NOTE FROM THE PORTUGUESE PRESIDENCY

RE: Final evaluation of the Pilot Project "Surveillance of Routes used for the trafficking of stolen vehicles" carried out with the intervening countries.

I

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

At international level, a development is underway, whereby activities are more and more focused on dealing with organised crime, including vehicle crime.

In its meeting of 30.5.1996, the Schengen Central Group decided to give Schengen Working Group I (Police and Security) a mandate for realising a pilot project regarding vehicle crime on the international transit routes in the Schengen area.

On 17.6.1996, a working conference took place in which members of the delegations of Working Group I and a number of experts participated. Representatives from Europol and Interpol provided the delegations with information about their respective activities in this field.

On 29.10.1996, Schengen Working Group I decided that the pilot project would begin in principle on 1.1.1997. Each of the participating states committed themselves to assign a project leader and an assistant project leader. It was decided that English would be the working language. The experts in the field from the various countries would work out the relevant activities.
Principal objective:
The principal objective of the project, as formulated by Schengen Working Group I is getting a good insight into (and, as a result, also more grip on) criminal activities and activities of organised crime groups, which are carried out on the international transit routes inside the Schengen area.

Sub-objectives:
- Reaching structural operational co-operation between the services charged with law enforcement and surveillance on the international transit routes in the Schengen area
- Making a solid contribution to the suppression of car crime
- Reporting experiences and problems, for future use in similar projects that will follow, namely those on drugs and illegal immigration.

It was also agreed in Working Group I that every state would initiate activities on the basis of the available information, whereby co-ordination would be the task of the national project leader. The pilot project was to encompass a number of bilateral or multilateral operations in the field of stolen vehicles and should be focused on the so-called North-South and East-West corridors and harbours.

The operation period was agreed to last three months. It would be rounded off with an evaluation report.

On 11, 12 and 13 December 1996, the national project leaders and their assistants met in Luxembourg, where the following basic agreements were reached:
- checks in the framework of the pilot project should be carried out between 1 April and 30 June 1997
- 3 HIOs (High Impact Operations) will be held, each on 3 to 4 consecutive days
- HIOs will be carried out on three locations, i.e.
  1. on the main transit routes
  2. in sea ports
  3. along the former East Bloc borders
the relevant information channels will be available round the clock during the HIOs with English speaking experts
project leaders arrange that car manufacturers in their respective countries are available for the supply of information during the HIOs for 24 hours a day
all participating states will use identical checking procedures and examination documents
Europol will carry out operational and strategic analyses
Interpol will be asked to supply information with regard to vehicle registration and documentation systems (Interpol declared that they did not have the possibilities)
the project leaders subscribe to the possibility of exchanging police executives with adequate expertise
relevant training of police executives will be arranged by and under the responsibility of the participating states
the Portuguese chairmanship (first six months of 1997) sees to continuation and preparation of the necessary activities, i.a. setting the HIO dates. At the request of the chairman, the project leaders of Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands make themselves available, with the approval of the meeting, to carry out the rest of the preparatory work and aspects regarding analysis in consultation with Europol.

On 17 and 18 February 1997, a number of proposals were made during a meeting of project leaders in Lisbon, which proposals were later accepted by Schengen Working Group I, i.e.:
- the HIOs are held in the participating countries on 10, 11 and 12 April, on 24, 25 and 26 April and on 2, 3 and 4 June. Evaluations will be held after each period, i.e. 17 April, 6 May and 25, 26 and 27 June.
- 1 September is the closure date for sending in the required information, after which a comprehensive report will be prepared before December 1997.
the following documents will be used:

1. suspect/hit (the basic form used for international information exchange in case of a hit or a suspicious situation)
2. statistical document (quantitative data)
3. examination document (qualitative data).

Guidelines have been drawn up for the checks on the transit routes, in the ports and along the eastern border of the Schengen area. They contain indications of the locations where the checks may take place, e.g. principal sea ports, transit routes and border crossing points.

A number of pre-conditions have been set with regard to the exchanging of functionaries.

Each project leader makes the relevant original documents for checks, including registration papers, available to other participating countries.

For optimum communication, an overview has been made of all relevant telephone and fax numbers of the parties concerned and the bodies which are closely involved in the operations, such as the national contact points.

The agreements reached imply that the participating countries have to work hard to finish in time the organisation for the first HIO period.

Findings on the basis of the evaluation of the 1st HIO period.

On 17.4.1997, the first period was evaluated, the findings of which are annexed.

- Exchange of colleagues
Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands exchanged colleagues for the purpose of observation. The Netherlands also sent functionaries to other countries, such as Sweden, Austria and Spain, whereas Belgium showed an interest in France.

It is proposed that a chart be made to make visible the exchange of colleagues during the three HIOs.
- Problems
Information exchange time:
It has proven to be difficult to have information exchanged rapidly. The agreed response time has not been achieved by a long way. It will be necessary for road checks during the third HIO period to have the response times as agreed, so as to avoid road users becoming annoyed.

