Geospatial Analysis of Terror Finance

OVERVIEW

A team of researchers at START created TerrorFi, a new relational database that unifies disparate lists of entities who fund terrorist and other illicit activities. By consolidating these lists kept by individual nations, the European Union, and the United Nations Security Council, START has enabled researchers to achieve new insights into the spatial relationships between financing and other types of illicit behaviors.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The TerrorFI database is a relational database presently based in Microsoft Excel and housed at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland, College Park. TerrorFi includes geocoded data (city and country when available) of the locations of entities who fund illicit activities including terrorism, state-funded terrorism, transnational criminal organizations, narco-trafficking, nuclear proliferation, and human rights violations. TerrorFi casts a wide net to encompass all of the various governmental lists and to better allow future research projects to understand the intertwining of the global (illicit) marketplace. It represents a comprehensive collection of entities sanctioned by various nations as of March 2016. The database includes non-state and state-based entities. For ease of navigation, the database uses different tables to represent different sections of the database. This document describes the collection of the data and the coding schema.

FINDINGS

TerrorFi includes over 17,000 entities. Some entities have multiple locations (e.g. banks) and so there areover 23,000 geocoded locations.
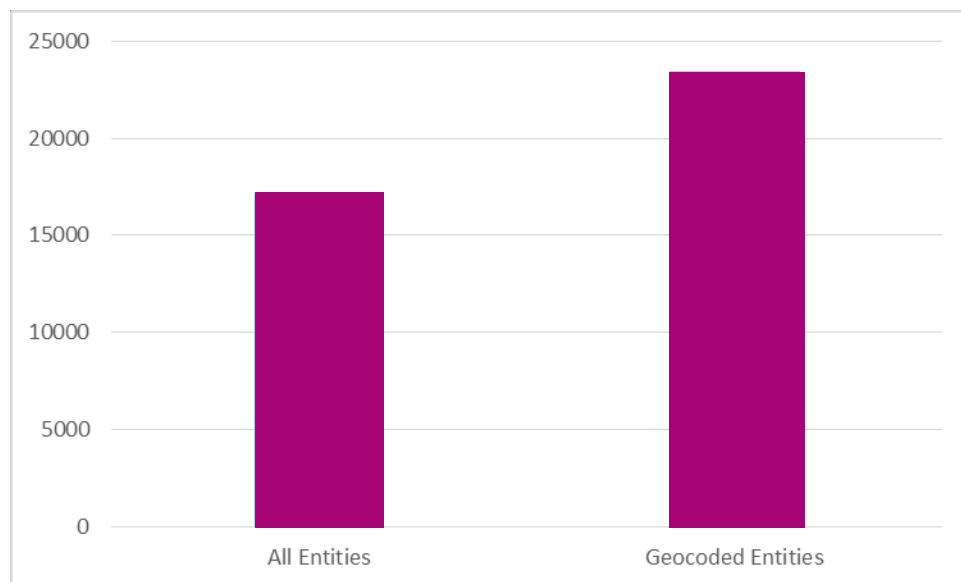

Figure 1

The geocoded entities are distributed around the world (fig. 2) with the highest numbers coming from Iran, Russia, and Pakistan. Figure 3 shows the visual distribution of entities sanctioned for financing terrorism (these listings come primarily from the United States Office of Foreign Asset Control list). These entities are found all over the world, but the greatest concentration is in Pakistan. Entities known to fund sanctioned narco-trafficking (fig. 4) are more regionalized than terrorism-supporting entities. These entities concentrate mainly in Central America and Mexico, but concentrations are also high in China, Southeast Asia, and Afghanistan. Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) represent the final subset of non-state sanctions. The available location data lists these organizations exclusively in Asia (fig. 5).

