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## **Jamaica in the Grey Zone – Responding to the Hybrid Threat of Organized Crime**

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**Solo Flight**

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**JAMAICA IN THE GREY ZONE – RESPONDING TO THE HYBRID THREAT  
OF ORGANIZED CRIME**

By Major Andrew Lamb

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## **JAMAICA IN THE GREY ZONE: RESPONDING TO THE HYBRID THREAT OF ORGANIZED CRIME**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Consider for a moment a warm summer day in the tropics, where the cool breeze and thumping bass of reggae music belie the fact that arms and drug trafficking, computer hacking, human trafficking, money laundering, extortion, and murder are actively afoot - your bellman is a notorious contract killer, your waitress is married to a drug trafficker, and the party boat you're booked on for tomorrow just collected a shipment of assault rifles and grenade launchers and delivered 200 kilos of cocaine. This may sound like the plot from a B-grade movie, but in idyllic vacation destinations like Jamaica thanks to organized crime, this is often the reality.

Organized crime, the grey zone in which it operates and the attendant hybrid threats have a fertile breeding ground in small island developing states like Jamaica. Everyone everywhere is now a potential target for both state and non-state actors who has an ulterior motive. While Jamaica will likely never be involved in the presence of hybrid threats cannot be ignored. Are state agencies and the security forces able to respond to hybrid threats posed by organized crime groups operating in the country?

This paper will demonstrate that organized crime should be considered a hybrid threat and occurs in the grey zone; it will identify the Jamaican agencies responsible to detect, respond to, or deter these broad organized crime/hybrid threats which could significantly affect Jamaica's security, and sovereignty. Finally, the paper will briefly outline some considerations to improve Jamaica's (military) response capability. Addressing all permutations of organized crime; all hybrid threats or the applicable responses to counter these is outside the scope of this paper, as are legislative matters beyond cursory mention.

### **JAMAICA – A SNAPSHOT**

Jamaica is a developing island state with a population of 2.7 million people has low economic growth, high debt, and even higher crime. A snapshot of Jamaica's crime landscape will show 1301 killings in 2020 – this is the highest homicide rate in the region 46.5 per 10000.<sup>1</sup> There over 200,000 illegal firearms, more than 300 criminal gangs - 66 of which are classified as second-generation gangs, focussed primarily on organized crime. Despite having about 450 (1.5 times the global average) police officers per 100000 population), the typical police officer's workload is 40 times that of his counterpart in the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

Jamaica's (organized) crime problem, runs the gamut from "highly organized, transnational groups to local gangs defending small patches of turf and engaging in opportunistic crime"<sup>3</sup> - of particular concern are those criminal activities including

<sup>1</sup> (Asmann and Jones, Insight Crime: 2020 Homicide Round up 2021)

<sup>2</sup> (Asmann, Jamaica Bets on Security Overhaul to Stem Bloodshed, Improve Anti-Crime Fight 2021)

<sup>3</sup> (Harriot and Jones 2016)

weapons and drug trafficking and cybercrimes including lottery scamming. Perhaps the most chilling evidence of the impact organized crime can have on a developing country like Jamaica occurred in 2010; when following an extradition request from the United States of America for a Jamaican gang-leader, Christopher ‘Dudus’ Coke, reputed head of Jamaica’s most feared export, the Shower Posse, which still operates locally and in the United States of America and Canada, Jamaica was brought to its knees and required intervention by the combined security and defence forces supported by elements of the United States military and law enforcement.

The standoff mounted by Coke loyalists and other criminals imported from gangs across the island, held Jamaican security forces at bay and many citizens hostage for days – the police force was overwhelmed. The criminals erected meters high barricades across several streets, destroyed an entire police station and several police vehicles, and engaged in prolonged gun battles with the security forces. Dudus initially escaped the resultant incursion by the security forces which included the use of mortars, armored tractors, armored personnel carriers, air and maritime assets, specialist search teams, and explosive ordinance disposal personnel - over 70 persons were killed in the gunfights and more than 500 were arrested. The Tivoli incident could have easily occurred in any of several other communities across the island.

