# German Authorities Uncover $2.78 Billion Cocaine Smuggling Operation



German authorities have announced the largest cocaine seizure in the country's history, valued at $2.78 billion. This operation, described as a significant blow to international organized crime, was revealed during a press conference in Düsseldorf on June 17, 2024, by North Rhine-Westphalia's Minister of Justice, Benjamin Limbach. Law enforcement officials discovered 39 tons of cocaine hidden among fruits and vegetables in various locations over the past year, thanks to a tip-off from Colombian authorities. The drugs were found in the ports of Hamburg, Rotterdam, and Colombia.

Seven individuals from different nationalities, including German, Azerbaijani, Bulgarian, Moroccan, Turkish, and Ukrainian, aged between 30 and 54, were arrested in connection with the smuggling operation. Additionally, it was unveiled that a businessman from North Rhine-Westphalia set up 100 letterbox companies to facilitate these illegal transports, which took place between April and September 2023. The investigation also led to the confiscation of mobile phones, laptops, gold bars, cash, and a Porsche.

The seizures highlight the growing challenge of drug trafficking, as emphasized by customs investigator Tino Igelmann.