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## **EPU – Police exposed the working methods of serious organized crime**

European Police Union (EPU) congratulates each member of the investigative team who have been involved in intercepting messages on encrypted service provider EncroChat.

The international large-scale investigation has exposed the working methods of serious organized crime beyond everyone's imagination.

Various liquidations, kidnapping and torture have been prevented. This operation also resulted in the seizure of large quantities of drugs (cocaine and crystal meth), automatic firearms, fast cars, cash money, and the arrest of suspects. Drug labs were found and also criminal underworld prisons with torture chambers (and torture devices) where people could be tied up and tortured.

This specialized team shows the true meaning of coordination, cooperation, devotion, teamwork and leadership. Your hard work has truly paid off.

Thank you all for keeping us safe!

## **Discovery of underworld prison with torture room**



**Driebergen – On 22nd June 2020, the National Police Unit arrested six men who were suspected from preparing criminal activities of kidnapping and abduction. In a warehouse in Wouwse Plantage (Province of Brabant), the Police found seven shipping containers, from which six were arranged as cell rooms, in which people could be tied up, and one was meant as a torture room. Moreover, the Police found a second warehouse in Rotterdam, that presumably was**

**meant as the place from which the criminals operated.**

“Last week, we made public the investigation we have been carrying out into the crypto communication provider Encrochat. During this investigation, we have been able, for quite a long time, to co-read the chat messages that criminals have been sending to each other. This provided us with a treasure of information”, said Jannine van den Berg, Chief of the National Police Unit. “We already announced at that time that more was yet to come. The discovery of this underworld prison is an example of this.”

### **Investigation into the underworld prison – the main facts**

In April of this year, the National Investigation Department of the National Police Unit started an investigation into a 40 year-old man from The Hague, who was suspected from being involved into drugs traffic and the preparation of a liquidation. “He lived a life under the radar but, from the financial research that we were carrying out, we found that he probably used a warehouse in Wouwse Plantage”, so continued van den Berg. “When we focused on the warehouse in our ‘26Lemont’ investigation, we obtained access to important chat contacts of the suspect through an Encrochat telephone line.”

### **“Treatment room”**

With the messages, photos were sent on a warehouse and a shipping container in which a dentist chair was placed, with straps that could be fastened on the arm and foot rests. The messages spoke of abduction and torture, “If I get him into the chair, there will be more to come”, “but the dog is not to be found”. The warehouse was named “ebi” (which refers to the Extra Beveiligde Inrichting, extra-secured prison, of Vught) and “treatment room”. The abductions, which would happen soon, seemed to be prepared with great precision: mutiple “teams” and an “OT” (observation team) were involved and arrangements were made for weapons, police uniforms, cans, stop signs and bullet-proof vests.



### **Warehouses**

The Police proceeded immediately to putting the warehouse in Wouwse Plantage under observation. From mid-April, we noticed how, almost every day, men were working on the shipping containers. One of them, a 44-year old man from Nieuwegein, also had meetings with the prime suspect of The Hague and his 43-year old accomplice from Rotterdam. The combination of intercepted Encrochat messages with the observation of the suspects’ meetings led to their identification.

From the messages, it also appeared that the group used a second warehouse, located directly next to the A16-highway in Rotterdam. Apparently, this second warehouse had to serve as the basis from which the criminal arrest team operated, with fast cars, weapons and bullet-proof vests included. Several suspects were seen at both warehouses.

### **Time to intervene**

From the chat messages, the Police could determine who the targeted victims were. These were warned and they went into hiding places. Thanks to these moves, and the permanent camera observation in and nearby the warehouse, the Police could prevent the abductions, kidnappings and other violent serious crimes that the criminals were planning. From the moment it became clear that the cells were more or less ready, it was decided to intervene. On 22nd June, the Police searched thirteen locations and arrested the suspects.

### **Torture instruments**

The rooms in the containers were constructed with soundproofing plates and warmth-insulating foil. In each cell, handcuffs were attached to the ceiling and on the floor. One chemical toilet was furthermore placed in every cell. A camera in the corner allowed to keep an eye from a distance on what was going on in the cells.

In one shipping container, more sets of police clothing, bullet-proof vests and flashing lights were found. In another one, there were bags with objects that presumably had to serve for torturing victims or at least putting them under pressure. The Police found (small and large) garden shears, a branch saw, scalpels, pliers, handcuffs, finger cuffs, tape, balaclavas and black cotton bags which could be pulled over the head. Moreover, with the search of a house in Rotterdam, 24 kilos of MDMA were found.

In the warehouse in Wouwse Plantage, three stolen delivery vans had been stalled, as well as two fast BMWs. A room nearby was turned into a sitting and sleeping place, presumably for guards. In the warehouse in Rotterdam, we found seven hand weapons and an automatic assault rifle, a Chinese variant of the Kalashnikov AK-47. In all, 25 weapons were found in the suspects' places.

### **Detention**

The investigating judge put the six men into forced custody on suspicion of preparing abduction, kidnapping, severe maltreatment and extortion and participation in a criminal organisation. Two suspects were moreover put into custody for possession of weapons. The Court Council in Rotterdam ordered their detention for 90 days on Monday.

### **Cooperation**

This investigation has been carried out by the National Police Unit, in particular by the National Investigation Department. The experts of the National Police Unit cooperated closely with among others regional units, local councils and foreign partners. The investigation's leadership was in the hands of the National Public Prosecutor's Office.