

141 ARRESTED IN WORLDWIDE CRACKDOWN ON AIRLINE FRAUD

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[Press Release](#)

Europol coordinated raids at European airports, targeting criminals trying to travel using fraudulently bought tickets.



As the peak summer holiday time approaches, over 141 individuals were arrested last week in the latest law enforcement swoop which took place at over 226 airports around the world.

Between 18 and 22 June 2018, 61 countries, 69 airlines and 6 online travel agencies were involved in the 11th edition of the Global Airport Action Days (GAAD) targeting criminals suspected of traveling with airline tickets bought using stolen, compromised or fake credit card details. Some 334 suspicious transactions were reported, and a number of investigations have been subsequently opened.

How serious a crime is it?

The [International Air Transport Association \(IATA\)](#) estimates that the airline industry loses over USD one billion per year as a result of the fraudulent online purchases of flight tickets. In addition, millions of innocent citizens are affected through the misuse of their credit card data.

Fraudulent online transactions are not only highly lucrative for organised crime, but they are also often purchased to facilitate more serious criminal activities including illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings, drug smuggling and terrorism.

Wide net cast to catch airline fraudsters

All regions of the world were mobilised during the action week to respond to the crime of airline fraud which is borderless by nature. The GAAD was organised through coordination centres at Europol in The Hague, INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore and Ameripol in Bogota, and was supported by Canadian as well as US law enforcement authorities through the NCFTA in Pittsburgh.

Eurojust assisted throughout the action week, together with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), which deployed officers to 22 airports. The Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP), implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in partnership with INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO), also took part in law enforcement activities at airports in Africa and the Middle East.

Public private partnership to combat airline fraud

During the action week, representatives from airlines, online travel agencies, payment card companies, Perseuss and the IATA worked together with experts from Europol's [European Cybercrime Centre \(EC3\)](#) to identify suspicious airline ticket transactions.

Payment card company officials confirmed suspicious transactions using their own financial data systems when alerted by the participating airlines. The IATA provided important fraud intelligence from its database. Notifications were sent to transport hubs across the world as law enforcement officers in waiting intercepted and detained suspects attempting to travel using fraudulently-obtained flight tickets. Backing them up, a team of dedicated Europol analysts provided live access to centralised criminal intelligence databases. INTERPOL assisted with the rapid identification of wanted persons and stolen travel documents, and Frontex with the detection of identity fraud, fake documents and irregular migration.

Europol's Executive Director, Catherine de Bolle, said: "Airline fraud is not only highly lucrative for fraudsters, it creates the risk of serious criminals and terrorists traveling around the world anonymously, potentially to endanger others. We are striving through initiatives like this one, working hand in hand with our private partners, to disrupt criminal movements and activities".

The Chairperson of the European Airline Fraud Working Group, Sofia Moutsou, commented: "Once again Europol has supported the airline industry with an excellent organization scale in our fight against online fraud. All the representative airlines, online travel agencies, card schemes, law enforcement cooperated with Europol with the most sufficient way. The results are really important. We protected our reservations - we kept our flights safe and beyond all these we kept the criminals away from us ,sending them where they should be. Arrested. This action has not only a financial aspect but it is a prevention campaign in many ways."

How to prevent airline fraud

Prior to the GAAD action week, Europol rolled-out a two-week long #2good2Btrue prevention campaign to raise awareness of airline/ticket fraud among holiday makers.

[Press release – Beware of the criminals out to ruin your holidays](#)

Here are some of Europol's tips to avoid becoming the next victim of a too good to be true holiday offer:

› Go official:

Book a holiday directly with an airline or hotel, or through a reputable agent/tour operator. Look for the IATA logo on the company's website.

› Do your research:

Do a thorough online search to ensure the company is legitimate. If they're suspect, other people may well have posted their experiences warning people off.

› Stay safe online:

Pay special attention to the website name and domain. Small changes in the name or domain – such as going from .com to .eu can direct you to a completely different company

› Pay safe:

Check that the website uses a secure payment system and the secure communication protocol (https) for the booking procedure.

› Check the small print:

Check that the website offers Terms and Conditions, a refund policy and a privacy policy.

› Use your instincts:

If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

› Report it:

Keep all the evidence and report it to your national police right away.



In 2010 the European Union set up a four-year Policy Cycle to ensure greater continuity in the fight against serious international and organised crime. In 2017 the Council of the EU decided to continue the EU Policy Cycle for the 2018 - 2021 period. It aims to tackle the most significant threats posed by organised and serious international crime to the EU. This is achieved by improving and strengthening cooperation between the relevant services of EU Member States, institutions and agencies, as well as non-EU countries and organisations, including the private sector where relevant. Payment fraud is one of the priorities for the Policy Cycle.

CRIME AREAS

[Forgery of money and means of payment](#) · [Payment Fraud](#)

TARGET GROUPS

[General Public](#) · [Law Enforcement](#) · [Academia](#) · [Professor](#) · [Students](#) · [Researcher](#) · [Press/Journalists](#) · [Other](#)

ENTITIES

[European Cybercrime Center \(EC3\)](#)

OPERATIONS

[Joint Action Days \(JADs\)](#) · [Airline Action Days](#)

ORGANISATIONS

[Air Transport Association \(IATA\)](#) · [European Border and Coast Guard Agency \(Frontex\)](#) · [Interpol](#) · [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(UNODC\)](#) ·

[World Customs Organisation \(WCO\)](#)

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