The Suspicious Activity Report

MAY / JUNE 2022

New Zealand Financial Intelligence Unit



INTRODUCTION

The Suspicious Activity Report is produced by the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), part of the New Zealand Police Financial Crime Group, currently led by Detective Inspector Christiaan Barnard. This report is comprised of FIU holdings and open-source media reporting collected within the last month.

Background

The Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) Act became law in October 2009. The Act's purpose is to detect and deter money laundering and contribute to public confidence in the financial system. It seeks to achieve this through compliance with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations. The Financial Intelligence Unit produces this monthly report as part of its obligations under section 142(b)(i) and section 143(b) of the AML/CFT Act 2009. The Financial Crime Group is made up of the Financial Intelligence Unit, Asset Recovery Unit, the Money Laundering Team, and a group at Police National Headquarters.

Financial Intelligence Unit

The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) has been in operation since 1996. Its core function is to receive, collate, analyse, and disseminate information contained in Suspicious Transaction Reports, Prescribed Transaction Reports, and Border Cash Reports. It develops and produces a number of financial intelligence products, training packages and policy advice. The FIU participates in the AML/CFT National Coordination Committee chaired by the Ministry of Justice, and chairs the Financial Crime Prevention Network (FCPN). It is a contributing member to international bodies such as the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units and the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering.

Asset Recovery Unit

The New Zealand Police Asset Recovery Unit (ARU) is led by Detective Inspector Craig Hamilton and was established in December 2009 to implement the Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Act 2009 (CPRA). The ARU is the successor to the Proceeds of Crime Units, which were established in 1991, and was combined with the FIU to create the Financial Crime Group. The CPRA expanded the regime for the forfeiture of property that has been directly or indirectly acquired or derived from significant criminal behaviour. It is intended to reduce the possibilities for individuals or groups to profit from criminal behaviour, to reduce the opportunities they have to expand their criminal enterprises, and act as a deterrent for criminal activity. There are five Asset Recovery Units, based in Whangarei, Auckland, Waikato/Bay of Plenty, Wellington, and Christchurch.

Money Laundering Team

The Money Laundering Team (MLT), led by Detective Senior Sergeant Andy Dunhill, is the newest element of the FCG and was established in 2017 to target money laundering risks and reduce the investigative gap for financial investigations in organised crime. The MLT investigates criminal offenders moving the proceeds of predicate offending. The focus of the team is on disrupting and dismantling facilitators assisting organised criminal groups to hide illicit funds, including complicit Designated Non-Financial Business and Professions (DNFBPs) and other third parties such as money remitters.



FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT UPDATE

Notes from the Head of FIU Detective Inspector Christiaan Barnard

After nearly 12 months relieving as the Director of the Financial Crime Group (FCG), my return to the Financial Intelligence Unit is imminent. The Financial Crime Group workforce numbers about 160 staff and comprises the FIU, Asset Recovery Unit (ARU), and the Money Laundering Team (MLT). My time in the role has given me a fresh appreciation of the excellent work that all the members of the FCG do to keep our communities safe. For those of you following each edition of our newsletter, you would have noted that there has been a steady



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series of relievers in the FIU Manager role. Each one was a Detective Senior Sergeant drawn from the FIU and ARU who was able to bring his unique financial crime perspective to leadership of the FIU.

There have been a number of events over the past year that have impacted the AML/CFT landscape in New Zealand, and the FIU specifically.

Since the publication of the Mutual Evaluation in April 2021, we have collaborated with other agencies and the private sector on the AML/CFT statutory review which has culminated in a report being submitted to Cabinet this month covering over 200 different issues. Work will immediately commence on those issues that can be addressed through regulation, leaving the rest to be addressed via the lengthy legislative process. While several of the changes are designed to address the recommendations arising out of the Mutual Evaluation, we have jointly sought to improve the whole system by taking a broad approach to the review.

This year, the FIU introduced new technology to transform the way we can visualise and analyse the data we collect from reporting entities. In November 2021, 'IQ' went live – IQ is a platform comprised of Qlik Sense and Datarobot, a powerful tool that enables us to develop our own applications in-house to meet the needs of the FIU and the FCG. In order to effectively leverage the new software, we have recruited more data analysts, who have been very busy developing and publishing applications.

Speaking of recruiting data analysts, we have recently announced our partnership with Autism NZ to create the Neurodivergence Programme. With the support of Autism NZ, we are recruiting neurodivergent staff as data and research analysts. We are removing the barriers that prevent neurodivergent people from accessing these roles in the standard recruitment process. This initiative is a first for the New Zealand Government and I am looking forward to seeing these positions being filled over the coming months.

World events have also impacted on the work by the New Zealand FIU. The Taliban toppling of the Afghan government in September 2021 created new security and terrorism financing risks, while Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine in February 2022 resulted in the passing of the Russia Sanctions Act in March, requiring 'duty holders' to submit suspicious

activity reports for suspected sanctions breaches. The FIU has been working closely with MFAT to support them with the implementation of the Russia Sanctions Act and its associated regulations.

Last week, I was in Latvia for the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units Plenary, which was the first time that the Plenary has been held face-to-face since 2019 due to COVID. Egmont is comprised of 166 jurisdictions, and 120 delegations were able to attend. I took the opportunity over the four days to have bilateral meetings with a number of jurisdictions, to either thank their FIUs for their assistance with Mutual Assistance Requests we had sent them, or to chase them up on outstanding requests. It was a busy week, but after two-and-a-half years of meeting through computer screens, it was a welcome change to see my colleagues in person. There is a lot to be said for the increased engagement and ability to get things done when you can see people in person. I will provide a more detailed report on my trip to Latvia in the next edition of the Suspicious Activity Report.

Remember – know the risk, ask the questions, and report your suspicion to the #nzfiu... and do what you can to disrupt, prevent, and deter.

