

# Operation Los Blancos



## The dismantling of one of Europe's most active Albanian cocaine trafficking networks

An Albanian-speaking crime group known as Kompania Bello had developed a new model for smuggling cocaine from South America to Europe. Using sophisticated encrypted communication means, the organisation's ringleader negotiated directly with South American drug cartels for large shipments of cocaine to be sent to major ports across Europe. With the help of accomplices based in Italy, the Netherlands and Albania, the drugs were concealed in vehicles and distributed throughout Europe. The criminals laundered their proceeds using an underground remittance system of Chinese origin, known as *fei ch'ien*, in which money is deposited in a network 'agency' in one country, while another operator withdraws the equivalent amount elsewhere in the world and passes it on to the intended recipient.



Close to **4 tonnes of cocaine** and over **EUR 5.5 million in cash** were seized over the course of this investigation.



**15 September 2020 – Coordinated raids** resulted in 20 arrests and pre-trial detentions throughout Europe and in Dubai.



Judicial coordination was also provided during the last stage of the investigation, from a coordination centre at Eurojust. The real-time involvement of prosecutors and investigative judges was ensured for the execution and, where necessary, the adaptation of European Arrest Warrants and judicial requests during the cross-border actions. The suspects were charged with international narcotic substances trafficking, illegal possession and distribution of drugs, and brutal assault, including murder.



Working closely together, the partners revealed the magnitude and complexity of this criminal activity, establishing a **joint strategy** and organising **exchanges of information and evidence** needed to prepare for the final phase of the investigation. Eighty-four members of the organised crime group were arrested in Italy, Ecuador, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Germany in the course of the investigation.



**2015** – National authorities from Italy and the Netherlands set up a **joint investigation team** supported by Eurojust and Europol.

