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Celebrating 10 years of obvious results, effort, debates, solutions and achievements, the SECI Center presents its compliments to all the people that contributed to the success of the regional fight against transborder crime.

We value all the great women and men that represent the foundation of a powerful mechanism that has proven its efficiency.

The Special Edition of the Annual Activity Report comprises the activities of the SECI Center in 2008, as well as the main achievements obtained in 10 years of existence.
Transborder crime is not just a phenomenon of the SECI region, but is very well placed also in other parts of Europe.

The year 2008 was significant for us in different areas. We developed and connected our operational and analytical activities as well as our legal department. The Center contributed to higher awareness of practitioners and policy-makers on challenges in transborder investigations.

I am pleased to announce that the SECI region has emerged with stronger regional identity, in terms of law enforcement cooperation. Some countries in the SECI region are still finding their feet as single players. They cooperate, even if they find themselves in disagreement in certain areas.

In the year 2008 we increased the number of members to 13 and the number of observer countries to 19. Today 32 states are cooperating on police and customs issues through the Center. This significantly contributes to the security in the region.

Effective joint investigations are our priority. Last year, 39 joint investigations and 2 region-wide operations were implemented under the Center's coordination. We have new proposals on the desk, such as the task force on Environmental Crime.

We started with the permanent project on OCTA SEE, Controlled Delivery Manual, finalized the new SELEC Convention, we signed an action plan with the Tax and Customs Administration of the Netherlands for the Container Security TF; we became observer to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols and we became partners with other international organizations on specific projects.

The Center cooperates with Interpol, WCO, UNICRI, UN, EUBAM, UNDP, RCC, MARRI, BSTF, CARICOM, OLAF, UNODC, OSCE and others, while cooperation with Europol is still limited. The Center and its members expect more flexible role of the EC in assisting Europol to become more involved in Center's cooperation.

I would like to congratulate the customs and police law enforcement officers and their authorities for achievements in 2008 with my true respect and appreciation.
Ion Gabriel Sotirescu  
Romania  
Deputy Director and Head of  
Operational Support Department

SECI Center is something of very special importance for me; its 10 year history has many connections with the last 10 years of my career, at least 5 of these years being common history.

I started in 1998 as the Romanian Police expert for the negotiations of the existing agreement, then from 2000 to 2003 I was the first Romanian Police liaison officer at the Center, until 2007 I was one of the JCC members and from July 2007, deputy director and head of operational support department.

I could say I’ve seen the Center growing up, I watched its first steps and now I’m proud to see a young and strong international organization, with huge potential of development in the benefit of its members.

Let’s all support SECI Center development!

Ibrahim Gül  
Turkey  
Head of Legal / Internal Department

Transborder Crime due to its nature must to be tackled by international cooperation.

This cooperation necessitates alignment of domestic legislation and establishing a legal ground for combating transborder criminality.

SECI Center has been recognized as the main actor in the SEE Region. This de facto situation enforced legal internal department to respond in the quest for legal cooperation. The Center has built bridges with INTERPOL, EUROPOL, OSCE, WCO and many important organizations.

Also it should be mentioned that in the process for the new SELEC Convention, the legal department acted as a secretariat and advisor to make the lessons learnt from SECI a practice reflected in the convention.

In terms of financial and administrative issues, 2008 was the pinnacle for the Center due to the impeccable management of those areas.
2. At a Glance

SECI Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime is registered as an International legal entity, Diplomatic mission, with its Headquarters in Bucharest, Romania.

13 Member States

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey.
The Joint Cooperation Committee is the highest decision-making body, comprising two national members, high officials representing the Police and Customs authorities. Each country has one vote in the decision making process. The JCC elects the SECI Center management every two years.

Observers: Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, EUBAM, France, Georgia, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Slovakia, Ukraine, UNDP Romania, the United Kingdom, UNMIK, and the United States of America.

Italy (Guardia di Finanza and Italian State Police) and the United States (FBI, DEA, USSS, DoJ) maintain permanent representation at the SECI Center.

ICPO Interpol and World Customs Organization are permanent advisors.
At a Glance

Agreement on Cooperation to Prevent and Combat Transborder Crime

The Scope of the Agreement

The Parties, through their designated authorities shall assist each other, in accordance with this Agreement, in preventing, detecting, investigating, prosecuting and repressing transborder crime.

The Headquarters Agreement establishes the legal basis for cooperation with the host country, Romania.

On the basis of this document the Romanian Government continuously supported the activities of the SECI Center, support which is specially recognized with their assistance regarding the three-partied legal arrangement between Romania, Interpol and the Center on communication connectivity.

The SECI Agreement was signed on the 26th of May 1999 at Bucharest, Romania.
3. Who We Are

The Southeast Europe Cooperative Initiative Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime, the SECI Center, is a unique operational organization which facilitates the rapid exchange of information between law enforcement agencies from different countries regarding trans-border criminal cases.

The SECI Center coordinates regional operations, putting together the resources of the 13 SEE member countries in order to dismantle organized crime networks.

The Center’s operational activities are conducted within the framework of seven Task Forces addressing issues of drugs and human beings trafficking, stolen vehicles, smuggling and customs fraud, financial and computer crime, terrorism and container security.

The organization issues analysis and reports on specific areas targeting organized crime, and organizes trainings for member countries’ law enforcement representatives.

Mission

We assemble the power of 13 nations’ law enforcement agencies and add the value of experts, thus building together a strong weapon against criminality.

We commit ourselves to sustain the Southeast European countries' declared war against organized crime and to strengthen the law enforcement capabilities for countering organized crime.
A unified team of professional, well-trained and experienced liaison officers and specialists.

The SECI Center management, supported by the small staff, is responsible for keeping the organization going.

The Center provides a venue for member countries to exchange law enforcement-related, operational information in a quick and timely manner, as well as to coordinate multi-national investigations in the Balkan region. The method is:

- Requests for regional assistance are sent to the Center from an individual country through its Liaison Officer;
- The Liaison Officer then disseminates it to the appropriate country liaison officers.
- The responses to the requests are forwarded by the involved liaison officers to the origin country.

The activity of the Liaison Officers is supported by a National Focal Point set up in each member state. The NFP fulfills two roles; first, it acts as a clearinghouse for information requests sent from the Center ensuring that requests are sent to the proper authorities in its country; and, secondly, it acts to gather the responses, and return them to the Center.
The SECI Center operational activity focuses on information exchange and task force coordination.

**Joint Investigations and Regional Operations**

The SECI Regional Center has provided facilities for coordinating joint investigations and regional operations among SECI members' national law enforcement agencies and observers. Backed by the excellent information exchange framework, lots of successful international investigations, mainly in the areas of drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, counterfeit currency, credit card fraud and customs fraud, but also homicides and kidnapping for ransom, were successfully completed with the arrest, prosecution and sentence of criminals. This capacity is continuously extended for disposal to national law enforcement beneficiaries.
In 2008, the SECI Center achieved all the targets established by the Annual Action Plan and offered the proper support to all the member countries law enforcement agencies.

### SECI Center balanced scorecard

**Key operational performance outcomes 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Outcomes</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase Information Exchanges</td>
<td>achieved</td>
<td>compared to 7,583 in 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,196 info exchanges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Activity Reports</td>
<td>achieved</td>
<td>against a target of 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 delivered on time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Force Meetings</td>
<td>achieved</td>
<td>against a revised target of 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 organized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Plans</td>
<td>achieved</td>
<td>against a target of 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 delivered on time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Operations</td>
<td>achieved</td>
<td>against a revised target of 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 implemented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations Evaluation Reports</td>
<td>achieved</td>
<td>against a target of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 delivered on time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Investigations</td>
<td>achieved</td>
<td>23 supported in 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 supported</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Reports</td>
<td>achieved</td>
<td>against a target of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 delivered on time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Information Exchange

Information exchange is the basic activity within the SECI Center, which works to facilitate communication among police and customs authorities from the member countries and the observer states.