2021-2022 Year in Review

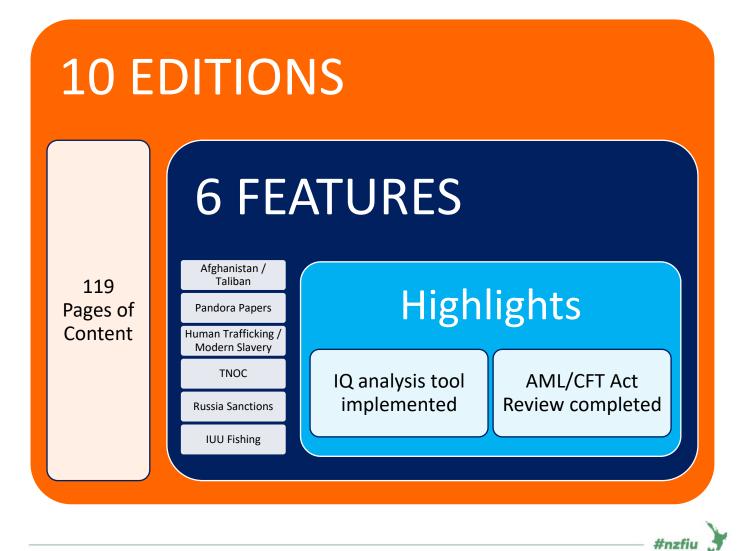
Looking Back

The Suspicious Activity Report is now in its third year, this being the 22nd edition. Building on the prior year, the 2021-2022 editions have included features on current events, including the Taliban assuming control of Afghanistan, the revelations of the Pandora Papers, and New Zealand's implementation of sanctions on Russia.

This year has seen increased capability for FIU data insights with the implementation of IQ in November 2021. The new software has enabled the FIU to detect, discover, explore, and share financial intelligence more effectively and efficiently.

Finally, this year saw a comprehensive, multi-agency collaborative review of the AML/CFT Act (Review). Many of you participated by making submissions to the Ministry of Justice and/or engaging in the industry sessions, and we are grateful for your contributions and feedback. The next phase of the Review will begin once the recommendations put forward are accepted by Parliament. Stay tuned for further industry engagement!

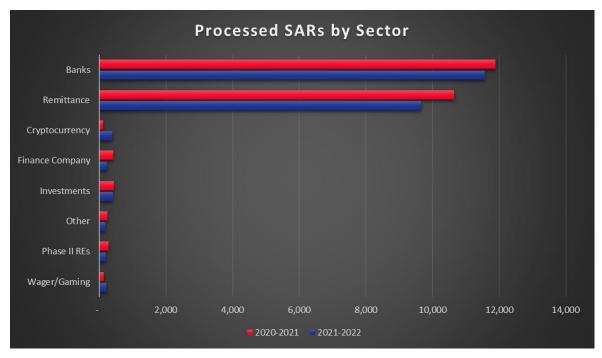
At the end of this month's edition, we have included an updated survey. Please take a moment to provide feedback to assist us in understanding your interests and planning future issues of *The Suspicious Activity Report*.



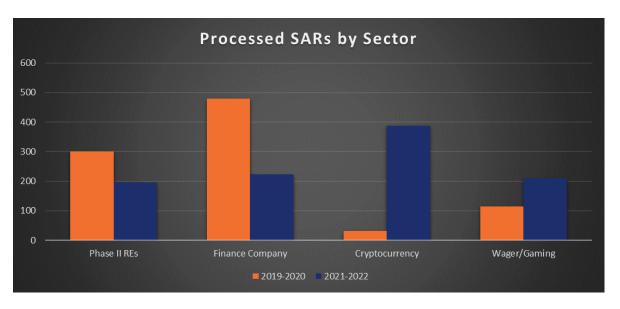
Suspicious Activity Reporting to the FIU

The 2021-2022 annual statistics dashboard (included at the end of this edition) shows the number of received and processed suspicious activity reports (SARs) has decreased slightly from the previous year, with a 5% decrease in transaction-based reports and a 13% decrease in activity-based reports.

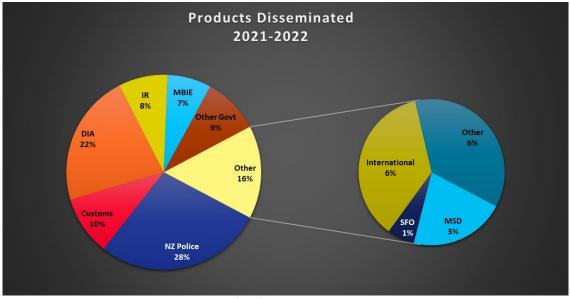
As in previous years, the majority of reports are received from the banking and remittance sectors. Almost all sectors of reporting entities submitted fewer reports compared to the prior financial year. As we encourage quality over quantity, this isn't necessarily a negative result.



Disappointingly, reporting from Phase II and finance entities fell again this financial year, an overall reduction of 35% and 56% respectively since the 2019-2020 year. We would expect to see increased reporting in the less-mature sectors. For example, two sectors increased their reporting exponentially over the same period: cryptocurrency and wager/gaming.

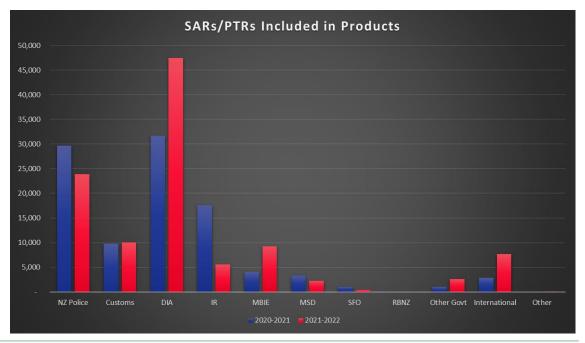


When considering disseminations, the dashboard shows the number of products (e.g. information reports) has decreased by over 70% from the prior year. This is almost entirely due to providing particular Police units, such as the Asset Recovery Units and the Money Laundering Team, with direct access to goAML. Investigators and financial analysts who have direct access interrogated the data over 59,000 times since July 2021, primarily reviewing the FIU's holdings on account numbers, persons, and entities.



