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ITALIAN MAFIA IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Since their appearance in the 1800s, Italian organized crime groups, broadly known as the Italian Mafia, have infiltrated the social and economic fabric of Italy and have become transnational in nature. Within Italy, there are four active groups: Cosa Nostra (Sicilian Mafia), Camorra, 'Ndrangheta, and Sacra Corona Unita. They are also known to collaborate with other international organized crime groups from all over the world to carry out their criminal activities. The FBI estimates they have more than 3,000 members and associates scattered mostly throughout major cities in the Northeast, Midwest, California, and the South. Their largest presence centers around New York, southern New Jersey, and Philadelphia. The major threats to Italian society posed by these groups are drug trafficking — heroin, in particular — and money laundering. They also are involved in illegal gambling, political corruption, extortion, kidnapping, fraud, counterfeiting, murders, bombings, weapons trafficking, and the infiltration of legitimate businesses.

La Cosa Nostra (LCN)

La Cosa Nostra evolved from the Sicilian Mafia and is one of the foremost organized criminal threats to American society. Translated into English it means “this thing of ours.” It is a nationwide alliance of criminals—linked by blood ties or through conspiracy—dedicated to

pursuing crime and protecting its members. It also is called the Mafia, a term used to describe other organized crime groups. The LCN, as it is known by the FBI, consists of different “families” or groups that are generally arranged geographically and engaged in significant and organized racketeering activity. It is involved in a broad spectrum of illegal activities: murder, extortion, drug trafficking, corruption of public officials, gambling, infiltration of legitimate businesses, labor racketeering, loan sharking, prostitution, pornography, tax-fraud schemes, and stock manipulation schemes. The LCN is the most active in the New York metropolitan area, parts of New Jersey, Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, and New England. The major LCN families include the five New York-based families—Bonanno, Colombo, Gambino, Genovese, and Luchese; the DeCavalcante family; the New England LCN; the Philadelphia LCN; and the Chicago Outfit. They have members in other major cities and are involved in international crimes. Although the LCN has its roots in Italian organized crime, it has been a separate organization for many years. Today it cooperates in various criminal activities with different criminal groups that are headquartered in Italy.

Camorra (Neapolitan Mafia)

The Camorra first appeared in the mid-1800s in Naples, Italy, as a prison gang—the word “Camorra” means gang. Once released, members formed clans in cities and eventually grew into the largest of the Italian organized crime groups. The Camorra made a fortune in reconstruction after an earthquake ravaged the Campania region in 1800. Now it specializes in cigarette smuggling and receives payoffs from other criminal groups for any cigarette traffic through Italy. The Camorra is also involved in money laundering, extortion, alien smuggling, robbery, kidnapping, political corruption, and counterfeiting.

’Ndrangheta (Calabrian Mafia)

The word “’Ndrangheta” comes from Greek, meaning courage or loyalty. The ’Ndrangheta formed in the 1860s when a group of Sicilians was banished from the island by the Italian government. They settled in Calabria and formed small criminal groups. ’Ndrangheta has many cells, which are loosely connected family groups based on blood relationships and marriages. They specialize in kidnapping and political corruption, but also engage in drug trafficking, murder, bombings, counterfeiting, gambling, frauds, thefts, labor racketeering, loansharking, and alien smuggling.

Sacra Corona Unita

Law enforcement became aware of the Sacra Corona Unita—translated to “United Sacred Crown”—in the late 1980s. Like other groups, it started as a prison gang. As its members were released, they settled in the

Puglia region of Italy and continued to grow and form links with other Mafia groups. The Sacra Corona Unita specializes in smuggling cigarettes, drugs, arms and people. It is also involved in money laundering, extortion, blackmail, and political corruption. The organization collects payoffs from other criminal groups for landing rights on the southeast coast of Italy, a natural gateway for smuggling to and from post-Communist countries like Albania and the former Yugoslavia.

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MISDEMEANOR

A misdemeanor (American English, spelled misdemeanour in British English) is any "lesser" criminal act in some common law legal systems. Misdemeanors are generally punished less severely than felonies, but theoretically more so than administrative infractions (also known as minor, petty, or summary offences) and regulatory offences. Many misdemeanors are punished with monetary fines. A misdemeanor is considered a crime of low seriousness, and a felony one of high seriousness. A principle of the rationale for the degree of punishment meted out is that the punishment should fit the crime. One standard for measurement is the degree to which a crime affects others or society. Measurements of the degree of seriousness of a crime have been developed.

In the United States, the federal government generally considers a crime punishable with incarceration for one year or less to be a misdemeanor. All other crimes are considered felonies. Many states also employ the same or a similar distinction.

The distinction between felonies and misdemeanors has been abolished by several common law jurisdictions (notably the UK and Australia). These jurisdictions have generally adopted some other classification (in the UK the substance of the original distinction remains,