CRIMINAL NETWORK SMUGGLING CIGARETTES AND ALCOHOL THWARTED IN GERMANY

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Press Release

Yesterday, with the support of Europol, German police and customs authorities conducted nine property searches in Berlin, arrested four persons and seized over 600,000 cigarettes. The criminals arrested - three Polish and one Belarusian - are between 38 and 55 years old and belong to an organised crime group suspected of smuggling millions of cigarettes and thousands of litres of alcohol from Poland to Germany.

According to the information gathered so far, some of the illicit goods were distributed in and around Berlin by Vietnamese vendors, and the rest was smuggled to the UK via France and Belgium.

Since November 2014, German authorities have been sharing their intelligence from this case with Europol, the EU’s law enforcement agency. Cross-matching against Europol’s databases generated multiple hits to seizures and investigations already reported by other law enforcement agencies. Criminal intelligence analysis greatly enhanced and developed the information available. This technique of ‘intelligence led policing’ supported the planning and execution of the operational phase.

Europol deployed a mobile office to the operational control unit in Berlin. This allowed information gathered during the raids to be cross-matched against Europol’s databases. Real-time feedback was then provided to officers on the ground during the operation.

Combating excise fraud is an EU priority in the fight against serious and organised crime.

KPMG’s Project Sun report states that the revenue loss from counterfeit and contraband cigarettes to EU governments in 2013 was approximately EUR 10.9 billion, from which Germany lost around EUR 2.1 billion.

By purchasing illicit tobacco and alcohol, individuals could be directly funding organised crime activities and the