

Criminals blowing up German ATMs arrested after joint action

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✘ Authorities in Hungary and Germany, with the active support of Eurojust and Europol, have dismantled a criminal gang, suspected of blowing up three automated teller machines (ATMs) in the eastern part of the German State of Hesse. In a coordinated joint action, approximately 20 premises were searched in Hungary and Germany and pieces of evidence, as well as assets originating from the crime, have been seized. Three out of eight suspects were arrested in Germany. Five more suspects have been interrogated, four in Hungary and one in Germany.

From 2016 onwards, the organised criminal group (OCG) has been suspected of blowing up or trying to explode cash machines in the State of Hesse, with an estimated illegal profit of EUR 285 000, and causing heavy damage to the surroundings of the ATMs. The OCG operated by breaking open the front part of the ATM and pouring explosive gas into the exit port of the machine, where the money usually comes out. With a pipe or a tube, the gas was subsequently passed into the safe of the machine and then ignited, with the explosion opening the vault of the ATM.

A Eurojust-supported joint investigation team was set up in the summer of this year between the Hungarian and German authorities. Eurojust further organised two coordination meetings, the second meeting to prepare for the joint action.

The operation was led by the Public Prosecutor's Office (PPO) of Hajdú-Bihar County in Hungary and the German General Prosecutor's Office of Frankfurt am Main, together with the National Bureau of Investigation of the Rapid Response and Special Police Services (KR NNI) and the police department of Mittelhessen in Gießen, Germany. Europol supported the Hungarian authorities on the ground in Hungary, with one officer, as well as two German investigators, taking part in the actions in Hungary.

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