

Human trafficking ring dismantled by Spanish and Bulgarian authorities

7 July 2017

A large-scale joint investigation, run by the Spanish and Bulgarian judicial and law enforcement authorities, and supported by Eurojust and Europol, has resulted in the dismantling of an international organised crime group involved in trafficking young Bulgarian women to Spain for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In the coordinated action week between 26 June and 30 June, 34 individuals were arrested (26 in Spain and 8 in Bulgaria), and 13 victims of sexual exploitation were safeguarded.

The criminal group operated in Spain and Bulgaria for at least six years, taking control of the prostitution industry in Torremolinos and Marbella, Spain. They recruited vulnerable women in Bulgaria, transported them to Málaga and forced them to practice prostitution in the Marbella area of Puerto Banús. The gang used violence and threats against the victims and their families. The victims were also forced to steal their clients' cash, credit cards and other valuable objects, sometimes by spiking the clients' drinks. The objects were channelled to local pawnshops linked to the criminal group, and converted into cash, which was used either to purchase high-value cars or transported back to Bulgaria.

The investigation began in 2014, when Spanish authorities detected the existence of a human trafficking group operating in Spain with links to Bulgaria. Given the dimension of the criminal network under investigation and its international character, a joint investigation team (JIT), formed by Spain and Bulgaria, funded by Eurojust and supported by Eurojust and Europol, was set up. The JIT had two Spanish co-leaders, a THB specialised prosecutor and Investigating Judge in Marbella, and a JIT leader from the Bulgarian side. The Bulgarian investigation was led by the Specialized Prosecutors' Office of Bulgaria. The excellent police and judicial cooperation led to the identification of new victims, the roles of the different members of the organisation and their *modus operandi*.

Eurojust and Europol provided support throughout the entire investigation and during the joint actions that took place last week in Spain and Bulgaria. The coordinated actions were prepared at a coordination meeting held at Eurojust in June. On the action day, Europol provided on the spot support by deploying two human trafficking experts to Spain, equipped with a mobile office, allowing real-time intelligence analysis and cross-checking against Europol's databases.

In total, 38 searches were carried out (21 in Málaga, Spain, and 17 in Bulgaria), resulting in the seizure of EUR 50 000 in cash, 12 luxury watches and a significant amount of drugs. Judicial authorities also ordered the seizure of six properties and 18 vehicles, as well as the freezing of numerous bank accounts. Seven EAWs issued by Spain are currently under

execution in Bulgaria and the procedure is pending before the District Court of Pazardzhik.

Further details are available in the [Policia's press release](#) (in ES only).

G20 Leaders' Statement on Countering Terrorism

1. We, the Leaders of the G20, strongly condemn all terrorist attacks worldwide and stand united and firm in the fight against terrorism and its financing. These atrocious acts have strengthened our resolve to cooperate to enhance our security and protect our citizens. Terrorism is a global scourge that must be fought and terrorist safe havens eliminated in every part of the world.

2. We reaffirm that all measures on countering terrorism need to be implemented in accordance with the UN Charter and all obligations under international law, including international human rights law.

Implementing international commitments and enhancing cooperation

3. We call for the implementation of existing international commitments on countering terrorism, including the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and compliance with relevant resolutions and targeted sanctions by the UN Security Council relating to terrorism. We commit to continue to support UN efforts to prevent and counter terrorism.

4. We will address the evolving threat of returning foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from conflict zones such as Iraq and Syria and remain committed to preventing FTFs from establishing a foothold in other countries and regions around the world. We recall UN Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014), which requires a range of actions to better tackle the foreign terrorist fighter threat.

5. We will facilitate swift and targeted exchanges of information between intelligence and law enforcement and judicial authorities on operational information-sharing, preventive measures and criminal justice response, while ensuring the necessary balance between security and data protection aspects, in accordance with national laws. We will ensure that terrorists are brought to justice.

6. We will work to improve the existing international information architecture in the areas of security, travel and migration, including INTERPOL, ensuring the necessary balance between security and data protection aspects. In particular, we encourage all members to make full use of relevant information sharing mechanisms, in particular INTERPOL's information sharing

functions.

7. We call upon our border agencies to strengthen cooperation to detect travel for terrorist purposes, including by identifying priority transit and destination countries of terrorists. We will support capacity building efforts in these countries in areas such as border management, information sharing and watch-list capability to manage the threat upstream. We will promote greater use of customs security programs, including where appropriate, the World Customs Organization's (WCO) Security Programme and Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which focus on strengthening Customs administrations' capacity to deal with security related issues and managing the cross-border flows of goods, people and means of transport to ensure they comply with the law.

8. We will address in close coordination the evolving threats and potential vulnerabilities in aviation security systems and exchange information on risk assessments. We recall the UN Security Council's Resolution 2309 (2016) which urges closer collaboration to ensure security of global air services and the prevention of terrorist attacks. We will promote full implementation of effective and proportionate aviation security measures established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in partnership with all its contracting states as necessary. We call to urgently address vulnerabilities in airport security related measures, such as access control and screening, covered by the Chicago Convention and will act jointly to ensure that international security standards are reviewed, updated, adapted and put in place based on current risks.

9. We highlight the importance of providing appropriate support to the victims of terrorist acts and will enhance our cooperation and exchange of best practices to this end.

