

# JAOC INTELLIGENCE DOSSIER

## MIGRANT SMUGGLING NETWORKS

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Over 90% of irregular migrants entering the EU use smuggling services at some point in their journey.
- In 2015, annual turnover reached USD 5–6 billion; by 2025, Channel operations alone generated ~€130 million.
- Networks show rising polycriminality: smuggling overlaps with human trafficking, drugs, arms, money laundering, and extortion.
- Migrants face extreme risks: 162+ deaths in the Channel since 2018, and many suffer abuse or exploitation.
- 2025 saw 41,472 arrivals via 670 boats to the UK; average passengers per boat rose from 13 (2020) to 62 (2025).

## 2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & KEY FIGURES

### 2.1 Core Model

Operate as flexible enterprise networks, not rigid hierarchies: cells coordinate for specific routes or services.

Two main service tiers: full "travel agency" packages, or fragmented hop-on/hop-off segments.

Leadership often sits outside transit zones; day-to-day run by local facilitators.

### 2.2 Named Networks & Leaders

| Network / Leader                             | Region / Role         | Status                                                |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Kazawi Gang (Yassine Al Maghribi Al-Kasaoui) | Western Med / Morocco | UK-sanctioned 2025; leads large-scale smuggling       |
| Bakhtiar / Mirkhan Rasoul                    | Channel / France      | "Boss" of northern France routes; Rasoul jailed 2025  |
| Jabal, Aram, Al-Millah                       | Channel / France      | Lead violent Iraqi-Kurdish gang exposed by BBC        |
| Dilshad Shamo & Ali Khdir                    | UK / International    | Ran from Wales car wash; jailed 19 years each 2026    |
| Krasniqi Network (Burim Krasniqi)            | Balkans / Documents   | Produced false IDs for 50+ countries; sanctioned 2025 |
| Algerian Bouriche / Benaniba Gang            | France / UK           | Crammed migrants into lorries; convicted 2025         |

### 2.3 Operational Layers

- Strategic:** Syndicates, militias, or crime groups controlling routes/finance
- Tactical:** Brokers, logistics, transport crews
- Grassroots:** Local guides, safe-house keepers, often from marginalized communities



## 2.4 Expanded Network Profiles

The following profiles represent expanded intelligence on identified networks and key figures. Text is colour-coded per JAOC standard: BLUE denotes operational/network intelligence; RED denotes policy, funding and legal intelligence.

### Kazawi Gang (Yassine Al Maghribi Al-Kasaoui)

The Kazawi Gang is a UK-sanctioned people-smuggling network controlling routes from North Africa into the EU. The gang is known to deal out harsh punishments to migrants unable to pay. Its boss, Yassine Al Maghribi Al-Kasaoui, was designated under the UK's Global Irregular Migration Sanctions Regulations on 23 July 2025, subjecting the network to asset freezes. The gang operates alongside other violent Balkan networks such as the Tetwani Gang.



Figure 1: Yassine Al Maghribi Al-Kasaoui — Balkan-based smuggler sanctioned by UK (Source: Balkan Insight)

### Mirkhan Rasoul (Channel / Northern France)

Mirkhan Rasoul, a 26-year-old Iraqi national, was sentenced to 15 years in November 2024 as the leader of a Channel smuggling network that operated between 2020 and 2022. Rasoul coordinated the gang's actions from his French prison cell after previous convictions. The network loaded boats "up to 15 times their theoretical capacity." French, German, Belgian, Dutch and British authorities jointly seized 1,200 life jackets, nearly 150 inflatable boats and 50 boat engines during the operation.



Figure 2: Channel smuggling network leaders — including Mirkhan Rasoul (Source: The Telegraph)

### Jabal, Aram & Al-Millah (Iraqi-Kurdish Channel Gang)

A BBC undercover investigation exposed this violent Iraqi-Kurdish gang as one of perhaps four now managing crossings and specific launch areas in northern France. The three leaders are:

**Jabal** — controlled logistics from Belgium and France; tracked to a Luxembourg reception centre in June 2024 but disappeared after confrontation.

