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## **Considerations Regarding the Typology of Counter-Detection Measures in the Light of Quantitative Research on Organised Crime Groups that Recruit Football Hooligans**

**Abstract:** Through the application of counter-detection activities, football hooligan groups in Poland have created organised crime networks, that are able to identify, locate and neutralise police intelligence activities. In the 20th and 21st centuries, the issue of counter-detection activities undertaken by members of organised crime groups has not been acknowledged by researchers. Therefore, the existing body of work on forensic tactics as a scientific discipline needs to be critically analysed, and new definitions need to be adopted. The scope of the study includes definitions of forms of counter-detection activities (e.g. counter-surveillance or inverse surveillance), as well as the classification and functions of counter-detection activities. The article seeks to establish a framework and define the conceptual grid and key assumptions underlying the concept of counter-detection activities. It is the first desk-research analysis to systematise knowledge on the counter-detection activities of criminal groups. Analysis results are the basis for the creation of a theory of anti-forensics; its typology is presented with the example of groups of football hooligans. The authors define the concept of counter-detection activities and its purpose, and seek to delineate the basic forms and strategies of counter-detection. The knowledge presented is also referred to as 'anti-forensics', which in fact, is a specific area of knowledge on how to prevent the detection of crimes and criminals. This follows directly from the wording of the cardinal rule of all crime-fighting: 'Think like a criminal'.

**Keywords:** counter-detection activities, counter-surveillance, delaying actions, legalisation and hiding criminal assets

## Introduction

When committing a criminal act, the offender produces certain pieces of information – leaving physical traces, giving knowledge to witnesses, etc. It is in the interest of the offender that this information does not reach law enforcement services. The flow of information between the offender, the witness(es) and the detective is of great importance as long as the detection process continues. The latter is a kind of ‘battle’ for information between the offender, seeking to minimise his/her role as the source or issuer of information, and the detective, whose aim is to maximise the flow of information about the crime. The ability of criminals to limit the flow of information to detectives, and their reasons for doing so, varies considerably. In practice, there are some who do almost nothing to restrict the flow of information (due to lack of skill and motive); at the other extreme, there are criminals who do everything in their power to inhibit it (Willmer, 1970).

The vast majority of criminals seek to avoid being punished and so do all they can to ensure that the crime they have committed remains undetected and that they do not get apprehended as perpetrators. Among the exceptions are offenders who come forward after committing a crime and incriminate themselves; these are usually people with mental disorders, emotionally driven murderers or politically motivated offenders. In the case of the latter, the act (such as murder or an act of terror) is generally a manifestation of an opinion, a demonstration of a certain attitude. Leaving these demonstration crimes aside, as well as crimes committed on the spur of the moment (*dolus repentinus*), offenders responsible for crimes of violence and other common crimes generally try to commit their offences without witnesses and possibly leaving few traces that would allow them to be detected, apprehended and later proven guilty. By contrast, the perpetrators of economic crimes usually try to make their crimes appear as if they are legal (Widacki, 2022).

Currently, activities aimed at an offender evading detection, so-called ‘counter-detection activities’, are increasingly seen as part of a planned criminal strategy and tactics. Generally, countermeasures are the actions and behaviours of individual criminals and criminal groups to disrupt or prevent law enforcement activities against them. Organised crime groups (OCGs) use various countermeasures to recognise and mitigate law enforcement actions; their application requires an awareness of the methods and techniques used by law enforcement authorities in investigating criminal networks. OCGs use a number of countermeasures to secure their communication against law enforcement surveillance, including technology such as the use of encryption and foreign and pre-paid SIM cards or satellite telephones, as well as reliance on code. To evade physical surveillance during transport, OCGs frequently change vehicles, often hired or leased using fraudulent IDs (Europol, 2017a).

This article presents a case study on the development of a system of counter-detection activities by criminal groups operating within groups of football hooligans in Poland. The analysis relies on empirical research on criminal counter-detection practice (Chlebowicz et al., 2021; Chlebowicz et al., 2022; Horosiewicz et al., 2020; Łabuz & Safjański, 2017; Michna et al., 2005; Safjański, 2007), as well as on research on stadium crime and hooliganism (Chlebowicz, 2009; 2010; 2014). In order to expand the empirical base, the authors analysed information from journalistic investigations and court judgments published on courts' electronic portals. Another important source of information was announcements by the National Prosecutor's Office of Poland and information provided by the Central Police Investigation Bureau. In addition, press releases available in electronic media were analysed. The criteria adopted during these searches included activities within organised groups of hooligans and elements of their *modus operandi* related to counter-detecting activities.

The article discusses key tactical undertakings and technical measures aimed at strengthening the imperviousness of a criminal group and at neutralising the efficiency of police intelligence activities, which are most suited to the needs and specifics of criminal groups based in football hooligan groups in Poland. Against this background, it should be noted that from a forensic point of view, only the combined use of criminal tactics and the latest technology can lead to the successful thwarting of police measures, both at the level of operational activities and at the procedural stage. Consequently, this translates into the impossibility of detecting perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

The prevalence of initiatives and techniques aimed at neutralising police operations and their active influence on ongoing criminal proceedings has clearly been growing and can be interpreted in terms of the professionalisation of the criminal world. Undoubtedly, the factor that has facilitated and accelerated the expansion of these forms of criminal activity is broad access to devices and technologies whose counter-detection potential is fully exploited by criminal groups. This calls for the reflection that perhaps this is a response to the surveillance capabilities that have emerged as a consequence of the development of the so-called information society. Regardless of sociological assessments of the phenomenon of using information technologies and their social and psychological consequences, it must be assumed that they are being used to increase the efficiency of criminal enterprises (Chlebowicz et al., 2021). The most effective counter-detection strategies of organised crime groups include corruption, paying for confidential information, infiltrating key positions in the public sphere, blackmail, counter-surveillance, disinformation and using violence against officers, witnesses and group members, among others (Vander Beken, 2004).

