



THE SENTRY

2025 IMPACT
REPORT

OVERVIEW

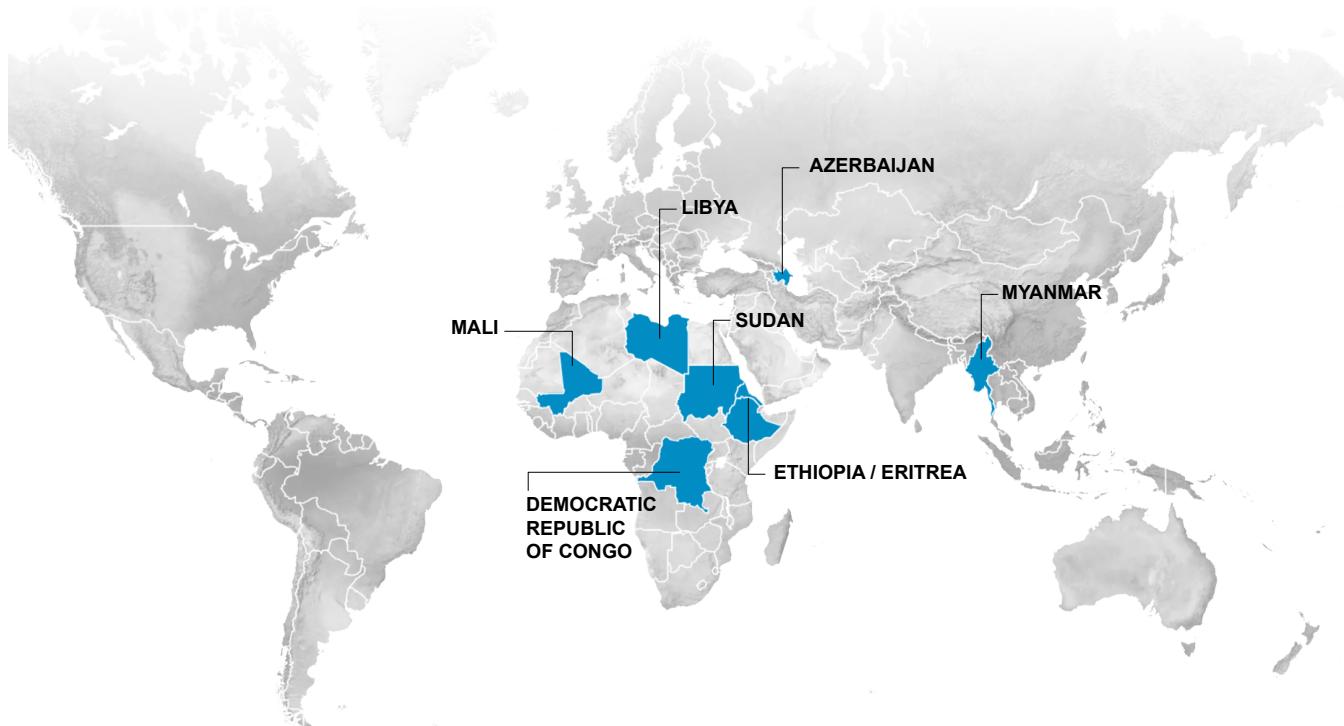


Around the world, conflict and repression are increasingly sustained by money—funds moved through global financial systems, hidden behind shell companies, and enabled by governments, corporations, and professional intermediaries. As enforcement weakens and oversight recedes, these networks are becoming more sophisticated and more dangerous.

The Sentry exists to disrupt this dynamic. Our mission is to expose and disrupt the networks profiting from the conflict, corruption, and natural resource exploitation that drive human suffering. We combine rigorous investigations with targeted advocacy—following the money, identifying perpetrators and enablers, and translating evidence into enforcement actions, policy reform, and accountability.

In 2025, The Sentry made deliberate choices about where to focus its time, expertise, and resources. As US leadership and enforcement capacity receded, we expanded engagement across the transatlantic sphere, with particular focus on the UK and EU, strengthening collaboration with European governments, institutions, and partners. At the same time, cutbacks in US funding and capacity left allies around the world with less access to high-quality, on-the-ground intelligence. The Sentry stepped in to help fill that void, delivering trusted, actionable information that would otherwise be missing. Moreover, we have continued to develop partnerships with private sector actors to identify risk, inform due diligence, and help close pathways that allow corruption and conflict finance to move through global markets.

In this Impact Report, we are proud to highlight several cases that show how this integrated approach translated into real-world consequences over the past year and the role your support played in making that impact possible.





OUR IMPACT IN 2025

FP ARGUMENT An expert's point of view on a current event.

Libya's Oil Corruption Is Bad for Business

International firms should address graft before participating in a deeply compromised sector.