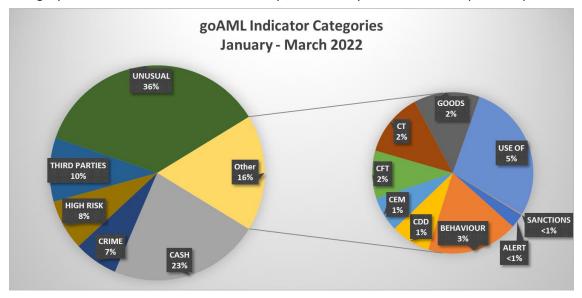
Direct data access can only be applied for if certain requirements are met, such as working in an investigation role that includes an ongoing requirement to access financial data. The application is reviewed by the FIU Systems Manager, and approved by either the Operations Manager or the Manager of the FIU. These goAML users have a more limited access than FIU staff, and may still need to submit inquiries.

Therefore, Police continues to be the FIU's largest 'customer' in terms of number of products received. However, for SARs, STRs, and PTRs included in those products, the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) received more than twice the number provided to Police, with 43% of the total disseminated. International disseminations of SARs and PTRs via Egmont also increased significantly, with the FIU assisting our overseas partners with several large investigations.

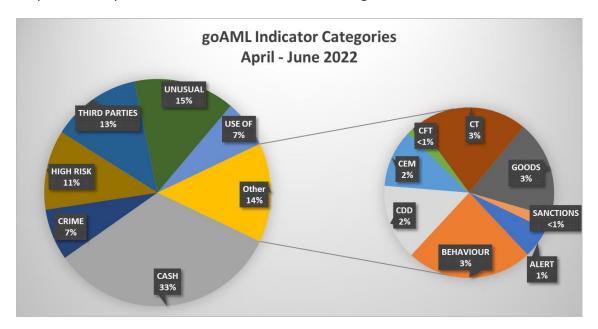


In March 2022, goAML indicators were revised slightly to remove the more general indicators, refine and clarify other indicators, and add indicators for cash withdrawals and purchases of illegal goods. This was to help reporting entities more clearly indicate the activity they were seeing, as well as assist the FIU to better understand overall themes and patterns.

Analysing the data from January 2022 through March 2022, the most often selected indicator category was 'Unusual Transaction or Activity', followed by 'Cash', similar to previous periods.



After the removal of the more general indicators in the 'Unusual' category, selection of other indicator categories increased, including Cash, High Risk Jurisdictions, and Third Parties. Reviewing the April-June 2022 period, the Cash category quickly became the most selected category, with Cash1 (Cash Deposits) the most often selected indicator. The newly added indicator for cash withdrawals – Cash6 – is already the sixth most chosen indicator, only two months later.

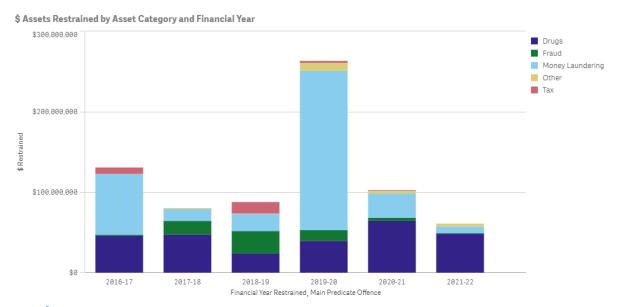


Choosing the appropriate corresponding indicator(s) helps the FIU form a macro view of suspicion activity, which in turn assists us in understanding overall risks and vulnerabilities.

Asset Restraints and Forfeitures

Restraints

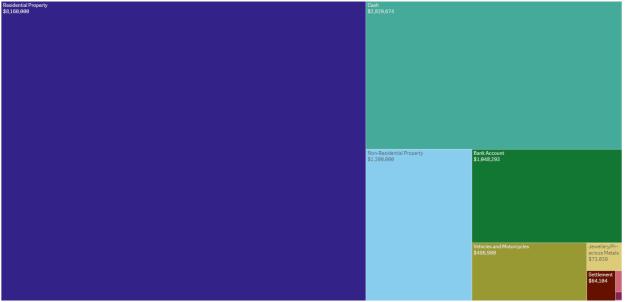
In the 2021/2022 year, 316 assets were restrained, with a total value of over \$60 million. As in previous years, the asset category with the most value restrained was residential property, at an estimated combined value of \$39 million across 49 properties. Drug offending was once again the most prevalent crime type, with 180 assets worth over \$180 million restrained last year.



Forfeitures

Similar to restraints, property was the asset category with the most value forfeited, with nearly \$10 million across 16 residential and one non-residential properties. Although lower in combined value, cash and bank accounts were more often forfeited, representing 56 and 17 asset forfeitures respectively.

\$ Forfeited by Asset Category for July 2021 - June 2022



Please note that all figures are considered estimates only.

INTERNATIONAL AML/CFT NEWS

Australia

AFP to target Italian organised crime and money laundering syndicates

In June, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) stated in a media release that after obtaining invaluable intelligence on the ANoM platform, the AFP will target Italian organised crime and money laundering syndicates.

AFP Assistant Commissioner Crime Command Nigel Ryan said the intelligence obtained through ANoM provided an invaluable insight into the scale of illicit drug imports facilitated by the 'Ndrangheta, the profits they were making, and how often they worked with outlaw motorcycle groups. He stated: "'Ndrangheta are not just an Australian problem – they are a global problem and are responsible for trafficking 70 percent of the world's cocaine."

Canada



<u>Cullen Commission releases its final report on money laundering in</u> <u>British Columbia</u>

The Commission of Inquiry into Money Laundering in British Columbia (BC), led by BC Supreme Court Justice Austin Cullen, was established in 2019 to inquire into and report on the extent of money laundering in British Columbia, the role of effectiveness of regulatory authorities and the barriers to law enforcement. The public inquiry heard from nearly 200 witnesses.

On 15 June, the Cullen Commission released its Final Report, spanning more than 1,800 pages and including 101 recommendations. Cullen stated that failures of law enforcement and government policy have led to the "staggering" proliferation of money laundering in the province.

EUROPOL/Hungary

Five arrests in Hungary for money laundering across three continents

According to EUROPOL, police in Budapest raided 24 homes in Budapest on 9 May, arresting 15 people, including five on suspicion of moving €44 million (NZ\$71.9m) in illicit funds through bank accounts across three continents.

EUROPOL estimates the criminal network to have been active since September 2020; the criminal origin of €5 million (NZ\$8.2m) has already been identified. The investigation uncovered 44 individuals involved in suspected criminal activities, 10 of whom organised the activity, while 34 were acting as mules.