## 1. The concept of counter-detection activities in forensic science and police practice

The description of the relationship between the perpetrator of a crime and law enforcement agencies can be made by referring to the so-called theory of combat. Indeed, while the objective of tactical and forensic activities carried out by police forces is to identify the perpetrator of a crime and collect evidence of guilt for the purposes of a trial, the objective of the perpetrator is not only to commit a crime but also to avoid criminal liability. The theory of combat modified for the purposes of forensic science further assumes that the objectives of the perpetrator and the law enforcement agencies are incompatible and that both entities are aware of this and, above all, consider the efforts of the other entity in their own action (Chlebowicz & Safjański, 2021).

Counter-detection activities refer to efforts aimed at avoiding detection, hindering criminals' identification through the secrecy of activities, limiting evidence left behind, and intimidating witnesses (Eck & Rossmo, 2019). Europol defines counter-detection activities as actions and measures used by individual criminals and criminal groups to prevent or disrupt actions taken against them by law enforcement authorities. Familiarity with the methods and techniques used by law enforcement agencies in investigations and operational cases constitutes a prerequisite for the efficiency of organised crime groups' use of counter-detection activities. According to Europol, the most common counter-detection activities include measures to protect communications from operational control (encryption of correspondence, use of foreign and pre-paid SIM cards or satellite phones, use of codes) and methods to evade police surveillance, e.g. frequent changes of vehicles, including renting or leasing vehicles using forged documents (Europol, 2017b).

In the 19th century, attempts to change one's appearance during or after a crime (e.g. growing or adding hair, beards or moustaches), using false names, impersonating others or using forged documents were considered to be the most rational counter-detection measures (Gross, 2020). At the beginning of the 20th century, Polish forensic literature referred to rational actions that hinder the detection and apprehension of the perpetrator of a crime as 'tricks of the felons', including simulating various illnesses, pickpockets discarding stolen wallets after they have been emptied, brazenly denying facts when apprehended by the police, keeping firearms away from home, burglars using gloves and hiding the loot of a crime (Łukomski, 1924). However, some irrational behaviour was also recorded besides criminals' rational acts to make it more difficult to track them down. In the 19th century, excrement was frequently revealed at crime scenes; criminals believed that this protected them from detection. Sometimes the faeces was covered with a piece of cloth to keep it warm for as long as possible; according to superstition, as long as the faeces remained warm, the perpetrator could safely leave the scene of the crime (Gross, 2020).

We cannot address the issues of defining counter-detection without first looking at the concept of *modus operandi*. The desire to avoid detection and apprehension is, in principle, a crucial element in determining an offender's *modus operandi* (Łukomski, 1924). It is assumed that the individual elements of the *modus operandi* represent the three stages of committing a crime, i.e. preparation, execution and concealment. Counter-detection activities undertaken at the stages of planning and concealment of a crime are exceptionally important (Wnorowski, 1978). If the crime is planned, the perpetrators usually try to minimise the probability of being apprehended, either caught red-handed or afterwards, given the traces they have left. Hence they generally choose the scene and conditions of the crime with great caution; for example, they prefer a desolate place to rob or, alternatively, a crowded place to carry out pickpocketing. Sexually motivated serial killers, whom criminology classifies as so-called organised killers, carefully decide on the location of the attack on their victim, the place to which they drag the corpse or unconscious victim after the attack – in order to manipulate the body – and finally, the route of safe escape. The prime directive for such forward thinking is to avoid capture and consequent criminal liability (Widacki, 2022). Actions during the stage of concealment of a crime consist, *inter alia*, in covering up traces of the activity and are aimed at delaying its detection, making it difficult or even impossible to detect it at all, therefore ensuring impunity for the perpetrator (Wnorowski, 1978).

Counter-detection activities commonly known as delaying tactics aim to hinder the investigation by preventing investigators from obtaining information that could lead to the identification of the perpetrator, rather than merely causing a delay in the investigation process (Konieczny, 2020). The following main forms of delaying behaviour can be distinguished:

- 1) Destruction of material by covering up ('cleaning') traces found at a crime scene in order to destroy evidence (dactyloscopic, biological, traseological, etc.), as well as larger-scale activities, such as setting a vehicle used in a crime on fire or setting a fire in a room where a murder has been committed;
- 2) Intimidation of and control over witnesses and victims in order to prevent them from transmitting detection-relevant information to detectives (this may take the form of psychological and physical violence, social condemnation, interference with family relationships, etc.);
- 3) Forging documents, providing false alibis or other fraudulent information either by oneself or with the assistance of friendly (bribed) persons;
- 4) Suspects' refusal to provide information by giving false statements or resorting to the option, perfectly legal in civilised systems, of remaining silent (Stelfox, 2009).

