



MINISTÈRE
DE L'INTÉRIEUR

Liberté
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Fraternité



Investigation of environmental crime

Special focus on illegal waste crime





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 **GENDARMERIE
NATIONALE**



Défendre la Nation — Protéger la population





CHIFFRES CLÉS

Chiffres au
31 juillet

2025


140 370 PERSONNELS




UNITÉS

- 67 984 gendarmes départementaux
- 14 403 gendarmes mobiles
- 4 394 gendarmes en outre-mer
- 3 109 brigades (au 31/12/2024)
- 116 escadrons
- 10 commandements de la gendarmerie en outre-mer




MOYENS DE MOBILITÉ

33 599 véhicules en service dont

- 26 824 véhicules légers
- 3 091 deux-roues et trois-roues
- 3 684 véhicules lourds et spécialisés
- 354 moyens nautiques
- 56 hélicoptères
- 196 véhicules blindés dont 90 VIPG « Centaure »



1- Threat assessment





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In link with environmental crimes





5 areas of expertise



#1

Protecting the environment and biodiversity:
natural spaces, aquatic environments, protected species and animal welfare

#2

Preserving the quality of life: waste management, reconciling urban planning and the environment, developing transports and low-emission areas, etc.

#3

Human safety in its environment: food and plant health safety, classified installations and pollution, etc.

#4

Energy transition police: eco-fraud (carbon tax, energy transition subsidies, etc.), securing alternative energies, etc.

#5

Public health: drug trafficking and offences related to public health safety





Environmental Crime : Key principles

4th source of criminal revenue after drugs, counterfeiting and human trafficking

An increase in environmental crime of 5 to 7% per year

80 to 230 billion euros in illicit gains per year

In France, more than 2,000 environmental offences are listed under 15 different codes



Environmental Crime : Key elements

Versatile criminality

Domino effects

The need to reconcile environmental
protection and economic
development

Damage that is difficult to assess



Environmental Crime is on the rise

Regulations / Legislations

Investigations can be long and
complex

Internet and social networks

Advantageous risk/benefit ratio for
offenders



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2- Gendarmerie nationale response to envicrime





Background

1993

Training of the first specialised investigators

The French national Gendarmerie, a security force for territories and spaces, has long been involved in the fight against environmental and public health issues, which are closely linked.

2004

OCLAESP creation

The Central Office against Environmental and Public Health Crime (OCLAESP) is an inter-ministerial judicial police unit under the authority of the Director General of the Gendarmerie Nationale (DGGN).

2020 2022

Strong growth of the OCLAESP

Creation of 10 detachments, in metropolitan France and overseas

2023

CESAN creation

A new impulse is given in June 2023 with the creation of Law Enforcement Directorate for Environment and Public Health (CESAN)





Dedicated organisation



OCLAESP :

Criminal investigations : organised crimes,
transnational ou sensitive cases



CESAN



Units on the field under the coordination of environmental officer :

Local brigades – specific units – dedicated units - ...



Structuring the gendarmerie's response to environmental crime

Threat assessment

Animation

Training

Assistance/support

Partnership

International



Local organisation to give a better response close to the citizen

« Environment » officier

Local gendarmerie unit

Units working in special fields

Units with special missions





Partnership and stakeholders



Administration & local authorities

Private sector

COLDEN & MISEN

International level



Training of Environmental crime investigators / Financial Investigators



#1

Local environmental investigators (4,500)

In each local gendarmerie brigade

Basic Level financial investigators

Every gendarme will have a basic level in the future

#2

Specialized environmental investigators (600)

In each local gendarmerie criminal investigation unit

Specialized financial investigators (1781)

Patrimonial investigators

#3

Trainers of Local environmental investigators (100)

In CESAN, OCLAESP and every regions

Financial senior investigators (571)

