

RISE OF FAKE 'CORONA CURES' REVEALED IN GLOBAL COUNTERFEIT MEDICINE OPERATION

21 March 2020

News Article

Criminals take advantage of the high demand in hygiene products driven by the COVID-19 outbreak

Europol has supported a global operation to target trafficking counterfeit medicines. Operation Pangea, coordinated by INTERPOL and involved 90 countries worldwide, took place between 3 and 10 March 2020.

PUBLIC DUPED INTO BUYING BOGUS 'CORONA SPRAYS' AND 'CORONAVIRUS PACKAGES' ONLINE

The pandemic has opened up a business opportunity for predatory criminals. Authorities around the world seized nearly 34 000 counterfeit surgical masks, making them the most commonly sold medical product online. Law enforcement officers identified more than 2 000 links to products related to COVID-19.

The results of the operation reveal a worrying increase in unauthorised antiviral medications and the antimalarial chloroquine. Vitamin C, known for its immune-boosting properties, and other food supplements have been seized around the world. Painkillers and antibiotics also represented a significant portion of the seizures.

The operation in numbers

- › 121 arrests;
- › €13 million in potentially dangerous pharmaceuticals seized;
- › 326 00 packages inspected;
- › 48 000 packages seized;
- › 4.4 million units of illicit pharmaceuticals seized worldwide;
- › 37 000 unauthorised and counterfeit medical devices seized (mostly surgical masks and self-testing kits for HIV and glucose monitoring);
- › 2 500 links taken down (websites, social media, online marketplaces, adverts);
- › 37 organised crime groups dismantled.

Europol supported the operation by facilitating information exchange and providing analytical support. One expert from Europol was deployed to cross-check in real time operational information against Europol's databases and provide leads to investigators.

CRIME AREAS

[Intellectual property crime](#) • [Counterfeiting and Product Piracy](#)

TARGET GROUPS

[General Public](#) • [Law Enforcement](#) • [Academia](#) • [Professor](#) • [Students](#) • [Researcher](#) • [Press/Journalists](#) • [Other](#)

ENTITIES

[Intellectual Property Crime Coordinated Coalition \(IPC3\)](#)

OPERATIONS

[Pangea](#)

ORGANISATIONS

[Interpol](#)

SUPPORT & SERVICES

[Operational support](#) • [Information exchange](#) • [Analysis](#) • [Operational](#) • [Intelligence](#) • [Mobile office](#)