The following tactical measures are also applicable as part of counter-detection efforts:

- 1) Creating a false narrative already at the planning and preparation stage of a crime;
- 2) The offender's behaviour during apprehension consisting in giving false explanations, providing deceptive leads (e.g. by handing over a 'set of IT data that is difficult to analyse'), presenting a false alibi or making a false admission of guilt;
- 3) Active disruption of police operations, an extremely broad category that includes disinformation activities introduced in the course of operational control or surveillance by an offender who has realised that he/she is being surveilled. These activities are often based on dedicated methodologies such as self-monitoring, counter-surveillance, and rapid handover of materials;
- 4) In an information society saturated with technology, delaying tactics also involve the use of advanced technical tools that, among other things, aim to neutralise the methodologies used in computer forensics;
- 5) A wide range of corruption techniques, involving not only traditional bribery, i.e. offering a financial, sometimes personal, advantage, but also engaging police officers in criminal activities and 'exerting political pressure through previously obtained influence' (Konieczny, 2020).

An innovative scientific study concerning the role of counter-detection activities in the threat of organised crime was initiated by researchers from Ghent University. The outcome of their research was a conceptual model for preventing organised crime that includes the recognition of the extent to which, apart from the traditional elements, counter-detection actions are used by organised crime groups (Black et al., 2000; Black et al., 2001). Subsequently, the Ghent researchers' conceptual model became the cornerstone for the development of a model for the use of strategic analysis in the process of combating organised crime across the European Union. Work in this area was carried out at the Institute for International Research on Criminal Policy in cooperation with the Joint Research Centre on Transnational Crime of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of Milan, the University of Trento and the Swedish Council for Crime Prevention. The research made it possible to create the Europol Organised Crime Threat Assessment Methodology, which, in addition to analysing organised crime groups and monitoring criminal markets, included an analysis of counter-detection activities carried out by organised crime groups (European Commission, 2002).

At the same time, a concept for the study of counter-detection activities was developed in Poland at the Strategy Bureau of the Warsaw Police Headquarters, according to which, from the point of view of law enforcement agencies, the classification of counter-detection activities based on the criterion of the direction

of their application is of utmost importance. This way, counter-detection activities can be classified as offensive, defensive and universal. Typically, offensive actions represent the most complex criminal enterprises, which include direct and indirect infiltration, intelligence or disruption operations. Defensive actions include activities aimed at strengthening one's own group, which include, inter alia: counter-intelligence and disinformation activities, disciplinary action against group members and associates, traditional methods of a tactical nature (counter-surveillance, self-monitoring), cover-up operations or changes in the internal organisation of criminal groups. Universal measures include the use of expert knowledge, corruption or the use of information technology to commit crimes (Michna et al., 2005).

Counter-detection activities can therefore be divided into delaying or eliminating, reactive or proactive, and also strategic or tactical, offensive or defensive, and simple or complex (Konieczny, 2021). An action is considered as delaying if it extends the time elapsed between the origin of the information and its acquisition by detectives relative to the amount of time that would have elapsed if the perpetrator had not carried out a counter-detection operation. Let us refer to the categorisation of criminals into organised or unorganised, without going into detail: the organised take a keen interest in the course of the detection process for the crimes they have committed and, more importantly, develop a good social relationship with the detectives, which may cause them to recognise that it is unlikely that their 'colleague' is the perpetrator of the crime being solved – although generally only up to a certain point. Elimination efforts are those that lead to the definitive loss of evidence that could incriminate the perpetrator, who is aware of this dangerous potential; examples include the destruction of a CCTV data carrier used to record critical events, of a knife used during a robbery, of false documents used by the perpetrator to extort credit, etc. (Konieczny, 2021).

An activity is deemed reactive if it is a kind of response (reaction) to a specific undertaking carried out by detectives. For example, the perpetrator learns that a particular witness has received a summons to testify; the message is therefore conveyed to him/her that if any testimony incriminating the perpetrator is given, he/she will risk losing his/her life. Another perpetrator may refuse to undergo a polygraph test, and another, using his/her contacts, may cause a sample of biological material taken from him/her to be swapped for a different one. An action is deemed to be proactive if it is carried out prior to the crime in order to interfere with the course and/or outcome of a detection operation that is anticipated to occur after the crime has been committed. A typical example is the preparation of a false alibi in advance. A rare but noteworthy method is for the offender to study forensic literature on interrogation techniques in advance, become familiar with them and subsequently, during the actual interrogation, successfully play the role of the person answering honestly the questions asked. Based on expert knowledge, proactive measures also include the development of a routine and professional lifestyle to avoid even being

flagged by detectives as a potential perpetrator. Proactive operations carried out by criminal groups are among the most sophisticated counter-detection operations; they will be discussed further below (Konieczny, 2021).

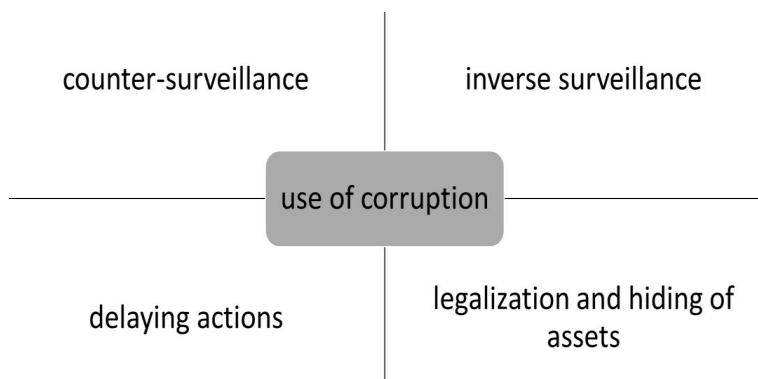
An action is deemed defensive if it directly serves to minimise the possibility of detecting the perpetrator. Examples of such an action include the removal of traces at a crime scene, disposal of stolen goods or evading the surveillance carried out by detectives in pursuit of the perpetrator. An action is offensive if it is intended to lower the credibility of detectives in the eyes of their superiors and thus cause confusion among the authorities. One example is the introduction of disinformation having the guise of truthfulness, resulting in a waste of the forces and resources of the service on unnecessary activities (Konieczny, 2021).

