Beat: Politics

OLAF participates in major cigarette seizure in the Mediterranean Sea

Operation Eagle Hunt

Brüssel/Wien, 11.01.2014, 16:17 Time

USPA NEWS - The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) participated in a major cigarette seizure in the Mediterranean Sea last week. Operation "Eagle Hunt", where OLAF provided operational support and key information to the Spanish Customs Administration.

Led to the successful seizure of some 348,000 packs of contraband cigarettes that were being smuggled into Spain by sea. The Spanish authorities arrested nine people who ran the contraband ship "White Eagle" that was intercepted in close proximity of the island of Menorca on 4 December.

The smuggling of cigarettes by sea occurs through complex contraband operations run by criminal organisations, often involving several transhipments, false or misleading bills of lading and the unloading of cigarettes at night time in secluded coastal areas. As it is very difficult for single authorities to patrol the Mediterranean and intercept such contraband operations, the cooperation of several law enforcement authorities is crucial.

OLAF can bring added value by facilitating the exchange of information between its partners, providing operational support and helping monitor the movement of cigarette containers. The Director-General of OLAF, Mr Giovanni Kessler said that "this successful operation highlights the excellent results we can obtain against cigarette smuggling through close cooperation with our partners. I would like to congratulate the Spanish authorities for this success."

The investigation led by Spanish Customs in close cooperation with OLAF and the authorities of several other third countries revealed that the cigarettes were initially loaded onto a ship in the port of Famagusta (Cyprus), destined for African markets. The cigarettes were then loaded onto the White Eagle vessel in Port Said (Egypt), declared as sailing to Togo. International intelligence information and operational cooperation revealed that the White Eagle deviated from its declared route and was preparing to unload the cigarettes in the Balearic Islands (Spain).

The criminal organisation that ran this contraband traffic aimed to evade European duties on cigarettes by fraudulently smuggling them onto the European market. According to initial estimations by the Spanish authorities, the seized cigarettes were worth €1.4 million.

Customs duties on imports to the EU go directly to the EU budget. OLAF investigates cases of customs fraud as they are financially damaging to legitimate industry and the EU taxpayer. OLAF also has an explicit mandate to fight cigarette smuggling as part of the EU efforts to curb this phenomenon.

Further details on the activities of the Spanish authorities can be found at:
http://www.agenciatributaria.es/

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1770/olaf-participates-in-major-cigarette-seizure-in-the-mediterranean-sea.html

Editorial office and responsibility:
V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Simone Mayer - europarl

Exemption from liability:
The publisher shall assume no liability for the accuracy or completeness of the published report and is merely providing space for the

submission of and access to third-party content. Liability for the content of a report lies solely with the author of such report. Simone Mayer - europarl

Editorial program service of General News Agency:
UPA United Press Agency LTD
483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619