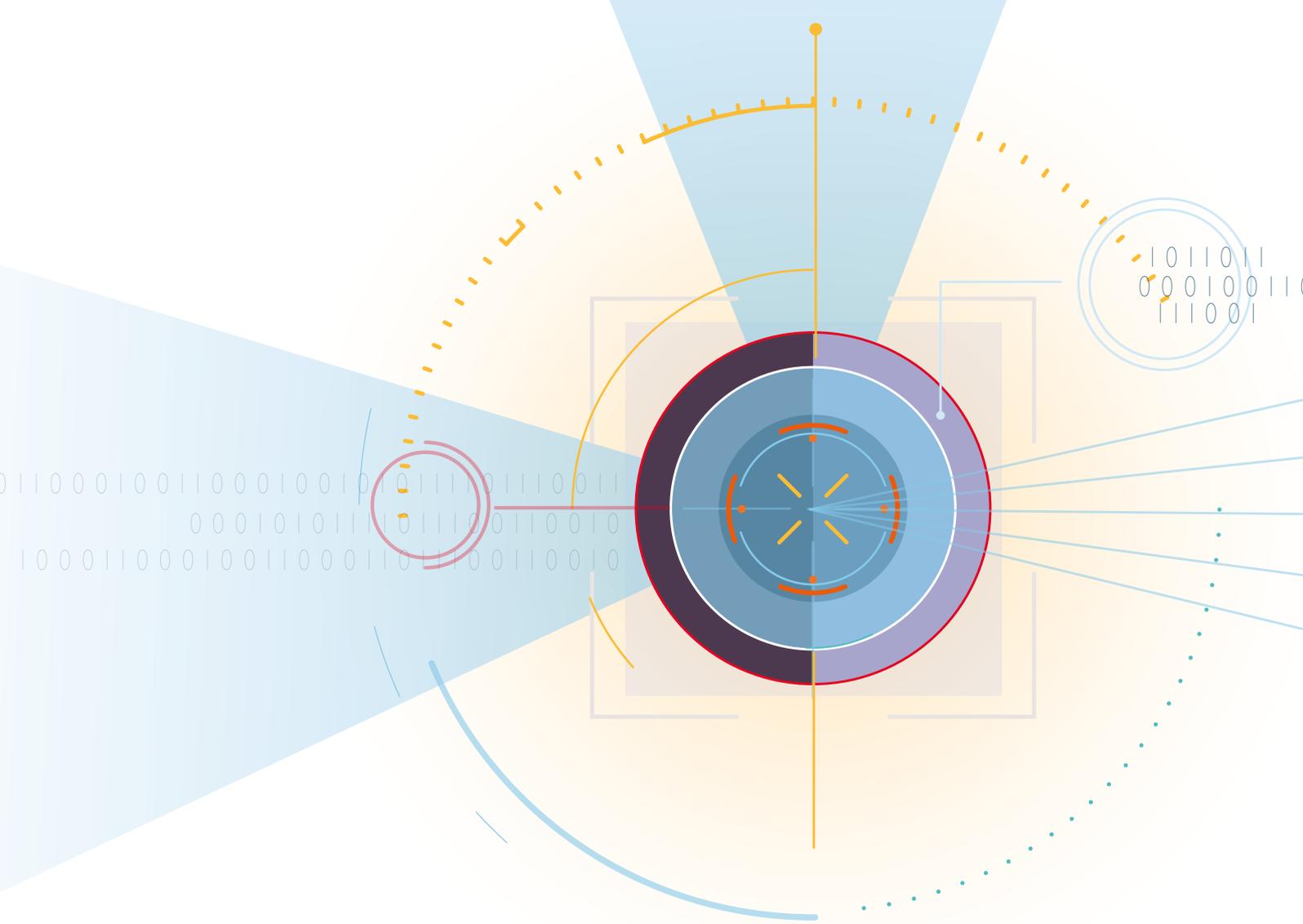


Fortifying the fraud fightback

# Transnational criminality during Covid-19

INSURANCE INSIGHTS



# Fast and fraudulent

In a recent Intelligence Download podcast, Dennis Toomey, our Global Director for Counter Fraud and Analytics, spoke to Renato Schipani, Criminal Intelligence Officer from INTERPOL. They discussed transnational organised crime and how fraudsters are taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic. This article is a summary of their podcast conversation.