Strict definitions of information, persons, personal data, analysis, special categories of data and processing of personal data were used by in the SECI Agreement and the other SECI Center documents in order to ensure the proper framework for different regimes concerning the processing of data, which should circulate through the Center among either Police or Customs Officials.

The level of confidentiality during the processing of information is the same as expressed by the requesting authority and the information is to be used solely for the purposes of processing.

Regular information exchange through the SECI Center led to the development of important investigative cases and arrests.

In April 2006, intelligence disseminated by the Romanian Police through the SECI Center led to an important SECI Center coordinated investigation targeting cigarette smuggling between Romania and Serbia.

The investigation resulted in 15 traffickers arrested on the territories of the two countries (11 in Romania and 4 in Serbia), as well as seizures valued at €50,000 Euro (boats and cigarettes).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Crime</th>
<th>Info Exchange 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Trafficking (THB)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal Immigration (Migrant Smuggling)</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Trafficking</td>
<td>1464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smuggling and Customs Fraud</td>
<td>6335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic crimes</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money Laundering</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stolen Vehicles</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterfeit Currency</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The SECI Center relies on experienced police and customs liaison officers, assigned in Bucharest, which have the full support of their countries in the fight against trans-border crime.

9,196 requests and information exchanges during 2008

For the purpose of this report, the term “request” means an assistance request asking a foreign law enforcement agency for support of any type (e.g., asking to provide information about a particular entity for the purpose of an investigation), and it always needs an answer in order to be considered completed.

The term “information” means any type of data, information or intelligence which is sent offered voluntarily to a foreign law enforcement agency and it does not explicitly ask for any answer (e.g., seizure notifications).

Based on information obtained and shared by Turkish National Customs utilizing the SECI Center communication channels, 375 kg of heroin were seized in December 2008, in the port city of Burgas, Bulgaria.

Per the above mentioned investigative lead, an undetermined amount of heroin was to arrive via TIR truck into either a Bulgarian or Romanian sea port for further distribution into Western Europe. During December 2008, both Bulgarian and Romanian law enforcement authorities were alerted regarding the arrival of a TIR truck into the Bulgarian port city of Burgas. The TIR truck recently arrived via ferry boat from the Georgian port of Poti.

Pursuant to a search of the TIR truck, 375 kilograms of heroin were discovered and seized by Bulgarian law enforcement authorities. 3 suspects were arrested during the operation.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration assisted in the coordination of the investigation.
8. Task Forces

The Center serves in a coordinating role for the regional task forces established within the organization.

- Anti-Drug Trafficking TF
- Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling TF
- Stolen Vehicles TF
- Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling TF
- Financial and Computer Crime TF
- Anti-Terrorism TF
- Container Security TF

The key actors responsible for planning and development of actions within a Task Force are the Coordinator and the Project Manager, who are representatives of the country that assumed its coordination.

The Task Force Coordinators are appointed by countries from officials in a high decision-making position within the national agency responsible for that criminal field.

Task Force Project Managers are appointed from the Liaison Officers who represent the coordinating country at the SECI Center.

In this regard, they have an important role in coordinating regional investigations and implementing regional operations, in close cooperation with the Task Force national coordinators and the SECI Center's Operational Support Department.

SECI Center was represented, through its management, liaison officers and staff, as well as member countries' representatives in hundreds of international meetings.

The majority of these activities were Task Force meetings (attended by the national experts from the countries), meetings for coordination of joint investigations, as well as various international meetings.
International Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Forces</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Drug</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THB and Migrant Smuggling</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stolen Vehicles</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial and Computer Crime</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Terrorism</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Container Security</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCTA SEE</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation visits at NFPs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Issues</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>166</strong></td>
<td><strong>168</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Trafficking in Human Beings and Migrant Smuggling Task Force

245 requests and information were exchanged among the SECI member countries in 2008 and 21 international meetings and activities were supported by the SECI Center in the framework of the Task Force Mirage.

During the 15th Mirage Task Force Meeting, national representatives reiterated the need to focus more on joint investigations in the future and agreed that countries should improve the data-sharing related to trafficking in minors and also trafficking in organs and tissues.

The Center receives national reports from the member countries and releases a Report on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling in South East Europe once a year.

2008 Report on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling

This Report noted the decreasing trend of victims of human trafficking in South East Europe registered in the last three years and the increasing number of illegal immigrants detected in the region.

Along with Western European countries, countries in SEE appear as destination for trafficking in human beings. The Eastern migratory pressures over the SEE region appeared to increase.

The regional trends of human trafficking and migrant smuggling for 2008 could be summarized as follows:

- Decrease by 99 percent of the number of victims registered by the countries in SEE.
- Continuing increase (by 15%) of the number of illegal migrants detected overall in the region, following the trend registered last year.

2004 Operation FLASH HOTEL

In 2004, Operation Flash Hotel initiated by Romania and pursued through information exchanges during the preliminary phase of Operation Mirage 2004.

Then surveillance measures were implemented focusing on the traffickers and victims in Romania and Turkey. Through international coordination, traffickers were arrested on both sides: 6 arrests were made and more than 20 Romanian victims were identified, 6 of them (including 1 minor) were assisted by IOM for repatriation. The investigating officers estimated that the proceeds of the crime are in excess of 1.5 million Euro.
The Romanian police– as task force coordinator – have shown their determination to cope with this plague by launching a strategy at the cooperation level among SECI law enforcement agencies.

- Group 1 – Hungary, Moldova and Romania
- Group 2 – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia
- Group 3 – Albania, Bulgaria, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece and Turkey

**Mirage**

Operation MIRAGE 2002 was the first regionally coordinated and conducted activity within South Eastern Europe in the field of Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration. Also it was the first time when Law Enforcement agencies, International Organizations and institutions such as IOM and Stability Pact as well as Non-governmental Organizations worked together on a national and regional level.

The scope of the region-wide initiative was to assist victims of human trafficking and dismantle trafficking networks.

The expected results have been fulfilled from the first operation: the temporary suppression of trafficking, initiation of investigations against criminals who deal with trafficked women and smuggle people, and liberation of numerous women from sexual slavery and ultimately repatriation to home.

Due to the success of the operation, the task force on trafficking on human beings and illegal migration was named “Mirage”.

**1,301 victims identified, 191 victims assisted and 509 traffickers charged as a result of the information exchanged and tactical measures taken by the police forces during the Mirage operations in 2002, 2003 and 2004.**

In 2004 the model of Mirage operations was replaced with a new approach and focus on yearlong efforts to provide support to multinational investigations and develop its assistance against trafficking in persons in South East Europe.

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**2006**

**Operation GROF**

48 persons were arrested as part of Operation GROF in October 2006 after completion of a joint investigation on illegal migration initiated by Slovenia. The coordinated work of the police agencies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, together with Austria and Germany, with the support of the SECI Center, led to dismantle of an international network.

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**2007**

**Operation DANUBE**

Operation "Danube" was initiated by Serbia in December 2006 based on information collected regarding a criminal network which transported illegal migrants (Albanian and Turkish citizens) via Serbia towards Western Europe, as well as Chinese citizens via Serbia towards the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Five countries in South East Europe joined forces and, supported by the SECI Center, in May 2007, 72 persons were arrested for organizing migrant transports.
9. Trafficking in Human Beings and Migrant Smuggling Task Force

2008 Joint Investigations

During 2008, 7 operational meetings on trafficking in human beings and illegal migration were attended by case officers in order to better identify the connections among cases under investigation in different countries.

