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"Operation Diabolo", an international customs operation led by OLAF, seized 135 million counterfeit branded cigarettes and 557,000 other counterfeit products

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"Operation Diabolo", an international customs operation led by OLAF, seized 135 million counterfeit branded cigarettes and 557,000 other counterfeit products

"Operation Diabolo", a joint international customs operation of the 27 EU Member States, with the participation of Interpol, Europol and the World Customs Organization, was organised in February by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) on behalf of the European Commission. Nearly 135 million counterfeit branded cigarettes and 557,000 other counterfeit products like textiles, footwear, toys, furniture, suitcases and watches were seized. In cigarettes alone, the operation helped avoid potential losses of approximately 220 million euros in customs duties and taxes for the European Community and Member States' budgets. The final results of the operation are presented today in Cologne in cooperation with the German Customs Investigations Office (Zollkriminalamt). Commission Vice-President Siim Kallas will present the results of the operation at a press conference in Brussels on Monday 23 April 2007.

"In today's world smuggled goods are more often than not counterfeit. Customs operations therefore go beyond the classical safeguarding of revenues for public coffers: they also protect the health and safety of consumers and the interests of legitimate business. This is especially true for cigarettes, the primary target of Operation Diabolo", emphasized Siim Kallas, Vice-President of the European Commission with responsibility for administrative affairs, audit and anti-fraud. "Trade facilitation and effective customs enforcement are two sides of the same coin. This is why I particularly welcome the first attempts by [ASEM](#) countries to participate in this joint operation."

Branded cigarettes and other counterfeit products originating from Asian ports were the target of the joint customs operation, codenamed "Diabolo", carried out in February 2007. Diabolo, a maritime operation, was a resounding success in terms of the coordination of operations at EU level. Its impressive results are presented today at a press conference in Cologne by OLAF, the German Customs Investigations Office ([Zollkriminalamt](#)) and the customs administrations of several Member States:

- | 67 containers with illegal consignments were detected.
- | Most of these containers carried counterfeit textiles, furniture, suitcases, mobile phone accessories, footwear, electronics, toys, sunglasses, football items, etc: a total of 557,000 articles were seized. One container carried undeclared poultry meat.
- | 20 of the 67 containers carried a total of 134,448,000 counterfeit cigarettes.
- | 220 million euros is the estimated potential loss that the budgets of the European Community and its Member States (customs duties and taxes) would have had to shoulder, but this could be avoided thanks to the success of Operation Diabolo.

Operation Diabolo was commissioned by the Member States of [ASEM](#) (Asia Europe Meeting^[1]) It involved over 300 customs officers across the EU and counted on the support of [Interpol](#), [Europol](#) and the [World Customs Organization](#). The customs authorities of the 27 Member States collaborated closely, under the coordination of OLAF, by stepping up the exchange of information in order to pinpoint flows of counterfeit goods in ordinary commercial transactions. Most international EU ports were involved over the operational period. The operation was directed by a team of 9 liaison officers from the Member States and OLAF officials from the permanent technical support infrastructure for joint customs operations set up at OLAF's headquarters in Brussels. The fruitful cooperation provided to OLAF by the competent authorities in Egypt and Israel during the operational phase was very much appreciated.

A press conference with Commission Vice-President Siim Kallas is scheduled for Monday, 23 April 2007, 12:15, in Brussels.

A technical briefing by senior OLAF representatives on OLAF's responsibilities and activities in the area of customs will take place at 11:00 the same day.

A background MEMO with a list of the results of Operation Diabolo will be available on Rapid on Monday 23 April 2007.

An overview of joint customs operations on the OLAF website:

http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud/olaf-oafc/st_en.html

^[1] The ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) is an informal dialogue process initiated in 1996. The 27 EU Member States, the European Commission and thirteen Asian countries (Brunei, Burma/Myanmar, China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Laos, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) participate in the process.