In specialized units



Tools and support to investigations

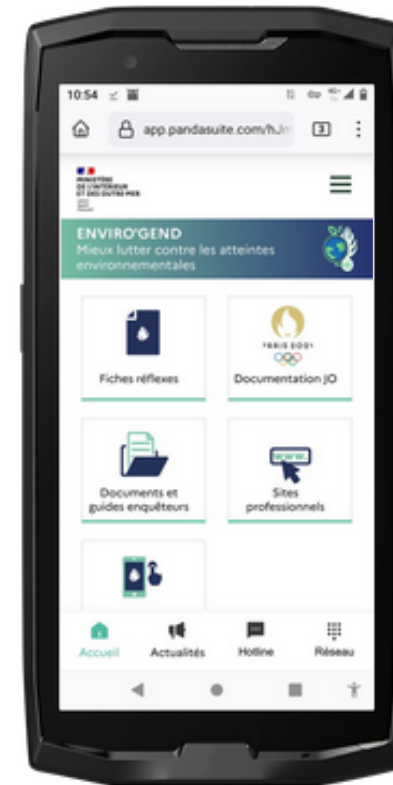
Easy use application

Available for any gendarme

Facilitate environmental crime scene
management

4 major functions
(including contact files
operationnal process

Establish an environmental diagnostic
(Illegal waste deposit)





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3- Focus on waste trafficking





Waste crime threat assesment



A major issue

Regulation

Consequences

Types of crime

Modus operandi :

- Dumping and burning waste
- Fraudulent ads on the Internet
- Illegal transfrontier shipment
- Diversion from the legal circuit
- Organising opacity to conceal responsibilities
- Lying about the real nature of waste





Origins of the case

August 2019

The OCLAESP receives information from a major waste company concerning an international network trafficking waste from Belgium to France.

Designation of the investigation department

An inter regional court specialized in organised crime (JIRS) deals with the case and asks the OCLAESP to act as the investigating department.

Context

The deregulation of European borders since the 1990s





The shipment of waste within the European Union

	Green List (harmless waste)	Orange List (hazardous waste)
✘ Elimination	Notification procedure (secured deposit)	Notification procedure (secured deposit)
∞ Valorisation	Information procedure	Notification procedure (secured deposit)



