

# 195 INDIVIDUALS DETAINED AS A RESULT OF GLOBAL CRACKDOWN ON AIRLINE TICKET FRAUD

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[Press Release](#)



195 individuals suspected of traveling with airline tickets bought using stolen, compromised or fake credit card details have been detained in a major international law enforcement operation targeting airline fraudsters.

Between 16 and 20 October 2017, 61 countries, 63 airlines and 6 online travel agencies were involved in the 10th edition of the Global Airport Action Days (GAAD) which took place at over 226 airports across the world.

During the action week, 298 suspicious transactions were reported. As a result, 195 people were detained, denied boarding, questioned by police and charged criminally. Investigations are ongoing. Several people were caught trying to traffic drugs from Latin America to Europe, frequently flying back and forth using fraudulently purchased tickets.

This edition of the GAAD welcomed on board a number of new airlines partners, with 6 new major airline carriers joining the initiative as it continues to gain traction globally:

- 4 from the Asia Pacific
- 3 from Africa
- 2 from the Middle East

## A GLOBAL PUBLIC-PRIVATE RESPONSE

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 20 airports, assisting in the detection of identity fraud, fake documents and irregular migration. 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.

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.

Europol's Executive Director, Rob Wainwright said: "Airline ticket fraud poses a range of security issues, and we cannot allow anyone, in particular serious criminals and terrorists, to travel around the world anonymously and to endanger others. This is why Europol, together with its private partners, needs to further extend these global initiatives, allowing for police and the private sector to share information about suspicious online activities to make life as hard as possible for criminals."

The Director for Organized and Emerging Crime at INTERPOL's General Secretariat headquarters, Paul Stanfield, stated: "Fraudulent online transactions are

highly profitable for organized crime, and are often tied to other activities which include cybercrime, illegal immigration, human trafficking and terrorism. Global Airport Action Days is therefore an important cross-sector collaborative operation against the transnational organized criminal networks behind fraudulent airline ticket purchases and other criminal activities."

The Executive Secretary of AMERIPOL, General Diego Mejia Valencia commented: "By fighting organised transnational crime and facing emerging crimes and new threats, AMERIPOL, which encompasses law enforcement authorities from 27 countries on the American continent, works to coordinate strategies and joint operations with other organisations like Europol, promoting public security in a regional and global level like it has been the case in this GAAD."

The Senior Vice President of Financial and Distribution Services at IATA, Aleksander Popovich said: "IATA has been a long standing partner of Europol in leading and growing this global initiative. We are very proud to see that our efforts are delivering results and that our members are paying increasing attention to the policy of zero tolerance as far as fraudsters and criminal activities are concerned. IATA definitely encourages the 'no criminals allowed on-board' policy and is ready to continue supporting this global fight against all types of criminal activities and fraudsters who use air transportation as 'modus operandi'. This year's second edition of the Global Airports Action Day saw a steep increase in participation in Middle East, Africa, Asia Pacific and LATAM regions, which is extremely positive. IATA will continue to strongly encourage global carriers to be actively involved in this industry-wide partnership with Europol against fraud and criminal activities in general".

The Chairperson of the European Airline Fraud Working Group, Sofia Moutsou commented: "I would like to thank Europol for the great cooperation and for giving to airline industry the chance to fight against fraud in the most sufficient and organized way. We are looking forward to a continuous cooperation that will bring the best results for everyone not only against financial loss but against crime as well."

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.

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

Crime-as-a-Service, the recent trend in all forms of serious organised crime, has now also appeared in the travel sector. Law enforcement has targeted fake online travel agencies, specialising in purchasing airline tickets with stolen or fake credit card details for other criminals, providing them 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.

The IATA estimates that the airline industry loses over USD one billion per year as a result of the fraudulent online purchases of flight tickets. Fraudulent 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.

## HOW TO PREVENT ONLINE AIR TICKET FRAUD

Passengers should be cautious when purchasing airline tickets online:

- Where possible pay for travel using your own credit card.
- Make sure the company you are buying your tickets from is legitimate. The IATA logo is one indicator of this.
- Avoid buying tickets from classified websites which sell other things, such as cars and holiday homes.
- When buying an airline journey from a travel company, you can check if the flight exists by checking the airline's own website.
- Remember that if the deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- If you become a victim of online ticket fraud keep all the evidence and report it to the police.

Participating countries: Austria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea Bissau, Honduras, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Mexico, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Togo, United Kingdom, United States.



TARGET GROUPS      [Facilitation of Illegal Immigration](#) · [Terrorism](#) · [Forgery of money and means of payment](#) · [Payment Fraud](#)  
ENTITIES              [General Public](#) · [Law Enforcement](#) · [Academia](#) · [Professor](#) · [Students](#) · [Researcher](#) · [Press/Journalists](#) · [Other](#)  
OPERATIONS         [European Cybercrime Center \(EC3\)](#)  
ORGANISATIONS     [Dragon](#) · [Joint Action Days \(JADs\)](#) · [Airline Action Days](#)  
                            [Air Transport Association \(IATA\)](#) · [Airport Communication Project \(AIRCOP\)](#) · [Eurojust](#) · [National Cyber-Forensics and Training Alliance NCFTA](#) ·  
[European Border and Coast Guard Agency \(Frontex\)](#) · [Interpol](#) · [Ameripol](#) · [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(UNODC\)](#) · [World Customs Organisation \(WCO\)](#)

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