



INTERPOL



# Operation PANGEA

Illegal online pharmacies pose a threat to the public by providing easy access to substandard, counterfeit and falsified pharmaceuticals. There is no way for a consumer to verify that the pharmaceuticals they receive from illegal online pharmacies are the medicines they claim to be. Often the dosages are incorrect, have deteriorated, or the medication might not even contain any active pharmaceutical ingredients. The involvement of organized crime in this type of trafficking requires close international police cooperation to identify the criminal networks engaged in this crime.

## TACKLING ILLICIT ONLINE SALES

In 2008, INTERPOL and the Permanent Forum on International Pharmaceutical Crime initiated Operation Pangea, the first international action tackling the online sale of counterfeit and illicit medicines and highlighting the dangers of buying medicines online. Coordinated by INTERPOL, the annual operation brings together customs, health regulators, national police and the private sector from countries worldwide. The first phase of the operation saw the participation of 10 countries in 2008, while more than 100 countries participated in the 2016 action. ▶

# OPERATION PANGEA

## OBJECTIVES

Activities target the three main structures used by illicit online pharmacies to conduct their trade – Internet Service Providers (ISPs), payment systems and delivery services.

The objectives of Operation Pangea are to:

- Safeguard public health;
- Seize counterfeit and illegal products and remove them from the market;
- Identify the producers and distributors of counterfeit and illegal medical products and the criminal networks supporting them;
- Shut down fraudulent websites;
- Raise public awareness of the risks of buying medicines online;
- Enhance cooperation amongst agencies combating the illicit trade of counterfeit and illegal medical products.

Each annual Pangea operation builds upon the best practices identified from previous operations to develop a collaborative approach to combat the illicit trade of counterfeit and illicit medical products worldwide, particularly products that represent a serious risk to public health. Key international organizations have joined the effort as well, including Europol, the World Customs Organization and the Universal Postal Union.

## OPERATION PANGEA IX

In 2016, Operation Pangea IX involved 103 member countries and 193 police, customs and health regulatory agencies. The initiative led to the inspection of more than 335,660 packages, 167,917 of which were seized when found to contain counterfeit or illicit medical products. More than 12.5 million units of counterfeit and illicit medicines with an estimated value of USD 53.7 million were taken out of circulation, some 5,000 websites selling illicit pharmaceuticals were suspended and nearly 400 people were arrested worldwide.



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