The joint investigation uncovered an array of 'front' companies with no record of meaningful activities, with tens of millions of euros stashed in 32 countries across Europe, South America, and Australia.

Spain

Spain busts smuggling ring selling polluting gases on black market

Spanish authorities have arrested 27 suspects across Spain as a result of an investigation involving EUROPOL and the European Anti-Fraud Office. Law enforcement agents searched 20 homes and 10 companies, seizing 110 tonnes of fluorinated greenhouse gases, as well as cash, luxury cars, and illicit drugs.

Spain's Finance Ministry said the investigation started in September 2021 when agents discovered a company that was selling gases illegally imported at a third of the market price. The investigation subsequently uncovered a wider network that used a travel agency to accept payment and launder the money. Those arrested face charges including smuggling, money launder and being part of a criminal organisation.

United Kingdom

Wigan drugs gang laundered criminal cash through ice cream parlours and takeaways

Seven men from Wigan were convicted of offences including conspiracy to supply cocaine and money laundering and have been jailed.

The court heard during the trial how an investigation began in July 2018 by Wigan's anti-gang officers. Many in the drug gang registered themselves as the directors of Limited companies, including 'WTR Sheds', 'Mikey's Sweet Dreams' ice cream parlour, 'Botatelli's Ice Cream' and a takeaway called 'Spudway', which were said to be set up with the intention of laundering illicit proceeds.

Hundreds of items were seized, including drugs, cash, mobile phones, and SIM cards, along with hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of assets including high-value designer clothing, jewellery, and high-end vehicles.

United States

Five states order a metaverse casino with alleged ties to Russia to halt sale of NFTs

Regulators in five US states have simultaneously filed emergency orders against a virtual casino operating in the <u>metaverse</u> they say has ties to Russia. Flamingo Casino Club's website lists perks such as virtual concerts, poker tournaments, and tennis courts. The site also entices patrons by offering a chance to win expensive prizes such as Teslas and iPhones in randomised lotteries.



Lottery between Flamingo Casino Club NFT holders: 150.000\$ - 5 NFT holders 10.000\$ - 20 NFT holders 10 Tesla model 3 - 10 NFT holders 200 Apple iPhone 13 200 NFT holders 5% more - 15 NFT holders

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Screenshot taken from Flamingo Casino Club's website which says NFT holders are eligible for prizes, such as Teslas and iPhones. Source: CNBC.com

Investigations into the casino began in March not long after it began operating. Through a series of subpoenas, regulators discovered that the IP address for the Flamingo Casino Club's desktop computer and mobile device are registered to Moscow. The virtual casino also falsely claimed to be in partnership with the well-established Flamingo Las Vegas casino.

Art / Antiquities Trafficking

Egyptian antiquities connected to international trafficking ring seized from The Met

Three years after the seizure of a ≤ 3.5 million golden sarcophagus from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, five more Egyptian antiques have been confiscated from the museum by the New York District Attorney's Office. The five objects are collectively worth more than ≤ 3 million and were confiscated as part of a global investigation into an international trafficking ring that led to a series of indictments, including against former Louvre director Jean-Luc Martinez.

During the past seven years, <u>Egypt was able to recover 29,000</u> smuggled antiquities, in cooperation with competent authorities. According to Ahmed Khalil, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Egyptian Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Combating Unit (EMLCU), the antiques were seized from several countries, such as Austria, Denmark, Mexico, Jordan, Switzerland, and the United States.

Khalil explained in a recent speech that the EMLCU works in coordination with national authorities, collecting and receiving financial information related to suspected cases of these crimes, as well as cooperating with financial intelligence units worldwide through membership in the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units.

Corruption / Insider Threat

Federal agent convicted of taking bribes from organised crime

A former special agent with Homeland Security Investigations, Felix Cisneros Jr, was found guilty by a federal jury of 30 felonies: one count of conspiracy to commit bribery of a public official, one count of bribery, 26 counts of money laundering, and two counts of subscribing to a false tax return.

According to evidence presented at Cisneros' trial, he accepted over US\$100,000 in cash, luxury travel, and other items of value from a person who was associated with a criminal organisation. In exchange for the bribes, he performed a series of official acts at the behest the person who paid the bribes.

Weapons Trafficking

Former police chief sentenced for illegally trafficking 200 fully automatic machine guns

The former Chief of Police from Ohio, Dorian LaCourse, was sentenced to three years' probation, including six months home detention, for conspiracy and making false statements. His co-conspirators, two federally licensed firearms dealers in Indiana, previously pleaded guilty in separate cases to participating in the same conspiracy and have not yet been sentenced.

According to court documents, LaCourse illegally exploited a law enforcement exception to the federal ban on the possession or transfer of fully automatic machine guns. His co-conspirators resold the machine guns at a significant profit. Over 100 illegally obtained machine guns and over 52,000 rounds of ammunition will be forfeited to the United States.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)



Outcomes FATF Plenary, 14-17 June 2022

The last Plenary of the FATF under the German Presidency of Dr. Marcus Pleyer was held in June, with delegates from over 200 jurisdictions participating in the discussions.

It was agreed during the Plenary that the FATF will severely limit the Russian Federation's role and influence within the FATF, due to the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. A <u>formal statement</u> has been released.

Also in June, the FATF published the <u>Targeted Update on Implementation of FATF Standards on</u> <u>Virtual Assets – VASPs</u> report. The report includes relevant emerging risks and market developments, including on decentralised finance, non-fungible tokens, and unhosted wallets.

MONEYVAL



2021 Annual Report

The Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL) released its 2021 Annual Report in May. In the report, MONEYVAL examines the action required to improve the fight against money laundering. It also assesses compliance with international standards and developments in the legal and institutional frameworks to prevent money laundering and terrorist

financing in the 34 jurisdictions that were subject to its monitoring as at 31 December 2021.

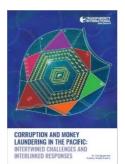
Tax Justice Network

Financial Secrecy Index 2022

The Financial Secrecy Index (FSI), a comprehensive study from the Tax Justice Network undertaken in the United States by the <u>Financial Accountability and Corporate Transparency</u> (FACT) Coalition, is a ranking of jurisdictions most complicit in helping individuals to hide their finances from the rule of law.

