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NOTE

from: the General Secretariat
to: Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum

No. prev. doc. : 10471/03 FRONT 79 COMIX 384 (RESTREINT UE)

Subject : Proposals for Joint Operations

Delegations will find attached proposals for joint operations transmitted by the Risk Analysis Centre.

In the first periodical risk analysis for the Common Unit (document 10471/03 FRONT 79 COMIX 384 RESTREINT UE), the Risk Analysis Centre (RAC) mentioned a number of general recommendations and some recommendations for joint actions. The Common Unit requested that the recommendations for joint operations were to be described more comprehensively by RAC. In this proposal document you will find more concrete recommendations for possible joint operations, already prioritised by RAC and ready for the Common Unit to decide upon. Specific operational measures within the proposed joint operations to be taken are not mentioned, as RAC considers this a task of the other ad hoc centres or Member State(s).

Proposed Joint Operations:

1. "Italian Southern Coastline"

In view of the current situation at the Italian southern coastline (e.g. islands of Lampedusa and Pantelleria) and RAC's conclusions on this topic in its first periodical risk analysis, it is deemed necessary to seek more effective measures to combat illegal immigration from the Northern African countries towards Italy on short notice. In 2002 at least 25.000 illegal immigrants by vessels were detected. Large flows of illegal immigrants coming from Libya and Tunisia are causing capacity problems in personnel and housing for the Italian authorities. Furthermore, Italian law allows keeping the immigrants in the temporary detention centres for a period of no longer than 30 days, with the possibility of extension once, also depending on capacity of the centres. After this period, when the immigrants cannot be deported to their origin or transit country, they receive an official document ordering to leave Italy within five days. They leave the temporary detention centres and could become illegal residents in Italy or elsewhere in the EU. This poses a clear threat to the whole EU area.

- Proposal:** - **A joint operation establishing assistance from other EU countries to Italy to alleviate the pressure on personnel involved and other resources in periods of high influx.**
- **Planning and implementation by the Italian authorities.**

2. "Spanish Coastline"

Comparing figures of illegal immigration in Spain with those of other EU countries lead to the conclusion that the situation at the Spanish coastline is a matter of great concern. In 2002 18.000 illegal immigrants were apprehended, mainly travelling in fishing boats to the Spanish coastline and the Canary Islands. Spanish authorities also report on about 42.000 refused entries at the overseas territories in Melilla and Ceuta up until September 2002.

- Proposal:** - **A joint operation establishing assistance from other EU countries to Spain (the Spanish Coast, Canary Islands and Ceuta and Melilla).**
- **Planning and implementation by the Spanish authorities.**

3. "Visa Under False Pretences"

The use of visa obtained under false pretences is one of the recent trends to enter the EU. Bogus travel agencies act as human trafficking organisations enlisting third country nationals to work in the EU Member States. These people will be granted a Schengen Visa for short term stay up to 90 days by one of the EU Member States' embassies or consulates, either because the used invitation appears to be reliable or due to the fact that it cannot be checked in the appropriate way. In many cases, the real reason to enter the EU is to obtain work or to stay permanently. So far, more than half of the EU Member States have reported this kind of crime. It is assumed that the abuse of visa is not strictly limited to the external land borders, but is also present at other border crossing points in the different EU countries. Geographically the reportedly biggest problem occurs at the border crossing points at the German and Austrian land borders where mainly nationals from Ukraine, Moldova, Turkey, Russia, Albania and China are detected.

Already started by the Centre Land Borders, joint operations concerning this current trend of illegal immigration could be an appropriate tool to fight this phenomenon. It can be estimated that figures of obtaining visa under false pretences easily reach more than tens of thousands of cases each year. This threat, which is transferred from the embassies and consulates abroad to the border crossing points, should be lowered. Obviously, rules in the Schengen Acquis concerning the issuance of visas by embassies and consulates should be applied strictly.

- Proposal: - An investigation of the situation in the EU Member States, concerning "visa under false pretences".**
- First stage: gathering more specific information, focusing on the issuance of visa.**
- Second stage: a joint operation on visa under false pretences, in order to intensify border checks at the external borders.**
- **Planning and implementation by EUROPOL, the Centre Land Borders and the Centre Airports (IAP)**

4. "Austrian External Green Borders"

In 2002, around 26.000 illegal immigrants (excluding Greece) were detected at the EU external land borders. More than 17.000 were apprehended when trying to cross the external green borders of Austria. At the same time figures on most of the EU external land borders were decreasing, so that it can be assumed that the migration pressure shifted to the Austrian borders with Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

- Proposal: - A joint operation establishing assistance from other EU countries to Austria to combat illegal immigration more effectively.**
- **Planning and implementation by the Austrian authorities and the Centre Land Borders.**

5. "Illegal immigration from China"

Contrary to the general decreasing trend, in a few EU Member States the number of (detected) illegal immigrants from China is significantly increasing. Already two international initiatives have been started to deal with this topic: the so-called G-8 Lyon Group in France, and the Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC) based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Proposal: - An investigation of the situation in the EU Member States, concerning "illegal immigration from China", taking into account the initiatives mentioned above.

First stage: gathering more specific information, focusing on all elements of illegal immigration from China towards the EU (travel routes, documents, etc.).

Second stage: a joint operation on illegal immigration from China.

- **Planning and implementation by EUROPOL, the Centre Airports (IAP) and the national authorities involved.**

6. **"Aegean Sea, Greece"**

Recent information is showing illegal immigrants being smuggled to Greece by sea. They predominantly travel from Turkey, and involve nationals from Turkey (Kurds), Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and other Asian nationalities. Different modi operandi have been detected through investigations by the Hellenic Coast Guard.

Proposal: - An investigation of the situation in the Aegean Sea, Greece.

First stage: gathering more specific information, focusing on all elements (travel routes, nationalities involved, modi operandi, etc.).

Second stage: a joint operation establishing assistance from other EU countries to Greece.

- **Planning and implementation by EUROPOL and the Greek authorities.**