

FACT SHEET



UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN MADRID

U.S. and Spain Security Cooperation

For decades, Spanish and American law enforcement officials have been working closely together to keep the citizens of both nations safer. Their cooperation has saved lives, severed linkages between criminal and terrorist organizations, seized illicit funds and weapons, and brought criminals and terrorists to justice in the United States, Spain, and other countries. Here are some examples:

Protecting Spanish and American Citizens: Bilateral counterterrorism coordination has been essential in preventing numerous terrorist attacks over the last decade, including in the United States, Spain, the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. For example, in April 2010, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and his Spanish counterpart, Candida Conde-Pumpido, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to expand U.S.-Spain law enforcement liason. As a result, every day Spanish and American officials from both Prosecutors' Offices collaborate to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat terrorist networks and major transnational criminal organizations. They share leads, raise awareness of each nation's potential vulnerabilities, work joint investigations, exchange information, and attend law enforcement seminars.

Securing the U.S. and Spanish Homelands: U.S. and Spanish information sharing has led to the disruption of multiple terrorist operations planned on U.S. and Spanish soil. For example, for six months in 2012, Spanish and FBI officials partnered on the investigation and eventual arrests of Muhammad Adamov, Eldar Magomedov, and Cengiz Yalcin in connection with an Al Qaeda plot. Critical information flow between the U.S. and Spanish governments led to their arrests and thwarted Al Qaeda's plan to use remote-controlled aircraft to deliver explosives in Spain and Europe.

Denying Terrorists Safe-Haven: The U.S. and Spain agree on the underlying conditions that terrorists exploit to secure a safe-haven. Officials from both governments consult each other regularly and maximize comparative advantages to ensure foreign assistance programs complement shared objectives and promote stability and security in some of the most difficult terrain around the world. More tactically, in 2008, the U.S. Terrorist Screening Center and Spain's Centro Nacional de Coordinación Antiterrorista signed an MOU to promote the exchange of information concerning known or suspected terrorists. Law enforcement officials from both countries continuously share information with each other, based on this agreement.

Confronting Emerging Transnational Threats: In addition to combating terrorism, the U.S. and Spain are expanding cooperation against transnational organized crime, which poses a significant and growing threat to our national and international security. In 2011, for example, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Spanish Attorney General's Office signed an agreement to enhance cooperation, focusing on Eurasian organized criminal enterprises.



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The agreement included the creation of a task force with an FBI agent assigned to work directly with the Spanish National Police with support from the Specialized Prosecutors Office Against Organized Crime and Anti-Corruption.

The United States also has an outstanding counter-narcotics relationship with Spanish authorities. We cooperate closely to interdict cocaine and hashish smuggled across the Atlantic and from Africa and to disrupt the logistical and financial activities of organized criminals. In August 2012, for example, the FBI, in coordination with the Spanish National Police, conducted an operation targeting the highest levels of the Sinaloa Cartel. This culminated in a large-scale undercover operation with the seizure of 346 kilograms of cocaine and the arrest of four significant members of the Mexican cartel, including the cousin of cartel leader Joaquin “Chapo” Guzman Loera.

Also in 2011, the United States and Spain teamed up on a global effort called *Operation Gallego* to identify, investigate, interdict, and prosecute the members a transnational criminal network. This two-year operation resulted in the arrest of 68 individuals, the dismantling of five cocaine laboratories in Spain, and the seizure of 575 kilograms of cocaine and more than eight million euros. *Operation Gallego* also had an international impact, leading to the arrest of eight suspected criminals in France and 10 in Brazil.

Protecting Spain’s Cultural Treasures: The United States understands the cultural and historical significance of protecting Spain’s treasures. That’s why we sprang into action in June 2012 when Spain requested our assistance in recovering a 16th century tapestry that was stolen in 1979 from the Cathedral of St. Vincent Martyr of Roda de Isábena. Produced in the 1500s, the tapestry depicts St. Ramon, the Virgin Mary with infant Jesus, Saint Vincent of Saragossa, and Saint Valerius. Acting on detailed information from the Spanish Civil Guard, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security unit that specializes in cross-border art thefts traveled to Houston, Texas to investigate and eventually seize the stolen tapestry. Due to the close cooperation between American and Spanish law enforcement officials, the United States was pleased to be able to return this extraordinary tapestry to the people of Spain.

Safeguarding Global Financial, Transportation, and Communication Systems: The U.S. and Spain collaborate to deter attacks that seek to exploit the global financial, transportation, and communication systems. Joint initiatives that advance financial security, transportation security, and defend communications systems serve to protect the means by which our increasingly interconnected world operates. For example, in May 2013, U.S. Secret Service officials worked with the Spanish National Police to facilitate the arrest of two individuals suspected of laundering more than six billion dollars’ worth of criminal proceeds – one of the largest money laundering operations in U.S. history. To help protect air travel, U.S. Customs and Border Protection inspectors in Madrid work with Spanish airline, security and police officials at Barajas International Airport. They screen U.S.-bound flights and assist Spanish law enforcement authorities in identifying possible terrorists, fraudulent documents, and special interest aliens traveling from or through Madrid en route to the Western Hemisphere.

Summary: Combating transnational crime and terrorism requires a multidimensional strategy that safeguards citizens, breaks the financial strength of criminal and terrorist networks, disrupts illicit trafficking networks, and defeats transnational criminal and terrorist organizations. While these are major challenges, U.S. and Spanish law enforcement authorities are committed to working together to enhance information sharing, protect the financial system, strengthen interdiction, investigations, and prosecutions, and disrupt drug trafficking and its facilitation of other transnational threats.

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