According to the 2022 FSI, the United States has been ranked the most secretive financial jurisdiction in the world for the first time. The report attributes the US score, in part, to unaddressed loopholes and lax rules in US anti-money laundering tax laws.

Transparency International New Zealand



Corruption and Money Laundering in the Pacific

Research undertaken by Professor John Hopkins and Chat le Nguyen from Canterbury University was published by Transparency International New Zealand in May. The report analyses the primary Anti-Money Laundering regulations relevant and applicable to anti-corruption, and examines the capacity and practice of implementing these standards in the Pacific. <u>Radio New Zealand interviewed</u> Professor John Hopkins about the report (7-minute audio).

FEEDBACK

Tell Us What You Think

Your feedback is important and will assist us in planning future issues of *The Suspicious Activity Report*. Please take the time to complete this form. The completed form can be emailed to: FIU@police.govt.nz.

1. Please select your industry:

 Accountant or Bookkeeper Bank Broker or Custodian Building Society Cash Transport Casino Charitable Trust Collective Investment Scheme Credit Unions Crypto/VASP Debt Collection Derivatives Issuer Factoring Finance Company Financial Advisor Financial Leasing Foreign Exchange 	 Investment Company Law Firm Life Insurer Managed Investment Scheme Manager Money Service Business Non-Bank Deposit Taking NBNDTL Payment Provider Peer-to-peer Lending Provider Real Estate Remittance Safe Deposit Securities Dealer Tax Pooling Trust or Company Service Provider (TCSP) Trust and Loan Company Wager and Gaming Services

2. How often do you read The Suspicious Activity Report? (Check all that apply)

[] Every edition

[] Occasionally

[] Only editions with content directly applicable to my industry or area of interest

3. What information or article did you find the most (or least) helpful?

4. Do you have any specific AML/CFT questions you'd like the FIU to address?

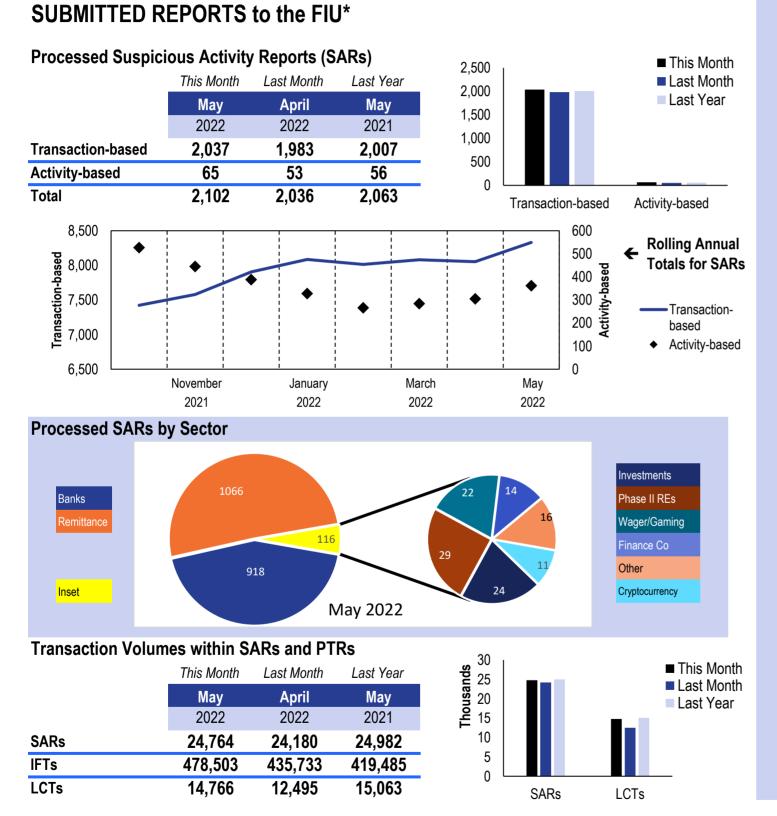
5. What topics would you like to see covered in future editions of *The Suspicious Activity Report*?

