



EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

PRESS RELEASE No 11/2017

26/06/2017

Operation Renegade halts thousands of potentially dangerous auto spare parts and other counterfeit goods

Over 70,000 counterfeit auto spare parts, including grills, oil and air filters, and fuel pumps, along with 590 cylinders of CFC refrigerant commonly used in air-conditioning and refrigeration systems were seized in a large-scale Joint Customs Operation coordinated by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). These fake items could not only be harmful to the environment, but also be potentially dangerous to the safety and health of citizens. An additional 400,000 counterfeit goods, including chewing gum, toys, perfumes, headphones, garden appliances and sunglasses, which can be found in many homes around the European Union and are often staple products in the daily lives of citizens, were also halted at the EU's doorstep.

Operation Renegade particularly targeted the international trade of counterfeit auto spare parts by sea container. Under the coordination of OLAF, EU and Asian customs authorities carried out targeted physical checks on more than 400 containers. Most of the European ports were involved in the operation, which, over the course of two weeks, uncovered a wide array of counterfeit goods, cigarettes as well as prohibited goods. The seizures of 56 million cigarettes alone prevented the loss of €12 million in customs duties and taxes. Furthermore, 668 kg of cocaine were apprehended.

“Operation Renegade shows what can be achieved when customs authorities, international partners and industry work together to fight against the trade of counterfeit goods. Counterfeit goods hurt consumers, harm legitimate businesses and cause huge losses to public revenues.” Giovanni Kessler, Director-General of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) said.

Operation Renegade was organised within the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) framework, as part of its joint efforts in the fight against counterfeit goods. The operation was coordinated by OLAF, with the support of a team of six customs liaison officers from Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Norway, China and Europol, all working together in Brussels. During the operational phase of Renegade, OLAF facilitated the cooperation between the EU Member States, Norway, 12 Asian countries (*), Interpol, Europol and the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for Western Europe (World Customs Organization).

A number of vehicle manufacturers also provided a valuable contribution in targeting the goods covered by the operation, which led to several successful seizures. The close cooperation with the rights-holders will be further explored by OLAF – especially for products posing a danger to the health and safety of citizens, or being potentially harmful for the environment. The exchange of information in real time allowed the experts involved to identify suspicious consignments of counterfeit goods within ordinary commercial transactions.

[*] Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Lao, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam

OLAF mission, mandate and competences:

OLAF's mission is to detect, investigate and stop fraud with EU funds.

OLAF fulfils its mission by:

- carrying out independent investigations into fraud and corruption involving EU funds, so as to ensure that all EU taxpayers' money reaches projects that can create jobs and growth in Europe;
- contributing to strengthening citizens' trust in the EU Institutions by investigating serious misconduct by EU staff and members of the EU Institutions;
- developing a sound EU anti-fraud policy.

In its independent investigative function, OLAF can investigate matters relating to fraud, corruption and other offences affecting the EU financial interests concerning:

- all EU expenditure: the main spending categories are Structural Funds, agricultural policy and rural development funds, direct expenditure and external aid;
- some areas of EU revenue, mainly customs duties;
- suspicions of serious misconduct by EU staff and members of the EU institutions.

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