# Police smash major drug rings and violent gangs on Costa del Sol in 13 operations



Police forces in Málaga have recently exposed the depth of their fight against organised crime, particularly in the Costa del Sol, a region popular with British expatriates and tourists. Over the last 18 months, the Policia Nacional has launched 13 significant operations, leading to roughly 40 arrests related to drug trafficking, violent crime, and illegal arms possession. These high-profile cases include shootings, kidnappings, and gang-related violence that have marked the area’s ongoing security challenges.

One notable operation, known as Operation Hawthorn, saw the arrest of three British nationals implicated in kidnapping, criminal organisation membership, and unlawful firearms possession. The suspects, with criminal records spanning the UK and Spain, were swiftly apprehended within just four hours, and police were able to rescue the victim and seize two firearms. Another investigation called Operation Sala followed an incident where shots were fired at a restaurant, leading to the arrest of two British men within ten days, with the entire investigation concluded in two weeks. Meanwhile, Operation Torcal remains active, with authorities pursuing three suspects believed to be abroad, after a violent robbery involving kidnapping and bodily harm.

In February 2025, a groundbreaking operation dismantled a drug trafficking network amongst a family clan in Málaga. This complex investigation, starting mid-2024, resulted in 13 arrests and uncovered a substantial cache of narcotics, including 135 kilograms of cocaine. Authorities seized six firearms, 20 mobile phones, nearly €176,000 in cash, as well as freezing 11 bank accounts. The operation also involved the confiscation of six properties valued at over €600,000 and 43 vehicles worth half a million euros. The gang operated two key warehouses for drug storage and preparation, indicative of their organised and systematic trafficking efforts.

Complementing these efforts, another large-scale investigation in October 2024 targeted stevedores at the Port of Málaga. Four dock workers were arrested alongside other logistics and money laundering suspects after authorities seized 430 kilograms of cocaine valued at more than €20 million. The drugs were found concealed in maritime containers and affixed to ships, demonstrating the sophisticated methods used to traffic narcotics through one of Spain’s busiest ports.

Further arrests in May 2025 rounded out a crackdown on money laundering linked to drug trafficking between Málaga and Melilla. Eight suspects were taken into custody related to an operation revealing hashish smuggling from Morocco to Spain by marine routes. The group had used a legitimate food company as a front, enabling them to launder approximately €1.5 million. Authorities seized €350,000 in cash alongside vehicles and technology, and froze bank accounts holding over €250,000.

Additionally, joint efforts between Spanish and Italian police in early 2025 led to the disruption of an international drug trafficking organisation operating between the two countries. Eleven individuals were detained, including two in Málaga and Cádiz, who were subject to European arrest warrants. Seizures included marijuana, hashish, cocaine, a semi-automatic weapon with ammunition, and drug packaging materials.

In a parallel strand of law enforcement, the local police, working with national agencies, have targeted pro-cannabis clubs in Málaga, resulting in the closure of four establishments and the arrest of eight individuals on public health grounds. More than six kilograms of hashish and marijuana were confiscated along with €4,500 in cash. This crackdown underscores growing concerns over drug-related activities in seemingly legitimate social spaces.