6. What other feedback do you have about The Suspicious Activity Report?

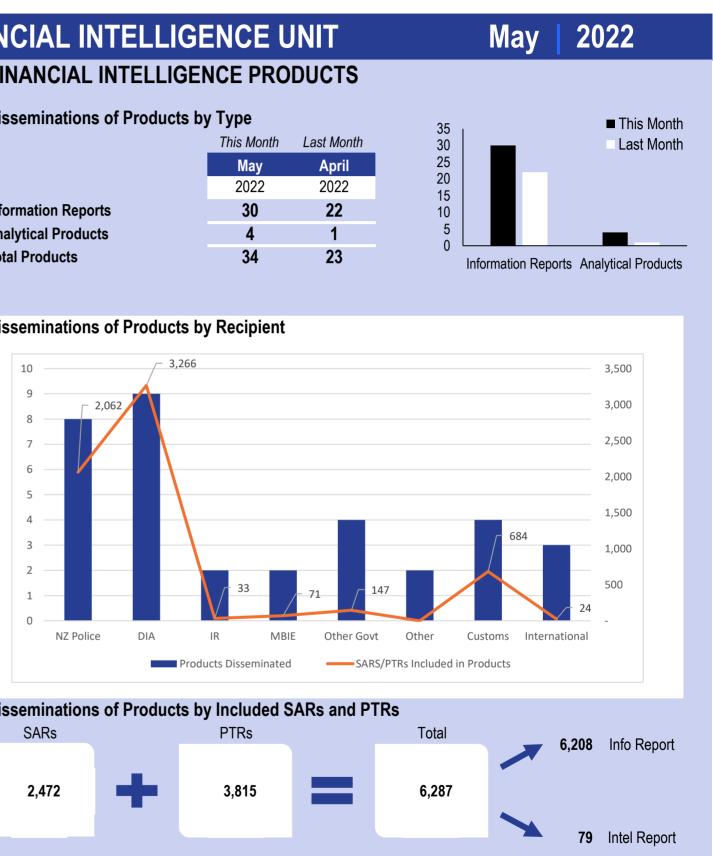


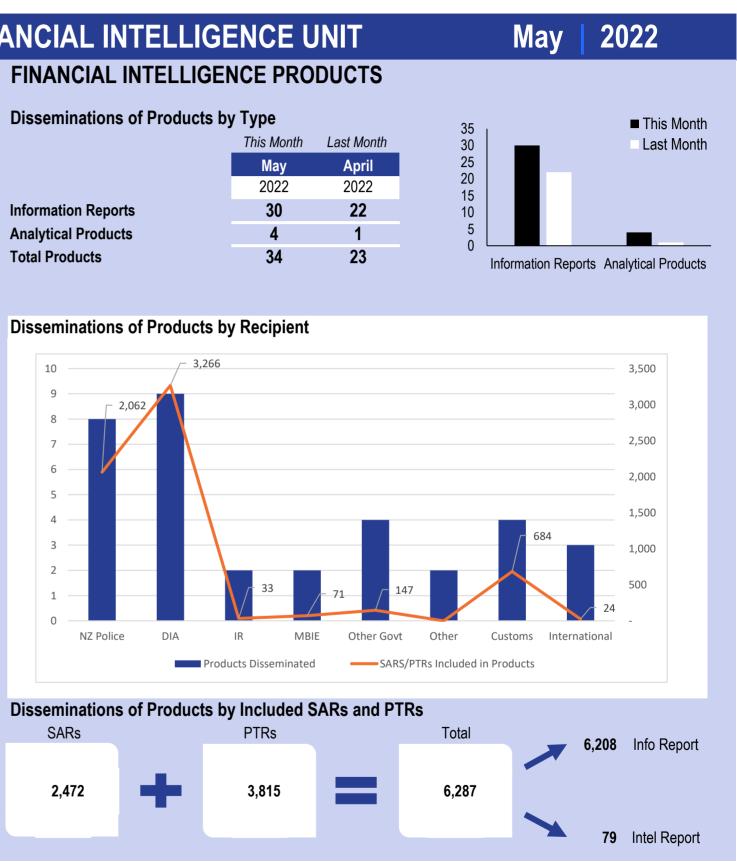
MONTHLY STATISTICS*

NEW ZEALAND POLICE FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT



Disseminations of Products by Type		
	This Month	Last Month
	May	April
	2022	2022
Information Reports	30	22
Analytical Products	4	1
Total Products	34	23

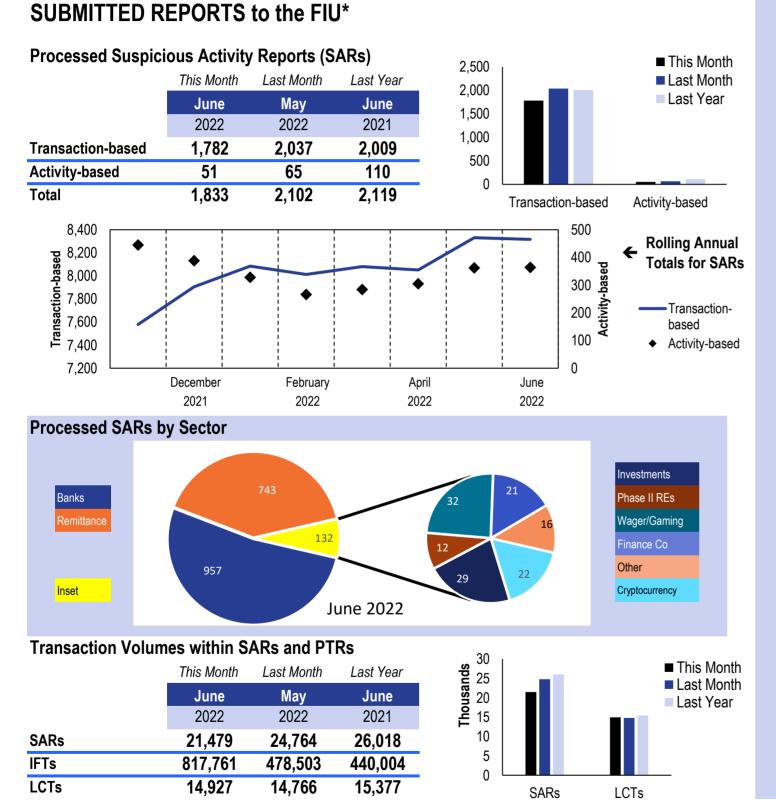




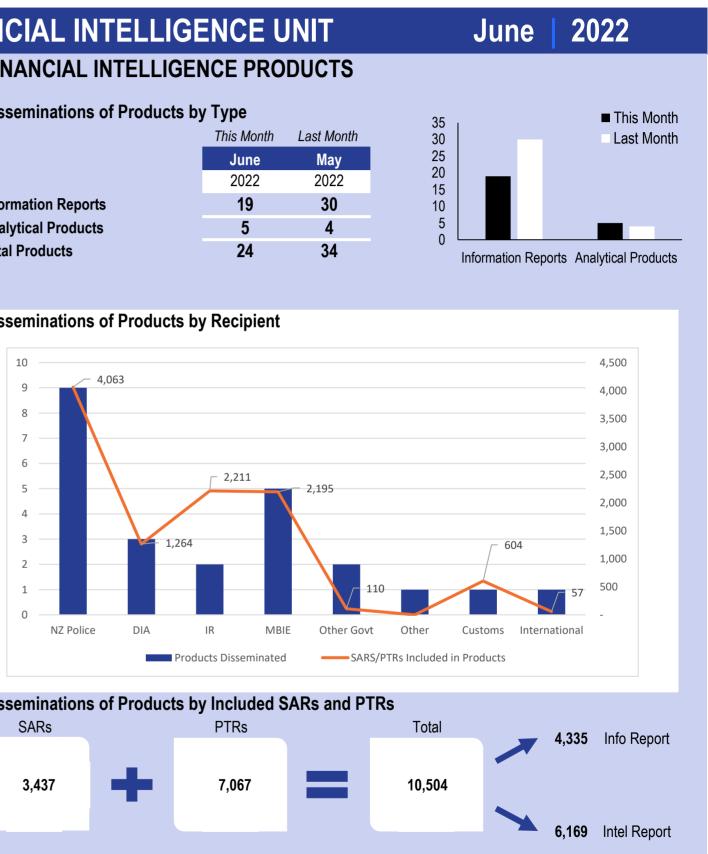
*Statistical data for transaction reporting and intelligence products may be updated as new information is processed, and so there may be minor discrepancies between the statistical figures contained in this report and subsequent reports.

