

Weekly Intelligence Brief

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Strengthening Relations Between Turkey and Kazakhstan

Megan Marsh

Senior Analyst

Asia Desk

On 11 SEP, top diplomats from Turkey and Kazakhstan met in Astana, Kazakhstan. Hakan Fidan, Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Murat Nurtleu, Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister discussed strengthening their cooperation in the defense industry and continuing to develop their economic partnership through the Trans-Caspian International Trade Route. This allows the countries to bypass sanctioned Russian trade routes. The two countries also have a military cooperation agreement that

strengthens their military ties through activities such as intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, cyber defense, and humanitarian aid operations.

Kazakhstan has strong economic relations with Russia, with roughly 40% of its food and clothing being imported from Russia. Additionally, Kazakhstan is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) equivalent led by Russia. Despite this history of strong ties, Kazakhstan has refused to supply troops for Russia in the Russo-Ukrainian War. The Kazakh government has since taken measures

to distance the country from Russia. These steps have included strengthening military and economic relations with other states, such as China and Turkey, as seen this week with Fidan's visit.

We can assess with moderate confidence that it is likely that Kazakhstan will continue to slowly distance themselves from Russia. We can also assess with moderate confidence that it is unlikely that Kazakhstan will formally end any relations with Russia in the near future.

Swedish Criminal Organization Lauanders Money Through Spotify

Josh Koval

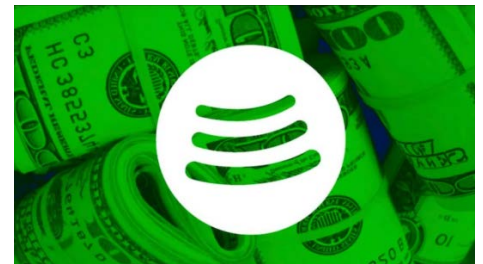
Senior Analyst
Europe Desk

On 05 SEPT, criminal organizations reported by Sweden's i24 newsfeed are said to be utilizing fake Spotify streams to launder ill-gotten gains following a recent surge in bombings and shootings. The bombings and shootings are suspected to be conducted by these criminal organizations across Sweden.

The suspected criminal networks have allegedly been directing

proceeds from drug dealers, robberies, fraud, and contract killings into fake Spotify streams. Spotify counts one stream anytime a track is listened to for 30 seconds or more. By laundering the money into these fake streams, it allows the organizations to receive payments from the streaming platform for the artificially inflated stream numbers. Spotify – a Swedish company – has yet to comment on these recent events after the Swedish government questioned these allegations.

We can assess with high confidence that Swedish organized crime syndicates are likely to continue using this method to launder their money. We also assess with high confidence that these Swedish crime organizations are unlikely to be caught.



European and American Interest Rates rise with intention to reduce inflation in economy

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Interest rates in the Eurozone have hit an all-time high of 4%. The increase comes as predictions for this year's inflation rate are expected to be north of 5%, with food and energy prices being the most noticeable rise for consumers in Europe. The rise in interest rates is meant to counter the inflation rate which is 5.3% as of August

2023. It is predicted to drop to around 2.9% in 2024 and then drop further to a total of 2.2% in 2025.

American markets have seen interest rates move to 5.25%, marking the 11th consecutive rate rise since the start of 2022. The goal for the American rates is to curb inflation until it is under 2%. Inflation rates hit 3.2% in July. Head of the Federal Reserve, Jerome Powell, claims that food and energy prices "remain volatile" despite

inflation dropping from last year's high of 9.1%. Powell stated that until inflation is under control for certain, the Federal Reserve intends to stay restrictive on policy. He also didn't rule out further raises in the interest rate if the Federal Reserve sees fit.

We can assess with high confidence that it is likely the interest rates for European and American markets won't lower until inflation is deemed under control.

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