Beat: News

Crackdown on a gold smuggling network

Italy, Germany and Switzerland

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USPA NEWS - With the support of Eurojust and Europol, authorities in Italy, Germany and Switzerland have taken action against an organised crime group (OCG) involved in the smuggling of gold and other precious goods as well as money laundering activities. During a joint action, 10 suspects were arrested. More than 150 police officers were involved in the operation. Eurojust assisted the authorities in setting up a joint investigation team (JIT) into the case.

The investigation was initiated by the Italian authorities in 2019. The suspects allegedly bought gold and other precious commodities on the black market, counterfeited documents relating to these items and used couriers to send them to Turkey. Investigators found a room in Zurich, Switzerland, converted into an illegal foundry where gold was melted to conceal its illicit origin.

The OCG is believed to have laundered over EUR 15 million through a complex money laundering scheme across Europe.

The case was opened at Eurojust in March 2020 at the request of the Italian authorities. Eurojust facilitated the coordination of investigations in Italy, Switzerland and Germany by supporting the set-up of a JIT between the Italian and Swiss authorities in June 2021. The Agency hosted three coordination meetings to provide legal expertise and operational support to the national judicial authorities and to prepare for the joint action day.

Europol supported the investigation by providing intelligence and facilitating multiple cross-checks and cross-match reports, and hosting operational meetings.

The joint operation was supported by the EU-funded Project ISF4 @ON, an Italian-led initiative to tackle mafia-type organised crime groups operating in Europe.

The following authorities took part in this investigation:

Italy: Public Prosecutor’s Office Milan; ROS Carabinieri Florence

Germany: German State Criminal Police Office North Rhine-Westphalia

Switzerland: Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland; Federal Office of Police fedpol (Federal Criminal Investigation Police)

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