

CRIMJUST delivers twelve trainings as part of Operation Azure in Bogota, Colombia, to strengthen institutional capacities against synthetic opioid trafficking in Latin America and the Caribbean



4 to 15 October 2021 – The CRIMJUST Global Programme carried out twelve capacity-building activities in Bogota, Colombia, in partnership with the UNODC Laboratory and Forensic Science and Laboratory Section, to law enforcement officials, forensic experts, prosecutors and judges from Mexico, Peru, Panama, Dominican Republic, Colombia, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay, as part of “Operation Azure” – a global initiative involving capacity-building, the release of two technical guidelines, donation of equipment and operational activities with a view of both strengthening national capacities and coordinating global responses to the

diversion and trafficking of synthetic opioid trafficking. As part of this effort, CRIMJUST provided Tru-Narc drug testing devices as well as of a crime scene kits to each country. This Operation is being implemented under the framework of the UNODC Opioid Strategy, funded by the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) of the United States State Department.

These trainings sought to enhance capacities to practitioners across the criminal justice chain, with courses on the “*Profiling of Synthetic Opioids in Mail and Small Parcels*”, the “*Safe Handling of Synthetic Opioids*”, the “*Use of Raman Drug Detecting Device and Crime Scene Kits*” and “*Providing Forensic Evidence in Synthetic Opioid Cases*” – the latter which was delivered in partnership with the Ibero-American Network of Anti-Drug Prosecutors (RFAI). They adopted a practical approach requiring participants to engage with counterparts from other countries as well as to draw upon guidelines and theory to carry out risk assessments and to solve mock cases. Two of these trainings were based on CRIMJUST technical guidelines on “*Profiling Synthetic Opioids in Mail and Small Parcels*” and on “*Prosecutors and Judges Adjudicating Synthetic Opioid Cases*”, initially released in English in September 2021 and later translated and disseminated in Spanish.



Together, these trainings served to highlight the specific challenges facing law enforcement and criminal justice officials handling synthetic drug cases and to

discuss best techniques and practices to detect, investigate and prosecute synthetic opioid trafficking. Briefly, while law enforcement officials are having to detect and investigate smaller – yet increasingly potent – quantities of synthetic opioids, criminal justice agencies are grappling to control the development of new opioids, as synthetic opioid manufacturers and traffickers seek to avoid sentencing by constantly altering the composition of these substances and exploiting legal loopholes.

In addition, the CRIMJUST Global Programme joined efforts with the Ibero-American Network of Anti-Drug Prosecutors (RFAI) to deliver a training on the “*Use of Special Investigative Techniques: Controlled deliveries*”. Drawing upon case studies and a series of practical scenarios, RFAI experts, including Ignacio Miguel de Lucas, Macarena Arroyo, José Mena and Yazmin Llanos



showcased opportunities to trace and map out criminal structures via controlled deliveries following a drug seizure. These trainings were inaugurated by Regional Representative Pierre Lapaque for UNODC Country Office in Colombia and his Deputy, Olivier Inizan, who highlighted the importance of using criminal justice cooperation to ensure investigations prioritize their focus on prosecuting organizers and financiers of drug trafficking, rather than on interdiction activities.

These trainings were initially delivered in Accra, Ghana, from 14 to 24 September 2021, to operatives from Nigeria, South Africa and Ghana. (For more information, please see the press release [here](#).) They will be followed by two phases of simultaneous operational activity and a global debriefing

meeting in late 2021.

For more information, please visit:

- [Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs](#) (INL)
- [European Union - Global Illicit Flows Programme](#)
- [UNODC Opioid Strategy](#)



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