



EU DRUG MARKETS REPORT

A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Case study 7

International judicial and law-enforcement cooperation leads to trial against major Swedish cocaine smugglers

On 26 March 2012, a highly organised drug trafficking network was brought to trial in Sweden. Eight members of the group faced criminal charges for trafficking multi-tonne shipments of high-quality cocaine from South America to Europe. Another trial on the money laundering activities related to drug trafficking was also held in Spain.

The indictments came as a result of more than three years of joint international effort at both law-enforcement and judicial level in Sweden, Spain and France, with continuous support from Eurojust and Europol. Several other Member States (the Netherlands, Malta, the United Kingdom, Estonia, Cyprus and Germany), as well as several third States (Colombia, USA, Switzerland, Venezuela, Israel and Andorra), also provided valuable assistance.

The investigation started in Sweden in December 2008. The international dimensions of the case soon became clear, and consequently, a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) was established for the purpose of coordinating operational and judicial activity. The JIT legal framework enabled a prompt exchange of information to take place without the need for lengthy rogatory procedures.

A first success for the JIT came with the seizure of 1.4 tonnes of cocaine found on board a 15-metre sailboat bound for Europe. The boat was boarded by French authorities in the Caribbean and was brought to Martinique in June 2010. The only person on board, a 56-year-old Swede, was arrested. The investigations continued, focusing on the main criminal figure and his accomplices, who were still at large. The investigators linked the suspected criminals to a sophisticated network of companies created to facilitate money laundering, money transfers and property acquisitions.

More than 30 people were subsequently arrested throughout the world. Spanish authorities froze several bank accounts as part of the investigations into money laundering and approximately 6 million euros were seized in five different countries, linked to reinvestments in real estate, a discotheque and other legal businesses, luxury vehicles and ships. The network appears to have invested and spent at least 12 million euros between 2007 and 2010.

Europol provided operational analysis and facilitated the identification of key players in the organised crime group in Colombia, USA, France, French West Indies, Spain and Sweden. Additionally, they provided expertise and investigative support to the financial part of the case by facilitating the recovery of the assets obtained by the illicit activities of the organised crime group.

Eurojust facilitated the exchange of information and coordination of investigations. It hosted 13 coordination/JIT meetings to decide where the prosecutions should take place and to solve possible conflicts of jurisdiction and to coordinate the division of tasks among the various jurisdictions involved. Eurojust provided expertise in relation to the maritime interception.



Photo: Europol.