SPATIAL DISTRUBUTION OF ENTITIES

The geocoded entities are distributed around the world with the highest numbers coming from Iran, Russia, and Pakistan.
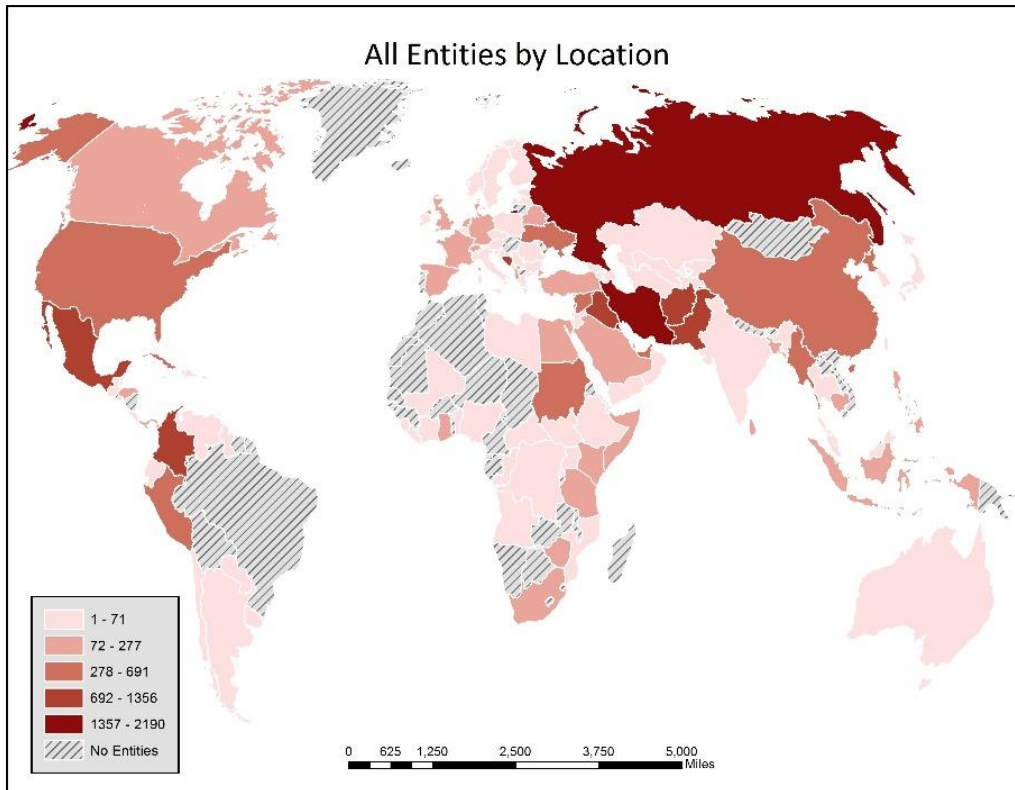

Figure 2

DISTRIBUTION OF SANCTIONED TERRORIST FINANCING ENTITIES

This figure shows the visual distribution of entities sanctioned for financing terrorism (these listings come primarily from the OFAC list). These entities are found all over the world, but the greatest concentration is in Pakistan.
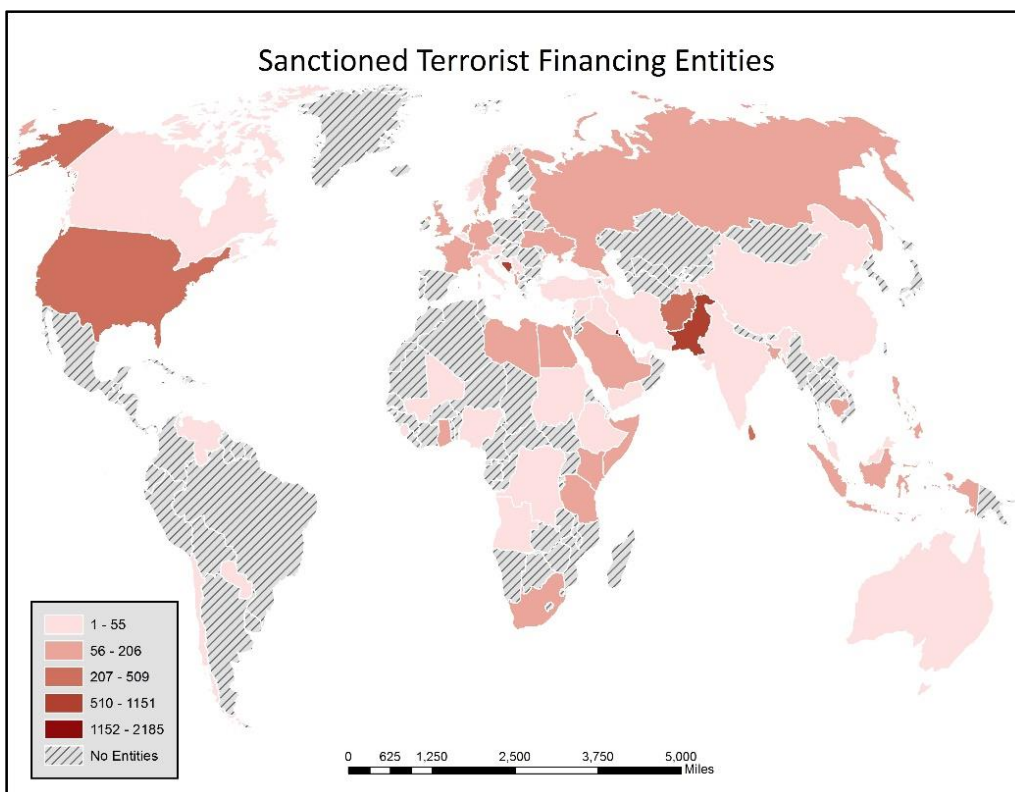
Figure 3