Operational information was exchanged and decisions were made on the prioritization and merger of some ongoing national investigations into regional joint investigations to be supported by the SECI Center.

10 joint investigations on human trafficking/migrant smuggling were supported by the SECI Center in 2008.

- **Operation Paradise** among Albania, Croatia, Slovenia and Italy, a joint investigation started in 2007 and finished in 2008 with arrestment of 5 persons in Italy, Croatia and Slovenia.

- **Operation Dragon** among the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia, illegal migration case of Chinese nationals to Greece (16 persons were sentenced and convicted at 4 to 15 years imprisonment).

2008 Operation DORA

25 persons were arrested in Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, following a regional investigation coordinated by the SECI Center and targeting a criminal group involved in illegally transporting migrants from China, India and Albania to the E.U.

This criminal group, which was composed of nationals from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and Greece, transported migrants by air through Moscow to Belgrade, and then overland to Greece.

In addition to coordinating this joint operation the SECI Center provided operational support. In particular, SECI Center analysts identified key elements of the transnational case and suggested investigative steps to the national investigators.
Romanian and Hungarian authorities together dismantled a migrant smuggling network with SECI Center assistance.

Operation Pigeon resulted in 24 smugglers detained, including over 20 individuals detained in simultaneous operations in Romania.

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI, offered permanent support and expertise to the officers involved in the task force’s activities.

In the framework of this Task Force, the SECI Center supports the judicial process of the identification of the victims of human trafficking in their origin country (Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine) and assists their travel as witnesses in trials against their traffickers.

Thus 29 victims testified as witnesses in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro during 2004 and 2005, with the SECI Center assistance.

For the first time in South East Europe, one victim testified by a video-conference system from Moldova for a court in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2005).

In 2006 SECI Center continued its special witness program in supporting regional judicial process, as a result, one Romanian victim of human trafficking testified against her traffickers in a court in Gradacac (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Witness testimony is one of the most valuable forms of evidence in convicting criminals; that is why the SECI Center developed such a program, whose main objectives are: Protection, Assistance, Transportation, and Facilitation of testimony of witnesses in order to support and facilitate the regional judicial process and cooperation.

The program has already had huge successes in previous years, “firsts” being established: the first time a witness had ever been transported to Bosnia & Herzegovina to testify, the first time a witness was protected pursuant to Bosnia & Herzegovina’s enacted witness protection law, and the first time a witness testified anonymously, behind a screen; the first time a videoconference system – active at the SECI Center – was used for witness testimony.
10. Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force

Established: July 2000
Coordinator: Bulgaria

In 2008, 1464 drug information and requests were exchanged among the countries and 17 international meetings and activities were supported by the SECI Center in the framework of the Anti-Drug Task Force.

During the task force meeting it was decided that countries should focus more on joint investigations and should increase the quality of data in seizure notifications to be sent to SECI Center shortly after the seizure had taken place.

This would allow SECI Center Analytical Unit to prepare regular Newsletters containing analytical conclusions for supporting countries in fighting drug trafficking.

2008 Overview on Drug Trafficking in South East Europe

According to the reports of SECI Center member states on drug trafficking in 2008, almost 70 tons and 1.4 million pills of different types of drugs were seized in the South East Europe region.

The total amount of opiates (including opium, heroin and morphine) seized in South Eastern European region was almost 19 tons with an increase of 10.5% compared to 2007 and 36% compared to 2006. Important seizures of precursors (Acetic Anhydride) were made in two SECI countries.

In 2008, the total quantity of the heroin captured in the SECI Member States increased overall by 13.7%.

Heroin from Afghanistan continues to transit Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and the Balkan countries to the distribution centers in West Europe.

Although the countries in the region are also destination countries for heroin, the bulk quantities are for transit on their way to Western European countries.

Regional cocaine seizure level has an important decrease during 2008 to 361.45 kilograms.
Large quantities of cannabis were seized during 2008 (50.7 tons). Cannabis continued to be cultivated in the region, 6 of the SECI Member States reported cases of cannabis cultivation.

In 2008, 1.4 million pills and almost 700 kilograms of ecstasy and amphetamines were seized in the South East Europe region. The South Eastern Region is also a source for amphetamines. Four laboratories were discovered in the last 9 years. According to available data the amphetamines produced or transiting the region have as destination Middle East countries.

2001-2007 Operation SLEPER I and II

Bulgaria and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia initiated a joint operation, codenamed SLEPER, on an international drug trafficking organization (DTO).

The investigation revealed that the DTO had illegal activities in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Turkey.

The law enforcement agencies from the above-mentioned countries, together with their counterparts from the U.S. DEA, Austria, Germany, Italy and Switzerland started coordinated actions.

The operation had a huge success as it led to the dismantling of a criminal network and seizures of big quantities of drugs: 550 kg of heroin in 14 seizures.

Strategic Analysis on Drug Trafficking is an important activity developed by the Center to support the countries.

In 2004, the national representatives agreed on the production of a consolidated regional drug seizure report, in order to keep up to date on drug trafficking within Southeast Europe.

The report is based exclusively on contributions from the participating countries at the SECI Regional Center.

The first Report on South East European Drug Seizures was released in April 2005 in Varna, Bulgaria.
10. Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force

2008 Joint Investigations

Eight (8) anti-drug joint investigations were supported by the SECI Center during 2008.

- Operation Borak Bunker among Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Austria on trafficking of heroin (1 meeting, 16 persons arrested in Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Operation Lotus among Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, United States/DEA and UK (over 300 kg of drugs - heroin, amphetamines and cocaine, and almost 1800 captagon pills were seized and 23 persons detained)

2008 Operation LEOTAR

Operation "LEOTAR" was initiated in 2007 by the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the information regarding a criminal group involved in illegal activities, especially drug trafficking, in several countries in the region.

A regional meeting of law enforcement agencies from Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro was organized by the SECI Center.

In August 2008, the police officers of Bosnia and Herzegovina searched 99 houses, apartments, vehicles, etc. where they discovered 60 kg of marijuana and over half a kilogram of cocaine and hashish. Also, a large number of firearms, ammunition and explosives were discovered.

After this major police intervention, 65 persons were arrested and the case submitted to the prosecutors.

2007 Operation PLASTENKA

13 tons of Acetic Anhydride, heroin precursor, were seized as a result of a controlled delivery.

Besides a successful case managed by the SECI Center and 5 member states (Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey), the operation led to the enhancement of the cooperation between law enforcement and judicial system.
The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, DEA, offered permanent support and expertise to the officers involved in the task force's activities.

The task force on drug trafficking was established on July 24-25, 2000 in Sofia. Bulgaria was chosen as a leading country and a coordinator was appointed from the National Service for Combating Organized Crime, Anti-Drug Department.

Since 2009, this Task Force has been leading a region-wide initiative to interdict drugs from transiting Southeast Europe and each year operations have been organized with the active participation of all the member countries and some of the observer states.

These regional operations were coordinated by the SECI Center under the general codename Containment and targeted drugs concealed in various means of transportation.

The main purpose is to seize as much Southwest Asian (SWA) heroin as possible before it reached the illegal markets in Western Europe.

The secondary goal was to gather intelligence aimed at criminal enterprises.

The average duration of an operation was 10 days.

