



INTERPOL

FACT SHEET

Illicit goods and global health

The trade in illicit products represents a major challenge for the international law enforcement community and a huge risk to global public health. The term “trafficking of illicit products” encompasses practices such as falsification (pharmaceuticals), counterfeiting (trademark infringements), piracy (copyright infringements), smuggling and tax evasion. Organized crime groups manufacture and distribute illicit goods with a complete disregard for the risks to the health and safety of consumers. The types of goods affected can include personal care products (e.g. cosmetics), medicines, medical devices, food, alcohol, toys, electronics, engine parts, construction materials, pesticides, among others. Besides representing a threat to consumers, the trafficking of illicit goods generates significant profits for transnational organized crime groups, which can fund other serious crimes.

► FIGHTING CRIMINAL NETWORKS

Criminals involved in pharmaceutical crime or trafficking in illicit goods operate through informal global networks, as well as through traditional organized crime groups. Large amounts of money are generated by these transnational criminal enterprises, which are attracted by the lucrative profits involved in trading counterfeit or fake goods, trading legitimate goods through illicit channels, or selling fake, expired or otherwise falsified medicines in shops and online. At INTERPOL, we are tackling these criminal rings and the threat they pose to public health and safety by bringing together key players to foster international cooperation.

► BUILDING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

INTERPOL assists member countries by delivering training to build the skills and knowledge of all agencies involved in the fight against illicit trafficking and pharmaceutical crime. Our training portfolio for our member countries and partners worldwide includes practical training as a precursor to operations, specialized courses in investigative techniques, train-the-trainer sessions and online learning courses.

The **International Intellectual Property Crime Investigators College (IIPCIC)** is a fully interactive online intellectual property (IP) crime training facility delivering cutting-edge Internet-based training. Students who successfully complete both the introductory and intermediate levels will receive special certification. The skills obtained by completing IIPCIC training courses are applicable to the investigation of trafficking in illicit goods.

► SUPPORTING OFFICERS IN THE FIELD

INTERPOL coordinates on-the-ground operations on a national, regional and global level, in conjunction with local authorities. Such operations bring together police, customs, health regulators and key partners in the private sector to tackle the criminal networks behind these crimes.

■ Global operations:

- Operation Pangea – a global operation targeting the online sale of counterfeit and illicit medicines as well as medical devices. Participating agencies conduct coordinated operational activities against illegal websites during the same week and identify the criminal networks behind the trafficking.

In 2017, Operation Pangea X led to a record number of 25 million illicit and counterfeit medicines seized worldwide and the recovery of illicit medical devices. The action resulted in the launch of 1,058 investigations, 3,584 websites taken offline and the suspension of more than 3,000 online advertisements for illicit pharmaceuticals.

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- Operation Opson – a four-month joint operation coordinated by INTERPOL and Europol targeting counterfeit and substandard food and beverages. OPSON was first launched in 2011 with the participation of 10 countries. In 2017, more than 65 countries participated.
- **Regional operations** aim to disrupt the activities of transnational organized criminals involved in the trafficking of illicit goods and pharmaceuticals in regions particularly affected by the problem. Operations and initiatives targeting illicit goods and fake medicines have been conducted in South America (Jupiter), Asia (Chain, Rainfall) Africa (Health, Heera, Afya), and the Middle East (Qanoon).

► INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

INTERPOL cooperates with multiple international and regional organizations, the scientific community, academia and partners from the private sector to combat crimes which threaten public health and safety. These alliances allow us to tackle all strategic, operational and technical aspects of illicit goods trafficking.

INTERPOL's annual International Law Enforcement IP Crime Conference brings together police, customs, regulatory agencies and private sector investigators to share and develop best practices to combat trafficking of illicit goods.

► AWARENESS RAISING

All levels of society are at risk from fake or substandard medicines and consumer products. INTERPOL strives to raise awareness among the general public and governments about the dangers posed by these criminal activities, as well as their links to other crimes such as drug and human trafficking, environmental crime and even terrorism.



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► CONTACT INFORMATION:

Contact us via our web site. For matters relating to specific crime cases, please contact your local police or the INTERPOL National Central Bureau in your country.

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