DISTRIBUTION OF SANCTIONED NARCO-TRAFFICKING ENTITIES

Entities known to fund sanctioned narco-trafficking are more regionalized than terrorism-supporting entities. These entities concentrate mainly in Central America and Mexico, but concentrations are also high in China, Southeast Asia, and Afghanistan.
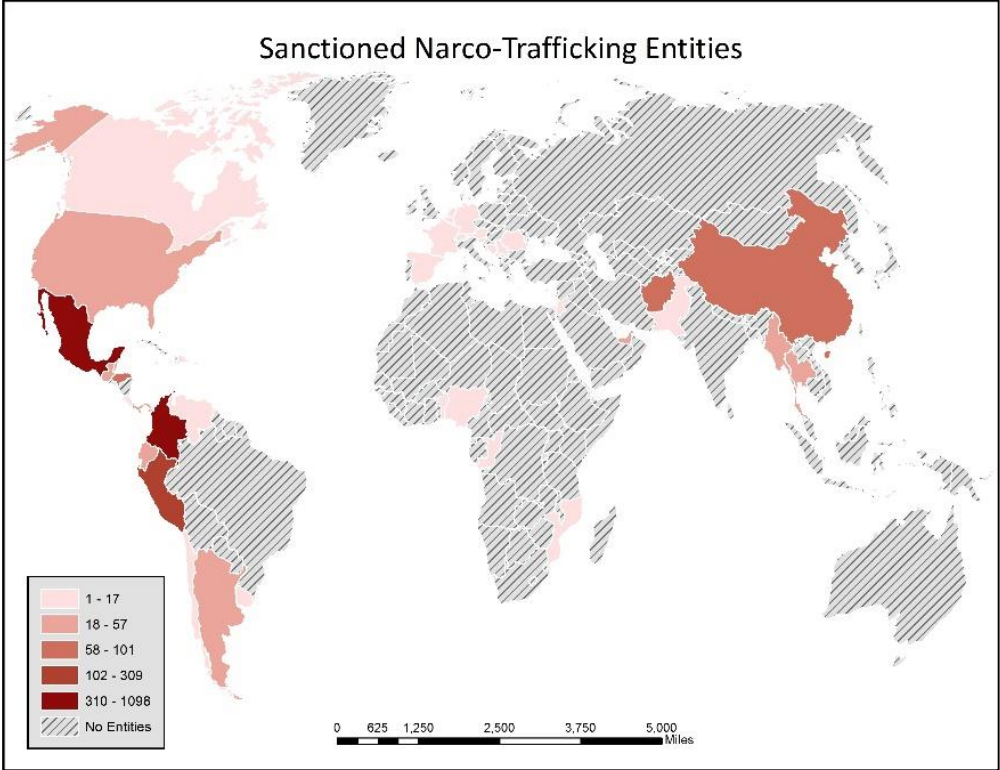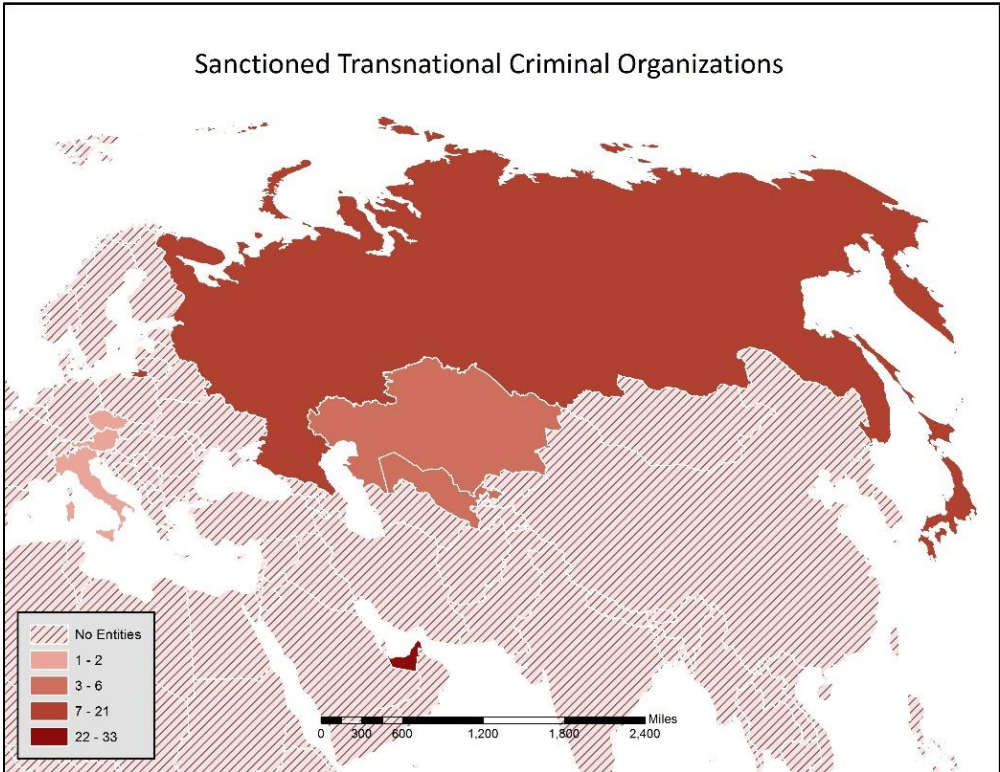