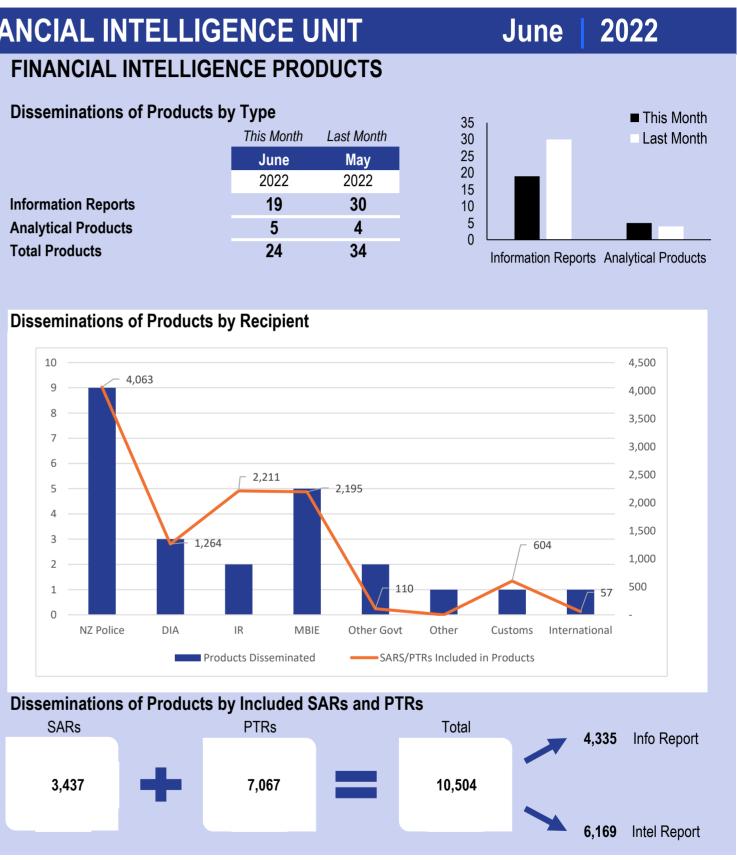
MONTHLY STATISTICS*

NEW ZEALAND POLICE FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT



Disseminations of Products by Type		
	This Month	Last Month
	June	Мау
	2022	2022
Information Reports	19	30
Analytical Products	5	4
Total Products	24	34



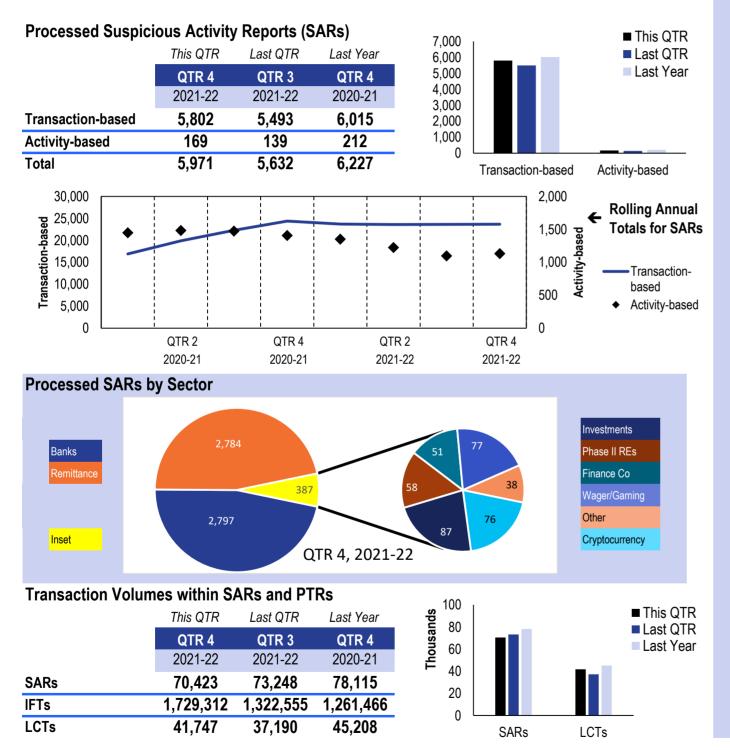


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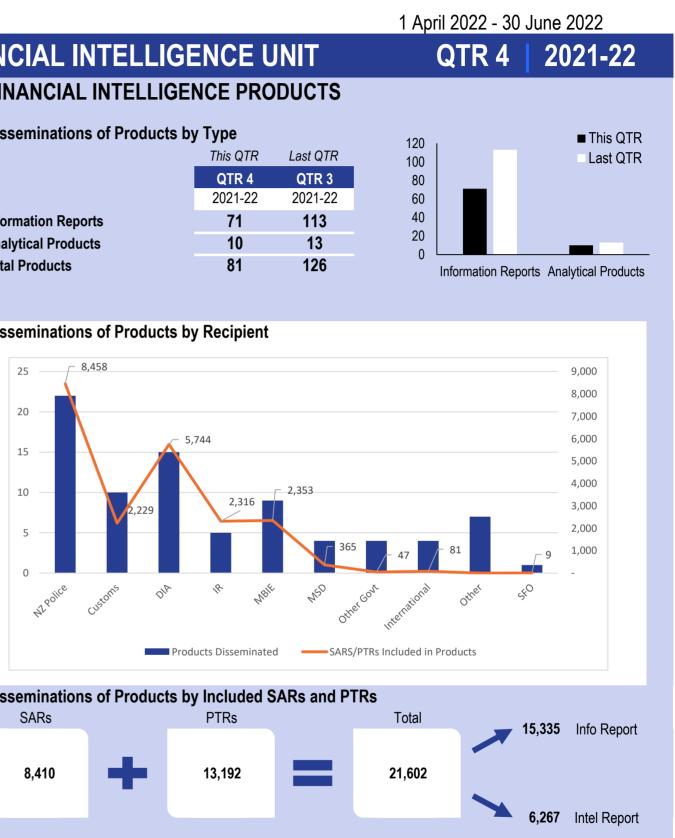
QUARTERLY STATISTICS*