Le Monde Afrique

La Libye, premier gisement de pétrole en Afrique, est devenue un contrefort de la contrebande

Le détournement massif de produits pétroliers subventionnés depuis la fragmentation politico-militaire causée par la révolution de 2011 nourrit l'instabilité aux frontières libyennes, révèle un rapport de l'ONG américaine The Sentry.

The New York Times
OPINION GUEST ESSAY

Sudan Is in Free Fall

Newsweek
OPINION

Why Is the NBA Partnering With the UAE and Rwanda? Both Are Accused of Fueling Massive Humanitarian Crises | Opinion

The Economist Middle East & Africa | Guns for hire

Putin's botched African adventure

Two years after Yevgeny Prigozhin's death, the Wagner Group is in meltdown in Mali

FOREIGN AFFAIRS The War on Trees

How Illegal Logging Funds Cartels, Terrorists, and Rogue Regimes

JUSTYNA GUDZOWSKA AND LAURA FERRIS

FP ARGUMENT An expert's point of view on a current event.

Sudan, Congo, and You

From soda to sports, global consumers are implicated in Africa's most deadly conflicts. This also creates an avenue for change.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS The Deadly Global Gold Rush

How to Stop the Illicit Mining and Trade That Fuel War and Repression

SASHA LEZHNEV AND JOHN PRENDERGAST

Svenska Dagbladet

Wagnergruppen mot fiasko – Kreml tar över

SUDAN

Over the past two years, the war in Sudan has spiraled into one of the worst humanitarian crises on record. As The Sentry has long warned would happen, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)—a paramilitary force that grew out of the Janjaweed militias that terrorized Darfur in the 2000s—are once again waging a campaign of genocidal violence.

In a pair of investigative reports this year, The Sentry exposed how the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is directly complicit in fueling this war. Our investigations revealed how the UAE, despite public denials, has provided [material and financial support](#), including [Colombian mercenaries](#), to the RSF, enabling a cycle of violence that continues to devastate communities across Sudan.

The Sentry laid out the case for urgent international action against the UAE, including essays in *The New York Times* and *Foreign Affairs*. The US government has since announced sanctions against the Colombian side of the mercenary operations but notably omitted the Emiratis involved. The Sentry will continue to investigate the UAE's involvement in Sudan and keep up the pressure in the coming year.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



This year, as Rwanda's proxy war in eastern DRC escalated with the capture of two major cities, The Sentry sought to provide analysis and expertise to boost efforts targeted at resolving the conflict.

Our work focused on identifying the best ways to build accountability and alter the cost-benefit calculations of the warring parties. Evidence and advocacy by The Sentry contributed to EU and US sanctions on some M23 rebel leaders and senior Rwandan officials. One of our experts testified in Congress about critical minerals, conflict gold, and the role of China, offering concrete recommendations for the US government and American companies to tackle this problem. And we provided constructive but critical inputs for the US-led negotiations between the DRC and Rwanda.

And yet, as the continuing bloodshed in eastern DRC demonstrates, without sustained pressure and structural reform, even the signing of a formal peace agreement will not stop Rwanda and the DRC fighting over the region's natural resource wealth.

SPORTSWASHING

Countries including the UAE, Rwanda, and Azerbaijan are investing heavily in high-profile sports ventures to deflect attention from their involvement in serious human rights abuses. The Sentry has sought to shine a light on this practice through targeted advocacy and opinion essays in *Common Dreams* and *Newsweek*—examining the NBA's partnerships with the UAE and Rwanda—and in *Foreign Policy*, highlighting these countries' ties to major European football clubs.

Under the banner of the Speak Out on Sudan campaign, The Sentry has helped build and lead a growing coalition to confront the UAE's role in atrocities in Sudan, drawing extensive media attention to the Emirates' sponsorship of the NBA Cup. In addition, we also ran a social media campaign around the Formula 1 Grand Prix in Baku drawing attention to Azerbaijan's corruption and repression as documented in our "[Aliyev Empire](#)" investigation.

Arsenal's recent decision to drop its sponsorship arrangement with Rwanda in response to the human rights abuses unfolding in eastern Congo is an early victory. It shows that by spotlighting the abuse of sports as a tool of influence, we can help counter the soft power strategies of regimes that seek to normalize impunity.

LIBYA



In “[Inside Job: Libya’s Fuel Smuggling Escalation](#),” The Sentry revealed how Libya’s own leaders have driven a massive expansion of gasoline and diesel smuggling operations. Between 2022 and 2024, we estimate fuel smuggling cost the Libyan state \$20 billion dollars. The report was widely cited, including in *The Guardian*, *Le Monde*, and major Libyan outlets, and we published an op-ed in *Foreign Policy* that outlined the key findings and recommendations.

This was the first report to truly expose and quantify the systematic corruption at the heart of Libya’s oil sector. While many have talked in the abstract about problems in Libya’s oil sector, The Sentry was able to trace, in detail, the insider deals struck between key Libyan players and their international partners, shattering the veil of deniability that surrounds this multibillion-dollar industry.