A counter-detection activity is simple if it consists of a single, conceptually distinguishable operation. An example would be fleeing the scene, if the perpetrator does not engage in other operations at the same time. Other examples could be altering one's appearance (e.g. growing/shaving off a beard), intimidating a particular witness or obtaining a false identity document. If these actions are not conceptually linked to each other, then they can be regarded as simple in nature. The criterion of the duration of the use is not relevant; if the perpetrator hides in one particular place, even for a long period of time, such a method of counter-detection may also be considered simple. An activity is complex if the perpetrator carries out more than one counter-detection operation at the same time and these operations are interlinked to ensure their effectiveness, for example the perpetrator uses information provided by a compromised investigator and adapts his/her behaviour to its content (Konieczny, 2021).

Counter-detection activities do not necessarily constitute a crime within the meaning of the Penal Code. Secondly, they may be carried out independently of the specific criminal act, and thirdly, they are often elements of activities or even lifestyles carried out by perpetrators, who, for instance, routinely use counter-surveillance and self-monitoring (this seems to be especially true of terrorists, especially so-called 'lone wolves'). As such, counter-detection activities constitute a separate segment of the behaviour of members of criminal or terrorist groups, although they can (and usually do) accompany behaviour that relates to the crime committed (Chlebowicz & Safjański, 2021). Therefore, it appears that basic forms of counter-detection activity, such as corruption, counter-surveillance, inverse surveillance, delaying actions, legalisation (money laundering) and hiding assets, can be distinguished, although we are aware that the boundaries between the various forms can be fluid and blurred. Figure 1 illustrates a typology of forms of counter-detection activities.



Figure 1. Forms of countermeasures.



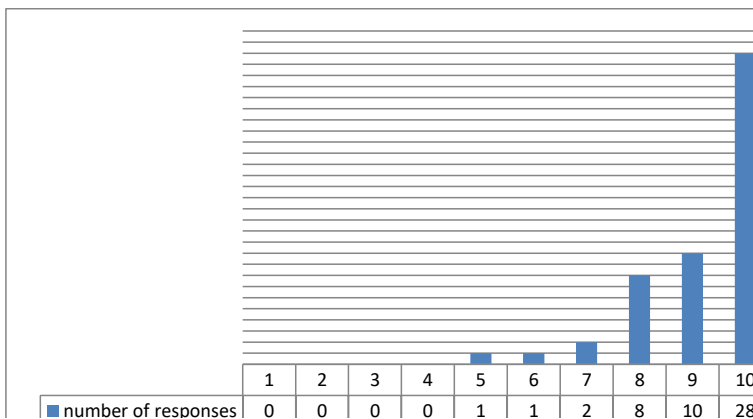
Counter-surveillance is intended to ensure the secrecy of criminal activities or to limit the effectiveness of police surveillance activities. In practice, it most often includes special methods and technical means used to detect or limit the effectiveness of police observation (of persons, objects or processes) or wiretapping (interception or monitoring of electronic communications over wired or wireless networks). For criminals it is natural to look for solutions that allow for the effective concealment and then legalisation of assets (any property) related to the crime. From the tactical and forensic point of view, this form of counter-detection activity aims to make it as difficult as possible for law enforcement to identify and locate property that is directly or indirectly related to the crime. Inverse surveillance is focused on actively collecting information about law enforcement officers in order to identify risks to criminal activities. Various tools and methods may be used in inverse surveillance, from the legal (e.g. analysis of activity on social media forums) to the illegal (e.g. access to information subject to banking secrecy by a bank employee). Methods used as part of delaying activities include corruption of prosecutors and judges, intimidation of witnesses, disinformation activities, disintegration activities and building relationships with politicians. From the point of view of law enforcement agencies, disintegration activities are the most dangerous; their mechanism is to create a situation that raises suspicions about the professional honesty of a police officer. The most common examples are denunciations, slander and provocation. It is important to recognise the mechanisms of disintegration activities due to the protection of the most valuable police officers (Chlebowicz& Safjański, 2021).

What is also worth emphasising is that counter-detection activities are still evolving, which is most probably closely related to the increasing professionalism of certain types of organised crime. It seems reasonable to argue that the apparent increase in counter-detection activities comes as a response of the criminal world

to undercover operations conducted by law enforcement authorities (Chlebowicz & Safjański, 2021). Today, criminals take counter-detection protection seriously, and those who want to defeat them need to understand this (Foertsch, 1999). In fact, holding a reputation within the criminal community for being an organised crime group forces its members to use even more sophisticated counter-detection measures (Lavorgna, 2016).

