

Europe joined forces against international trafficking in stolen vehicles

Operation "Jpo Itacar" dealt a severe blow to international high-end and luxury vehicles traffickers. The three-day operation, coordinated by the Italian Traffic Police Service, was aimed at tackling stolen vehicles trafficking with the participation of all 28 EU member countries (with their 600 vehicles stolen per day, an average of 25 per hour).

On October 7-9, 323 cars were retrieved with an estimated value of over 5 million euros, 469 people arrested and 1,713 reported to the judicial authorities. Each of the cars recovered was worth more than 35,000 euros and almost half of them were stolen from rental companies.

This was the case, for example, of a BMW X3 and a Mercedes Benz B-Class which were retrieved in the port of Naples: they had been rented in France by Italian nationals and taken to Italy, where the vehicles were handed over to non-EU drivers, who embarked them on boats bound for North Africa in exchange for a sum of money.

Three Range Rover stolen in Italy, with an estimated value of over 250,000 euros in total, were recovered in the port of Genoa. Though they were hidden inside containers and covered by mattresses, the police still managed to locate them thanks to x-rays scanners. Also in this case, the vehicles were bound for the African market.

Switzerland, Europol, Interpol, Frontex and Tispol (the European Traffic Police Network) also joined operation "Jpo Itacar", which was launched by the Italian delegation at CARPOL subgroup (Network of national contact points for stolen vehicles trafficking) and approved by the Law Enforcement Working Party - LEWP, under the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Four teams of experts from Interpol joined the operations in Italy, namely in the ports of Genoa, Trieste and Naples, while a joint control room manned by experts from all participating countries was set up at Europol headquarters in The Hague. The police in the various countries worked simultaneously, performing checks and inspections in ports, at border crossings, along those motorways mostly used as trafficking routes, as well as at car rentals and repair shops.

As to the routes, the investigations have revealed that stolen vehicles with final destination United Arab Emirates and Asia depart from Italy across the border of Brogeda (Como) and are then shipped from the ports of Rotterdam, Hamburg, and Antwerp.

The route to Africa passes through Genoa or Ventimiglia and reaches the port of Marseille.

Vehicles heading to the Balkans go across the borders of Tarvisio and Trieste.

Italy deployed 14,000 Police and Carabinieri officers, who checked 82,492 vehicles, recovering 92 stolen vehicles worth nearly 2 million euros.

Moreover, 97,359 people were checked in total, of which 46 were arrested and 362 reported to the judicial authority.

Director of Traffic, Railway, Postal and Communications Police and the Police Special Units Roberto Sgalla described this joint police operation as "an almost unique experience, clearly showing that police cooperation can play a crucial role in stemming the flow of crime".

Italian

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