

USE CASE

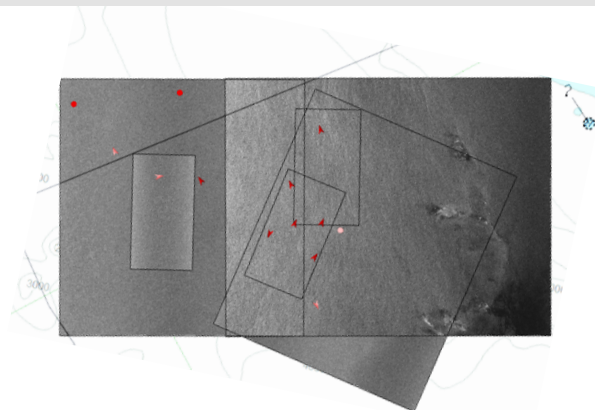


APPREHENDING THE ALI PRIMERA¹

Shipments of drugs from South America may transit either directly across the Atlantic, or arrive first in West Africa and be trafficked onwards to Europe. Either way, the sea approaches to Spain and Portugal are key entry points for drug smuggling to Europe. Customs and other anti-drug-trafficking authorities frequently carry out operations along known transit routes to detect and intercept suspicious vessels. The Spanish Directorate of Customs Surveillance (Departamento de Aduanas e I.I.EE.) makes routine service requests to CMS for regular monitoring, but also activates short notice requests based on intelligence information.

In May 2017, the Spanish authorities, in cooperation with the Portuguese authorities, the US Drug Enforcement Agency and the UK's National Crime Agency, were monitoring the activities of a South American organisation based in Spain and known to be smuggling large quantities of cocaine. Based on combined intelligence information from several organisations in the joint operation, authorities were searching for a specific vessel type in transit between South America and Europe. They requested CMS services combining SAR satellite products and vessel detection to support their monitoring activities. As a result of the joint operation, a Venezuelan flagged fishing vessel, the *Ali Primera*, was intercepted by Spanish authorities (the Policía Nacional de España and Agencia Estatal de Administración Tributaria) south west of the Canary Islands. The vessel and crew were taken to Las Palmas for investigation, where a search uncovered around 2.4 tonnes of cocaine - worth an estimated €100 million wholesale - on board. Seven crew members were arrested.²

Copernicus, the European Union's Earth Observation Programme, delivers operational data and information services to support a broad range of environmental and security applications. The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) is responsible for implementing the Copernicus Maritime Surveillance Service.



Overlay of multiple satellite images used during the operation



Offshore patrol vessel Petrel I towing the Venezuelan flagged fishing vessel



Offshore patrol vessel Petrel I towing the Venezuelan flagged fishing vessel

Get in touch for more information

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REFERENCES

¹ https://www.policia.es/prensa/20170515_1.html; <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/index.php/news-media/nca-news/1121-ten-tonnes-in-under-ten-months>

² <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/index.php/news-media/nca-news/1121-ten-tonnes-in-under-ten-months>

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