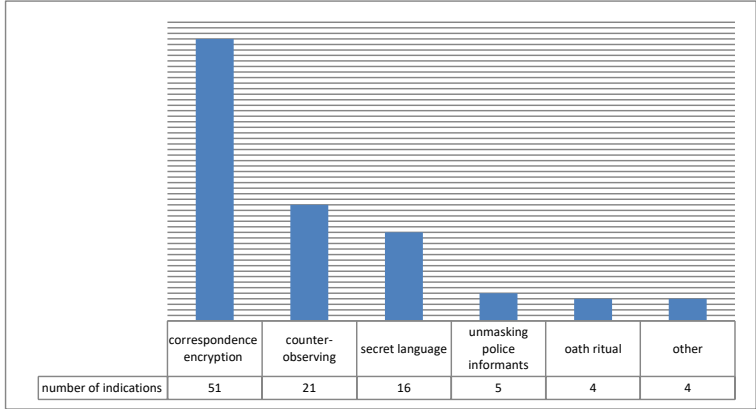
In 2021–2023, one of the authors of this paper (Chlebowicz) conducted a diagnostic survey on cross-border crime in Poland, using a structured interview technique with 50 former Polish law enforcement officers (PLEOs) experienced in countering organised crime. When asked how they assess the effectiveness of countermeasures used by Polish organised crime groups based in groups of football hooligans in preventing detection of criminal activity, 76% of the PLEOs rated the countermeasures as very effective (38 answers gave a rating of 9 to 10, on a scale of 1 to 10); 22% of officers surveyed rated them as effective (11 answers gave a rating of 6 to 8); 2% rated them as rather effective (1 answer gave a rating from 3 to 5). None of the PLEOs rated the countermeasures used by these organised crime groups as ineffective (ratings of 1 or 2). The results are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The distribution of PLEOs' answers to the question 'How do you assess the effectiveness of countermeasures used by Polish organised crime groups based in groups of football hooligans in preventing detection of criminal activity?' on a scale from 1 to 10. N=50.



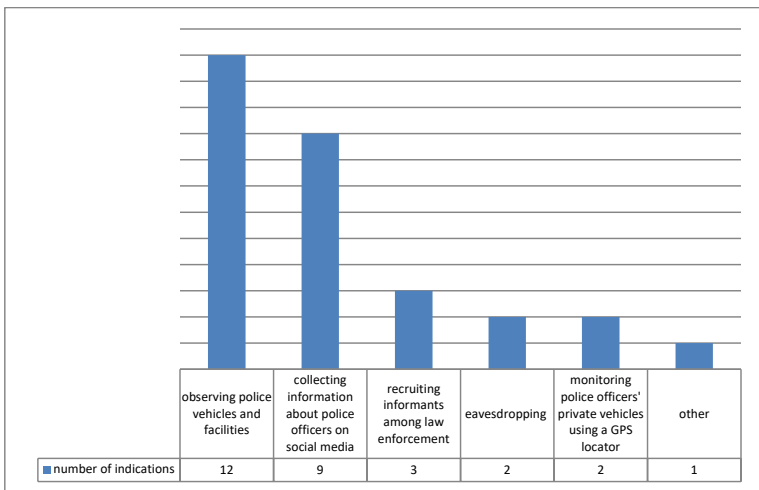
When asked what counter-surveillance methods used by criminal groups based in the football hooligan community had been encountered during the PLEOs' detection practice, communication encryption was indicated as the most popular method (50 indications). Another very popular method was counter-observation (21 indications). The results are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The distribution of PLEOs' answers to the question 'What counter-surveillance methods used by criminal groups based in the football hooligan community did you encounter during your detection practice as a law enforcement officer?' Several indications could be given. N=50.



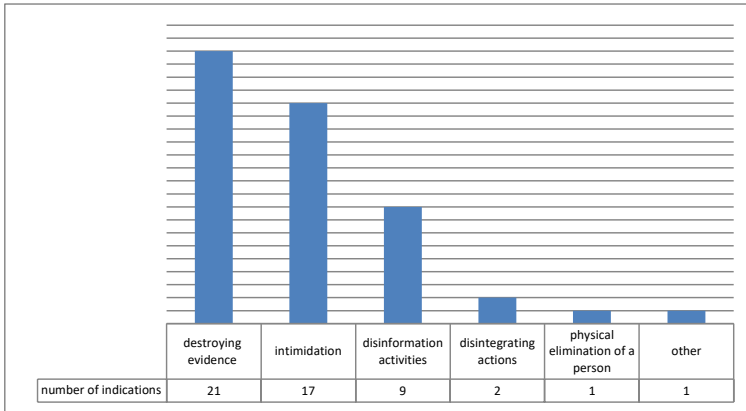
When asked what inverse surveillance methods used by criminal groups based in the football hooligan community had been encountered during detection practice, observation of police vehicles and facilities was indicated as the most popular method (12 indications). Another very popular method was collecting information about police officers on social media (9 indications). The results are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. The distribution of PLEOs' answers to the question 'What inverse surveillance methods used by criminal groups based in the football hooligan community did you encounter during your detection practice as a law enforcement officer?' Several indications could be given. N=50.



