

'Ndrangheta: 30 suspects caught in New York and Reggio Calabria

Following a major police operation 30 people were detained on suspicion of being part of an international drug trafficking ring between the US and the Calabria region.

The operation was jointly conducted by the investigators of the Polizia di Stato, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Homeland Security, in Calabria and New York.

The investigation, coordinated by anti-mafia prosecutors in Reggio Calabria and New York, has reconstructed old and new criminal alliances, including mafia-type connections, thus confirming that the 'Ndrangheta crime syndicate is a major player in international drug trafficking.

The operation was code-named "Columbus", because precisely on Columbus Day, that is October 12, Italian police and FBI agents intercepted a first cocaine shipment in a US port. Coming from Central America, the drug was intended for the New York and European markets. A Calabrian-born man, with no criminal records, who ran a pizzeria in the Queens borough of New York, was arrested along with his parents on charges of international drug trafficking.

From the investigations, as well as audio and video wiretaps, it emerged that the family used the restaurant as a front business for cocaine smuggling to New York and Calabria.

The investigators of the Central Operations Service and the Criminal Investigation Department of Reggio Calabria have been working in New York with FBI agents for months.

In October and December 2014, following the shadowing and wiretapping of persons suspected of having organized an international drug trafficking, law enforcement authorities had seized two cocaine shipments, 60 kilos in total (132 lbs), in the US ports of Wilmington (Delaware) and Chester-Philadelphia (Pennsylvania).

Police Chief congratulates his officers

"Once again the excellent investigators of the Polizia di Stato, working side-by-side with FBI colleagues, have been able to launch a crackdown on the 'Ndrangheta's international dimension, that makes it one of the world's most powerful organized crime syndicates", Police Chief Alessandro Pansa said, commenting the operation.

"Under the wise direction of the New York and Reggio Calabria prosecutors, the Polizia di Stato kept on investigating after striking a very hard blow to the US gangs with Operation "New Bridge" in February 2014", Prefect Pansa continued.

"My compliments and congratulations go to the officers of the national police who keep on ensuring the highest working standards in the fight against organized crime."

The investigation was the result of the cooperation between the US and Italian judicial and investigative authorities, in a partnership known as the "Pantheon project" established between the Italian Central Operations Service (SCO) and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In the Pantheon project, experienced FBI agents and Italian police officers specialized in organized crime are sent to each other's countries to share and compare information on Mafia-type crime trends, crime syndicates, offenders and illicit trafficking.

Italian version

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