**Aram** — drummed up customers, believed to be based in Iraq.

**Al-Millah** ("The Chief") — ran financial operations and was described by sources as ordering henchmen to be tied to trees and beaten. The gang changed names multiple times (The Mountain → Ghali Ghali → al-Millah → Kaka) to evade authorities. Associates were filmed collecting cash payments at Birmingham New Street Station in the UK.

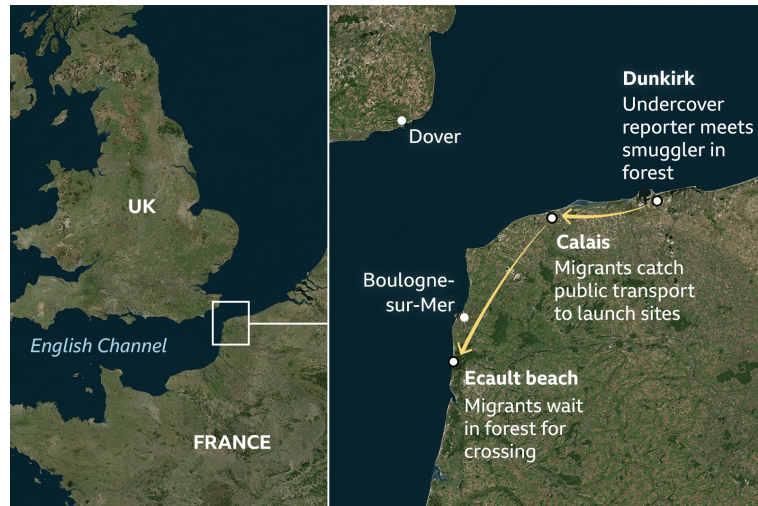


Figure 3: Channel crossing routes — BBC undercover investigation mapping (Source: BBC News)



Figure 4: Aerial view of migrant encampment in northern France (Source: BBC News)

### Dilshad Shamo & Ali Khdir (Wales Car Wash Network)

British citizens Dilshad Shamo (43) and Ali Khdir (42) ran the Fast Track Car Wash in Caerphilly, South Wales, as a front for a "sophisticated" smuggling operation. Over just six months of NCA surveillance, they facilitated the trafficking of at least 409 people (potentially 630+) into Europe using lorries, ferries, privately hired yachts and even planes. They used encrypted messaging and social media to advertise, posting glitzy videos of European destinations. Both were jailed for 19 years each in April 2026.



Figure 5: Dilshad Shamo (left) and Ali Khdir (right) — NCA mugshots, jailed 19 years each (Source: BBC News)



Figure 6: Fast Track Hand Car Wash, Caerphilly — the smuggling front operation (Source: BBC News)

### Krasniqi Network (Burim Krasniqi)

The Krasniqi Network operated a sophisticated forgery laboratory in Kosovo with equipment to produce false or fraudulently altered passports, ID cards and driving licences for over 50 countries including the UK. Leader Burim Krasniqi (DOB: 23/04/1983) was sanctioned by the UK on 22 October 2025. Other key members sanctioned include Arif Krasniqi (intermediary/facilitator), Valon Krasniqi (document producer), Flamur Krasniqi, Granit Avdyli (lab worker/advertiser), Shkembim Ermellahu, Endrit Ermellahu, Nexhmue Selmani (organised premises/equipment), Sami Duriqi and Almir Jahovic.



**Balkan-based criminal groups and gang leaders****Krasniqi network**

A Kosovo-based organised crime group responsible for producing false documents and supplying them to criminal gangs. The group created false passports, IDs and driving licenses for over 50 countries, including the UK, using a sophisticated forgery laboratory. These include:

- Burim Krasniqi, the leader of the Krasniqi network.
- Arif Krasniqi, an intermediary of the group who sourced clients for their services.
- Flamur Krasniqi, a member of the group found in possession of forged documents.
- Valon Krasniqi, involved in the production of forged documents.
- Sami Duriqi, involved in the production of forged documents.
- Granit Avdyli, involved in the production of documents and the advertising of the group's services.
- Nexhmije Selmani, provided premises used by the group for document forgery and was involved with sourcing forgery equipment.
- Endrit Ermellahu, involved in the production of forged documents.
- Shkembim Ermellahu, a member of the group found in possession of forged documents.