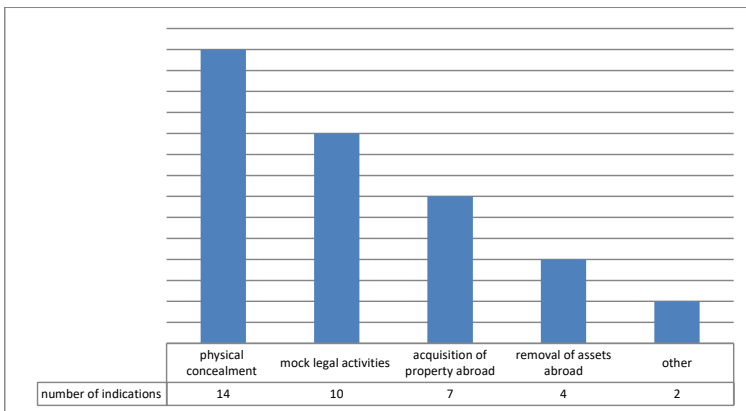
When asked what delaying action used by criminal groups based in the football hooligan community had been encountered during detection practice, destroying evidence was indicated as the most popular method (21 indications). Another very popular method was intimidation (17 indications). The results are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5. The distribution of PLEOs' answers to the question 'What delaying action used by criminal groups based in the football hooligan community did you encounter during your detection practice as a law enforcement officer?' Several indications could be given. N=50.



When asked what methods of hiding assets used by criminal groups based in the football hooligan community had been encountered during detection practice, physical concealment was indicated as the most popular method (14 indications). Another very popular method was mock legal activities (10 indications). The results are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. The distribution of PLEOs' answers to the question 'What methods of hiding assets used by criminal groups based in the football hooligan community did you encounter during your detection practice as a law enforcement officer?' Several indications could be given. N=50.



## **2. An outline of the criminological image of so-called 'stadium crime'**

Studies conducted independently by British and Polish researchers during the first decade of the 21st century on criminal groups operating within the football hooligan milieu have revealed the significant potential threat posed by these circles (Chlebowicz, 2009; 2010; Frosdick et al., 2005). The football hooligan community in Poland has undergone a significant and profound transformation, with the main result being the formation of criminal groups inside these communities. It is reasonable to hypothesise that it is the organisational forms of stadium hooligans, modelled on those typical of criminal groups and associations, that currently constitute the dominant part of the so-called 'stadium crime' phenomenon. This means that gangs of football hooligans constitute a significant component of the phenomenon of organised crime in Poland (Chlebowicz, 2009). At this point, it is important to stress that these authors unanimously agree that stadium hooliganism is evolving by gradually 'abandoning' the stadium context and shifting criminal activity outside (Frosdick et al., 2005).

Two areas of football hooliganism can be distinguished today. The first, often equated with stadium hooliganism, involves acts of violence that are closely linked to a football match. In this context, it should be noted that the violence used against rival groups of supporters and hooligans, or in later stages primarily against the police, is devoid of spontaneity. The organisation of public-order disturbances in connection with sports events requires a division of tasks, the ensuring of a minimum level of discipline, the drawing-up of an action plan and implementation of its individual elements. As is well known, the organisation of arranged fighting also requires considerable commitment on the part of the participants. This manifests itself in preparations for physical confrontation, with hooligans often practising martial arts and other sports together within their groups. The second area is the wide range of crimes, the motivations for which are primarily financial rather than subcultural (Chlebowicz, 2010).

Undoubtedly, an ongoing trend is the extensive involvement of football hooligan gangs in drug-related crime. Practically all criminal groups operating in hooligan environments are active in the drug market (Pytlakowski & Latkowski, 2017). However, it is worth pointing out that drug trafficking is taking the form of a professional undertakings on a relatively large scale. No longer is it just the shady selling of drugs in circles of people directly associated with supporters' groups but wide-ranging activities that can be described as the creation of new areas in the black market. Surveys into the activities of football hooligans in Cracow revealed that one scheme of drug distribution involved, among other things, an organised criminal group composed of pseudo-fans supplying drugs to persons aspiring to become members of this group. The 'candidates' were then tasked with distributing the drugs within their local neighbourhood, with the profits being passed on to members of the fighting squad. This arrangement resembles the relationship between a wholesaler

and retailers (Chlebowicz, 2009). The British variant of the transformation of football hooliganism has thus been mirrored in Poland. At the same time, one integral element of this process is the clear increase in the role of organised groups of football pseudo-fans (Chlebowicz, 2014).

There are numerous indications that hooligan organisations are already strong enough to participate effectively in smuggling operations throughout the European Union. This means that football hooligan crime is, at least to some extent, already cross-border in nature, which corresponds to general trends in the internationalisation of criminal activities. The successes of the Polish law enforcement agencies in dismantling the largest organised criminal groups have encouraged the leaders of stadium hooligans to develop counter-detection activities aimed at ensuring the closed nature of the group and the secrecy of their undertakings and gaining an informational advantage (Chlebowicz, 2009).

According to information made available by the Central Investigation Bureau of Police, it is known that 41 football hooligans were detained in February 2023, 37 of whom were suspected of being part of an organised criminal group charged with, among other things, murder, robbery, extortion and drug offences. In the course of the operation, in which more than 1,000 Polish police officers participated, cocaine, amphetamines and cannabis, as well as dozens of machetes, telescopic batons, pyrotechnics and seven firearms, were confiscated. Assets originating from robberies and worth PLN 200,000 were also recovered (Central Investigation Bureau of Police, 2023).

Criminal groups composed of hooligans serve as intermediaries between sources of drugs located outside Poland and retail sales in the country. Furthermore, an expansion of the 'product range' has been observed, since, in addition to classical drugs, an illegal trade in anabolic steroids is also developing; it is probable that the same distribution channels are used for the trafficking of steroids, which are in high demand (Chlebowicz, 2010). This trend was already signalled in 2010, when it was rightly foreseen that 'some supporter groups, displaying confrontational tendencies, would evolve into classical criminal gangs supervised and led by leaders of organised structures, particularly specialising in the production and distribution of drugs (Pływaczewski, 2010).