Taken together, these operations highlight the multi-layered challenges law enforcement faces in the Costa del Sol, a region battling organised crime on multiple fronts—from violent gang activities and kidnappings to sprawling international drug trafficking and sophisticated money laundering schemes. The authorities’ actions reflect an intensified and increasingly coordinated effort to restore security and dismantle entrenched criminal networks exploiting Spain’s strategic Mediterranean location.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2070615/crisis-spain-costa-del-sol-crime-wave)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2070615/crisis-spain-costa-del-sol-crime-wave)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://cadenaser.com/andalucia/2025/02/05/la-policia-nacional-detiene-en-malaga-a-trece-miembros-de-un-clan-familiar-por-trafico-de-drogas-e-incauta-135-kilos-de-cocaina-ser-malaga/), [[4]](https://www.surinenglish.com/malaga/malaga-city/thirteen-members-family-clan-arrested-malaga-an-20250206073540-nt.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://elpais.com/espana/2024/11/13/detenidos-cuatro-estibadores-del-puerto-de-malaga-por-trafico-de-cocaina.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://costablancadaily.com/news/costa-del-sol/2025/05/14/arrests-in-malaga-and-melilla-for-laundering-1-5m-euros-of-drug-money-using-food-company-as-front/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[6]](https://www.surinenglish.com/malaga/members-an-organisation-involved-drug-trafficking-between-20250213080646-nt.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[7]](https://cadenaser.com/andalucia/2025/04/03/decretado-el-cierre-y-cese-de-actividad-en-malaga-de-cuatro-establecimientos-procannabis-ser-malaga/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2070615/crisis-spain-costa-del-sol-crime-wave> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://cadenaser.com/andalucia/2025/02/05/la-policia-nacional-detiene-en-malaga-a-trece-miembros-de-un-clan-familiar-por-trafico-de-drogas-e-incauta-135-kilos-de-cocaina-ser-malaga/> - In February 2025, the National Police dismantled a drug trafficking organisation in Málaga, arresting 13 members of a family clan. The operation, initiated in July 2024, led to the seizure of 135 kilograms of cocaine, six firearms, 20 mobile phones, and €176,175 in cash. Authorities also froze 11 bank accounts, seized six properties valued over €600,000, and 43 vehicles worth €500,000. The group operated two warehouses: one for storing and receiving drugs, and another for preparation and distribution. All detained individuals were placed at the disposal of the judicial authority, with seven remanded in custody. ([cadenaser.com](https://cadenaser.com/andalucia/2025/02/05/la-policia-nacional-detiene-en-malaga-a-trece-miembros-de-un-clan-familiar-por-trafico-de-drogas-e-incauta-135-kilos-de-cocaina-ser-malaga/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://elpais.com/espana/2024/11/13/detenidos-cuatro-estibadores-del-puerto-de-malaga-por-trafico-de-cocaina.html> - In October 2024, the National Police arrested four stevedores at the Port of Málaga involved in cocaine trafficking. The operation, conducted with the Civil Guard and the Customs Surveillance Service, resulted in the seizure of 430 kilograms of cocaine valued over €20 million. The drugs were concealed in maritime containers and structures attached to ships. The investigation, initiated in September 2023, also led to the arrest of a port services company employee and two individuals linked to logistics and money laundering. Additionally, ten people were detained in Cádiz for trafficking one tonne of cocaine hidden in a container from South America. ([elpais.com](https://elpais.com/espana/2024-11-13/detenidos-cuatro-estibadores-del-puerto-de-malaga-por-trafico-de-cocaina.html?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.surinenglish.com/malaga/malaga-city/thirteen-members-family-clan-arrested-malaga-an-20250206073540-nt.html> - In February 2025, the National Police arrested 13 individuals from the same family in Málaga for alleged drug trafficking, money laundering, membership in a criminal organisation, and illegal possession of weapons. The operation uncovered two warehouses: one for storing and receiving drugs, and another for preparation and distribution. Authorities seized 124 packages of cocaine weighing 135 kilograms, six firearms, 20 mobile phones, and €176,175 in cash. They also froze 11 bank accounts, seized six properties valued over €600,000, and 43 vehicles worth €500,000. All detainees were placed at the disposal of the judicial authority, with seven remanded in custody. ([surinenglish.com](https://www.surinenglish.com/malaga/malaga-city/thirteen-members-family-clan-arrested-malaga-an-20250206073540-nt.html?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://costablancadaily.com/news/costa-del-sol/2025/05/14/arrests-in-malaga-and-melilla-for-laundering-1-5m-euros-of-drug-money-using-food-company-as-front/> - In May 2025, the National Police arrested eight individuals in Málaga and Melilla for money laundering related to drug trafficking. The organisation primarily transported hashish from Morocco to Spain via marine routes. The operation resulted in the seizure of €350,000 in cash, vehicles, and technological devices, as well as the freezing of over €250,000 in bank accounts. The investigation revealed that the group used a food company as a front for their illicit activities. ([costablancadaily.com](https://costablancadaily.com/news/costa-del-sol/2025/05/14/arrests-in-malaga-and-melilla-for-laundering-1-5m-euros-of-drug-money-using-food-company-as-front/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.surinenglish.com/malaga/members-an-organisation-involved-drug-trafficking-between-20250213080646-nt.html> - In February 2025, the National Police, in collaboration with Italy's Guardia di Finanza, dismantled a criminal organisation involved in drug trafficking between Spain and Italy. Eleven individuals were arrested, including two in Málaga and Cádiz, who had multiple European arrest and extradition warrants issued by Italy. The operation led to the seizure of mobile phones, SIM cards, cash, and, in Italy, kilograms of marijuana and hashish, 179 grams of cocaine, a semi-automatic weapon with ammunition, and materials for weighing and packaging narcotics. ([surinenglish.com](https://www.surinenglish.com/malaga/members-an-organisation-involved-drug-trafficking-between-20250213080646-nt.html?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://cadenaser.com/andalucia/2025/04/03/decretado-el-cierre-y-cese-de-actividad-en-malaga-de-cuatro-establecimientos-procannabis-ser-malaga/> - In April 2025, Málaga's Local Police, in collaboration with the National Police, conducted six interventions in four pro-cannabis clubs located in the Centro, Teatinos, and Cruz del Humilladero districts. These actions were prompted by drug trafficking and administrative violations, leading the City Council to issue decrees for closure and cessation of activity. One of the clubs was a repeat offender. The operation resulted in the arrest of eight individuals for public health crimes, the seizure of over six kilograms of hashish and marijuana, and the recovery of €4,500 in cash. Since January 2014, the Local Police's Investigation and Protection Group (GIP) has been investigating pro-cannabis associations, a pioneering effort in Spain. Since 2018, 28 criminal records related to these associations have been filed. ([cadenaser.com](https://cadenaser.com/andalucia/2025/04/03/decretado-el-cierre-y-cese-de-actividad-en-malaga-de-cuatro-establecimientos-procannabis-ser-malaga/?utm_source=openai))