## **ORGANIZED CRIME, HYBRID THREATS, AND THE GREY ZONE**

Throughout this paper, the terms organized crime, hybrid warfare, hybrid threats, and grey zone will be used; therefore before we proceed, it is important to understand these. The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Convention) provides a globally accepted framework to treat the threat of organized crime, it interestingly does not define organized crime or specifically lists the crimes that form such an offence; the convention focuses on the prevention and combatting of transnational organized crime and not the ever-changing criminal activities that may be so classified. The convention however defines an "organized criminal group as meeting the following four criteria: a group of three or more persons that were not randomly formed; existing for a period of time; acting in concert with the aim of committing at least one serious crime punishable by at least four years of incarceration; in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefits."<sup>4</sup>

Organized crime groups are typically engaged in providing illicit services, illicit goods, or disrupting legitimate business or government activities. The UNODC posits this definition for organized crime “Organized crime is a continuing criminal enterprise that rationally works to profit from illicit activities that are often in great public demand. Its continuing existence is maintained through the corruption of public officials and the use of intimidation, threats or force to protect its operations.”<sup>5</sup> Some organized criminal activities in Jamaica include narcotrafficking and drug-related crime, arms trafficking, lottery

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<sup>4</sup> (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2010)

<sup>5</sup> (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2018)

scamming, credit card fraud and associated financial crimes, kidnapping, extortion, burglary, armed robbery, murder, and other violent crimes.<sup>6</sup>

Though often used interchangeably, hybrid warfare, hybrid threats, and the grey zone are distinctly different. Monaghan in *Countering Hybrid Warfare* succinctly makes the distinctions – “Hybrid warfare describes a change in the character of warfare (that is, against violent adversaries during armed conflict), while hybrid threats emanate from nonviolent revisionist grand strategy that seeks gains while avoiding reprisal through exploiting the gray zone between peace and war.”<sup>78</sup> Hybrid threats and hybrid warfare are part of a continuum of conflict that will challenge the government’s ability to secure or defend its interests. While both concepts involve the government’s abilities to offer protection, hybrid threats focus on the populace while warfare focuses on the military “hybrid threats mainly target the will of the people and the decision making ability of the government, whereas hybrid warfare mainly targets the effectiveness of the military to conduct successful operations.”<sup>9</sup>

Both hybrid threats and hybrid warfare can be combined, but in the context of organized crime, this is extremely unlikely even in the context where organized crime is supported by a state actor. Of greater concern to this paper is violence resulting from organized crime in the grey zone and how Jamaica could counter and prevent this using the limited resources of the state.

Gray (grey) zones are an ambiguous space between war and peace where *conflict* takes place. It allows hostile actors to make gains without engaging in overt fighting and often allows them deniability. Definitions of gray zone are often inconsistent, but by focusing on the activities in the gray zone over the intent of the space, Hoffman offers the following definition of gray zone tactics “those covert or illegal activities of non-traditional statecraft that are below the threshold of armed organized violence; including disruption of order, political subversion of government or non-governmental organizations, psychological operations, abuse of legal processes, and financial corruption as part of an integrated design to achieve strategic advantage.”<sup>10</sup> This definition covers several intents or results of organized crime and so allows it to be included as a grey zone activity.

The figure below shows how hybrid threats and the grey zone are situated along a continuum of conflict.

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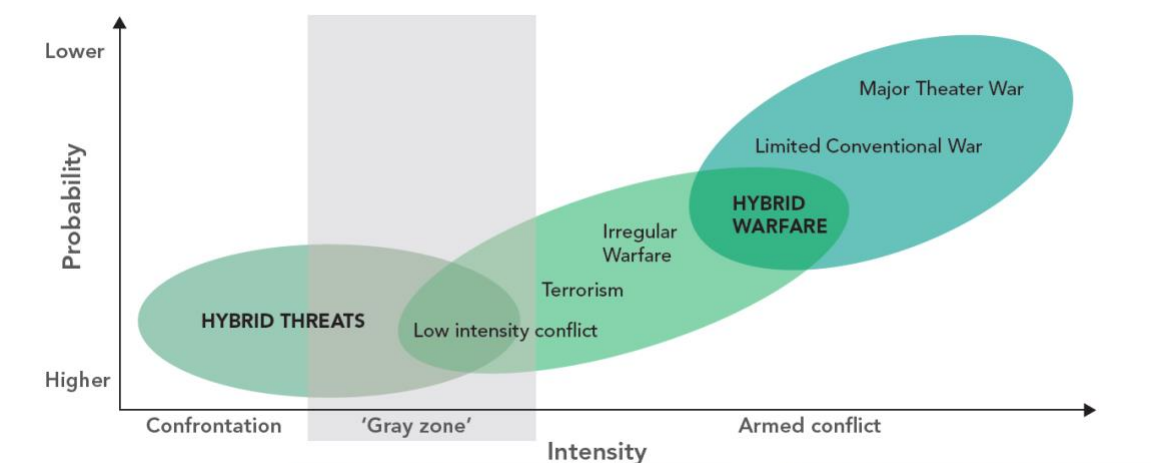
<sup>6</sup> (UK Home Office 2019)

