REPORT

Operation COCAIR 3

February 2012
Joint concerted action to counter a genuine threat to the balance of this African region

The World Customs Organization (WCO) Secretariat regularly conducts analyses of drug seizures made by our Member countries and input into the Customs Enforcement Network (CEN).

The trend noted between 2005 and 2008, showing a somewhat uncharacteristic routing whereby cocaine shipments consigned in South America with Europe as their final destination were stored in and transited West Africa and, to a lesser extent, Central Africa, was borne out in 2009 and 2010, even though this phenomenon is somewhat on the wane.

In December 2008 and in June 2010, in partnership with INTERPOL, the European Commission and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the WCO Secretariat carried out pilot Operations COCAIR 1 and COCAIR 2, designed to strengthen anti-drug trafficking mechanisms in over twenty international airports in West Africa, Central Africa and Brazil. The aim was to intercept shipments of cocaine and other drugs bound for Europe.

These two Operations were implemented thanks to the establishment of a three-phase action plan:

1. Tailoring and use of CENcomm (CEN communication tool adapted to the Operations’ requirements), as well as the INTERPOL 1-24/7 database.

2. Training for officers from the various participating services (Customs-Police-Gendarmerie or other drug enforcement agencies). The provision of drug detection kits to all selected airports.

3. Establishment of an Operational Co-ordination Unit (OCU) in Dakar (Senegal).

The Western and Central Africa Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILOs) were directly involved in the mechanism and played a decisive role in implementing these two Operations. Given the success of both Operations, not only in terms of positive results but also of the enthusiasm generated and the motivation they inspired, a decision was taken to roll out a new Operation reprising the same overall objectives as the first two: Operation COCAIR 3.

This latest Operation, set in motion by the WCO, in partnership with INTERPOL, the European Commission and the UNODC, also falls within the scope of a new Project called AIRCOP aimed at improving controls in international airports, especially by enhancing cooperation between drug enforcement services and by establishing effective and secure communication systems: CENcomm for Customs and I-24/7 for the Police.

Countries taking part

**West Africa**

- Benin (Cotonou Airport)
- Burkina Faso (Ouagadougou Airport)
- Cape Verde (Praia, Santa Maria and Sao Vicente Airports)
- Côte d’Ivoire (Abidjan Airport)
- Gambia (Banjul Airport)
- Ghana (Accra Airport)
- Guinea (Conakry Airport)
- Mali (Bamako Airport)
- Mauritania (Nouakchott Airport)
- Niger (Niamey Airport)
- Nigeria (Lagos and Abuja Airports)
- Senegal (Dakar Airport)
Togo (Lomé Airport)

Central Africa
- Cameroon (Yaoundé and Douala Airports)
- Central African Republic (Bangui Airport)
- Chad (N’Djamena Airport)
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa and Lubumbashi Airports)
- Gabon (Libreville Airport)
- Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville Airport)

Other region
- Brazil (São Paulo Airport).

Training in advance of the Operation

- Basic training (risk analysis, selection and targeting of operations posing a risk, product recognition, police investigation, etc.) as well as training in the use of CENcomm and INTERPOL’s I-24/7 database was thought necessary to ensure the success of the Operation.
- This training took place in the WCO’s Regional Training Centre, located in Brazzaville (Republic of the Congo), from 7 to 11 November 2011.
- A good forty experts (Customs – Police – Gendarmerie and other drug enforcement agencies) from eighteen of the twenty countries involved in Operation COCAIR 3 attended the training (Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Senegal and Togo).
- All the experts having completed the training left Brazzaville with the full set of course materials required to redeliver this training within their respective countries. The knowledge gained from the training was passed on in the majority of countries participating in the Operation.

Formation aux nouveaux outils de lutte contre les stupéfiants

DOUANE

Plaisir des douanes, policiers et gendarmes apprennent déjà le 7 novembre à Brazzaville, en atelier technique pour mieux connaître le problème de contrôle des produits sociaux.

Le ministre de la sécurité nationale, lauréat de la lutte contre le trafic de drogue dans les universités africaines, s’est rendu au centre de formation de l’Organisation mondiale de la douane (OMC), à Brazzaville, avec la délégation connue des douanes de plusieurs pays africains. Les missions qui l’ont retenu pendant douze jours, ont permis d’examiner des stratégies pour la lutte contre le commerce du trafic de drogue et des produits de la société. Les experts ont également échangé sur les différentes étapes et préparés les futures actions des douanes pour la lutte contre le trafic de drogue.

Le directeur général des douanes, Jean-Michel Ngoué, a rappelé que la lutte contre le trafic de drogue était une priorité pour l’OMC et aussi pour toute l’Afrique. La formation était destinée à permettre aux experts du région d’améliorer leurs compétences et de mieux collaborer dans la lutte contre la criminalité.

