



# How FBI spy phones led to a worldwide crime sting

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*A global sting in which organized crime gangs were sold encrypted phones that law enforcement officials could monitor has led to more than 800 arrests and the confiscation of drugs, weapons, cash and luxury cars, officials said on Tuesday.*

ACTING U.S. ATTORNEY FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
RANDY GROSSMAN:

"This investigation called Operation Trojan Shield shined a light into the shadowy industry of hardened encrypted devices."

1. The FBI on Tuesday announced details about a massive takedown of criminal gangs and organized crime around the world, using customized smartphones and a messaging app called ANOM to arrest more than 800 suspects and counting.

GROSSMAN: "Criminal organizations and the individual defendants that we have charged purchased and distributed ANOM devices in an effort to secretly plan and execute their crimes. But the devices were actually operated by the FBI."

2. The operation, conceived by the FBI and Australian police in 2018, was one of the biggest infiltrations and takeovers of a specialized encrypted network in history, involving 12,000 devices used by 300 criminal groups in more than 100 countries including Italian organized crime, Asian triads, biker gangs and transnational drug syndicates.

EUROPOL DEPUTY DIRECTOR JEAN-PHILIPPE LECOUFFE:

"This law enforcement operation is exceptional by its global outcomes."

3. The European Union's law enforcement agency, Europol, said authorities seized \$48 million in cash and cryptocurrencies in raids around the world, along with more than 30 tons of narcotics including more than eight tons of cocaine.

GROSSMAN: "A transnational criminal organization used ANOM devices to plan a shipment of cocaine from Costa Rica to Spain."

The cocaine was to be imported via a shipping container concealed within hollowed-out pineapples.”

4. The massive sting began when U.S. officials paid a convicted drug trafficker to give them access to a smartphone that he had customized, on which he installed the ANOM messaging app.

5. Distributors initially sold just 50 devices to organized crime networks and, over three years, ANOM's popularity grew by word-of-mouth.

6. According to a court document, it took \$100,000 plus expenses, and the opportunity for a reduced sentence, for the drug trafficker turned smartphone developer to collaborate with the FBI.