<sup>7</sup> (Harriot and Jones 2016)

<sup>8</sup> (Monaghan 2019)

<sup>9</sup> (Monaghan 2019)

<sup>10</sup> (Hoffman 2018)



**Figure 1 - Hybrid Threats and Hybrid Warfare shown as a Continuum of Conflict<sup>11</sup>**

In several respects, organized crime is similar in nature and intent to hybrid warfare. Both seek to operate from the shadows, both create counter cultures, and have sophisticated organizational structures which make identifying key players and their real intent extremely difficult. There are links for example between terrorism, a form of hybrid warfare, and organized crime where despite the differing intents (philosophical change versus profit) both may pull from the same social groups for members, and work together out of necessity for financing – “terrorism is unlikely to be able to manifest itself without a dependency...on some form of organised crime.”<sup>12</sup>

The link between terrorists and organized crime and the attendant need to decisively address this was the subject of discussion at the United Nations (UN) Security Council in August 2020, when concerns were raised by the head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime about the increasing links between organized criminal groups and terrorist groups. These links will most likely increase and prevent an even bigger threat.

In few instances, organized crime poses a hybrid threat which if left unchallenged may transition to hybrid warfare as evidenced in the Mexican drug wars or those previously waged by the FARC in Columbia. Most conflict with organized crime will however see these organized criminal organizations posing a hybrid threat and subtly or overtly challenging legitimate governments. Countering this hybrid threat requires the three prongs again posited by Monaghan – policy, strategy, and capability. Jamaica isn’t short of laws or recommendations for laws to bolster the fight against organized crime. Jamaica is a signatory to among other international conventions and treaties the “Palermo Convention” on Organized Crime. Significantly, and incorporating the strategy pinnacle,

<sup>11</sup> (Monaghan 2019)

<sup>12</sup> (Gallagher 2019)

Jamaica has several well-documented, bipartisan plans that address even in passing the need to counter criminality including threats posed by organized crime.

The strategy involves detection, deterrence, and response to the threat while capabilities speak to executing those operations to effect the strategy. This means the security forces must develop and maintain the ways and means to counter the threat posed by organized crime. Jamaica's MNS and the JDF in contemplating the fight against organized crime must consider the JDF's role in "countering hybrid threats must be balanced against the need to protect their "core business": being prepared to fight and win conventional conflicts."<sup>13</sup> This is particularly important in the context of limited resources and competing demands.

To better ground the remainder of this paper, it is important to situate organized crime in Jamaica and to show why it should be considered a hybrid threat. "Large-scale organized criminal groups engage in more sophisticated and complex international illegal operations alongside their domestic illicit activities... These major criminal groups maintain some autonomy vis-à-vis their international criminal partners,"<sup>14</sup> Jamaican organized criminal groups are engaged in crimes ranging from extortion to arms and drug trafficking to large scale fraud. Both major political parties the Jamaica Labour Party and the opposition People's National Party have supported and benefited from supporting organized crime groups in the past and several groups still have links to the parties.

## **JAMAICA'S SECURITY ARCHITECTURE AND ORGANIZED CRIME-FIGHTING CAPABILITIES**

There is no single response to the threat posed by organized crime or their operations no matter how disruptive. The major challenge of the Jamaican government is how to contain organized crime/criminal groups; prevent their merger or exploitation by terrorist groups which would then embed terrorists and terrorism into the Jamaican landscape. Governments will need to engage their full range of power (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic) to kill the monster of organized crime. Jamaica is no different and will need to use both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches to handle this threat. The country has several tools to tackle the threat holistically and effectively including the country's security forces and specialized agencies.

