

Joint operation against 'ndrangheta in Italy and Germany

9 January 2018


Today, during an international joint action day in Italy and Germany, 160 people were arrested. More are expected to be apprehended. They are suspected of participation in a mafia-type ('ndrangheta) organised criminal group, attempted murder, extortion, money laundering, firearms-related offences and other crimes. Today's operation is the culmination of lengthy and complex investigations, initiated and conducted in Italy by the Reparto Operativo Speciale (ROS) under the leadership of the Procura della Repubblica – Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia (DDA) of Catanzaro.

In Germany, the operation involved several Prosecutor General's Offices and Prosecution Offices in four German Federal States (Baden-Württemberg, Hesse, Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia), as well as numerous German police authorities, with the full and direct support of Eurojust.

The investigation revealed that a local cell of the 'ndrangheta (a so-called 'locale') based in Cirò (Crotone, Italy), owned and used several businesses in Italy, including companies producing wine, oil, bread and dairy products, as front companies to launder illicit profits obtained through a wide range of criminal activities. Telephone interceptions, together with other covert investigation measures, further revealed that a branch of the locale of Cirò was very active in Germany, where its members also intimidated owners of restaurants, pizza and ice cream parlours, forcing them to buy products from the companies controlled by the criminal group.

Eurojust ensured a comprehensive coordination at EU level and provided full operational legal assistance to all national authorities involved. Today, 160 arrests and over 250 simultaneous searches and seizures took place all over Italy and Germany. Eurojust set up a coordination centre at its premises in The Hague with the participation of representatives of the Prosecution Office and ROS of Catanzaro. Via the coordination centre, Eurojust coordinated the simultaneous execution of 10 European Arrest Warrants and 13 European Investigation Orders in four Federal States in Germany and facilitated the real-time exchange of information among all judicial and law enforcement officials involved in the joint operations.

Today's joint operations were prepared during a coordination meeting that took place in December 2017 at Eurojust, during which representatives of the relevant judicial and law enforcement authorities of Germany and Italy discussed the best way forward in relation to mutual legal assistance and exchanged operational information resulting from the complex national investigations. They also agreed on a common operational strategy to dismantle the mafia criminal group, including deciding to organise today's joint operation to arrest the group's alleged members.

For best viewing of this video, click on the Full Screen icon in the video player: 

The video format used is supported by *Internet Explorer* and *Firefox* browsers. Users of *Chrome*, *Safari* and *Edge* can click on the "Download Media" link (a plug-in may be required if this link is not visible).

[Press release: Work starts on major Northumberland flood scheme](#)

Work has started on a major £600,000 flood scheme which will protect homes and businesses in a Northumberland coastal town from tidal flooding.

The project in the Cowpen area of Blyth will see an existing 180m flood wall upgraded and extended to create a 380m wall to reduce the risk of flooding to the town.

When taking climate change into account these new defences, from Crawford Street to Quay Road, will protect over 1,000 properties into the future while also offering immediate improved protection from tidal flooding to 58 properties.

The work is being funded by the Environment Agency but is being built by Port of Blyth as part of their wider redevelopment of the adjacent Bates and Wimbourne Terminals. The flood defences are due to be completed in Spring 2018.

While the Environment Agency has advised on the specifications and design of the flood wall, Port of Blyth will own and maintain the wall. The Environment Agency will carry out annual inspections.

Leila Huntington, the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Manager for the North East, said:

This is a great example of a partnership project which protects homes and businesses now and into the future. We have been working closely with Port of Blyth to support the development of a flood wall as part of a wider land development scheme.

By working together it means a greater standard of flood protection improvements can be provided at a reduced cost and with less disruption to the local community.

We're committed to increasing protection for our at-risk communities and are continuously looking for opportunities to

collaborate with our partners and provide the best possible solutions.

Martin Lawlor, Chief Executive of Port of Blyth, added:

This project is a real win-win for the town of Blyth and the Port. As a result of this programme of flood defence work, a huge number of homes and businesses within Blyth will be protected by the flood risks presented by global warming.

On top of this, the scheme enables the Port to move forward with our development plans for connecting our Bates and Wimbourne Quay terminals which will attract inward investment into the town.

A Flood Warning service is available for Blyth residents considered to be at risk of flooding, one for the North Sea at Blyth and another for the North Sea at Blyth Town Centre.

To check if you are at risk of flooding and to sign up for free flood warnings call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or visit the [gov.uk web pages](#)

[Labour's leadership needs to come clean](#)

This morning I attended the Single Market Summit, the start of a cross-party initiative between opposition leaders to oppose the Conservatives' hard Brexit.

To the anger of many Labour MPs – and to my great disappointment, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn refused to attend.

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Author:

[Universal Credit will drive up](#)

homelessness as people struggle to rent homes

The Conservative's roll out of Universal Credit risks driving up homelessness.

That's what I will warn in a debate in Westminster Hall this morning.

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Author:

Press release: Support deal worth £100m agreed for Puma helicopters

The deal will sustain around 25 jobs at Airbus Helicopters UK Ltd in Oxfordshire at the company's base in Kidlington and at RAF Benson, where the front line squadrons are based and many more across the supply chain.

The support arrangement will enable planned and responsive Puma operations to take place and ensure the maintenance of the aircraft as it provides support to ground troops on the battlefield and to civil and emergency services responding to disasters and emergencies.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

This £100 million investment will ensure our Puma helicopters continue to transport British troops and kit to the front line – helping us provide vital support quickly in rapidly evolving situations.

The deal – part of our £178 billion Equipment Plan – will not only give our Armed Forces the kit they need to deal with intensifying global threats, but will also sustain British jobs at Airbus Helicopters.

The contract, which is intended to eventually provide support until the Puma HC Mk2 out of service date, currently planned for March 2025, will provide technical services to support safety management and fault investigation and materiel support including repair and overhaul of major components. It will also provide a training service for RAF maintenance engineers.

The Puma HC Mk2 was the first helicopter deployed to the Caribbean from the UK to provide emergency humanitarian relief to the islands left devastated by Hurricane Irma back in September 2017.

Deploying rapidly, the aircraft provided relief to people who saw their homes destroyed and helped deliver supplies and aid as part of the wider UK emergency response within 72 hours of receiving the call. Separately, the Puma HC Mk2 has been deployed to Afghanistan since 2015 as part of the UK's contribution to the NATO Afghanistan Mission named Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT.

Air Vice Marshal Graham Russell, Director Helicopters, for the MOD's procurement organisation, Defence Equipment and Support said:

The Puma HC Mk2 is carrying out a vital role in troop transport, load movement and humanitarian operations around the world. The upgraded helicopters represent a significant increase in capability over the Mk1.

This support arrangement, which embraces learning from the early days of operating the Mk2 aircraft, will ensure that cost-effective support is always available to allow the user to deliver the capability wherever and whenever it is needed.