Figure 7: UK sanctions listing — Krasniqi Network members and roles (Source: KOHA.net)

**Algerian Bouriche / Benaniba Gang**

This 12-member Algerian-led ring brought North African migrants into the UK on tourist visas, then crammed them into lorry trailers (including refrigerated units) to smuggle them to France via Dover, charging up to £1,200 per person. Ringleader Azize Benaniba (41) was jailed for 12 years and 11 months in July 2025. Facilitator Mohamed Bouriche (43) organised vans and transport. The NCA identified 20+ smuggling runs between February and October 2023. On one occasion, 39 migrants including children were loaded into an airtight refrigerated trailer in Sandwich, Kent; several required medical attention.

*[Intelligence Note: No verified photographs of Azize Benaniba or Mohamed Bouriche are currently available in open sources.]*

## 3. ROUTES, HOTSPOTS & EVOLVING PATTERNS

### 3.1 Established Routes

**Western Mediterranean:** Spain/Portugal; Algerian/Moroccan nationals; speedboats from Almería

**Central Mediterranean:** Libya/Tunisia → Italy; primary hub for over a decade

**Balkan/South-Eastern:** Turkey → Greece/Bulgaria → Northern Europe

**Eastern:** Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine; smuggling spiked 2021–2023

**English Channel:** Northern France/Belgium → UK; small inflatables; shifting launch points

### 3.2 Emerging Trends

- **Atlantic shift:** Senegal/Mauritania → Canary Islands, longer/deadlier to avoid detection
- **Belgium expansion:** Crossings up from near zero (2025) to 400+ (2026) as France tightens controls
- **"Mega-dinghies":** 42ft boats carrying up to 165 people (July 2026), £300k+ revenue per trip

## 4. COSTS, PAYMENTS & FINANCIAL FLOWS

### 4.1 Pricing (2025–2026)

| Route                              | Cost                          |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Turkey → Greece (legal ferry)      | ~€20                          |
| Turkey → Greece (smuggler)         | €1,000–€3,000                 |
| Turkey → Italy                     | Up to €10,000                 |
| France → UK Channel                | €1,000–€3,000 / £1,800–£2,500 |
| Full journey (Horn of Africa → UK) | €15,000–€25,000               |

### 4.2 Payment Systems

- Cash:** Dominant; physical handovers at transit points or in destination countries
- Hawala:** Trust-based informal transfer; 2–10% commission; brokers in shops/exchanges
- Crypto:** Growing use of Bitcoin/Tether for cross-border settlement
- Laundering:** Front businesses (grocers, car washes, travel agents), smurfing small deposits, professional outsourcing

## 5. DIGITAL & TACTICAL EVOLUTION

### 5.1 Communications

**Encrypted:** WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal for coordination/payment

**Social media:** TikTok/Facebook for marketing; AI-generated videos falsely showing safe/easy journeys

**Recruitment:** False job offers, "success stories," influencer-style tactics

### 5.2 Supply Chain

Channel boats sourced from China → Turkey → Germany → France; kits cost €10k–€20k

Cheap inner tubes often issued instead of life jackets

## 6. CRIMINAL LINKS & RISKS

**Polycriminality:** Smuggling + drugs, arms, counterfeiting, document fraud

**Exploitation:** Ransom demands, sexual abuse, forced labour; victims blackmailed via footage

**Security:** FATF notes links between some groups and terror financing where routes overlap with conflict zones

**Violence:** Rival clashes, beatings, shootings; migrants trapped between gangs and authorities



## 7. ENFORCEMENT & DISRUPTIONS

EU/UK: Europol's EMSC, UK NCA, Eurojust joint operations

Recent actions:

- March 2026: 24 arrested in Spain/France speedboat network bust
- March 2026: 21 held over Channel supply chain; safety gear seized
- April 2026: Shamo/Khdir jailed 19 years in Wales
- UK sanctions 18+ key figures/networks under 2025 Regulations

