

COPERNICUS MARITIME SURVEILLANCE

USE CASE

SPANISH CUSTOMS DRUGS SMUGGLING

The trafficking of narcotics into Europe represents a serious threat to public health, safety and security. Beyond its direct health impacts, the illicit drug trade often intersects with other organised crime, corruption and violence, further jeopardising the well-being of communities across borders.

To counter this major challenge, the Spanish Customs frequently requests support from the Copernicus Maritime Surveillance (CMS) service to monitor maritime cargo, enforce the law when illegal activities are detected, and gather intelligence data.

In January 2023, as part of its routine monitoring of the high-traffic area of the Alboran Sea, the Spanish Customs requested CMS services to strengthen these efforts.

The SAR¹ Earth Observation images, together with the vessel detection service, allowed the Spanish Customs to detect a vessel which was not reporting its position off the coast of Almería.

This information was quickly conveyed by the regional air-naval Unit of Andalucía to a helicopter on duty which conducted a control flight over the area where the non-reporting vessel was detected.



The screenshot shows a CMS interface with a large dark grey polygon representing a detected vessel on a map. The polygon has a blue circular icon with a white arrow pointing outwards in the top-left corner. To the right of the map is a vertical list of buttons with icons: a gear for settings, a close button, a camera icon, and eight buttons for different types of maritime data: Potential Oil Spills, Detected Activities, Detected Changes, Detected Features, Detected Wakes, Detected Vessels, SAR Wind, and SAR Swell. Below this is a section titled 'EO Details' with a blue icon. It contains a table with the following data:

SERVICE ID	STATUS	EO OPERATION
2301070042	Delivered	IMS SAFETY
DTO ID	SATELLITE	ACQUISITION
1	RADARSAT-2	START
ACQUISITION STOP	TOTAL VDS	VDS RE-CORRELATED
	6	N/A
LAST RE-CORRELATION DATE	SENSOR TYPE	SENSOR MODE
N/A	RADAR	
SENSOR RESOLUTION (M)	AFFECTED AREAS	PASS
2.5		DESCENDING
POLARIZATION CHANNELS	FEEDBACK	POLYGON
HH	N/A	
TOTAL OIL SPILLS	TOTAL ACTIVITIES	TOTAL CHANGE DETECTIONS
0	0	0
TOTAL DETECTED FEATURES	TOTAL WAKES	
0	0	

At the bottom are three buttons: 'Download EO', 'Feedback ...', and 'Alert Report'. Below these are navigation icons: a double left arrow, a single left arrow, '2/2', a single right arrow, and a double right arrow.



Spanish Customs' patrol vessel.



PROGRAMME OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Implemented by  EMSA



The drugs seized during the operation.

The aerial inspection confirmed that the vessel was a go-fast loaded with hashish bundles. A pursuit operation targeted the go-fast vessel. Although it evaded interception by

throwing cargo into the sea to increase speed, the Spanish control unit recovered a total of 44 bundles, equivalent to more than 1.3 tonnes of hashish.

emsouth.eu/copernicus

Get in touch for more information

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EU SPACE

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COPERNICUS MARITIME SURVEILLANCE (CMS)

The Copernicus Maritime Surveillance Service provides Earth Observation products (satellite images and value-added products) to support a better understanding and improved monitoring of activities at sea, within a wide range of operational functions such as maritime safety, maritime security, customs, law enforcement, marine pollution monitoring, fisheries control and international cooperation. Implemented by EMSA on behalf of the European Commission (DG-DEFIS), it is a Security Service of Copernicus. It operates under restricted access which is granted to authorised users free of charge.

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REFERENCES

- 1 Synthetic Aperture Radar.

CREDITS

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