**Containment type operations:**
- 2002 – Operation Containment I (trucks, buses and cars)
- 2003 – Operation Orient Express (passenger trains)
  - Operation Route E 70 (cars and buses)
  - Operation Speedway (trucks)
- 2004 – Operation Safe Haven (airports)
- 2005 – Operation Harmony (trucks and maritime containers)
- 2006 – Operation Containment V
- 2007 – Operation Containment VI

"Containment" became a "trademark" operation of SECI Center, being conducted each year with spectacular results.

1.5 tones of drugs were seized during Operations Containment.

In 2007, during region-wide Operation Logo, the SECI Center countries reported seizures of 70 kg of drugs and 90 arrests.

Chapter 10: Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force

SECI CENTER - Annual Report 2008
11. Stolen Vehicles Task Force

Established: 2002
Coordinator: Hungary

Along 2008, 53 information exchanges were circulated among the SEE countries through the SECI Center channel related to stolen vehicles.

At the 7th Task Force Meeting on Stolen Vehicles held in October 2008 the participating SECI countries presented the situation related to stolen vehicles and it was generally noticed that criminals in this area changed the modus operandi.

Changes of the vehicle crime situation (legislative changes, exam of originality of the vehicle, check of the origin abroad, etc.) made the Hungarian coordinator to look forward and to propose broadening the activity of the TF with fighting against leasing and insurance fraud.

2008
Operation CREDIT CAR

The preparatory phases of the region wide operation targeting leasing and insurance fraud were done in 2008.

The 2 phase operation, with a 24 hours real time info exchange took place in 2009.

The first Task Force Meeting was held on April 29-30, 2002 in Budapest, establishing its purpose: decreasing the risk of this vehicle criminality committed by organized crime groups and its goals:

- Exchange information on vehicle registration and documentation system
- Review of vehicle originality system in every SECI member state, the use of a unitary method
- Sharpen the control and the rules of the activity of vehicle trading firms.
In October 2006, Operation Catch was implemented with the participation of six SECI member states and Europol. A number of 745 information requests were initiated during the operation, most of them generated by the Turkish National Police.

Ten vehicles were seized during the Operation Catch (6 in Serbia, 3 in Moldova and 1 in Croatia).

In February 2006, the Serbian police requested all SECI Center countries to check a list of vehicles suspected to be stolen. As a result of the information received from SECI countries, 6 vehicles were identified as being stolen from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Serbia and Sweden. Three persons were arrested in Serbia in connection with a vehicle insurance fraud scheme.

Data on hundreds of vehicles found on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and suspect to be stolen was sent to Slovenian police for checks and data on vehicles reported stolen in Slovenia over the past 5 years was sent to Bosnia and Herzegovina for detection and seizure.

Regional Operations Road Show I, II and III

This Task Force has the merits of bringing the SECI member countries together with EU partners such as Austria, Belgium, Italy, Germany, and Spain in order to plan and implement region-wide operations (code-named Road Show) targeting stolen vehicles trafficked to and through the region.

The primary goal of the operation was the interdiction and seizure of stolen vehicles transiting regional countries, deterrence and apprehension of traffickers. The secondary goal was to gather intelligence aimed at criminal enterprises which regularly use Southeast European route to move the vehicles to the region and beyond.

Operations were carried out in 2003, 2004 and 2005. As an example, 16 countries and UNMIK participated in the Operation Road Show 2004, which was clearly successful from the international cooperation point of view. In spite of the short period of implementation (two days), there was a significant amount of information exchanged throughout Southeast Europe.

The field results were outstanding. The Operations Road Show resulted in vehicles seized, 202 offenders identified and 24 arrested throughout the region.
12. Anti-Smuggling Anti-Fraud Task Force

Established:
February 2003

Coordinators:
Albania and Croatia

During the 7th Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force Meeting in 2008, countries decided to prepare a more comprehensive report on cigarette smuggling in SEE on an annual basis and to increase the cooperation between law enforcement authorities and private sector.

2008 Overview on Regional Smuggling

According to the findings of the analytical report covering 2008, Southeast Europe is strongly affected by cigarette smuggling, involving transiting through many countries. The total quantity seized in the region in 2008 is 666,056,970 pieces of cigarettes.

The cigarettes coming from East are supplying the black markets from the rest of Europe following the routes through Romania and Hungary by land. The cigarettes coming from Asia are mostly transported through the sea routes, using the ports from Greece, Croatia (Rijeka) and Slovenia (Koper).

Trucks and vessels were mostly used to move the contraband consignments. The most encountered cover loads were the fruits and vegetables, followed by timber and furniture, mattresses, glass objects, electronic devices, and tobacco leaves.

At the border crossing points the authorities from the Member States seized 79% of the total quantity reported through the seizure notifications. The risk analysis proved to be the most fruitful reason for control as in 2008 accounted for the highest quantity in comparison with intelligence and routine checks.

The most seizures referred to quantities below 250,000 pieces. Marlboro, L&M, Karelia, Jin Ling, Raquel, Memphis and NEXT were the brands seized in quantities above 40 million pieces.

2008 Joint Investigations on Anti-fraud and Anti-smuggling

Operation Cotton, a joint investigation among Customs Services from Serbia and Hungary, on smuggling of textile, using false invoices and false brands (2 meetings, 1600,000 Euro tax shortages).
2001
Operation BULLDOG

"BULLDOG" was the first operation, set up as a tactical exercise in 2001 with the purposes of gathering information about the tobacco illegal trade and to enhance cooperation among the member countries.

2005
Operation BLACK PEARL

Operation „Black Pearl” was implemented in November 2005 to monitor and exchange information on the movement of petroleum products in the region. 1,190 information were initiated by the SECI participating countries during the operational period. The operation led to 80 seizures, totalling 309,254 kilograms of various petroleum products seized.

2006
Operation KARELIA

In January 2006, information initiated by Romanian Customs about a suspect maritime cigarette consignment legally declared for Montenegro led to significant seizures and arrests. The information was disseminated to all SECI countries and measures were taken to monitor the suspect transport alongside its route. An operation was coordinated between Romania and Greece (Operation Karelia), which led to the seizure of 37 million cigarette units while attempting to illegally unload the consignment in Greece. Four suspects were arrested and investigated in Greece.

10
The Task Force was born as a result of merging in 2003 of two SECI Center task-forces: the commercial fraud task force coordinated by the Customs Administration of the Republic of Croatia and the task force on customs valuation fraud coordinated by the Albanian Customs. From the very beginning, the policy of the task force activity was centered on regional operations, in order to have a clear picture of the smuggled goods, especially cigarettes, and to set up an active assistance system among the authorities in the region in order to stop the illegal traffic and the fraud attempts.

Chapter 12: Anti-Smuggling Anti-Fraud Task Force

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12. Anti-Smuggling Anti-Fraud Task Force

In June 2004, the SECI Center Task Force on Anti-Smuggling and Anti-Fraud approved the proposal of Hungarian Customs and Financial Guard to implement a regional operation focused on cigarettes smuggled via all forms of transportation (air, sea, rail, and road). The exercise was code-named Operation Shadow and principally aimed at exchanging information and producing a situation report on cigarette smuggling based on details of seizures made in SEE during a specific period. The active contribution of the participating countries during operation Shadow showed their serious commitment to cooperative through the SECI Center against cigarette smuggling.

According to the decisions made at the second meeting of the SECI Center Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force, the representatives of the SECI member countries agreed to continue to contribute to the follow-up of Operation Shadow (against cigarettes smuggling) on a regular basis, under the following terms:

- The countries would continue to notify to the SECI Center all the seizures of minimum 100,000 pieces of cigarettes
- The SECI Center will gather all the seizure notifications in view of further dissemination to the member countries through their respective Liaison Officers and development of periodical analysis reports on cigarette smuggling in the region
- Investigations following significant seizures (above 1,000,000 pieces) would be assisted by the SECI Center, offering its communicational channels and by supporting investigative meetings.