[Listen to the podcast](#)

Renato worked as an Italian state police officer for 28 years and was previously the President of the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators. He moved to INTERPOL in 2008 where his daily work involves leading organised and emerging crime investigations. INTERPOL enables police in 194 member countries to fight international crime together, by facilitating secure access to police data and offering a range of technical and operational support.

Understandably, the human and economic impact of the pandemic has hit the headlines over the last few months. In this 'fast and fraudulent' podcast episode, Dennis and Renato discuss how the flourishing world of transnational criminality threatens to extend the suffering resulting from COVID-19.

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## Criminal activity is spreading as fast as the pandemic

Sadly, organised criminal groups are extremely quick to adapt to any new situation – no matter how grave it may be. And they've moved rapidly to exploit the global COVID-19 pandemic. As Renato explains in the podcast: "They [organised criminal groups] try to exploit the situation that COVID-19 has left. There has been an increase in the sale of counterfeit goods such as masks and hand sanitizer, for example."

With borders closed and as movement is more closely monitored, much of this activity is being done online. The Dark Web plays a crucial role in allowing criminals to carry out these schemes remotely. Dennis and Renato point out how the pandemic has created an opportunity for criminal groups to target weak or desperate people by offering loan sharking services via the internet.

Examples like this and the PPE scam above are a timely reminder to consumers to make sure they understand exactly where their products and services are coming from.

## Vehicle crime – a global challenge

During the podcast, Dennis and Renato focus on vehicle crime – the umbrella term that covers the theft and trafficking of vehicles and the illicit trade in spare parts.

Renato says: “In my daily work I lead specific projects within the organised and emerging crime unit, where a lot of our time is dedicated to fighting vehicle crime on a global level.”

Vehicle crime has direct links to broader organised crime. For example, illegal drugs are often paid for with stolen vehicles and victims of human trafficking are regularly discovered in stolen vehicles.

INTERPOL runs an international database of stolen vehicles. In 2018, there were 143,000 vehicles reported stolen worldwide. In the podcast, Renato highlights the challenges of tackling vehicle crime: “Criminal groups exploit the gaps in export procedures very, very well. They get a luxury vehicle on finance or rental then export it out of the country.”

## Cross-border corruption

Throughout the pandemic, with many people struggling to fulfil their lease or loan contracts as the economic crisis takes hold, vulnerable customers are encouraged to get rid of their cars through criminal gangs. Procuring the vehicles is one part of the process – and a relatively simple step. But criminals then need to distribute them to be sold on, stripped for parts or enable the vehicles to be used to move illegal drugs or arms.

So, how do criminals get these vehicles across borders? Renato explains: “Corruption unfortunately is one of the issues. It’s a global challenge. No region in the world is spared from corruption, although it takes different forms.”

INTERPOL has an anti-corruption unit that is working hard to educate people and put a stop to the far-reaching effects of corruption.

## Fortifying the fraud fightback

Technology plays a crucial role in combating fraud. By understanding the threat landscape, we can develop and implement the right technology solutions to tackle fraud.

Solutions range from machine learning – to help uncover suspicious behaviour and process data volumes at scale – through to advanced analytics, which offer the capability to track user behaviour and highlight suspect activity.

## Recommended content:



**[LISTEN]** to the podcast with INTERPOL: 'fast and fraudulent'



**[HEAR]** from the IFB and ISM on how insurers can evolve in the current pandemic



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## Meet the experts:



### **Dennis Toomey, Global Director for Counter Fraud and Analytics**

Dennis brings nearly three decades of experience to BAE Systems' Insurance team. A Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE), Dennis has held senior positions at SAS, Accenture, Liberty Mutual and LexisNexis. He holds an MBA in Leadership from Franklin Pierce University. The key challenge Dennis currently helps insurers address is the need to detect more fraud, and do so faster with less challenges. With 29 years of tackling insurance fraud, he's keenly aware the phenomenon is not a victimless crime.



### **Renato Schipani, Criminal Intelligence Officer, Interpol**

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