

Operation 30 Days of Action

Key operational findings



Operation 30 Days of Action, conducted through the month of June 2017, was the largest law enforcement operation ever led against waste crime.

Waste crime is a significant worldwide concern, challenging legitimate economies, the rule of law and sustainable development. When hazardous waste is improperly disposed, it contaminates the water, soil and air, eventually enters the food chain, threatening human health and safety. In an effort to reduce costs of environmentally sound disposal or recycling, waste criminals illegally trade and dispose of waste exploiting regional inequalities such as labour laws, weak environmental legislation and law enforcement capacity to displace their criminal activities where the risk of detection is lower. Waste is trafficked for improper re-use or disposal both domestically and transnationally, which requires an international coordinated enforcement response.

Operation 30 Days of Action was initiated by INTERPOL Pollution Crime Working Group in response to a call from the global law enforcement community to gather more information on waste crimes and to encourage international cooperation in the fight against illegal waste activities.

The operation targeted illegal landfill activities and illegal shipments of all types of waste, including electronic, industrial, construction, household and chemical waste. Police, customs, border and environmental agencies from 43 countries from every region of the world participated in the Operation, making it an unprecedented global effort against waste crime.

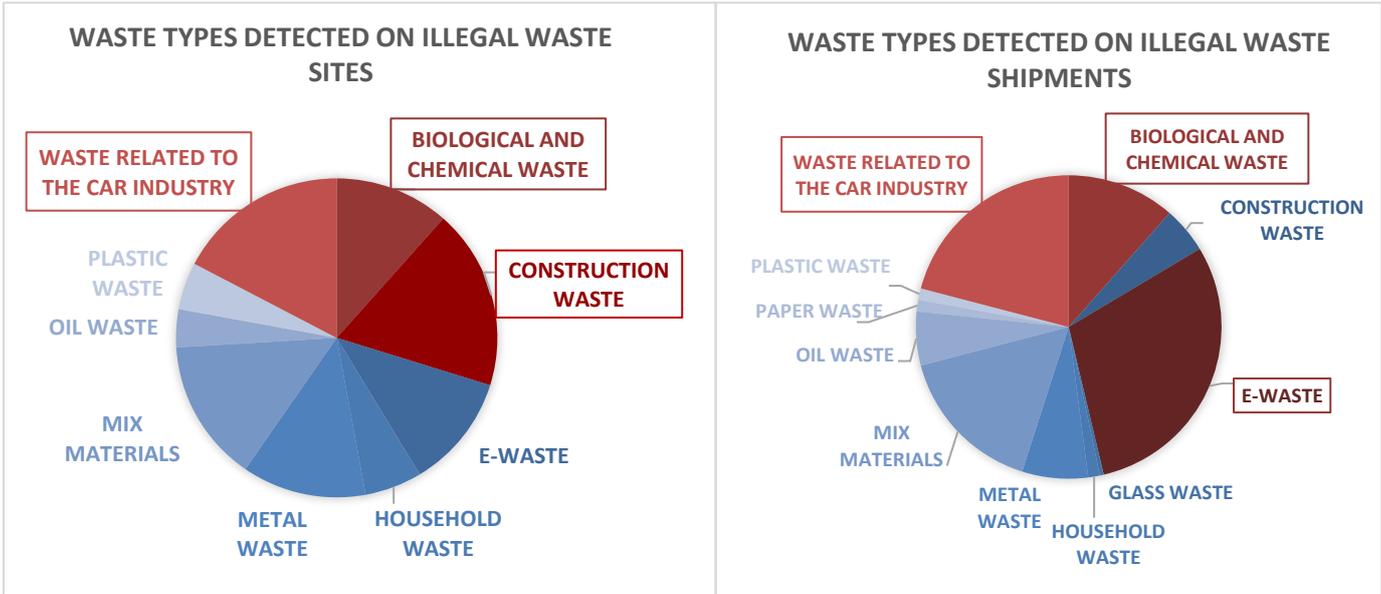
The operation uncovered 664 cases of criminal and administrative waste violations, of which 238 cases of waste activities on site and 423 cases of waste shipments (3 cases were unspecified). As a result of the Operation, 483 individuals and 264 companies were reported and over 1.5 million tonnes of illicit waste was detected.

Countries' reports indicate that the illicit waste sector is a profitable transnational business involving all regions of the world. Criminal and administrative violations were detected in 84 countries and territories worldwide. 134 transnational trade routes were identified, with 62% of all illicit waste trade occurring along transboundary routes, mainly at the interregional scale.

The value of illicit waste detected was estimated in the order of USD 33 million¹. This value reveals the great economic loss for the legitimate waste recycling industry, as well as the profitable nature of the illegal waste market on which criminals strike.

Operational findings confirmed some known trends in waste crime.

Europe appeared at the core of waste crime networks, with most cases of illegal waste sites (90%) and of illegal waste shipments (77%)² originating in this region. In particular, 68% of all criminal cases involving interregional shipments consisted of exports from Europe to Africa, mostly e-waste falsely declared a used goods exported to West Africa. Further, most interregional trafficking routes detected were on maritime routes (63%) from developed to developing countries. Waste trafficking involved mainly electronic waste (47%) and waste related to the car industry (33%) especially tyre waste (21%), which was found to be often used as concealment material for other hazardous waste. Construction waste and waste related to the car industry accounted for the largest share of waste illegally disposed of³.