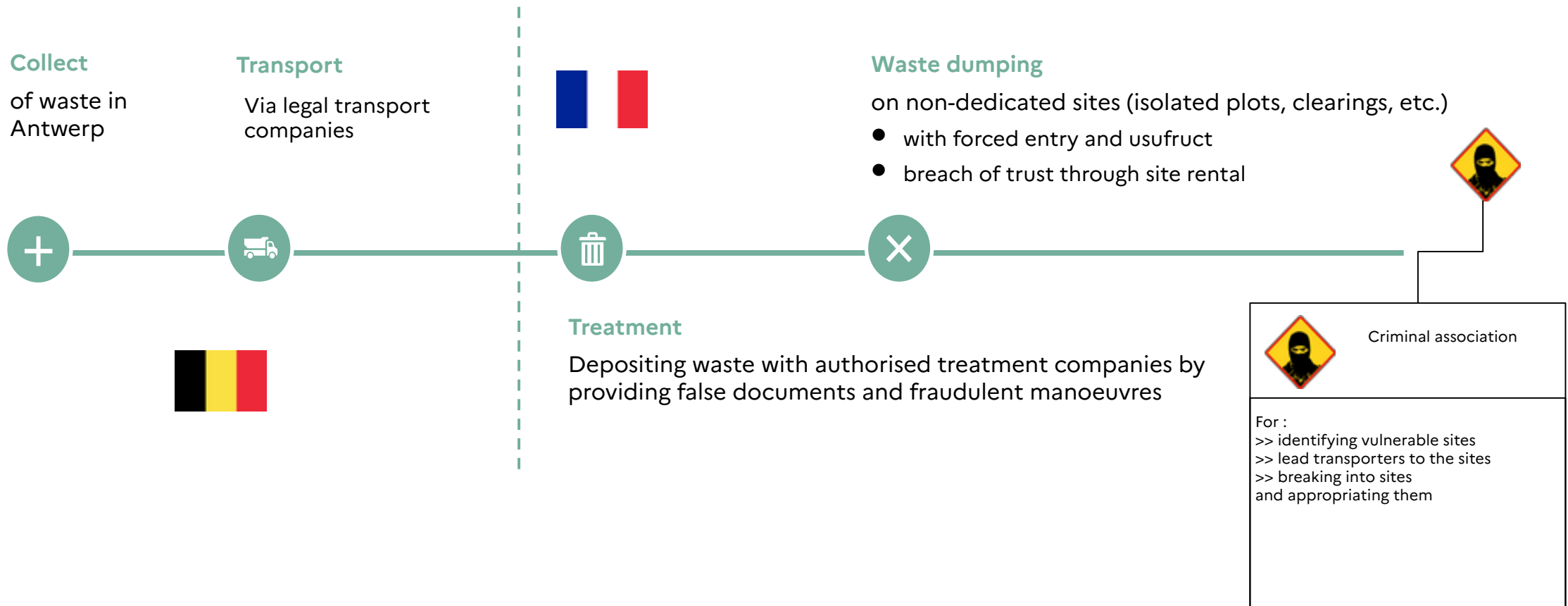
Modus Operandi

To increase their profits considerably, criminal organisations manoeuvre around costly national and international environmental regulations.



Criminal modus operandi

From the port of Antwerp to the fields and glades of France





OCLAESP Action 1/2

Investigations

Surveillance

The implementation of physical and technical surveillance systems makes it possible to :

- identify suspect sites
- identify the modus operandi
- identify the origin of illegal waste, confirming that it has been transferred across borders

Means used

- transnational surveillance (JIT or by default EIO)
- special investigative techniques dedicated to the fight against organised crime :

-  wiretapping,
-  beacons placing...

Information gathering

Collecting and using data enables us to :

- assess the financial proceeds of offences (seizure of assets and identification of money laundering circuits)
- assess ecological and environmental damage

Means used

- helicopter and drones for volumetric estimation of the tonnage of abandoned waste
- analysis of waste documents by a police expert

OCLAESP Action 2/2

Cooperation

With Belgium :

European Investigation Order



Allows :

→ facilitating information sharing

→ coordinated international judicial operation

9 

arrests
(3 Belgium /6 France)

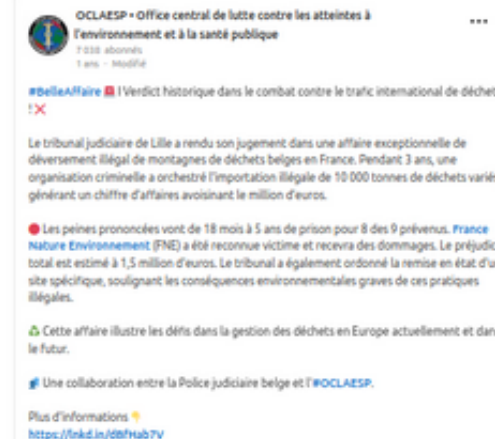
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imprisonments
sentenced between 18
month to 05 years

500 000 

euros cash seized (watches & luxury goods)

The operation held in June put a stop to the traffic. Further transnational investigations confirmed the criminal structure and established the ecological damage at €1,500,000.



Traffic international de déchets : jugement rendu dans une affaire hors-norme



Best practices

- Contact with legitimate waste management companies able to provide information on illegal competition : a win to win situation
- Close international cooperation: as criminals move beyond borders, law enforcement have to adapt
- Use of advanced investigation techniques

Need to assess environmental damage and illicit gains: these estimates help to asset seizures and the categorisation of offences

No corruption but money laundering



Points to be improved

Immediate search of financial flows

Identify the source of funds as quickly as possible

- Avoid focusing on assets held in their own name.
- Indeed, in the case of good money laundering practice, these are minimised or even eliminated.
- Track funds through to the final beneficiary
(follow the money)
- Prevent money laundering to enable the seizure of criminal assets proportionate to the crimes committed

Determining whether an organised gang has been formed

Although the evidence of fraud and organised waste trafficking was provided in the preliminary :

- Organised crime is rarely considered to be the purpose of the investigation.
- It may be, however, when the case is opened for investigation from the outset.
- However, during the entire preliminary investigation phase of this case, no act of investigation was carried out under the terms of articles 706-74 and seq. of the French Criminal Procedure Code (CPP)



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4- Focus on waste trafficking with corruption & money laundering