- Language:
In spite of the basic agreement that all contact points would see to communication in the English language, the agreement was not complied with. In a number of countries communication with other countries was effected in their own language, or there were no English speaking functionaries, as a result of which the foreign liaison did not have contact points. In other cases, fax messages were transmitted in a language other than English.

- Portable phones:
Due to the problems that were faced, the demand for portable phones has increased. They enable telephone communication from the checking site with countries abroad. Confirmation of a hit can later be communicated through the official channels.

Findings with respect to the evaluation of the second HIO period

During the evaluation in The Hague, the following subjects were discussed:

- Problems:
The response time was still too long.
Particularly difficult was information retrieval by non-Schengen countries from the Schengen system.

- Principal agreements: (Regrettably, not all of the countries attended the evaluation meeting).

Everyone was convinced that a quick response time from the Schengen system would be necessary for responding to requests related to road checks, also for the sake of non-Schengen countries. This would avoid unnecessary hold-ups on the roads.
It was emphasised again that every participating country use English as working language.

It was agreed that neighbouring countries would provide one another with information. Changes in fax and telephone numbers should be communicated before the checking operations’ beginning.

In view of information leaks, it was insisted that secrecy be maintained with regard to the third HIO.

The countries are requested to fill in the forms accurately for the sake of adequate analyses.

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Proposal respecting the items that will have to be expanded on
(see development in SUGGESTIONS below)

1. Communication
   - use of all agreed documents
   - working language
   - reachability
   - information exchange
   - communication with third parties for the sake of information supply
   - communication with principals

2. Implementation
   - use of resources, computers, etc.
   - deployment of personnel (training)
   - flexibility (personnel and operation, location and forms)
   - exchange of functionaries
   - finance
- security aspects
- reaction to the operations (general public - authorities, etc.)
- set up
- co-operation between project leaders
- investigations following discoveries

3. Information
- national impact
- level of information quality
- level of information accessibility
- problems regarding legislation (national-international)

4. Confidentiality

5. Evaluation of the whole of the pilot project
- analysis and evaluation
- points to be improved
- conclusion
- recommendations

**********

The analysis of the data will be provided by Europol in co-operation with CRI.

II
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

INTRODUCTION

As stated before, the High Impact Operations were carried out during three different periods of time and with different goals: the first one concerned seaports, the second
one focused on the eastern border of the Schengen territory and the last one the major North-South and East-West road networks.

Considering that such operations were the first ones to be developed throughout Europe with joint and simultaneous intervention of the authorities of 14 European States, some errors were committed, which were duly corrected as one went along from one HIO to another HIO.

Any other problems that happened to arise were also swiftly solved, due to their accidental and meaningless nature.

The conclusions hereby mentioned aim at expressing the whole set of emerging questions which were in due time answered to.

Similarly, the suggestions hereby presented aim in particular to convey some of the experience achieved to the people responsible for further projects (illegal immigration and drugs), in order to allow them a better performance and to avoid the same errors. In fact, if one has to award any merit to the project "Surveillance of routes used for the trafficking of stolen vehicles", besides the accomplished results, was that of raising certain issues concerning operationality, of which the resolution found will surely benefit all people involved in performing new projects.

The performance of this project implied, in practical terms, some disruption to the citizens: however, it is important to stress that its performance also had the purpose of assuring the citizens that were 'disturbed' the necessary tranquillity of knowing that they had in their possession legal vehicles, aside from the detection of criminal offences and the subsequent arrest of its perpetrators.

The Schengen Presidency, embodied by Portugal over these last six months, wishes to appraise the work, the effort and the commitment of all the countries participating in the project "Surveillance of routes used for the trafficking of stolen vehicles", as well as to stress that it was possible thanks to the conception and attention of The
Netherlands and to the perseverance of Luxembourg, being the latter ascertained via the successful meeting held in December 1996 in that country.

A

CONCLUSIONS

The Schengen Presidency, after the ending of the activities carried out within the Project "Surveillance of routes used for the trafficking of stolen vehicles", and subsequent to a global pre-evaluation drafted with the help of experts of some of the intervening countries, concludes that:

1 - The interchange of police officers was fruitful since it permitted a direct and joint intervention of joint teams where the participation of professional knowledge was positive. In addition, the existence of liaison officers enabled the completion of direct and urgent contacts with the respective congeneric authorities, which turned out to be useful and efficient;

2 - The conception and subsequent implementation of standard documentation to be used in the field is a precious working tool with a view to an ulterior data analysis;

3 - The perfect knowledge, by all countries, of the identification documents used in each one of the countries is essential to the uncovering of criminal offences committed by people and/or organisations, and especially for the training of the policeman to be involved in the operations;

4 - Regarding the operational framework and on what concerns communications, the project resorted to a single working language, adopted after previous agreement from all the intervening countries. The adoption of a
single working language applied not only to the Centres of Operational Command of each country but also to the teams doing field-work which were comprised mainly of liaison officers;

5 - The use of means that enabled to contact directly the Centres of Operational Command from the field, namely through the resort to cellular phones, turned out to be particularly useful;

