



INTERPOL

FACT SHEET

Pharmaceutical crime

We are seeing a significant increase in the manufacture, trade and distribution of falsified, diverted, stolen and illicit medicines and medical devices. In some areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America, falsified medical products can form around one-third of the market. They often contain the wrong amount of active ingredient – too little, too much or none at all – posing a major health risk. Fake drugs can kill, therefore the fight against pharmaceutical crime is crucial to protect global public health and safety.

► FIGHTING THE CRIMINAL NETWORKS

Criminals involved in pharmaceutical crime operate through informal global networks, as well as through traditional organized crime groups. These criminal networks are involved in all types of pharmaceutical crimes, such as falsifying, diverting, stealing or illicitly selling medicines over the Internet. Large amounts of money are generated in these transnational criminal enterprises: one network dealing with illicit online pharmacies earned USD 55 million during the two years before it was dismantled. 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 inter-agency cooperation between police, customs and health regulatory agencies.

► BUILDING THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

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

► SUPPORTING OFFICERS IN THE FIELD

INTERPOL delivers full operational support to member countries at all stages of an investigation.

We offer our expertise, from intelligence-gathering, planning and implementing an operation, to legal issues for cases that are brought to court. Operations are run on a national, regional and global level. Coordinated by INTERPOL, these operations bring together customs, health regulators, national police, key scientific partners and the private sector to tackle physical outlets as well as Internet suppliers selling illicit medical products.

- **Global operations** – such as Operation Pangea – are aimed at targeting the online sale of counterfeit and illicit medicines, as well as highlighting the dangers of buying illicit medicines online by raising awareness among the general public.
- **Regional operations** aim to disrupt the activities of transnational organized criminals involved in the trafficking of illicit pharmaceuticals in regions particularly affected by the problem, such as Southeast Asia (Operation Storm) and all regions of Africa (Operations Giboia, Mpili and Porcupine, for example).

Between 2010-2014, these operations have led to the arrests of 1,400 suspects, the suspension of 57,000 illicit online pharmacies and the seizures of 500 tonnes and 30.3 million units of illicit medicines.

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► **INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION**

INTERPOL cooperates with multiple international and regional organizations, the scientific community, academia and partners from the private sector. These alliances allow us to tackle all strategic, operational and technical aspects of pharmaceutical crime.

INTERPOL has also built a global Single Point of Contact (SPOC) network, with specialized points of contact in health and enforcement units around the world.

On a regional level, INTERPOL coordinates the Storm Enforcement Network, which aims to strengthen collaboration in enforcement activities among agencies and key partners to combat pharmaceutical crime in the Asia-Pacific region.

► **AWARENESS RAISING**

The victims of pharmaceutical crime are often the most vulnerable citizens in our societies. Therefore, one of the most important tasks for INTERPOL is to raise awareness among the general public and governments about the dangers of pharmaceutical crime. Through a campaign on fighting fake medicines involving videos, publications and other public relations materials, INTERPOL actively participates in promoting public health and turning back pharmaceutical crime.



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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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