The regional information exchange on cigarette smuggling was boosted during the Operation Shadow at a level never achieved before. The SECI Center had an excellent cooperation with WCO and Italian Guardia di Finanza during this operation. There were 472 significant seizures (at least 20,000 pieces each) reported by countries to SECI Center, amounting to 151,499,163 pieces.

In 2007, Operation Shadow II was conducted in the region, having as result a substantial amount of more than 35,000,000 pieces of cigarettes confiscated relating to 37 seizures.

In April 2008, Operation Shadow III on cigarette smuggling was implemented with the participation of all SECI member countries and using WCO's CENComm system as a communication tool.

The amount of 24,515,790 pieces of cigarettes relating to 19 seizures was confiscated during the 10 days of the Operation SHADOW III. Six significant seizures of over 1,000,000 pieces of cigarettes were made.
Between 30 November and 6 December 2006, Operation Hurricane on counterfeit and pirated goods was implemented with the participation of all SECI member countries and using WCO's system as a communication tool.

Operation Hurricane was effective from numerous points of view. It not only resulted in seizures of a larger number (24) in the SECI region than ever reported before, but also revealed the smuggling of counterfeit perfumes as a new phenomenon.

In March 2008, Operation Hurricane II on counterfeit and pirated goods was implemented with the participation of all SECI member countries and using WCO's CENComm² system as a communication tool.

The total number of 105 cases amounting almost to 507 000 pieces of counterfeit goods were reported.

A significant seizure of 5 000 pieces of sunglasses, reported to the CEN database by Greek Customs, was a result of warning message sent by Turkish Customs.

The SECI Center in cooperation with WCO, RILO - ECE analyzed all gathered data and prepared the final report.

Established: September 2001
Coordination: Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Sub-groups:
- Credit Card Fraud (Romania)
- Cyber Crime (Romania)
- Money laundering (Moldova)
- Intellectual Property (Bulgaria)
- Counterfeit Money
  (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

During 2008, SEE Center was represented at 11 operational meetings, conferences, seminars and trainings organized on the topic of financial crimes.

2008 Joint Investigations

A total number of 16 joint investigations were developed under the umbrella of Financial and Computer Crime Task Force. Some of them are still ongoing and others are already finished with large number of persons arrested.

12 Joint investigations were carried out among Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia on organized crime groups specialized in counterfeiting credit cards and skimming devices operating in all these countries and also in Norway and Canada (11 persons arrested).

The current trend in the scheme of financial crime shows that criminals exploit the Hi-Tech technology for their purposes and they cause a large amount of damage for individuals and for institutions all around the world.

Known cases of counterfeiting currencies, especially the US dollar and the new trend of counterfeiting Euro, growing number of reported frauds with counterfeited payment cards, and internet frauds are characteristic of financial crime in Southeastern Europe.

Law enforcement agencies with insufficient legal structure, limited financial and personal sources and inefficient and very bureaucratic international law enforcement cooperation cannot adequately combat new forms of financial and computer crime. This circumstance has created the necessity for various law enforcement agencies to coordinate their investigative efforts within and out of the SEE Region.
Operation Flash among Hungary and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, joint investigation on money laundering finished in May 2008 (1 meeting, 1 person arrested)

The operation was initiated by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, based on information on three nationals who penetrated the computer data bases of three banks and used the information related to their clients in order to steal funds, using duplicates of valid credit cards.

The illegal activity was conducted on the territories of other countries, too, so the Ministry of Interior of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia submitted the case to the SECI Center, which organized two operational meetings with officers from the law enforcement agencies of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Germany (observer to SECI Center).

The liaison officers were also in contact with Italian authorities, as members of the criminal network were staying temporarily there. The seven month investigation concluded with the arrest of 11 persons in two SECI Center countries.

In order to develop the most effective cooperation for law enforcement, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia initiated the establishment of a Financial Crime Task Force.

The first meeting was held during January 31 and February 1, 2002 in Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The task force had been reorganized in 2004, when 5 sub-groups had been established:
1. counterfeit currency
2. plastic card fraud
3. cyber-crime
4. intellectual property theft
5. money laundering

The task force focused its efforts in supporting the joint investigations in the field, upon the requests coming from the member countries. The joint investigations became a very good practice among the SECI Center member countries.

Regional Operation

In 2001 Operation E@fox resulted in 8667 counterfeit notes withdrawn from the market, and procedures started against 447 persons; payment card frauds have been also discovered.

In 2002, USSS, Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey, and SECI Center had a common investigation, discovering 200,000 counterfeit USD.

The seizures in Hungary and Turkey of money with the same serial numbers and quality were the result of common activities between several countries in the region.

The U.S. Secret Service (USSS) offered permanent support and expertise to the officers involved in the task force's activities.

In June 2005, the SECI Center hosted a two-day training on payment card frauds.

This conference was the first major training under the umbrella of the SECI Center’s Financial and Computer Crimes Task Force, and brought together financial investigators from most of the SECI Member Countries, Visa International, American Express, the Romanian Fraud Forum (a private conglomeration of banks, credit card industry, and governmental agencies), and the United States Secret Service.

It was the first such regional meeting of its type, and marked an important step forward in regional cooperation on financial crime matters.

In 2006, a regional meeting of the Task Force was held in Skopje where, for the first time in SEE, the representatives of banks and payment industry from all member countries participated alongside the law enforcement representatives. It was a first in involving all stakeholders in the region.
14. Anti-Terrorism Task Force

Established: February 2003
Coordinator: Turkey

Related to anti-terrorism issues, in March 2008 took place at SECI Center Headquarters in Bucharest a working meeting between the SECI Center Management and Turkish experts as country coordinating the task-force, aiming to discuss on the future development of the Anti-Terrorism Task Force.

As a follow-up of the meeting, a Workshop on anti-terrorism took place on 15-16 October 2008 attended by representatives of SECI member countries, observer countries ('Austria, France, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, Spain, the U.K. and USA) and representatives of EUROPOL and OSCE.

The Turkish experts made presentations in detail about different terrorist organizations. They expressed the willingness to share their experience and train experts from the member countries by request, participants being advised that terrorism is spreading and the countries should be prepared to fight against this threat.

2008 Training on Operations against Hijacked Planes

15 members of Canton Sarajevo Ministry of Internal Affairs and 15 officers from State Investigation and Protection Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina attended a two-week "Training Course on Operations against Hijacked Planes" in November (in two different periods of time), organized by the Turkish National Police.

The training is part of the activities of the Anti-Terrorism Task Force, established within the SECI Center in 2003 and coordinated by Turkey. The instructors are experienced officers who dealt with real hijacking cases, and who can share the experience in a highly equipped training base in Ankara, Turkey.
The terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 has opened a new chapter for combating terrorism and the related organized crime phenomenon. The JCC immediately recognized that the usual way of fighting terrorism is not sufficient and effective. There is a need for a new approach for combating terrorism and it is expressed in a declaration and a resolution that identify the related issues of the SECI Center’s region.

The Bucharest Declaration on the Suppression of Terrorism and the Resolution on assistance to the Investigative process related to the terrorist attack in the USA, September 11, 2001 underlined the awareness of the growing concern caused by the increase of the number of terrorist attacks.

It aims at taking measures for insuring the sovereignty and security of the SECI Countries and wishes to take effective measures to combat terrorism.