Sanctioned Narco-Trafficking Entities

- 1 - 17
- 18 - 57
- 58 - 101
- 102 - 309
- 310 - 1098
- No Entities

Figure 4

DISTRIBUTION OF SANCTIONED TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION ENTITIES

Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) represent the final subset of non-state sanctions. These entities are classified as TCOs by OFAC. These organizations are largely representative of organized crime syndicates.

Sanctioned Transnational Criminal Organizations

- No Entities
- 1 - 2
- 3 - 6
- 7 - 21
- 22 - 33

METHOD

TerrorFi includes geocoded data of the locations of entities that fund activities such as terrorism, state-funded terrorism, transnational criminal organizations, narco-trafficking, nuclear proliferation, and human rights violations. The database lists all known aliases for each listed entity, which agency or government sanctioned them, and when possible, the name and date of the statute. Agencies included are the Office of Foreign Asset Control (U.S.), Bureau of Industry and Security (U.S.), Directorate of Defense Trade Controls (U.S.), Her Majesty's Treasury (UK), the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia), the European Union External Action Lists, and the United Nations Security Council. When possible, Sanctions are separated out between those targeting state (n = 894) versus non-state actors (n = 6,884)[1], with the latter further refined as either terrorist (n = 5,253), narcotics-related (n = 1,587), transnational criminal organizations (n = 44), or unknown (n = 10,626) (fig. 6). The narcotics-related sanctions and transnational criminal organizations are specific to the Office of Foreign Asset control and do not overlap.
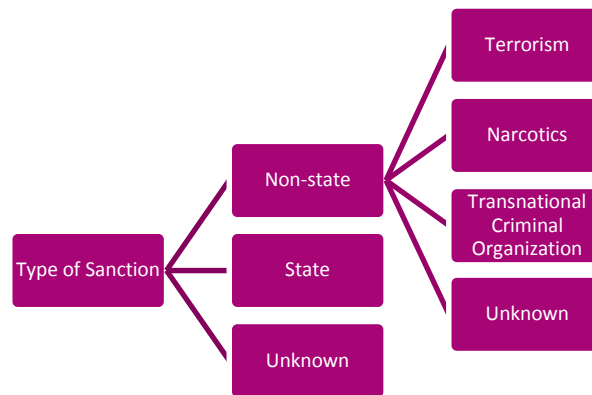

Figure 6: Visual of how sanction type is delineated

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future work on this project will consist of further updates as entities are added or removed, a web-based search tool, and a web map for the geocoded data.

RESEARCHERS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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[1] 273 entities are listed as both state and non-state. 2,159 entities are not listed.