### **3. The origins of counter-detection activities in organised crime groups functioning among football hooligans**

From the very beginning, stadium crime was considered a form of organised crime. This was due to the simple fact that the very nature of football hooliganism required efficient coordination of the activities of individual hooligans. Regardless of whether the hooligans participated in arranged fighting or were engaged in initiatives such as organising brawls in the stands of sports venues, their modus operandi had to take into account such elements as the distribution of tasks, areas of expertise and,

most importantly, the existence of effective leadership, exercised either by a single individual (a group leader) or by collective leadership (elders), who made the key decisions. Leadership conceived as a permanent organisational element of the group meant at the same time that the individual members of the group had to obey the commands of the leader (or, depending on the local context, the elders).

Access to specific internal information within hooligan structures is hierarchical. Members considered by the group to be credible and loyal (a status they often obtain after multiple verification and screening activities) have access to valuable information from the point of view of law enforcement agencies. The lower someone is in the hierarchy, the more accessible the information, but it is usually of lesser importance (Radwaniak, 2011). The activities described here additionally foster the formation of a hierarchy in the group and, by way of feedback, strengthen the position of the group leader. Effective leadership also enables criminal groups to undertake activities that extend well beyond the area of the stadium.

In the case of the Polish variant of organised crime originating from football hooligan circles, it needs to be observed that it is highly capable of planning counter-detection activities. This results from the ability to commit financial resources, a well-developed network of contacts, significant criminal experience and effective leadership. The qualifications, abilities, routines and personality traits of individual group members, as well as the availability of appropriate technical facilities, mean that the modus operandi of the criminal group as a whole is highly characterised by individual elements. However, the group's modus operandi cannot be considered to be that of each of its members (Wnorowski, 1978). The results of criminological research in Poland indicate unequivocally that in the case of so-called stadium crime, counter-detection activities were the result of the evolution of modus operandi, which began to include actions designed to avoid criminal liability; particular elements began to incorporate specific counter-detection activities.

Counter-detection activities undertaken at the planning stage of a crime are unique; this applies both to mass disruptions of public order at sports venues and to other forms of behaviour that show no connection to a football match. So-called criminal intelligence serves as an example of this phenomenon: the literature suggests that one of its sources is direct observation of the venue or surveillance of individuals. Groups of football hooligans become familiar with the security of sports venues in great detail; an illustration is the mass disturbances of public order at the municipal stadium in Toruń on 21 May 2005, which were preceded by intensive reconnaissance activities undertaken by the 'Młode Orły' fighting unit of supporters of the Lechia Gdańsk team. Members of this unit mapped the Toruń stadium, creating a video recording of its topography, including access routes. Another interesting example demonstrating the planning element of actions undertaken by football hooligans was the mass disturbance of public order during the match between Ruch Chorzów and ŁKS Łódź on 3 May 2005 in Chorzów. After a large group of hooligans forced their way onto the pitch, a dozen

or so pre-selected individuals damaged a CCTV camera by cutting off its power supply (Chlebowicz, 2009).

Criminal intelligence is being consistently developed and advanced, drawing on the practical experience of football hooligans as well as on modern technology. It is virtually standard procedure to track hooligans from rival 'firms' by means of GPS trackers attached to their cars. GPS trackers are also attached to smugglers' cars in order to determine where contraband is stored; for example, GPS tracking enabled football hooligans to break into an underground cigarette factory in Silesia. It has been noted that in the case of some crimes, hooligans refrain from using mobile phones in order to avoid being linked to the place where the act was committed and their movements being traced; communication is instead maintained by means of short-wave radios. In the course of one particular case, it was revealed that the hooligans who had fatally beaten one of the leaders of a rival criminal group had stashed their mobile phones in a basement before committing the crime; gangsters with connections to the football hooligan community jammed the locators and mobile network near one of the production halls, because an illegal cigarette factory was operating inside. The criminal group, Psycho Fans, based in Chorzów, employed a systematic approach to their activities, which were carried out by a dedicated hooligan unit led by Łukasz B., also known as 'Balus'. This involved gathering information on rival gangs through regular social media searches, tracking their vehicles using GPS trackers and even using software specifically purchased for hacking into social network accounts.

The range of counter-detection behaviour includes the destruction of traces and evidence of crimes, especially during actions involving beatings using dangerous objects by members of rival groups of football hooligans or hooligans who have chosen to cooperate with the Central Investigation Bureau of the Police and testify in criminal trials. Such behaviour includes the destruction of footwear, machetes used during attacks and mobile phones. Cars used during such incidents are usually destroyed by burning, cut up for scrap, thrown into bodies of water or otherwise hidden. An undoubtedly offensive counter-detection technique is the intimidation of witnesses, usually former hooligans. The main methods of intimidation are usually beating, causing bodily harm – for example, through the use of flares (in one case, flares were used against a key witness travelling in a car) – or drawing graffiti in housing estates where hooligans reside stating that the witness in question is an informer.