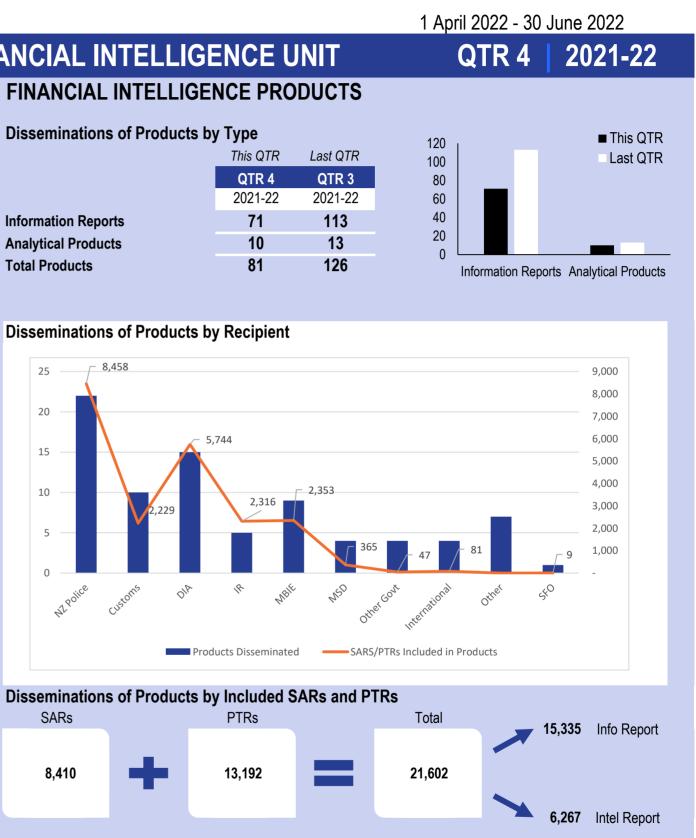
NEW ZEALAND POLICE FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT

SUBMITTED REPORTS to the FIU*



Last QTR This QTR QTR 4 QTR 3 2021-22 2021-22 71 Information Reports 113 10 13 **Analytical Products** 81 126 **Total Products**

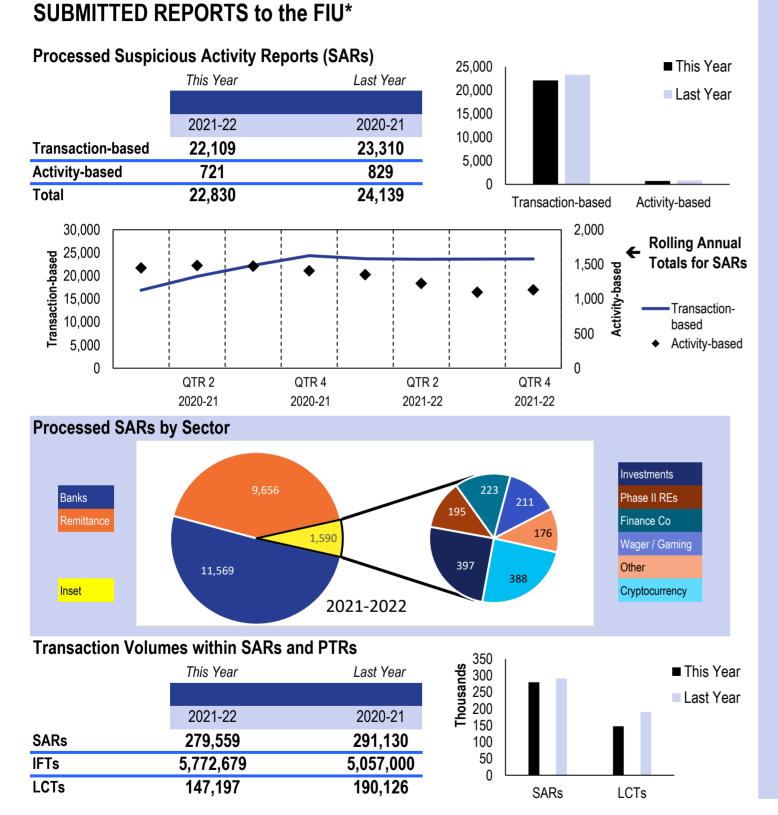




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ANNUAL STATISTICS*

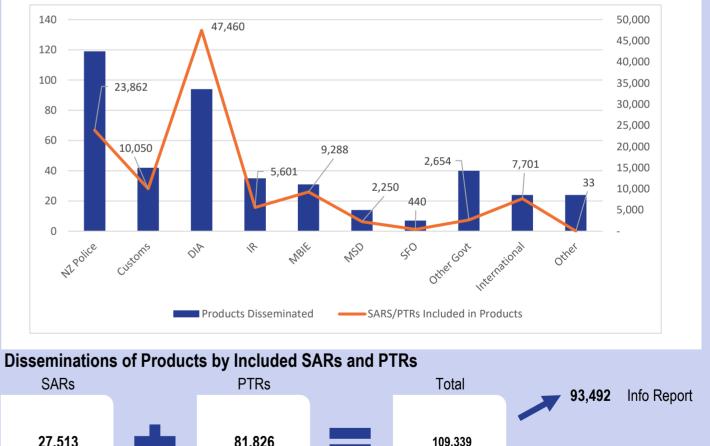
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FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE PRODUCTS

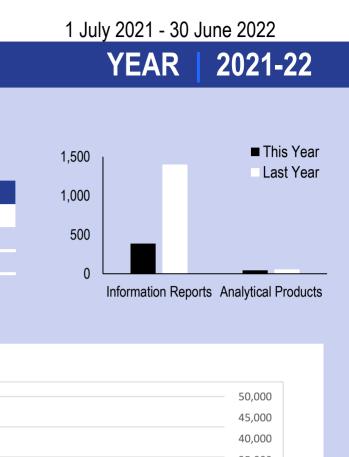
Disseminations of Products by Type		
	This Year	Last Year
	2021-22	2020-21
Information Reports	386	1,401
Analytical Products	44	57
Total Products	430	1,458

Disseminations of Products by Recipient





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15,847 Intel Report





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