Fighting terrorism finance

10. We underline our resolve to make the international financial system entirely hostile to terrorist financing and commit to deepening international cooperation and exchange of information, including working with the private sector, which has a critical role in global efforts to counter terrorism financing. We reaffirm our commitment to tackle all sources, techniques and channels of terrorist financing and our call for swift and effective implementation of UNSCR and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards worldwide. We call for strengthening measures against the financing of international terrorist organisations in particular ISIL/ISIS/Daesh, Al Qaida and their affiliates.

11. There should be no "safe spaces" for terrorist financing anywhere in the world. However, inconsistent and weak implementation of the UN and FATF standards allows them to persist. In order to eliminate all such "safe spaces", we commit to intensify capacity building and technical assistance, especially in relation to terrorist financing hot-spots, and we support the FATF in its efforts to strengthen its traction capacity and the effectiveness of FATF and FATF-style regional bodies.

12. We welcome the reforms agreed by the FATF Plenary in June and support the ongoing work to strengthen the governance of the FATF. We also welcome the FATF intention to further explore its transformation into a legal person, which recognises that the FATF has evolved from a temporary forum to a sustained public and political commitment to tackle AML/CFT threats. We also appreciate FATF commencing the membership process for Indonesia that will broaden its geographic representation and global engagement. We ask the FATF to provide an update by the first G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in 2018. We call on all member states to ensure that the FATF has the necessary resources and support to effectively fulfil its mandate.

13. We welcome that countering terrorist finance remains the highest priority of FATF, and look forward to FATF's planned outreach to legal authorities, which will contribute to enhanced international cooperation and increased effectiveness in the application of FATF's standards.

14. We will advance the effective implementation of the international standards on transparency and beneficial ownership of legal persons and legal arrangements for the purposes of countering financing terrorism.

15. Low cost attacks by small cells and individuals funded by small amounts of money transferred through a wide range of payment means are an increasing challenge. We call on the private sector to continue to strengthen their efforts to identify and tackle terrorism financing. We ask our Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to work with FATF, FSB, the financial sector, Financial Intelligence Units, law enforcement and FinTech firms to develop new tools such as guidance and indicators, to harness new technologies to better track terrorist finance transactions, and to work together with law enforcement authorities to bridge the intelligence gap and improve the use of financial information in counter-terrorism investigations.

16. We call upon countries to address all alternative sources of financing of terrorism, including dismantling connections, where they exist, between terrorism and transnational organized crime, such as the diversion of weapons including weapons of mass destruction, looting and smuggling of antiquities, kidnapping for ransom, drugs and human trafficking.

Countering radicalization conducive to terrorism and the use of internet for terrorist purposes

17. Our counterterrorism actions must continue to be part of a comprehensive approach, including combatting radicalization and recruitment, hampering terrorist movements and countering terrorist propaganda. We will exchange best practices on preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, national strategies and deradicalisation and disengagement programmes, and the promotion of strategic communications as well as robust and positive narratives to counter terrorist propaganda.

18. We stress that countering terrorism requires comprehensively addressing underlying conditions that terrorists exploit. It is therefore crucial to promote political and religious tolerance, economic development and social

cohesion and inclusiveness, to resolve armed conflicts, and to facilitate reintegration. We acknowledge that regional and national action plans can contribute to countering radicalisation conducive to terrorism.

19. We will share knowledge on concrete measures to address threats from returning foreign terrorist fighters and home-grown radicalised individuals. We will also share best practices on deradicalisation and reintegration programmes including with respect to prisoners.

20. We will work with the private sector, in particular communication service providers and administrators of relevant applications, to fight exploitation of the internet and social media for terrorist purposes such as propaganda, funding and planning of terrorist acts, inciting terrorism, radicalizing and recruiting to commit acts of terrorism, while fully respecting human rights. Appropriate filtering, detecting and removing of content that incites terrorist acts is crucial in this respect. We encourage industry to continue investing in technology and human capital to aid in the detection as well as swift and permanent removal of terrorist content. In line with the expectations of our peoples we also encourage collaboration with industry to provide lawful and non-arbitrary access to available information where access is necessary for the protection of national security against terrorist threats. We affirm that the rule of law applies online as well as it does offline.

21. We also stress the important role of the media, civil society, religious groups, the business community and educational institutions in fostering an environment which is conducive to the prevention of radicalisation and terrorism.

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[Romanian THB ring disrupted in France](#)

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A joint action day on 19 June in France and Romania led to 23 arrests (13 in France and 10 in Romania) for suspected involvement in a human trafficking ring and participation in a criminal organisation.

In 2011, French police became aware of thefts committed on the Metro in and around Paris by young adult and underage Romanian nationals. The level of

these crimes peaked in 2015 and 2016, when France hosted very large international events (the Paris Climate Change Conference (CPO 21) and the Euro football competition).

Young potential thieves, belonging to family clans from Iasi and Roman in Romania, were regularly trafficked from Romania to France. The thieves reside in one building in Saint-Denis, and are supervised by adult organisers. Every morning, between 6:00 to 10:00, groups of children and young adults leave the building to commit crimes on the Metro.

The action was led in France by the Brigade for the protection of minors of Paris, conducted by an investigative judge, and in Romania by the Directorate for Investigation of Organized Crime and Terrorism, Iasi Territorial Office, and Brigade for Combating Organized Crime, as well as Border Police Iasi. Of the 39 suspects identified, 31 are minors. The value of the stolen goods is estimated at approximately EUR 600 000 since 2011.

Preparations for the action day were made possible by the signing of a joint investigation team (JIT) agreement between France and Romania, funded and supported by Eurojust.

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