Jamaica's security apparatus including responsibilities national defence and security operations are largely but not exclusively housed under the Ministry of National Security (MNS) – these include the Jamaica Constabulary Force – responsible for maintenance of law and order, and the Jamaica Defence Force, responsible for defence against external threats. The MNS is primarily concerned with setting policy and providing the resources to ensure the Jamaican society remains safe.

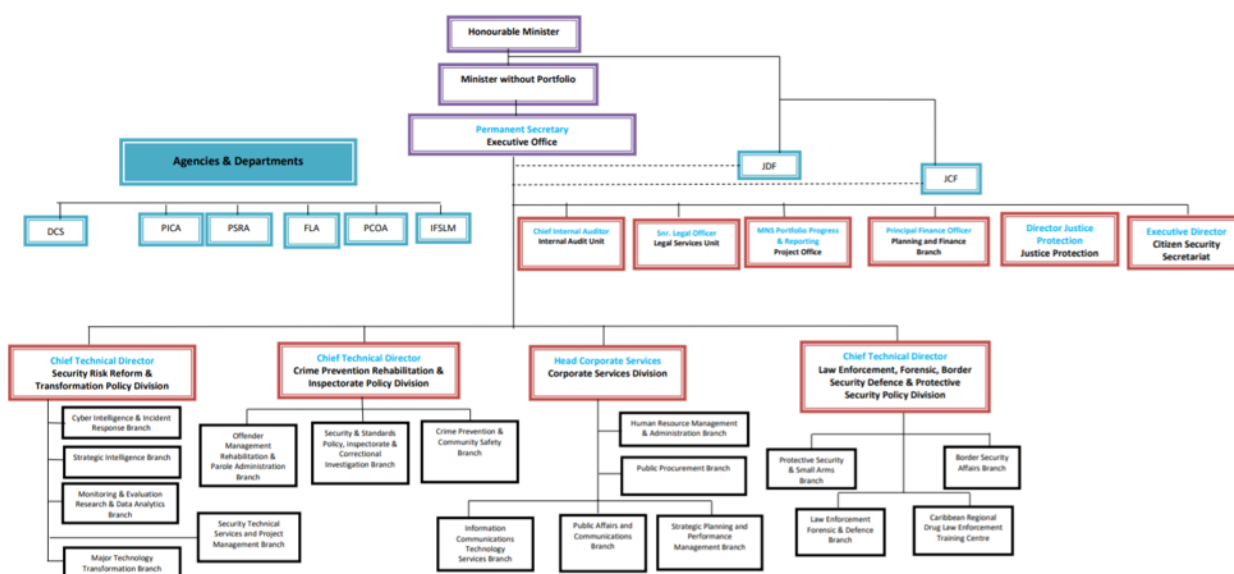
The MNS comprises four divisions and six Agencies and Departments; three divisions are directly responsible for security operations and relevant policy direction. The Security Risk Reform and Transformation policy division houses Cyber Intelligence

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<sup>13</sup> (Monaghan 2019)

<sup>14</sup> (Arias 2013)

and Incident Response Branch, Strategic Intelligence Branch, and the Security Technical Services and Project Management Branch among others. The Crime Prevention Rehabilitation and Inspectorate Policy Division includes Offender Management, Security and Standards Policy, and the Crime Prevention and Community Safety Branch. The Law Enforcement, Forensic, Border Security Defence & Protective Security Policy Division houses the Protective Security and Small Arms Branch, Border Security Affairs Branch and the Law Enforcement Forensics and Defence Branch.



**Figure 2 - Ministry of National Security Organization Structure<sup>15</sup>**

The Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) is the country's police force - its responsibilities include the maintenance of law and order, protection of life and property, and prevention and detection of crime, and enforcing all of Jamaica's laws. The force has over 11,000 members covering four portfolios, five (geographical) areas, and 19 (operational) divisions. Of particular importance to countering the threat of organized crime is the Counter-Terrorism and Organised Crime (C-TOC) Branch – an eight-unit formation tasked specifically to “combat terrorism and organized crime in all forms”<sup>16</sup>