6 - In view of the technical means possessed by certain countries, the direct access to the data bases by the field operating teams was of the utmost importance, via technical devices, enabling also a precise, fast, brief and efficient electronic communication;

7 - The confidentiality is a plus not to be lost, since any information leakage would seriously damage the operations and the results to be accomplished;

8 - The three high impact moments explicitly scheduled to be carried out over three days turned out to be unsuitable, due to the specific problems of each country;

9 - All the elements of every operational group working in the field, as well as those posted in the Centres of Operational Command, have experienced the permanent need to be swift in answering the requests; only thus could there be an average answering time elapsing from 45 minutes over the 1st HIO to 15 minutes over the 3rd one;

10 - The press should be ignored while the entire project is being carried out;

11 - The existence of the Centres of Operational Command is deemed crucial;
12 - It is important to run a final analysis applied to all the collected data during the operations developed within the performance of the project;

13 - The results might be better, as well as the efficiency while accessing the database, provided that all countries access the SIS;

14 - The of police co-operation in operational matters and the improvement of relations and of efficiency stem from the three evaluation meetings held, from the commitment and skill of each country and naturally, from the work of every team operating in the field.

B

SUGGESTIONS

The suggestions hereby presented are but the corollary of the conclusions previously achieved and particularly aim at - as mentioned before - transmitting to the responsible bodies by the new working projects that will take place, the matters that were considered as most relevant.

Therefore, we suggest that:

1 - The importance of the interchange of police officers should be increased. It is a useful step, in terms of the exchange of knowledge and techniques, as well as on what concerns swift communications, and still in the solidarity that is necessary to have;

2 - There should be complete certainty of the telephone and fax numbers of the communication addressees. In fact, situations have occurred in which at the last moment and just before the beginning of the operations there were changes of the telephone and/or fax numbers, these changes were not always communicated in due time. It should be clear that the numbers chosen by the countries should remain unchanged during the performance of the project;
3 - All countries should draft documents so as to be used in the operations, with the aim of a better and easier understanding between them and enabling a posterior analysis of the data collection;

4 - Regarding the forms used to collect data, it is crucial to have a correct interpretation of the criteria in order to avoid errors in filling in those papers, which cause a deficient final evaluation.

5 - All countries should have, before the beginning of the concerned operations, identification documents used in each country (of vehicles and/or persons), enabling a better knowledge of the same in order to detect casual forgeries;

6 - All countries should use, in their communications a single language agreed to by everybody, and we suggest that it could be English;

7 - All countries should take the best advantage of the technical means they possess in order to obtain a better communication and access to the databases;

8 - The confidentiality of the operations should be assured; the press should not have any prior knowledge of the projects in course and of operations to be performed;

9 - The periods of the high impact operations should not be so short and so rigid. According to the concrete realities of each country a certain flexibility should be imparted. Therefore, instead of three high impact periods uniformly scheduled for a certain moment and with the duration of three days, it is acknowledged that the periods should be uniformly extended (i.e. for 8 or 10 days), being each country responsible, during that time, for the choice of the three days of high impact operations, this should be communicated to all participating countries so that the Operational Command Centers are on the alert to respond rapidly to the posed requests;
10 - All participants, at an individual level, should be aware of the need to be quick in the answers, since a swift communication is one of the main keys for the success of the operations;

11 - All field operating elements should report immediately the activities performed to the concerned Operational Command Center;

12 - The data collected in the end should be sent for analysis to a specific body (i.e. Europol),

13 - There should be a greater control of the elements to supply the SIS database with. This problem is due to the fact that the respective reports of stolen and found vehicles are not always done, and also to the need of having an accurate care on verifying the VIN of the vehicles and respective data input;

14 - The structure and the philosophy of the project “Surveillance of routes used for the trafficking of stolen vehicles” should continue the same and that 1 or 2 operations of this type together with the operations performed within the scope of the other projects should be performed annually.

15 - It is important that EUROPOL and INTERPOL take part in the evaluation meetings;

16 - It is important to stress the implementation of personnel training before the beginning of the operations.

C

APPROVED PROPOSALS

The intervening countries in the last evaluation meeting approved two proposals presented by The Netherlands and one proposal by Germany, which are as follows:
1 - The implementation of a group comprised of the representatives of Austria, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany to the conception of a final report to be presented by December of the current year;

2 - The request to Working Group I to authorise the joint work between the current group and the one to represent the Illegal Immigration Project;

3 - The abovementioned group, under point 1, will devise more specific concepts on the terminology of “controlled cars” and “suspected cars”, in order to have a standardisation of criteria.
### SCHENGEN PILOT PROJECT ON STOLEN VEHICLES - QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION

#### ANNEX - page 1

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TOTAL | 223.026 | 26.777 | 285.970 | 19.907 | 298 | 36

1 HIO: 1st operation - seaports
2nd operation - eastern border
3rd operation - road networks.

2 controls carried out after the time-span scheduled for the HIOs
3 countries not involved in field work.
4 Portuguese law does not allow to inquire people beyond certain typified cases.
5 countries not involved.
6 some of the officers were involved in the three operations.