### 7.1 Southern European Interdiction & Containment

#### Spain

- **Technology & Surveillance:** Deploys the SIVE (Integrated External Surveillance System) with thermal cameras, AI-driven drones, lasers and smart sensors across Ceuta, Melilla and the Canary Islands. The Spanish government has awarded multimillion-euro tech contracts for border infrastructure.
- **Morocco Partnership:** Funds and supports Moroccan enforcement, including a new 7-metre high barbed-wire fence and 3-metre deep trench around Melilla, plus 24/7 military deployment.
- **West African Bilaterals:** Agreements with Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia and Mali combining coastguard support, returns agreements and circular labour migration programmes. Spain provided drones and guards to Senegal.
- **Frontex Operations:** Joint operations at Spain's external borders renewed for 2024 after a temporary suspension over data-protection concerns.

#### Italy

- **Libya Memorandum of Understanding:** Renewed in 2023/2025. Italy and the EU provide monetary and technical support to the Libyan coast guard to intercept migrants at sea and forcibly return them to Libya, where they face documented torture and sexual exploitation.
- **Albania Offshore Processing:** Italy built detention centres in Shëngjin and Gjadër, Albania, under a €133 million contract with Medihospes. The deal applies only to adult males from "safe countries" intercepted in international waters. However, the programme is largely suspended after Italian courts repeatedly blocked transfers, ruling that even "safe" country nationals faced risks. Only three operations were carried out (8, 16 and 49 migrants), and all detainees were eventually transferred back to Italy by court order.
- **ECHR Push:** Meloni's government is lobbying to make Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights more "flexible" to allow easier removal of migrants.
- **Schengen Suspension:** In August 2026, Italy imposed temporary border checks with Spain over the Ceuta migrant crisis, suspending Schengen free-movement rights for flights and maritime transport.

## 8. AFRICAN GOVERNMENT FUNDING & EXTERNALISATION

The EU has poured billions into African states to externalise border control. Key funding streams include:

| Recipient Programme                       | Amount                                                                       | Purpose                                                         | Effectiveness                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) | €4.8 billion (2015–2021)                                                     | 250+ programmes across 26 countries                             | Little evidence it altered root causes; instead increased surveillance and control capacity                                                                       |
| Morocco                                   | €1.6 billion until 2027 (NDICI); €631m (2021–22); ASOP partnership July 2022 | Border enforcement, "reforms and resilience"                    | Morocco claims tens of thousands of crossings stopped since 2023; built massive wall around Melilla                                                               |
| Mauritania                                | €210 million (Feb 2024)                                                      | Migration management, anti-smuggling, security, job creation    | Short-term operational gains but fuelled unrest in election year; accusations of becoming part of Europe's "containment architecture"                             |
| Senegal                                   | €30 million (2024)                                                           | Prevent irregular migration                                     | Spain bolstered coastguard support; pilot seasonal labour migration programme launched 2025                                                                       |
| Libya                                     | ~€310 million (EUTF); €90m detention/returns; €42m border surveillance       | Coast guard capacity, detention centres, search-and-rescue      | Crossings fell 81% (2017–18) but hundreds of thousands trapped in Libya facing torture, extortion and forced labour; funding diverted to militias                 |
| Nigeria                                   | €10 million (A-TIPSOM); €1.4m (French JOP)                                   | Anti-trafficking/smuggling, border agency training, prosecution | "Clear little evidence" these initiatives scaled down smuggling networks; instead led to criminalisation and abuse of vulnerable migrants                         |
| Tunisia                                   | "Team Europe" package                                                        | Migration control, returns                                      | Sharp fall in crossings achieved through "heavy coercion (mass round-ups, expulsions toward desert borders)" – high ethical/diplomatic costs, inherently unstable |

Has it made a difference?