Following the publication of our report, Libyan authorities indicted and arrested the CEO of a Libyan oil company featured prominently in the report, and the Central Bank of Libya has published a specific policy directive echoing several of the report’s recommendations.

MALI



In “[Mercenary Meltdown: The Wagner Group’s Failure in Mali](#),” The Sentry exposed how the Russian mercenary group’s brutal playbook—first developed in the Central African Republic—collapsed in the region. Our investigation found that Wagner and its offshoot, Africa Corps, have become increasingly ineffectual as they have grown more violent and indiscriminate, employing tactics such as sexual violence and mass executions.

As the civilian death toll has mounted, Russia’s failures have emboldened the terrorist organizations they were hired to suppress, paving the way for the al-Qaeda affiliate in the region to advance on the capital, Bamako. As The Sentry argued in *Jeune Afrique*, this dramatic implosion stands as a clear warning to other African regimes considering Russia as a security solution.

“Mercenary Meltdown” has helped shape the global understanding of Russia’s ambitions and vulnerabilities in Africa with coverage in major platforms, including *CNN*, *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *National Public Radio* amplifying calls for accountability and reform.

NATURAL RESOURCE EXPLOITATION

The Sentry has significantly expanded its work on natural resource crime—from conflict gold and critical minerals to illegal logging and oil smuggling. These sectors are among the primary engines fueling authoritarian regimes, armed groups, terrorist organizations, and transnational criminal networks.

Our team published two major essays in *Foreign Affairs* this year: “The War on Trees: How Illegal Logging Funds Cartels, Terrorists, and Rogue Regimes,” and “The Deadly Gold Rush: How to Stop the Illicit Mining and Trade That Fuel War and Repression.” These articles positioned The Sentry as a key resource on environmental crime among policymakers, researchers, and global security experts.

We are now advancing a deeper phase of work in this sector: investigating illicit supply chains, exposing financial networks, and pursuing accountability measures to disrupt them. This expansion marks a major step forward in our mission to confront natural resource exploitation as a driver of conflict.

MYANMAR



Together with our partner, Justice for Myanmar (JFM), [The Sentry revealed](#) how Myanmar’s military junta is attempting to evade international sanctions and fabricate legitimacy through a rebranding exercise that replaces an already sanctioned entity with a newly created one. We jointly issued a call for US, European, and like-minded governments to close sanctions loopholes and hold the junta’s international enablers to account ahead of sham elections designed to legitimize the military regime.

In December, JFM was awarded the 2025 Right Livelihood Award for their work disrupting the junta’s financial lifelines and pushing for accountability and democracy.

ETHIOPIA / ERITREA



X, @mvreisen

In “[Power and Plunder: The Eritrean Defense Forces Intervention in Tigray](#),” The Sentry revealed how the Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) engaged in industrial-scale looting during and after the war in Tigray. Our report contains evidence of the trafficking of gold, antiquities, and human beings in a campaign marked by extreme brutality. And even though the conflict ended in 2022, the EDF has continued to pursue cross-border illicit financial activities with impunity, exacerbating the risk of renewed conflict. The Sentry has executed a targeted impact strategy aimed at curtailing war profiteering and holding senior EDF commanders to account, including engaging with diplomatic representatives in the region on possible options for accountability, and sharing evidence with sanctions officers in the US, UK, EU and UN.

AZERBAIJAN



In “[Aliyev Empire](#),” The Sentry exposed a \$13 billion network controlled by Arzu and Leyla Aliyeva, the daughters of Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev. The investigation mapped 148 companies tied to the ruling family spanning the oil, telecom, banking, and mining sectors, and traced assets from London and Malta to Dubai and Moscow.

A companion brief detailed the global enablers of the Aliyev network in places such as the UK, Singapore, Malaysia, and Panama. Together, these reports served as a stark warning to governments, regulators, law enforcement, and banks to examine their exposure to Azerbaijan’s sprawling kleptocratic empire.

Separately, The Sentry worked closely with *Forbidden Stories*, an investigative journalism nonprofit, on an exposé of the connections between an Azerbaijani oligarch close to the Aliyev family, a Maltese bank, and a Guernsey-based financial advisor suspected of facilitating money laundering.

THANK YOU



The Sentry's work is made possible through the generous support of our close partners and current and recent donors. We are grateful for their continued investment in our mission:



STICHTING GIUSTRA
INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION



...and many generous individual donors.

Their support helps us expose wrongdoing, shift international policy, and disrupt the financial flows that fuel conflict. To learn more about our work or become part of our community of supporters, visit TheSentry.org

The Sentry is registered as a 501(c)(3) public charity with tax ID number 20-8827879. We have received a Platinum Seal of Transparency from Candid, a US nonprofit information service.