

Operation Minerva: Frontex and Spain Team Up to Fight Crime

2022-09-23

Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, and the Spanish National Police have wrapped up operation Minerva for this year. Officers from 22 European countries and their Spanish colleagues managed to identify 118 people suspected of being affiliated with terrorist organisations. They also seized 11 stolen cars and 160 kg of hashish.

The operation takes place each year over the summer months to support border checks in the Spanish ports of Algeciras, Tarifa and Ceuta, which are handling summer passenger traffic to and from Morocco. The joint teams handle thousands of passengers and vehicles during the busiest summer days.

On average, more than 100 Frontex standing corps officers assisted Spanish authorities with checking the people crossing the borders. Among them, dog handler teams specialised in looking for people trying to cross the border hidden in vehicles played a particularly important role.

OPERATION MINERVA 2022

RESULTS:



- 118 people suspected of affiliation with terrorist organisations



- 160 kg of hashish



- 11 stolen cars



- 20310 illegal cigarettes



- 107 pieces of weapons



- 16 goods smugglers, 2 traffickers in human beings



- Officers from 22 countries teamed up with Spanish officers

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Urmas, a Frontex standing corps officer, shared his experience from this year's operation:

"The traffic is high at this time of year – about half of all the yearly external border crossings in Spain happens during the three summer months. We checked two to three million people in this summer operation and had several drug seizures or detections of stolen cars.

“The biggest seizure we had was towards the end of the operation, in Tarifa – the officers discovered 139 kilograms of hashish after they got alarmed by the smell when checking the car’s trunk. Part of the car had to be practically taken apart to get to the compartment.” (You will find a video of this action in our recent post – <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1517511718677811>)

“Another interesting case took place in June. The joint teams discovered 7.5 kilograms of hashish in a truck. But it wasn’t because of the dog – he simply knew where truck drivers often hide contraband, and he checked this place just in case. This is a great example of harnessing the knowledge and experience acquired over the years – an invaluable factor in all missions.”

The Frontex support included officers checking vehicles, people and passports, together with experts in stolen vehicles and in identification of fraudulent documents. Frontex also provided dog handler teams to help detect hidden people, drugs and other illegal goods.

As in all joint operations coordinated by the agency, Frontex officers worked under the command of the host country authorities. The main goal of Minerva is to strengthen border security, cooperation among participating authorities, and identify threats to EU’s security.