The Anti-terrorism task force was born by merging the task force on trafficking of small arms and light weapons, coordinated by Albania, and the task force coordinated by Romania on combating trafficking of nuclear and strategic materials. The task force is coordinated by the National Turkish Police. Several workshops have been organized within the framework of this task force.

In September 2009, an International Workshop on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons was organized by the SECI Regional Center and Saferworld, in association with the Ministry of Public Order of Albania and supported by the UK Government. The Workshop aimed at advancing the implementation of the action plan of the SECI Center Task Force on Combating Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons. In particular, the Workshop sought to find an agreement on the Task Force’s information exchange process, to consider the development of possible Joint Law Enforcement operation pilot project (PLOWSHARE) and to determine the training needs of the Law Enforcement officers.

A similar workshop was organized 2 years later, also in Albania.

Following the post-blast investigation of the November 2003 attacks in Turkey, the meeting of the sub-group on terrorist groups was held with the participation of senior experts from the SECI Center member countries, as well as the investigators of the terrorist incident in Istanbul. The specific experience obtained through the investigations throughout Turkey was shared with the attendants.
2002
Operation Plowshare

Operation “Plowshare” in 2002 was the first conducted in this field and targeted seizures of small arms (over 90 seized) and ammunition (nearly 20,000).

2005

In 2005, following the request of a member country, the SECI Center provided financial support for an undercover weapons purchase operation. The purchase being successful, it was decided to continue the contact of the undercover agent with the criminal group dealing with trafficking in weapons in order to gather more information. As a result of this undercover operation, information was gathered on the existence of several illegal weapon deposits on the territories of other neighbouring SECI Center member countries. The operation led to the arrest of 17 persons, and the seizure of important amounts of weapons, ammunition, and even anti-tank missile launchers and detonation devices incorporated in mobile phones.

After the operation was ended, the SECI Center supported the inclusion of the undercover agent in a witness protection program and his relocation in another SECI Center member country. It was for the first time when such relocation was arranged with the support and facilitation provided by the SECI Center.

2007 - Regional Operation on Weapons of Mass Destruction

The SECI Center hosted in September 2007 a crisis response exercise on Weapons of Mass Destruction for the Black Sea Region, using the video conference system.

The scenario of the five-day exercise conducted by U.S. Department of Defence with the participation of representatives from Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova and Romania, and Turkey as observer, involved the trafficking of WMD across borders by a sophisticated network of criminals and terrorists.

The participants were confronted with information that allowed them to exercise both national and international command post procedures.

The purpose of this exercise was to enhance the ability of the participating countries to deter, detect, respond to and investigate situations regarding WMD and related items.
15. Container Security Task Force

Established:
November 2005
Coordinator:
Greece

Three major decisions have been adopted in 2008 in the framework of Container Security Task Force:
- approval of the operational plan for "Pandora" Operation;
- approval of a large scale training in Rotterdam Mega Port, hosted by the Dutch Tax And Customs Administration;
- approval of the bilateral regional Black Sea Operation "Kafkan".

Since June 2008, the Tax Customs Administration of the Netherlands (observer to the SECI Center) became strategic partner of the SECI Center on container security related issues. Common projects were developed in order to enhance the effectiveness of the customs administrations in the region.

At the 4th Task Force Meeting on Container Security held on 6 - 7 October 2008 in Thessaloniki, Greece and attended by all SECI Center member countries and by observers (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and USA), the representatives of the member countries presented the latest developments in the field of container security and approved the above mentioned steps.

2008
Operation PANDORA

Multiple scope operation prepared in 2008 to be implemented in 2009.

2007
Operation SECURE ARK

The first SECI Center regional action in the field of Container Security, conducted in September 2007, targeted International terrorism, aiming to detect and deter at import or transit, by sea or land Weapons of Mass Destruction, Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) substances, and other terrorist-related materials including restricted or prohibited goods.

A total number of 59 messages were exchanged during the operation, which proved the commitment of the customs services in the region in the fight against international terrorism and the decision for conducting such operations in the future was taken.
The newest Task Force on Container Security was established in 2005 under the coordination of the Hellenic Customs and Excise Duties Administration in order to respond to the modern threats and security requirements. Containerized shipping is a major vulnerability all over the world – over 900 million cargo containers move between major ports each year and containerized shipments represent today 90% of the world commerce.

The challenge of container security is a considerable threat in the SECI region, as 10 of the thirteen Member States are located along the coasts and have active ports, which both ship and receive goods. Despite the growing threat worldwide, there has not been a targeted cross-border initiative to systematically collaborate in inspecting containers. The lack of cooperation in addressing this security issue could be exploited by organized crime groups and/or terrorist organizations.

The project relates to cargos submitted to risk analysis and risk information regarding possible implications for the regional security such as weapons of mass destruction (WMD), explosives, dual use goods, components and material transported under suspicious circumstances that can be used for terrorist or criminal purposes etc.

C.S.T.F. aims to seal the SEE financial perimeter, and protect the national revenue of the SECI Center member states. The Task Force additionally aims to develop safety & security standards in the regional supply chain. One of the main concerns is to provide protection from threats against the health of the citizens and the pollution of the natural environment. To achieve its goals, the T.F. organizes two standard types of large, regional scale operations, conducting also occasionally joint customs operations in limited scale. Moreover, the C.S. project focuses on providing permanent training and seminars.

2006, 2008 Assessments Reports on Container Security

The report developed by the SECI Center every two years, is a tool for closing gaps in regional security. The findings of the regional assessment are the base for the future steps of the task force.

2007 Training on Container Security

Two representatives from each SECI Center member countries participated in the train-the-trainers type of course.

One of the main goals of the course was to create a core body of experts in container security and to animate them to cooperate on regular basis. The trainees became very familiar with the entire spectrum of modern methods used in preventing and detecting high-risk container movements.
The year 2008 represents a turning point in the SECI Center’s involvement in supporting national authorities in fighting trans-border crime, as for the first time SECI Center Analysis Unit provided, upon countries’ request, operational analysis in addition to the SECI Center’s traditional coordination in exchanging information and the logistical support offered for operational meetings.

This capability represents a major step forward in the SECI Center’s analytical support for the Member Countries’ authorities.

For Operation Dora, two SECI Center analysts combined the evidence threads from the national investigative teams to develop a clear regional picture of the regional organization, while the national teams continued to investigate.

In a face-to-face meeting of the case coordinators from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Albania, the SECI Center’s analysts presented the hypotheses and conclusions developed through the analytical process, providing a view on the group’s structure and the key elements.

Based on this report, the three countries’ police officers together drew up the action plan, comprising the future steps to be enforced for the success of the operation.

Based on the combined evidence, the law enforcement agencies jointly decided to act simultaneously and, over a 24 hours period, the police services from Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia made the arrests.

Similar analysis was made for Operation TARA.

The SECI Center was involved in producing the Controlled Delivery Manual, along with OSCE and started one of the most relevant projects for SEE in the past years. OCTA SEE, in addition to the main documents produced every year by the SECI Center analysts and experts.

2008 Regional Projects and International Partnership

Controlled Delivery Manual for South East Europe

In March 2008, OSCE invited SECI Center to join the project of preparing a Controlled Delivery Manual for South East Europe, by supporting the collection of necessary data from the SECI countries and to keep the manual updated after preparation.
The project was presented by OSCE representative at the 14th Anti-Drug Task Force Meeting in May 2008 and obtained the SECI Center JCC approval at the regular meeting on 6 of June 2008.

The SECI Center had the task to collect the necessary data based on a Questionnaire submitted by OSCE and to keep the Manual updated after preparation.

**ADAM Project**
**Automated Donor Assistance Mechanism**

In the framework of Paris Pact Initiative (an international partnership of more than 50 countries and international organizations), UNODC launched the ADAM Project (Automated Donor Assistance Mechanism).