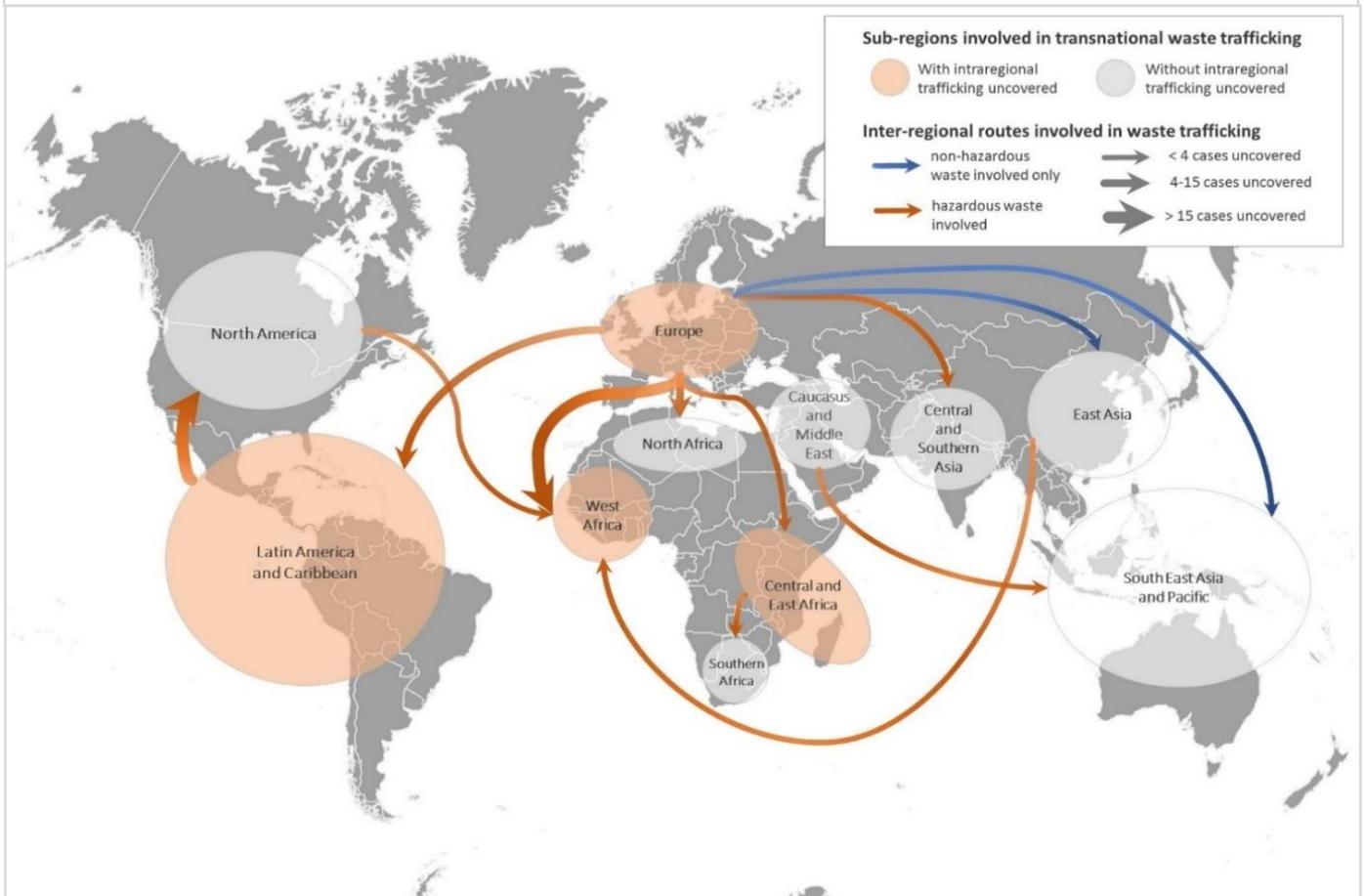
Operational results showed also some emerging trends.

In terms of waste types, chemical and biological waste⁴ accounted for a significant share of waste being illegally trafficked (10%) and illegally disposed (12%). It was also observed the rise of the Middle East and Latin America and the Caribbean, both as import and export regions, as well as the incidence of intraregional waste trade and of illegal hazardous waste disposal within Latin America.

¹ Estimation based on a representative sample of 15% cases providing monetary value of illicit waste detected.
² These results should be considered bearing in mind that more than 50% of participating countries were European countries with consolidated waste crime-related legislations and law enforcement capacities.
³ Data based on criminal cases.
⁴ Chemical and biological waste includes waste water, expired medicines, sludge, paint, pesticides, etc.

Waste Trafficking Routes

Criminal Violations detected during Operation 30 Days of Action



The course of the Operation suggested that the waste law enforcement community needs to further develop capacity to conduct intelligence-led investigations and to share information across borders. Greater focus should be placed on targeting criminal networks and reaching successful prosecutions; shaping regional enforcement strategies adapted to the context; and supporting law enforcement in countries with limited resources and expertise. However, according to participating countries, a key factor in the success of the Operation was the strong engagement and good inter-agency cooperation at the national level, reflecting a holistic approach to waste crime.



Illegal burial of diverse waste in Italy

Illegal disposal of chemical waste in Peru

Illegal shipment of waste intercepted in Netherland

Illegal disposal and trafficking of expired medicine in El Salvador

Operation 30 Days of Action was coordinated by INTERPOL Environmental Security Programme (ENS) through the Pollution Crime Working Group and in close cooperation with the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) in Europe, and with the UN Environment project Regional Enforcement Network for Chemicals and Waste (UN-REN) in Asia, underscoring the need for a coordinated response among stakeholders globally.

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