

153 DETAINED FOR TICKET FRAUD FOLLOWING WORLDWIDE LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATION

13 Jun 2017

[Press Release](#)





153 individuals have been detained following the sixth Global Airport Action Days (GAAD) major international law enforcement operation targeting airline fraudsters. The individuals are suspected of flying using airline tickets purchased with stolen, compromised or fake credit card details.

Between 6 and 8 June 2017, 64 countries, 84 airlines and eight online travel agencies worked jointly with law enforcement officers to carry out operational actions in 230 airports across the world.

During the operation, 312 suspicious transactions were reported. As a result, 153 people were detained, denied boarding, questioned by police and criminally charged; several investigations are ongoing.

Some individuals were caught trying to traffic heroin from Latin America to Africa and Europe, frequently flying back and forth using fraudulently purchased tickets.

During the actions, new modi operandi were identified as being used by organised crime networks to gain access to transit areas in airports in order to facilitate illegal immigration and drug trafficking.

Since many individuals use credit cards and fake identification documents to facilitate illegal immigration, Europol's European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) joined this year's GAAD to provide better support to EU Member States and partners for fighting human smuggling networks. Europol specialists and analysts equipped with special technical equipment were deployed to several European airports.

Representatives from airlines, online travel agencies, payment card companies, Perseuss, and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), worked together with experts from Europol's European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) to identify suspicious transactions and provide confirmation to law enforcement officers deployed in the airports.

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex, deployed 27 officers to 18 airports to support this operation, assisting with detecting identity fraud, fake documents and illegal immigration. Eurojust also assisted throughout the action days.

Rob Wainwright, Europol's Executive Director said: "Airline ticket fraud is borderless by nature. Effective international public-private cooperation and mutual assistance within the law enforcement environment make a distinctive contribution to our fight against this type of crime. Europol is fully committed to playing a leading part in this work through its unique capabilities."



INTERPOL Secretary General Jürgen Stock said: "This type of fraud poses significant security risks by potentially enabling criminals and terrorist to travel anonymously. INTERPOL will continue to support these types of global operations, which also show the value of cooperation between the public and private sectors."

"Airlines cancel fraudulent flight bookings on a daily basis, but there is little else they can do about this criminal activity. It is through these operations that we can pass the information on to law enforcement and see the criminals arrested and charged. The airline industry wishes to thank Europol's EC3 for yet another successful operation", said Meta Backman, Chair of the European Airline Fraud Prevention Group.

Aleks Popovich, IATA's Senior Vice President, Financial and Distribution Services, stated: "IATA is proud to coordinate carriers' participation in the Global Airlines Action Day (GAAD) for a fourth consecutive year. This important initiative is focused on fighting airline ticket fraud and enables

effective cooperation between travel value chain stakeholders. It also significantly limits opportunities for fraudsters to use air as a vehicle for illegal activities that raise the cost of travel for businesses and consumers. We look forward to a positive outcome from GAAD and we rely on the continuous mobilization of all actors involved across the industry to turn this into a daily operational business model. IATA is also strongly encouraging all airlines to join forces to continue their fight against all kinds of fraud."



National Cyber Forensics & Training Alliance (NCFTA) CEO Matt LaVigna said: "Under Europol's

leadership, the GAAD initiative continues to be an impactful, necessary, and productive tool in the fight against international criminal activities. Recognizing that these criminals cannot be permitted to go undeterred, the NCFTA is proud to support this effort in the US by leveraging our trusted public-private partnerships and we look forward to future successes. Alongside all partners in this initiative, we are committed to making a global impact on transient criminal groups engaged in fraud and other nefarious crimes."□

GAAD is a horizontal and multidisciplinary operation to fight fraudulent online purchases of flight tickets with compromised credit card data. The public-private partnership concept agreed for this action is the most efficient way of combating online fraud and other serious forms of organised crime, facilitated by ticket fraud, such as illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings, drug trafficking, and others.

GAAD was coordinated from operational centres at Europol in the Netherlands, INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore, NCFTA in the U.S., and Ameripol in Bogota. GAAD was also supported by UNODC (AIRCOP for Africa), the Latin American and Caribbean Intelligence Police Community (CLACIP), Canadian and US law enforcement agencies.

Law enforcement is now tackling this international phenomenon on a daily basis in close cooperation with the private sector. This has enhanced trust between all involved parties and will continue to inflict damage to the criminals involved in airline ticket fraud.

The GAAD is part of Operation Dragon, the fourth EU-wide set of Joint Action Days taking place within the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime. The intelligence-led operational actions taking place in the framework of this operation cover several crime areas whilst focusing on key criminal hotspots and key criminal infrastructure in the EU and beyond.

Know the crime: airline ticket fraud

The use of compromised credit card details is an increasingly high volume crime, with tens of thousands of crimes reported in many EU countries. An increase in card-not-present (CNP) fraud is apparent across almost all sectors; the purchases of physical goods, airline tickets, car rentals and accommodation with compromised cards has seen a significant increase throughout the EU. Airline companies are among the most affected by CNP fraud.

It is estimated that the airline industry's losses has reached up to one billion euros per year, as a result of the fraudulent online purchases of flight tickets. These online transactions are highly lucrative for organised crime and are often purchased to facilitate more serious criminal activities including illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings, drug smuggling and terrorism.

Crime-as-a-Service - a recent trend in all forms of serious organised crime - has now appeared in the travel sector. Law enforcement have targeted fake online travel agencies, who specialise in

purchasing airline tickets with stolen or fake credit card details for other criminals, providing them with a service.

For example, one criminal enterprise offered financial services, fraudulently purchased tickets and fake documents. During the action, several bookings for different destinations were linked to the same criminal organisation. As a precaution, passengers should take care when purchasing airline tickets online and be suspicious about deals that are too good to be true.

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