The aim of the project is to combat trafficking in drugs, by coordinating the technical assistance for the countries in the field of countering narcotics traffic along the main opiates trafficking routes from Afghanistan.

SECI Center was invited to nominate a focal point, whose task to be the uploading, validation and making searches for SECI Center interest, for project data related to technical assistance in counter narcotics.

**Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe**

The SECI Center attends the international meetings related to implementation of the Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe. The main role is to sustain the member countries in the process of implementation of the provisions of the Convention, mainly by emphasizing the unique operational role of SECI Center in the law enforcement cooperation in the SEE region.

In accordance with the SECI Agreement, one of the most important objectives of the SECI Regional Center includes the compiling of strategic analysis on the trans-border crime phenomenon.

The analysis products developed by the SECI Center underline the trends in the criminal activities, as well as new modus operandi in order to support the regional law enforcement agencies, thus offering essential tools in the development of their country strategies.
The Common Threat Assessment on Organized Crime for South East European region, OCTA-SEE, is to be the first strategic, future-oriented analysis prepared by SECI Center, in the effort to reveal the current threats and expected new trends of organized crime from South East Europe, aiming to help decision-makers at national and international level in better setting up strategies for fighting organized criminality.

In order to fill in the intelligence gap of the EU in relation to SEE region, with a focus on Western Balkans, at the 7th Ministerial Conference at Brdo (Slovenia), on 4th of October 2007 (Brdo Process), the Slovenian EU Presidency proposed the development of a Common Threat Assessment on Organized Crime for the South East European Region (OCTA-SEE).

The SECI Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime was identified as the appropriate regional organization which to deal with the preparation of such document, having Europol as main support institution and also one of the beneficiaries of the OCTA-SEE, along with the involved countries.

On 5 of June 2008, the Slovenian EU Presidency representative presented to the SECI Center Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC), the OCTA-SEE Project in terms of initiative, background and way ahead.

Recognizing the importance for the SEE countries and for the European Union of a common threat assessment of the organized crime for the SEE region, the JCC members unanimously agreed on the SECI Center involvement in producing the OCTA-SEE, and expressed the willingness of all SECI countries (not only Western Balkans) to bring contribution to the OCTA-SEE. Accordingly, all 13 SECI Member Countries cooperate with the SECI Center along this process.

Following the recommendation of the representative of the EU presidency and in alignment with Europol, as beneficiary and main support institution, the SECI Center was tasked to prepare the detailed plan, as well as the questionnaires submitted to the countries that represent the base for the analytical document.

Conclusions of the first OCTA-SEE, are to be discussed at the political level of the Brdo Process in 2009.
In 2008 SECI Center has grown with the accession of Republic of Montenegro, which deposited its instrument of accession on 23 October 2008 and become the 13th member state of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative.

SECI Center was granted the status of Observer and was invited to participate to the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols held in Vienna, 9-17 October 2008.

The Czech Republic was granted the status of observer at SECI Center.

A letter of intent with South East European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG) was signed on 21 of March 2008.

The Action Plan between Tax and Customs Administration of the Netherlands was signed at the 28th JCC Meeting, the Plan aiming mostly on the customs activity.

The negotiations of the new SELEC Convention continued in 2008 with 6 meetings, this process being at the stage of the “second reading”.

The strengthening and enhancement of the international cooperation evolved with establishing collaboration with the RCC, EUROPOL, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, UNICRI, Partnership with OLAF, MAARI-RC.

SECI Center became partner in some projects, like ILECUs and ICMPD Project <<Programmes for the Enhancement of Anti trafficking Responses in South Eastern Europe: Data Collection and Information Management – Phase II Data Processing, Maintenance and Analysis>>.

Supporting Developments - important documents have been prepared and high level officials have had important meetings with the SECI Center management.

**SECI Center as a model**

In 2003 the SECI Regional Center launched an assistance program to the GUUAM project. Experts from SECI Center and from some of its member countries gave advice to the two working groups, GUUAM working group in Baku and GUUAM working group in Kiev. The expertise provided consisted in the preparation of legal documents, IT and network connectivity matters.
17. Strategic Cooperation and Legal Issues

The steps taken to build up and to strengthen the connections in the region have been among the greatest challenges of the SECI Center. While consolidating the relationship between the law enforcement agencies of the member countries, the Center focused on expanding the area of cooperation, by offering observer status to countries pledged to cooperate, by signing agreements with different organizations, and by developing common projects.

The SECI Agreement stipulates:

"In order to improve the effectiveness of the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of trans-border criminal violations, and as active members of ICPO-Interpol for police matters, World Customs Organization for customs matters, the SECI participating countries shall exchange and develop criminal information in partnership with their law enforcement authorities and with the Interpol General Secretariat and WCO."

The relations between ICPO-Interpol and World Customs Organization and the SECI Center were continuously improved. In order not to duplicate our efforts, the Center continued to cooperate with the two main professional organizations. The WCO offered valuable assistance to the SECI Center by providing its Communicating System to share real time information during regional operations.

From the very beginning, in order to enhance the common efforts of fighting transborder crime, the SECI Center established partnerships with the most active organizations. Memoranda of understanding and agreements have been signed with:

- European Union Law Enforcement Cooperation (EULEC) – (organization dissolved)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM),
- International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD),
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID),
- Central European Initiative (CEI),
- Stability Pact
- European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM)
- Association of Legal Career Women from Moldova. Project: Center for prevention of trafficking in women;
- Southeastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons

For the purpose of further development of cooperation in the field of countering trans-border crime and with awareness of the difficulties of combating crime in the region, the SECI Center expected to establish formal relations with Europol. A letter of intent has been already sent in order to formalize the cooperation. The EU Commission issued the “Road Map”, the guide for this target, approved by the COREPER, at its meeting on the 5th of November 2008.
Aiming to support the countries' efforts to build up their NFP in 2003, SECI Center signed an agreement with the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany for funding a project “SECI UPGRADE 2003” with the main objective to increase the abilities of the SECI Center to fight against terrorism, illegal migration, drugs and human being trafficking.

The 20th Session of the JCC in 2005 marked a turning point in the development of the SECI Center through the adoption of the new SECI Center Strategy. The SECI Center Strategy is the basic document for the Center functioning during the six-year period. The Strategy has medium term character, being for the time frame 2005 – 2010.

The integration of the SPOC Secretariat within the SECI Center Legal and Internal Department brought a new and reinforced structure to the SECI Center. It transferred financial support and – most important – additional knowledge and qualified human resources. A stronger legal department at the SECI Center will strengthen regional ownership.

SEEPAG

The Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group is an international mechanism of judicial cooperation, formed by the countries of the SEE region with an express intention of facilitating judicial cooperation in significant trans-border crime investigations and cases.

This initiative recognizes that as trans-border crime transcends national borders, the strategy for combating it must have regional as well as national dimension. SEEPAG was developed to assist the SECI Center and the law enforcement authorities and as an important instrument in combating organized crime.

The SECI Center supported and facilitated the activities of the South East European Prosecutors Advisory Group from the very beginning.

Having in mind that the cooperation with the Public Prosecutors is the main area towards which the capabilities of the Law Enforcement must be focused in order to achieve real success and results with respect to combating transborder crime, the SECI Center continues to maintain a close relationship with SEEPAG.

By improving the available facilities for mutual legal assistance, the SEEPAG seeks to significantly increase the capacity of individual states to suppress, investigate and prosecute serious trans-border crimes.
As the SECI Center’s development exceeded the 1999 expectations, a new legal base and organizational structure is needed in order to meet the demands of the fight against transborder crime.

