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OLAF cooperation with AMERIPOL leads to international operation and seizure in Colombia

Information and assistance from the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) earlier this month helped authorities in Colombia seize a major consignment of counterfeit healthcare products originating in China and bound for Venezuela.

The container of counterfeit over-the-counter products (12,400 toothbrushes and over 38,000 products destined to relieve nasal congestion and flu symptoms) was intercepted and seized thanks to information and tracking provided by OLAF, in close cooperation with the Police Community of the Americas (AMERIPOL) and the Colombian tax and customs authorities (POLFA and DIAN).

OLAF established cooperation with AMERIPOL following a virtual conference organised in May on the counterfeiting and smuggling of healthcare products and on organised crime related to sanitary products in the current COVID-19 pandemic. The National Police of Colombia and other police forces and customs authorities in the region are part of this new cooperation framework that strengthened OLAF's network of global partners.

The counterfeit pharmaceuticals operation was the first occasion for OLAF to put this new relationship with AMERIPOL into practice. OLAF identified a suspicious container headed from China to Venezuela and alerted the Colombian authorities via AMERIPOL. OLAF also tracked the container and provided the competent authorities with the information. Colombian authorities intercepted and seized the container.

OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä said: *"This successful operation is another example of how the European Anti-Fraud Office cooperates with partners from all over the world in the fight against counterfeit goods. As the world remains engaged in tackling COVID-19 and its consequences, we cannot allow counterfeit, substandard and ineffective products to put the health of consumers at risk when they should protect them instead. Pooling knowledge and resources from all over the world is the only way to fight against this illicit trade and the criminal networks behind them. This is why OLAF has built up over time a solid network of partners in all continents. We are happy to count AMERIPOL, POLFA and DIAN amongst them."*

Efficient cooperation with its partners is essential for OLAF's investigative and policy work, including the fight against counterfeiting. Counterfeit goods are a threat not only to legitimate businesses and to the economy – they can also endanger the health and safety of consumers.

More information on the operation can be read (in Spanish) in [AMERIPOL's press release](#).

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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