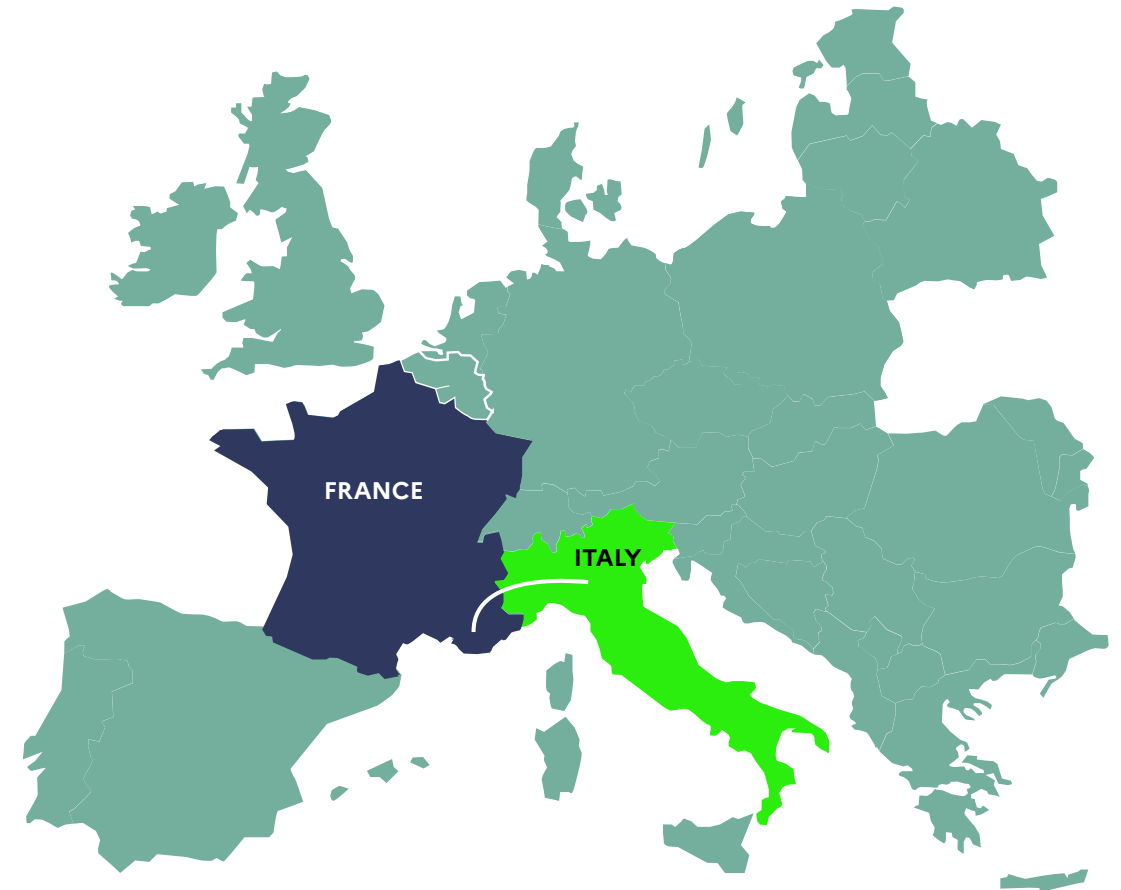
Origins of the case

August 2009

- The Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Criminal Investigation Section of Marseille (SR) has received an anonymous tip-off containing detailed information from a French senator and his brother which one controls a network of various companies in the South East of France.
- The Marseille court specialized in organised crime has received a second anonymous tip-off with more informations

Context

- This case is most difficult because the head of this organized group is the brother of this Senator.
- And this Senator is also the President of the Bouches-du-Rhône departmental council.