Opération Sao avec une pluie de 32 ppm

Depuis le 1er octobre, la lutte contre le trafic de drogue a été renforcée dans plusieurs pays africains. Les douanes, les forces de l’ordre et les services de sécurité ont été mobilisés pour lutter contre ce fléau social. L’opération Sao, initiée par l’OMC, a eu pour objectif de réduire la circulation des produits de la société dangereux et de sensibiliser les populations à leur danger.

Le ministre de la sécurité nationale, à la rencontre de l’équipe de travail du projet, a souligné que la lutte contre le trafic de drogue était une priorité pour l’OMC et pour tous les pays africains. Les experts ont échangé sur les différentes étapes et préparés les futures actions des douanes pour la lutte contre le trafic de drogue.

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Dans une interview à la Nouvelle de Brazzaville, le ministre a dit que la lutte contre le trafic de drogue était une priorité pour l’OMC et pour tous les pays africains. Les experts ont échangé sur les différentes étapes et préparés les futures actions des douanes pour la lutte contre le trafic de drogue.

Extrait de Les Dépêches de Brazzaville newspaper (Issue No. 1365 of Wed, 9 Nov 2011)
OCU set up at WCO headquarters in Brussels

Its role

Provide international co-ordination and consultation with regard to information sharing and operational decisions.

Maintain regular contact with the Customs and Police National Contact Points (NCPs).

Relay the information received from NCPs (seizure reports and alerts) to other countries as well as to the RILO Western Europe, after having supplemented it where necessary.

Prepare daily information sheets reporting on the previous day’s major developments and activities and circulate them among participating countries.

The OCU was made up of a dozen experts from Member countries, the Western Africa RILO, the Central Africa RILO and the Western Europe RILO, as well as WCO and INTERPOL experts to review the nominal data and for Customs-Police co-ordination.

Results

Drug seizures:

➢ Cannabis: 9 seizures totalling 468.5 kg

➢ Cocaine: 10 seizures totalling 24.68 kg.
Brazil - Sao Paulo
Date: 04/12/11
Mode of transport: air
Route: Sao Paulo – Doha – Damascus
Drugs: 5.9 kg cocaine
Method of concealment: in luggage

Cape Verde - Praia
Date: 04/12/11
Mode of transport: air
Route: Fortaleza (Brazil) – Praia (Cape Verde)
Drugs: 1 kg cocaine
Method of concealment: in a wig

- Heroin: 2 seizures totalling 6.31 kg
- Ecstasy: 1 seizure totalling 1.1 kg
- Methamphetamines: 2 seizures totalling 1.6 kg
- Amphetamines: 2 seizures totalling 2 kg
- Mescaline: 1 seizure totalling 0.4 kg
**Seizures of cash:**

- Four seizures involving 655,620 USD, 2,186,500 euro (including one seizure of 2,000,000 euro found in the luggage of two passengers in Mauritania at outbound screening) and 13,150,000 CFAF. The total amount seized came to the equivalent of 1,877,458,508 CFAF.

- It is strongly suspected that these funds can be traced back to organized crime activities.

**Seizures of weapons and ammunition:**

- Two discoveries (three shotguns and one automatic pistol together with ammunition)
Seizures of African art objects:

➢ Four seizures of masks, statues and loincloths totalling 50 kg

Seizures of CITES goods:

➢ Four seizures of worked ivory objects totalling 5.932 kg

Seizures of counterfeit goods, including medicines:

➢ Three seizures of goods totalling approximately 120 kg
Over and above the seizures of drugs, cash, weapons, works of art, CITES goods, etc., the main objectives of the Operation were met, especially in terms of:

- Heightening controls at the major international airports in West and Central Africa on flights bound for European countries or major North African hubs (Casablanca, Tunis and Algiers). Almost all the participating countries deployed heightened controls on sensitive flights and, in some countries taking the part in Operation COCAIR 3, the control mechanism was extended to other modes of transport (land, sea).

- Identifying natural and legal persons and organizations involved in this trafficking, within the scope of the legal provisions offered by each country’s legislation.

- Raising the awareness of airport inspection services about smuggling risks on flights bound for European countries (direct flights or flights transiting hubs) and via different carriers (especially postal freight and express delivery at export, on which there are usually few inspections).

- Gathering of information on the status of cocaine trafficking from this sub-region and assessing and analysing this information in order to produce risk profiles and updated and relevant targeting criteria.

- The training given at the Brazzaville RTC on product identification and targeting of passengers and the redelivery of this training to field officers in the participating countries produced results, since most of the seizures made were thanks to instincts acquired during the successive training sessions, especially in terms of analysis of passenger behaviour and utilizing passenger lists.

- Strengthening information sharing between Customs and Police services on this phenomenon, as well as co-operation and information sharing between the regions involved, using the expertise and logistical resources made available by the WCO and INTERPOL. This objective widely accomplished during the Operation and continues to be sought on a daily basis. This is undoubtedly the most tangible result.

It goes without saying that the rollout of Operation COCAIR 3, largely funded by the European Commission, has to form part of a much wider-reaching and sustainable capacity building project for Customs administrations, Police services and other agencies responsible for combating drug trafficking in this region, over a period of at least four to five years.

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