In 2006, the JCC decided to establish the SELEC Expert Working Group to negotiate and to develop the new Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC), which will cover the police and customs authorities’ issues and which will be in line with the Council Conclusion of 4th December 2006 on the further development of the SECI Center and the SECI Center Assessment of August 2004.

The SELEC Expert Working Group had 12 meetings during April 2007 – April 2009, supported by the European Commission and the United States of America. European countries’ experts, as well as experienced U.S. prosecutors provided assistance, and actively participated in developing the document along with the SECI Center management.
The Financial Consultative Group, the former Budget Working Group, was established pursuant to a JCC decision, aiming to draft a budget proposal in accordance with the enhanced financial needs of the SECI Center in order to keep a high level for its operational activities, to secure the continuity of the organization and also to offer advanced support to its member states in order to achieve its primary goal which is the combat of the transborder crime.

The SECI Center Budget for 2008 amounted to 550,000 euros as contributions from the Member Countries. Some of the activities of the Center were financially supported by observer states.
SECI Center Bucharest – a success story
As SECI founded by efforts from every side the Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime nobody was really aware that it might be a real success story for the whole region.
I remember the activities of Richard Schifter - in this time special envoy of the Department of State of the US Government for the region and all other friends to create this center.
The reason was quite clear beside the overall existing necessity to fight transborder crime it was also to get rid of this common opinion that South East Europe is full of criminality. We got a lot of support. By the State President of Romania Constantinescu, by the governments of the region but also by the European Union and Member States to establish the center on the basis of a common treaty.
It was not easy to elaborate but it was possible. There was really regional cooperation working and in reality it was a first effective instrument based on this. I am still quite happy that I was part of this exercise, which showed clearly that the region is able to be self responsible.
My congratulations and please continue to enlarge the work as it was done for the last ten years. SECI Center is a contribution for more peace, security an stability and of course more Europe in the region.

Dr. Erhard Busek
Coordinator of SECI
Former Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

Dr. Ferenc Banfi
Hungary
Former Chairman of JCC
Former Deputy Director of SECI Center

I have participated in the creation of the SECI Center since this initiative was proposed.
At that time people envisioned multinational cooperation in transborder crime prevention as writing letters (information requests) among similar foreign administrations.
From its very beginning, SECI Center has demonstrated its potential through successful operations in drugs, stolen vehicles and cigarette smuggling prevention.
Due to the high results of the organization the international cooperation between law enforcement agencies in the region has become widely spread.
During the last ten years the multinational law enforcement cooperation initiated through the Center, has proven to be one of the most successful practices initiated in the region.
I am personally very proud that took part in SECI center's creation. Apart from Center's undisputable success in the area of tackling organized crime, it fostered setting up a network of professionals within the Southern Europe which continued to cooperate when back in their home law enforcement agencies, thus increasing Center's effectiveness.

SECI Center was created in a quite different environment that the one we observe now. But interestingly enough, the risks and challenges our societies face today are such that proved the visionary mission of the Center. In the global world, organized crime and terrorism continue to pose threats which are impossible to tackle by a single country no matter how powerful and resourceful it is.

SECI Center's regional spirit, character and approach though made it very versatile, useful and effective tool.

Yalcin Cakici
Turkey
Former Director of SECI Center

SECI Center is the concrete shape of determination for combating transborder crime in South Eastern Europe.
It is not more than 10 years that Center came on the scene as a core establishment. Successful coordination in combating crimes, sound operations through task forces and effectiveness in the region, provided a rightful international reputation to the Center. As the first full term Director in 2003-2004, we achieved quite successful developments on the way of institutionalization. Finalizing an Assessment Report is the milestone on the way of integration with the EU Institutions. Several expert meetings have been carried out on the Data Protection issue hindering information sharing among the member states.
I am confident of SECI Center family members success in the course of their devoting mission on the relay race.

Chapter 20: Statements

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SECI Centre represents the determination and enthusiasm of the Southeast European countries for combating trans-border crime, by strengthening the cooperation between and among customs and police authorities.

Joint approach in intensifying efforts to exchange information in the areas of common interest within SECI Task groups and by liaison officers, has highly contributed to more efficient police and customs actions against trans-border crime in SECI member countries.

It was my privilege and honor to be the JCC Vice Chairperson of the SECI Centre and still is, to be involved actively, mainly as JCC Member, in the process of its further development.

I would like to emphasize that we, the Republic of Croatia, Customs Directorate and Police Directorate strongly support work done by SECI Centre and would continue to do so in the future.

It has been an honour for the Hungarian Customs administration to take part actively in the work done under the auspices of SECI Center since 1st July 2000, to fill in important posts as the JCC Chairmanship between 2007-2008 thus contributing to the fight against cross-border crimes in South-Eastern Europe.

In most cases SECI offers the single link between law enforcement agencies of EU and non-EU countries, resulting in the exponential increase of requests for criminal assistance during the 10 years of SECI.

Hungary puts special emphasis on organizing and participating in Operations such as Hurricane and Shadow. On taking part in the work of the Task Force for Container Security, furthermore on conducting joint investigations like Operation Cotton which was given a shared bi-annual award of SECI in the second term of 2008.
As former chairman of the JCC, I recall the decisions made during the 1st High Representatives Conference held on November 29th 2006, in Bucharest, which brought together outstanding personalities, politicians, diplomats and high ranking officials of the participating states in the SECI Center.

This conference was due to place a new cornerstone in this structure launching the principles which would delineate its future role.

It proposed:
- the adoption of a new legal tool transforming the Center into an international organization;
- reinforced cooperation schemes with the EC and Europol necessary for enhanced operational effectiveness of the Center;
- a revised budget basis to better reflect the necessities of the organization.

Thanks to our joint efforts, all these goals are being currently fulfilled.

Snejana Nenova
Bulgaria
Former Head of Legal/Internal Department of SECI Center

A lot has been said about SECI Center and its actions on preventing transborder crimes. Still, there are important things people often overlook, things I want to bring to your attention.

Serving as a Head of the Legal and Internal Department for two terms I gained experienced which proved to be crucial for the enhancement of my knowledge and skills. I am pretty sure that's true for all people who have worked or are still working on the tenth floor of the Romanian Parliament.

Through its numerous multinational crime-prevention operations, SECI has helped people get experience by building a set of tools they could use in their countries' administrations after the end of their terms in the Center.

I am sure that such an aspect of SECI's contributions to the region will become more and more visible after each successive anniversary-celebration the Center will have.
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We celebrate the tenth year of the establishment of SECI Center in 2009.

Looking back to the last 10 years, we may conclude that the early millennium was the start of a new era, which brought a new understanding and perception for combating trans-border crimes and security.

In this new era, new conception “free but secure” trade comprehension became more dominant.

In the light of new concepts and developments, we witness that customs and police departments and in general terms law enforcement agencies have involved in the revision of their administrative structures, their reorganization, the increase of their administrative and technical capacities and the improvement of national, regional and international cooperation.

In this period, we may also state that multi-agency cooperation became much more important.

It is obvious that SECI Center is a multi-agency cooperation platform through which the experiences of the member states are shared, the general and expertise trainings are delivered, the information and intelligence exchanged, bilateral, tri bilateral and multilateral operations are carried out.

National Focal Points assigned in each member states, have established an efficient communication network between themselves with the help of training activities, task forces meetings and operational activities.

As of now, a trustworthy environment and structure is enabled between SECI Center and SECI member states and among national focal points.

SECI Center proved with its ten year activity resume that it played and surely will play a major role in holding the stability and improving the wealth in the region.