



Spain dismantles global match-fixing ring with INTERPOL support

15 September 2023

INTERPOL Notices play key role in catching one of the group's leaders

LYON, France – The Spanish National Police, in cooperation with the Spanish Tax Agency, Europol and INTERPOL, have dismantled an organized crime group suspected of fixing sporting events as well as using technology to place bets ahead of bookmakers.

So far, 23 suspects have been arrested, including one of the group's leaders who was apprehended on the basis of an INTERPOL Red Notice for persons wanted internationally.

The operation began in 2020 when Spanish officers detected a series of suspicious online sports bets placed on international table tennis events. After analysing available data, investigators identified a criminal network of Romanian and Bulgarian origin.

Members of this crime ring fixed matches outside of Spain by corrupting athletes. Once the outcomes were agreed, crime group members based in Spain would then place online bets on a massive scale.

Getting ahead of bookmakers

Through their investigations, officers uncovered a criminal process whereby the group would access match information before bookmakers, allowing them to place bets with certainty and ultimately, cash in. Through advanced technology, they gained access to live video signals from around the world, straight from stadiums, pitches and arenas. Intercepting these signals gave them a clear advantage on bookmakers, who were dependent on slower satellite feeds and relays for the same events.

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Bundesliga, Qatar 2022 World Cup matches and ATP and ITF tennis tournaments.

Despite collecting significant payouts, the group avoided detection by using a multitude of identities and accounts.

Among those arrested was a trader from a major bookmaker who, in collusion with the criminal group, would validate online bets placed by the criminal network.

INTERPOL Notices decisive

Through its Financial Crime and Anti-Corruption Centre, INTERPOL worked closely with authorities throughout the investigation, fully mobilizing members of the INTERPOL Match-Fixing Task Force (IMFTF) and using the full range of the Organization's global policing capabilities.

Three different [INTERPOL Notices](#) were published during the operation:

- A Purple Notice warning member countries of the modus operandi linked to the interception of satellite signals.
- A Blue Notice to obtain more information on the group's leader.
- A Red Notice seeking the location and arrest of the group's leader.

"Organized crime groups will exploit the tiniest of gaps given the opportunity. In this case, we're talking about a 20 or 30 second advantage that led to significant gains," said INTERPOL Secretary General Jürgen Stock.

"Successful operations such as the one led by Spain only reaffirm our engagement in ensuring our entire suite of Notices, databases and expert networks fully support police in closing these gaps," concluded Mr Stock.

IMFTF specialists were also deployed to Spain to work alongside officers during house raids, facilitating the extraction and analysis of data from seized devices, cross-checking information across INTERPOL's databases, helping track assets and money laundering channels.

Some 47 bank accounts and 28 payment gateways were blocked across several countries. Seizures included mobile phones, satellite dishes and signal receivers, cash and counterfeit banknotes, credit and debit cards, identification documents and prepaid SIM cards.

Additional arrests are anticipated as officers work to identify more members of the group, as well as athletes who accepted bribes.

The outcomes of the operation were presented this week to IMFTF members during their annual meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in a dedicated session restricted to law enforcement.

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