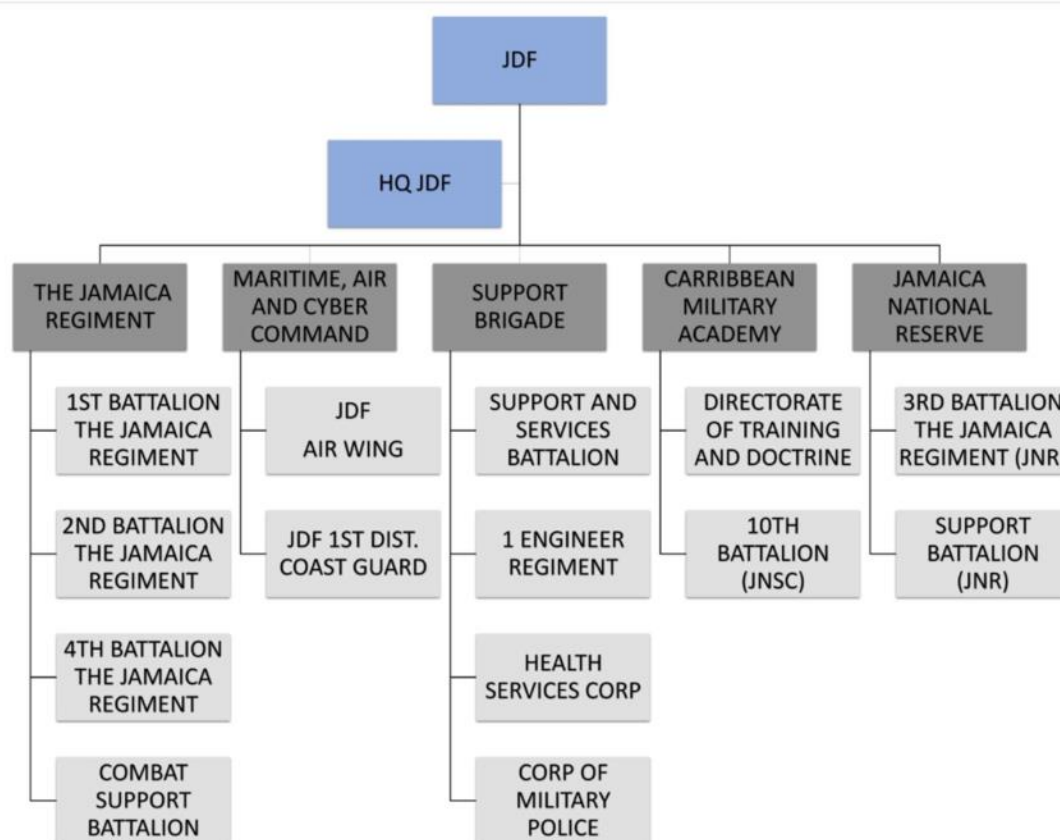
<sup>15</sup> (Ministry of National Security 2020)

<sup>16</sup> (Jamaica Constabulary Force 2017)





Academy (CMA) – this is the academic and training hub of the force; home to the Jamaica National Service Corps, several schools, and Centers of Excellence delivering world-class training to regional and international students. The reserve force – Jamaica National Reserve (JNR), covers multiple domains, and consists (on paper) of three infantry and a support battalion. The reserve force is currently understrength (operating well below 50% of its capacity) and two infantry battalions are silent.



**Figure 4 - Organization of the JDF<sup>21</sup>**

The Financial Investigations Division (FID) of the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service is another key player against organized crime. The FID's objectives include investigating money laundering and financial crimes, deterring and prosecuting these offenses, and removing the profit from crime by seizing and forfeiting unlawfully obtained assets. The FID houses Jamaica's Financial Intelligence Unit and Financial Investigations Team; the latter comprises civilian forensic examiners and specially vetted and trained police investigators. Investigations typically involve proceeds from drug trafficking, lottery scamming, corruption, and other illicit activities including crimes committed offshore.

<sup>21</sup> (Jamaica Defence Force 2019)



**Figure 5 - Organization Chart - Financial Investigation Division<sup>22</sup>**

Cybercrime is increasingly being employed by organized crime and other players in the grey zone, and there is an increasing emergence of organized cybercrime groups focused on both destabilization and profit. Since January 2016, Jamaica has officially established a cybersecurity capability for government-owned/operated cyber systems through its Cyber Incident Response Team (JA-CIRT).<sup>23</sup> JA-CIRT's functions are largely administrative (developing policies, strategy, standards, legislation, and training) but include incident response and management, threat assessment and management, and the conduct of risk assessments and audits of government-based systems.<sup>24</sup>

The final agency being included is the Jamaica Customs Agency's Contraband Enforcement Team (CET). This group of highly trained, armed customs officers are a specialized unit within Customs who work with local and international law enforcement agencies and to deter, detect and prosecute breaches of Customs and related laws, through "seizures of contraband such as narcotic drugs, firearm and ammunition."<sup>25</sup> CET has worked with all the other local security entities to good effect in the past and can directly target organized crime by directly deterring, displacing, and preventing the entry of contraband into the country. The agency however is often overlooked and remains underutilized – likely because of the revenue collection concerns of the Jamaica Customs Agency.

## CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

So far the paper has discussed the challenge of organized crime, situated it as a pertinent threat operating in the grey zone, and identified the key government entities which can impact the threat. The JDF especially needs to be better utilized against organized crime in the grey zone. Counternetwork<sup>26</sup> a 2017 RAND report offers instructive guidance that should be adopted by the MNS and considered by the JDF in particular.

<sup>22</sup> (Financial Investigations Division 2016)

<sup>23</sup> (Gunn 2016)

<sup>24</sup> (Government of Jamaica 2018)

<sup>25</sup> (Jamaica Customs Agency 2017-2019)

<sup>26</sup> (Rabasa, et al. 2017)

A key finding of the RAND report is the fact that “Countering transnational criminal networks requires identifying the critical nodes in the criminal organizations and determining where operations can achieve the greatest effect.”<sup>27</sup> Organized crime has a destabilizing effect that can usurp a nation’s ability to function. Organized crime and nonstate actors if left unchecked will fill societal voids and as demonstrated by the Shower posse in 2010 can fill the security and political void they create through “the gradual erosion of state power, legitimacy, and capacity.” The RAND report also “Combating transnational criminal organizations is an endeavor in which the Army could help develop interagency and multinational strategies to more effectively counter these organizations and then assist with planning to implement those strategies.”<sup>28</sup>

In applying the recommendations of the Counternetwork<sup>29</sup> report along with essential points made in Countering Hybrid Warfare,<sup>30</sup> the MNS should consider the policy implications including the need for new or improved laws, the strategy and capabilities need to attack the threat posed by organized crime, and to prevent it taking root in the grey zone, especially considering the potential nexus between organized crime and terrorism and the impact this would have on Jamaica. Based on the disparate nature of the MDA involved in the fight against organized crime there is a need to better coordinate the various players engaged in the fight and provide the necessary policy guidance to ensure an effective fight against transnational organized crime and the attendant hybrid threats.

The JDF’s role in countering organized crime should be clarified, and possibly expanded to take advantage of the increased defence force. The JDF can be used to better target players in organized crime through both kinetic and non-kinetic means. While the JDF is more suited to deliver kinetic effects, its resources can also be used to deliver or support those non-kinetic effects and demonstrate their resolve to protect the state. Kinetic targeting is “the targeted application of military force ... against opposing forces or objects with (primarily) lethal effects,” while, “non-kinetic targeting describes “the targeted application of (other military and non-military) capabilities...to generate (additional) non-kinetic effects in the non-physical and physical domains.”<sup>31</sup>

Despite reservations about using the military to do crimefighting, the JDF should be utilized even more widely against organized crime. Jamaica should also seriously consider the limited constabularization<sup>32</sup> of some military units to better allow them to support the fight against organized crime. This has been done to good effect in other countries; one example, the Italian Carabinieri is tasked with both national defense and the investigation of serious crimes including the apprehension of dangerous mafia dons,

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<sup>27</sup> (Rabasa, et al. 2017)

<sup>28</sup> (Rabasa, et al. 2017)

<sup>29</sup>

<sup>30</sup> (Monaghan 2019)

<sup>31</sup> (Duchaine 2016)

<sup>32</sup> (Flores-Macias and Zarkin 2019)

has an interesting approach involving “military duties and advanced weapons skills, but rare use of weapons.”<sup>33</sup>

The MNS needs to also develop a common playbook to guide how these organized criminal networks are targeted. Better utilization of all the parties will allow for greater collaboration in the crime fight and provide some distinction between community policing and the hardcore fight against the hybrid threat posed by organized crime. More specifically, in the absence of a defined external state aggressor, the JDF should be more focussed on deploying its resources against the clear, present, and increasing danger posed by organized crime, working with other MDAs to disrupt overt (criminal) activities, and more importantly those in the grey zone.

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<sup>33</sup> (Braw 2020)

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