 36 32 36 42	Male Female Female Female Female Female	Vietnamese Vietnamese Vietnamese Vietnamese Vietnamese Vietnamese	- Organizer and executor - Executor and helper - Executor and helper - Helpers (Courier) - Helpers (Courier) - Helpers (broker)	1. P.T.K (Vietnamese): Broker and Supplier 2. N.C.H (Vietnamese): Principal as Mr. Big Boss 3. N.T.T.C (N.C.H's wife):"potential" money launder 4. N.T.H (V.D.M's wife):"potential" money launder 5. N.V.L (V.D.M's relatives): "potential" money launder 6. X.D (Laotian) Supplier 7. M.B.D (Vietnamese) Demand 8. - S (Vietnamese): Dealer retail	Heroin	- 255 blocks, equivalent with 77.641,5 g in which 70 blocks, the equivalence of 24.155 g is direct evidence	Lao PDR

Table 5 Case study 5 (CS5): D.T.C and her accomplices

Name Case	Offender Name	Age	Gender	Nationality	Role	Related Actor(s)	Drug Type	Drug Quantity	Source Drug
D.T.C and her accomplices refer to Article 194 *Trial* Judgement on 14 January 2014 *Appeal* Judgement on July 2014	1. D.T.C 2. N.T.C 3. T.B.H 4. N.T.H 5. N.T.X 6. L.T.H 7. N.T.N	44 45 36 34 50 39 52	Female Female Male Male Female Female Female	Vietnamese Vietnamese Vietnamese Vietnamese Vietnamese Vietnamese Vietnamese	- Organizer and executor - Organizer and executor - Drug courier and helper - Broker - Organizer for delivering - Retail dealer - Organizer for transporting and trading	1. B (Chinese) Demand 2. C (Vietnamese): Retail dealer 3. S.L (Laotian): Big boss 4. K.T (Laotian): S.L's disciple 5. X.X.L (Laotian) 6. S.L's disciple 7. B.H.H (Vietnamese) 8. L.A.H (Vietnamese) 9. L.A.T (Vietnamese)	- Heroin - Opium	- 132 blocks, the equivalence of 45.795,27 g in which 31 blocks, equivalent with 10.818,97 g is direct evidence - 1,97 g of opium	Lao PDR

Table 6 Case study 6 (CS6): N.T.T and his accomplices

Name Case	Offender Name	Age	Gender	Nationality	Role	Related Actor(s)	Drug Type	Drug Quantity	Source Drug
N.T.T and his accomplices refers to Article 194 *Trial* Judgement: 28 August 2013 *Appeal* Judgement: 6 December 2013	1. N.T.T 2. T.V.T 3. P.T.L 4. B.N.T 5. X.N.C 6. N.X 7. T.V.L 8. T.T.H	41 30 38 34 33 23 24 28	Male Male Female Male Male Male Male Female	Vietnamese Vietnamese Vietnamese Vietnamese Laotian Laotian Vietnamese Vietnamese	- Organizer - Executor - Helper - Helper - Drug courier - Drug courier - Helper (concealing offences) - Helper (Failing to denounce offences)	1. H.N.C (Laotian) Supplier 2. T.H (Chinese) Demand	- Heroin - ATS	- 208 blocks, the equivalence of 72.864,5 g in which 58 blocks, the equivalence of 20.318 g is direct evidence - 321 tablets, the equivalence of 30 g	Lao PDR

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