Criminal groups operating in football hooligan circles have significant financial resources at their disposal gained from illegal activities; this gives them the opportunity to initiate corrupt activities. The collected materials show that a gang based with the Cracovia Krakow hooligans (the Cracovia Gang) used corruption and inverse surveillance in the local court to get access to court files, laundered money through investments in the development industry and used counter-surveillance, which can be illustrated by a situation involving the evacuation of a drug warehouse while the immediate vicinity was patrolled with cars in order to possibly block police



cars. The secret communication platform used by the Cracovia hooligans, ‘Anom’, is also used by criminals around the world, including the bosses of Colombian and Mexican drug cartels. They were convinced that their messages could not be traced; however, they did not know that Anom was a trap set by the FBI.

The efficiency of corruption counter-detection efforts is dependent on the durability of the relationship between the criminal group member and the police officer. Lasting relationships between police officers and criminal group members are most often based on spending time together in places such as gyms, pubs, clubs or social agencies (Miller, 2003). Paweł M., aka ‘Misiek’, the leader of the criminal group of Wisła Kraków hooligans, the so-called ‘Sharks’, testified that in April 2018, he received a call from Mirek from Gdańsk, who said that the police were preparing actions to detain Wisła Kraków hooligans. Mirek allegedly learned this from one of the anti-terrorist agents with whom he went to the gym. An extreme example of delaying actions was an order given by Torcida, the gang of hooligans of the Gornik Zabrze club, to assassinate a judge. While pursuing their goal of subverting criminal trials, hooligans also corrupted doctors who issued medical certificates in exchange for money. This enabled criminals to obtain evidence that their health condition did not allow them to stand trial.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1 illustrates the range of forms of counter-detection activities undertaken by the most dangerous criminal groups operating within football hooligan groups in Poland.

Table 1. Range of forms of counter-detection activities undertaken by the most dangerous criminal groups operating within football hooligan groups in Poland.

Gang	Counter-surveillance	Inverse surveillance	Use of corruption	Delaying actions	Legalisation and hiding of assets
Cracovia Gang (Cracovia Cracow)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Psycho-Fans (Ruch Chorzów)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

1 In order to expand the empirical material, we analysed information on organised criminal groups operating in the football hooligan milieu based on information from journalistic investigations and a review of court judgments published on electronic portals available on the websites of courts in Kraków, Katowice, Wrocław and Łódź. Announcements from the National Prosecutor’s Office and information provided by the Central Police Investigation Bureau were also an important source of information. In addition, press information available in electronic media was analysed. The criteria adopted during this search included activities within organised groups of football hooligans and elements of the modus operandi that are related to counter-detection activities.

Sharks (Wisła Cracow)	YES	YES	YES	YES	NOT CONFIRMED
Torcida (Górnik Zabrze)	YES	YES	NOT CONFIRMED	YES	NOT CONFIRMED
Teddy Boys 95 (Legia Warsaw)	YES	NOT CONFIRMED	YES	YES	YES
Brygada Banici (Lech Poznan)	YES	NOT CONFIRMED	YES	YES	YES
Green Gang (Lechia Gdansk)	YES	NOT CONFIRMED	NOT CONFIRMED	YES	NOT CONFIRMED

## Conclusions

The phenomenon of counter-detection activities of criminals, although noticed by forensic scientists over the last 100 years, has not been exhaustively studied. For this reason, not even a basic typology of these activities has been developed within forensics. To systematise knowledge on anti-forensics, we have described the scope, characteristics and contexts of the counter-detection activities undertaken by groups operating within football hooligan groups in Poland. This has allowed us to create a framework in which we could describe the typology of the main forms of counter-detection activities by criminals.

The actual nexus between undertaking counter-detection activities and the operations of organised crime groups involving football hooligans in Poland is more complex and nuanced than is generally described in this article. Moreover, for other countries, the relationship between the two varies across time and territories, and may depend on various factors, including the specific socio-cultural context and the state involved. We note that the application of counter-detection activities in practice gives organised crime groups based in groups of football hooligans a crucial advantage over law enforcement. According to our observations, there has been a general increase in counter-detection activities applied by criminals throughout Poland since 2000.

There are two contexts in which inference about counter-detection activities limited only to criminal groups in Poland based among football hooligans remains problematic. First of all, most criminal trials in Poland against members of these groups are still ongoing, and there is no full access to court files for forensic researchers. Furthermore, the scope of criminal counter-detection activities has all the appearance of being significantly more extant than criminal groups based

in groups of football hooligans. Most counter-detection activities undertaken by criminal groups in Poland based among football hooligans within the domestic sphere is done locally, whether legally or illegally. In this context, we note a thriving illicit market. While Poland could, indeed, simply be an outlier in Europe, it could also be the herald of a possible future for other countries.

Counter-detection activities constitute an interesting area for further research, one worth investigating, studying and drawing conclusions from, especially with regard to the preparation of police and special forces to work out the modus operandi of criminal groups operating among football hooligans, who more and more frequently imbue criminal tactics with elements showing clear signs of counter-detection activities. It should be noted that a range of counter-detection measures similar to those used by criminal groups operating in football hooligan circles is employed by members of motorbike gangs (Pływaczewski, 2022).

Combating threats posed by the football hooligan milieu and arising from the professionalisation of their criminal activities, exemplified by the application of a system of counter-detection measures, ought to become an essential element of contemporary security strategy, both locally and regionally. In view of this, it is also possible to conclude that counter-detection issues lie at the root of the actual causes of crime and, incidentally, confirm the validity of the assertion that it is not the severity of punishment but its inevitability that deters people from committing a crime or strengthens their motivation to do so (Beccaria, 1973). Consequently, the results of research on counter-detection measures, if they are not ignored, may, in future shape an effective yet increasingly less severe penal policy.

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