The Task force

Magistrate	Law enforcement	Administrative authorities
Preliminary investigations Financial Public Prosecutor specialized in financial investigations	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Criminal Investigation Section of Marseille (SR) Financial and environmental investigators	Tax investigators (BCR)
Investigative judge specialized in financial investigations and organized crime	National Judicial Customs Unit (SNDJ)	Environmental Agency (DREAL, OFB)

Constraints



First case in France with where an elected official was suspected to be part of an organized group
Necessity to maintain a strict confidentiality
High risk of threats



Modus Operandi

To optimize the results, magistrate and gendarmerie has decided to associate these units and a judicial expert, an experienced former auditor.
And they work at the same place







Strategy 1/2

Connection with organized criminals

The special investigations prove :

- Links with the Italian Mafia and Corsican criminality
- 2 organized criminals from Marseille threat elected and public authorities or waste industry managers
- Money laundering in Las Vegas casinos

Means used

- **GIGN**
- Special investigative techniques dedicated to the fight against organised crime :
 -  wiretapping,
 -  Geolocation
 -  beacons placing, informators...
 -  informant

Documentation

Collecting and using data enables to :

- Confirm illegal waste in some sites assess the financial proceeds of offences (seizure of assets and identification of money laundering flow diagrams)
-
- Assess ecological and environmental damage

Means used

- Investigations by environmental agencies to determine the pollution of ground and river, and the French biodiversity Office to confirm the destruction of an endemic plant the donwy bondweed
- Analysis of waste documents, in the same time by financial and environmental investigators with the help of road safety unit



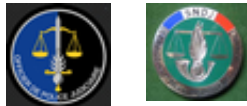
Strategy 2/2

Means used

The prosecutor and the investigative judge had decided to



- focused on the facts, not against suspects
- Systematically public prosecutor give an authorization for the investigative judge to work against new offences when the investigators find them



- gendarmerie, customs, and judicial expert can directly exchange procedural documents
- Communication with tax administration



Benefits

- More discretion
- Any limits for the investigative judge and the investigators
- Win time with this « JIT »
- Tax authorities can start immediately administrative check



Financial Investigators / Data analyst and Judicial Expert

Facilitators to identify :

- Shell companies
- Illicit financial flows
- Hidden kickbacks
- Identify Falses document and use of them
- Corruption

Medias and NGOs



The media and NGOs helped to lift Senator immunity

But they also hampered the investigation by revealing information too quickly.



verifications

Surveillance and on-site observations near open air waste sites confirm :

- Soil and water pollution
- Waste is dumped using Italian trucks at night.
- False declaration regarding the nature and volumes of the waste



Environmental agencies confirm :

- The site have any protection of soil, underground water
- The company destroyed an endemic and protected plant specie
- on this site : Downy Bindweed





verifications

-
- Opposant of decision of the elected are being threatened by his brother.
 - The nickname of this brother is « Mister » because he gave orders to the officials
 - Surveillance of meeting locations with suspects confirm corruption, misuse of corporate assets, and criminal conspiracy
 - False declaration regarding the nature and volumes of the waste company,
 - And allocation of land preempted by the departmental council to another company, subsequently allowing the main suspect to expand his waste disposal site.



International Cooperation










Facilitating information sharing



Facilitating identification companies

Facilitating to obtains account bank

Win time to seize assets

Countries	Results	Comments
Spain 	Excellent	Great cooperation with SEPRONA and Direzione Investigativa Antimafia, Carabinieri, Guardia di Finanza
Italy 		
Switzerland 	Average	Bank secrecy and administrative deadlines
Monaco 		
Luxembourg 		
British Virgin Islands 	None	Total opacity, any return
Panama 		



Court Decision

Sentences



- 03 French and Spain companies
- Assets seized confiscated



- More 40 custodies
- 10 sentenced between 06 month to 06 years jail
- Ineligibility for the Senator and other elected people

Assets



- More than €13,000,000 € confiscated
- €11,000,000 of posted guarantees
- Accounts bank seized

Damages and Interest



- Urban Community of Marseille: €11 millions
- Bouches-du-Rhône Departmental Council amount
- corresponding president allowances
- French State: €150,000 for moral damage
- NGOs: €1 symbolic damage



And the future

Appeals



against the exclusion of company
from public procurement contracts
→ **reimbursed €1,7 million**



To annul payment of €30 millions taxes and
€5,7 millions in tax reassessments

Restoration of environment



Restoration of the sites remains uncompleted

Second case

They are being charged for :

- Corruption,
- Breaches of integrity
- Public procurement for building social housing
- And money laundering

**Of course, they are presumed innocent in
this second case**





Thank you Any Question ?

lieutenant-colonel Hervé MARIE