Empirically, no. Research consistently finds that externalisation policies do not sustainably reduce irregular migration or prevent deaths at sea. Instead they:

- **Displace flows** to more dangerous routes (e.g. Atlantic route to Canary Islands surged as Mediterranean was squeezed).
- **Increase coercion** in partner states (arbitrary detention, forced returns, abuse).
- **Fail on returns:** The EU's effective return rate hovers around 23% overall, and closer to 15% for African nationals.
- **Undermine sovereignty and trust:** Seen as imposition of European priorities; sparked protests in The Gambia and Mauritania.

## 9. LEGAL STATUS OF LANDED MIGRANTS

### The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum (In Force: 12 June 2026)

The new Pact fundamentally changes the legal status of irregular arrivals:

#### Detention, Not Free Movement

- Asylum seekers are **not granted free movement**. Upon arrival, they are subject to large-scale screening and processing in border facilities.
- They can be detained in **closed facilities at borders for up to 12 weeks** while their claims are fast-tracked. During this time, they are deemed **legally not on EU soil** despite being physically present.
- If rejected, they can be detained for a **further 12 weeks** pending return. In reality, detention often lasts longer because countries of origin frequently refuse to cooperate on forced returns.

#### Fast-Track & Safe Country Rules

- Claims from nationals of "safe countries of origin" (common EU list includes Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, India, Kosovo, Morocco, Tunisia, plus EU candidate states) are fast-tracked with fewer safeguards.
- The "safe third country" rule is expanded: if an asylum seeker transited through a country such as Tunisia, Egypt or Turkey, their claim can be discarded without individual assessment of persecution, and they risk being returned there.
- A "Rwanda clause" now allows Member States to send asylum seekers to non-EU countries they have no connection with, provided there is an agreement for that country to process the claim.

#### Appeals & Remedies

- Appeals in "safe country of origin" cases will **no longer have automatic suspensive effect** in many circumstances, meaning migrants can be removed while appealing.
- It will still be possible to request a court to grant suspensive effect, but this adds a critical hurdle.

#### Dublin & Solidarity

- The **first country of entry** remains responsible for processing the claim in most cases (Dublin principle), though a new "solidarity mechanism" allows other states to either pay money or relocate applicants to relieve pressure on border states.

SUMMARY

Migrants who land in the EU are **detained at the border**, subjected to fast-track procedures with reduced legal safeguards, and denied free movement. If their claim is rejected, they face prolonged detention while authorities attempt returns that succeed only a minority of the time. The legal trajectory is toward ever-more restrictive containment, offshore processing and expedited removal.

## 10. KEY INTELLIGENCE GAPS

- Full extent of crypto integration and digital recruitment
- Links to wider UK/EU organised crime networks
- Scale of abuse and exploitation within journeys
- Complete mapping of the Jabal/Aram/Al-Millah network's UK-based financial collectors and their ties to Birmingham
- Full scope of the Krasniqi forgery laboratory's client list and document types beyond the 50+ countries identified
- Actual diversion rates of EU trust-fund monies to militia groups in Libya and other conflict zones
- Long-term viability and legal durability of the Albania offshore-processing model under ECHR challenge
- Extent to which "safe third country" returns will withstand European Court of Justice scrutiny once the Pact is fully operational

## 11. SOURCES

The following open-source materials were consulted in the preparation of this dossier:

- Europol European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) Reports
- UK National Crime Agency (NCA) — Press Releases & Operational Updates
- UK Home Office — Migration Statistics & Policy Papers
- GOV.UK — Sanctions Listings (Global Irregular Migration Sanctions Regulations 2025)
- Financial Action Task Force (FATF) — Terrorist Financing Risk Assessments
- BBC News — Undercover Investigations & Court Reporting
- Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- Frontex — Risk Analysis & Operational Updates
- European Commission — Migration & Asylum Policy Communications
- European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
- Italian Ministry of the Interior — Migration Control Policies
- Spanish Ministry of the Interior — Border Security Updates
- UK House of Commons Library — Research Briefings
- Council of Europe — Human Rights & Migration Reports
- The Telegraph — Investigative Reporting on Smuggling Networks
- Balkan Insight / Prishtina Insight / KOHA.net — Regional Crime Reporting
- French National Gendarmerie / Judicial Press Releases

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