

Secretary Napolitano and World Customs Organization Secretary General Kunio Mikuriya Announce Preliminary Results of Largest Global Cash Smuggling Operation



Release Date: November 6, 2009

For Immediate Release
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Brussels—Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano and World Customs Organization (WCO) Secretary General Kunio Mikuriya today announced the preliminary results of Operation ATLAS—the largest multilateral operation in history targeting cash smugglers which took place from Oct. 26-30.

More than 80 countries participated in Operation ATLAS (an acronym for Assess, Target, Link, Analyze and Share)—leading to more than \$3.5 million in cash seized and the identification of \$24 million in undeclared currency that may have otherwise gone undetected at ports of entry around the world during the five-day period.

“In our increasingly networked world, multinational cooperation is critical to combating transnational criminal activity,” said Secretary Napolitano. “Today’s announcement reflects an unprecedented model of international collaboration that we will continue to build upon in the future.”

“Operation ATLAS provided the perfect platform to promote the implementation of international anti-money laundering standards and recommendations, to improve national control techniques, and to enhance cooperation among all parties involved in fighting money laundering and terrorist financing,” said Secretary General Mikuriya. “The operation’s successful outcomes also demonstrate the benefits that accrue from coordinated and focused inter-agency cooperation at the national level.”

DHS’ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) led Operation ATLAS in close collaboration with fellow DHS component U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), with the assistance of the WCO using CENcomm, a secure communication tool developed by the WCO. The operation was supported by Interpol and Europol.

Participating countries used real-time information sharing and coordination of cash declaration data to disrupt and dismantle criminal organizations that smuggle illicit cash around the world—employing several different methods to detect cash carried in baggage, on travelers and in shipments aboard commercial flights at designated airports.

Operation ATLAS reflects the commitment shared by Secretary Napolitano, Secretary General Mikuriya and WCO members to continue the expansion of cooperative efforts to deter transnational smuggling organizations around the world—bolstering global security and enhancing mutual efforts to deter terrorists and other criminals.

The announcement came during a press conference at WCO Headquarters in Brussels—part of Secretary Napolitano’s week-long trip to Europe and the Middle East to meet with her international counterparts to discuss information sharing and privacy protection; collaborative efforts to secure cyber networks worldwide; the international response to the H1N1 global pandemic; and coordination to combat transnational criminal activity and the global threat of terrorism.

Secretary Napolitano’s trip follows Secretary General Mikuriya’s recent visit to the United States where he discussed trade security and facilitation as well as customs capacity building with top government and business leaders.

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This page was last reviewed/modified on November 6, 2009.