
EUROPOL DELIVERS CRUCIAL SUPPORT TO INTERNATIONAL OPERATION LEADING TO THE SEIZURE OF ABOUT 100 TONNES OF HASHISH

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[Press Release](#)

The Hague, the Netherlands

In the early hours of 23 September 2016, Spanish Guardia Civil, supported by Europol, the [French Direction Nationale du Renseignement et des Enquêtes Douanières](#) and the Italian Guardia di Finanza, localized and intercepted a vessel flying the flag of Panama.

Law enforcement officers immediately boarded the ship, which was sailing to Libya, and found a crew of 12 individuals (11 Ukrainians and 1 Uzbek). A few large bags containing hashish stashed in the deck were discovered after a careful inspection of the vessel.

The ship was subsequently escorted to the port of Almeria, where a thorough search revealed the crew were transporting 19.6 tonnes of hashish. The crew were arrested and the shipment was seized.

This is yet another strike inflicted against transnational organised crime networks active in large-scale drug trafficking and other forms of serious crime in the Mediterranean Sea. It marks a significant advance in the efforts of the Joint Operation Team 'Rose of the Winds'.

Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol: "This is an outstanding piece of international police cooperation supported by Europol, leading directly to the disruption of a major criminal enterprise involved in trafficking drugs and generating illicit profits on a grand scale. We also believe the action has denied terrorist groups in the region the opportunity to acquire significant new funds. Europol congratulates those services involved in the operation."

Within this context, several international investigations were launched between 2013 and 2015 by the [Italian Guardia di Finanza](#) and [D.C.S.A. – Direzione Centrale per I Servizi Antidroga](#), [Spanish Guardia Civil](#), [French Office Central pour la Répression du Trafic Illicite des Stupéfiants](#) and the [Greek Hellenic Coast Guard](#).

The mentioned authorities pooled their resources together with the unique services offered by Europol, which intensely supported all four Member States in a range of areas.

Specifically, during the second half of 2015, four cargo ships carrying over 61 tonnes of cannabis resin were interdicted in Palermo, Malaga, Cagliari and Palermo again, and 46 crew members were arrested.

The Europol Drugs Team played a key role in the operations. Apart from financially funding 20 operational meetings that brought the investigators to the same table, on-the-spot support was provided for all five operations.

Europol specialists in analysis, forensics and organised crime were deployed in the Member States to extract and analyse huge amounts of electronic data from devices that were seized. By collecting and analysing this data, Europol produced and provided the affected states with 29 analytical reports on the criminal networks behind these deeds.

Europol specialists were therefore able to concretely link the criminal groups to facilitating irregular migration and cocaine trafficking. There is also convincing intelligence that suggests links to weapons trafficking.

In addition, the routes used, the financial flows and the nationalities of the perpetrators suggest that at least some of the huge revenues generated may be destined to finance the activities of terrorist groups or their associates.

Please contact the relevant law enforcement authorities for queries on the Member States' involvement.

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