

# ORANGE NOTICE

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## IMMINENT THREAT

### COVID-19-RELATED CRIME

#### Falsification, Theft and Illegal Advertising of COVID-19 and Influenza Vaccines

**Description of the types of crime likely to pose an imminent threat:** *Crimes related to illicit vaccines, and especially vaccines against COVID-19<sup>1</sup> pose a serious and imminent threat to the health and safety of people world-wide.*

*Such crime hinders the efforts of the authorities to control and eradicate the spread of COVID-19, contributes to the proliferation of other diseases, threatens public order and the well-being of our communities, and may erode trust in the health system.*

*It is vitally important that law enforcement agencies ensure a stable and secure framework in which medical workers can deliver safe and effective vaccines for people who opt for immunization through vaccination, while also ensuring the safety of the supply chain, physically, legally and online.*

*The purpose of this orange notice is to issue a warning about criminal activity involving vaccines in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has triggered unprecedented, opportunistic and predatory criminal behaviour.*

*In the light of the upcoming global distribution of vaccines against COVID-19, the relevant authorities are strongly advised to raise their level of preparedness. This is in order to deal with this emerging threat, from both a strategic and operational perspective, and to protect the life and health of people and the general well-being of communities.*

*INTERPOL has now identified specific criminal activity in this area and wishes to highlight these cases to warn you of the imminent threats to public safety and to assist you, our member countries, in your efforts to tackle this emerging crime threat.*

*Additional law enforcement guidance and a threat assessment are due to follow in early December 2020.*

<sup>1</sup> Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is the strain of coronavirus that causes Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the respiratory illness responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic. For the sake of readability, this notice adheres to popular nomenclature in referring to the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine as the "COVID-19 vaccine."

## 1. Falsified COVID-19 vaccine: Vietnam

In March 2020, an individual posing as a medical worker in Binh Dinh Province, Vietnam, sold and administered falsified vaccines to 34 people. The offender had collected VND 63,628,000 (USD 2,742) before the police intervened. In order to give the impression of legality and of a sound vaccination process, the offender had asked victims to complete fake “vaccine injection” and “blood test” forms.

The fake vaccine contained either distilled water or, in some cases, an *antibiotic*, and was administered in 1 ml, 5 ml, and 6 ml syringes. The vials of alleged vaccine were kept in a medical case and preserved in a plastic cup with ice. Adults and babies alike received the fake vaccine. However, babies were not given the antibiotic, but water. The offender claimed that the vaccines were effective against the following viruses and diseases: COVID-19, strokes, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, meningitis, Japanese encephalitis, Rotavirus, influenza, measles, pneumococcus, petechial fever and cervical cancer (See point 2).



Counterfeit vaccines seized by police in Vietnam

## 2. Falsified COVID-19 vaccine: India

In September 2020, law enforcement officials arrested a 32-year-old man after a raid on his premises in the village of Rusuda, Western Odisha, India. There, authorities found glass bottles with labels marked “COVID-19 vaccine,” packaging materials, various powders, and other chemical substances, as well as medicines used to treat infertility. The man refused to reveal the composition of his alleged vaccine, calling it “top secret.”

The raid occurred after the offender sent an e-mail to the regulatory agency asking for a licence to sell the substances that he called a “vaccine,” although he had no formal medical qualification. Although the falsified products were intended for public distribution, police stopped the production operation before any of the illicit substance was sold.

These types of threat (described under points 1 and 2) constitute an immediate danger to anyone who is injected with unidentified substances, potentially causing health issues and further physical harm. Additionally, these cases constitute a threat to the general public because they create the false belief that the persons in question have been immunized against a disease, which in fact contributes to the spread of the disease. It is therefore strongly recommended that law enforcement supports health prevention measures in relation to counterfeit/falsified vaccines.

### 3. Stolen influenza vaccine: Mexico

On 12 October 2020, a truck belonging to the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) was robbed by unknown persons who stole 10,100 doses of an influenza vaccine called Vaxigrip® f.f suspension, and manufactured by Sanofi Pasteur. The stolen items have the health registration number 478M96 SSA, batch number U3J491V, and an expiration date of June 2021. The vaccine, produced exclusively for the use of the public health sector, was intended for active immunization against influenza A and B viruses. The vaccines were stolen while in transit for the national influenza vaccination campaign undertaken by the IMSS. These vaccines were not available for private sale or supply in Mexico, and were only distributed and administered as part of a public vaccination campaign.

This type of case represents a direct and physical threat to the legal supply chain, because it hinders immunization campaigns carried out by the competent authorities and also threatens the life and health of individuals who might receive these stolen vaccines after they have been compromised or rendered ineffective because of improper transportation.

Policing guidelines on the safeguarding of legitimate supply chains and a detailed Threat Assessment are to follow.

### 4. COVID-19 vaccine - illicit online advertisement: Singapore

In November 2020, Singaporean authorities were alerted to an advertisement placed on a news website, showing a picture of a vaccine, apparently sold by a private company. So far, no such vaccine has been authorized in Singapore which makes any online sale of this type of product illegal.



Advertisement for vaccine for sale online

This case is typical of illicit online sales of medical products, which are diverted from the legal supply chain and legal authorization processes and for which the safety cannot be guaranteed, thereby posing a direct threat to human life and health. We must aim to detect and prevent this illegal online activity.

### 5. COVID-19 vaccine advertisements on the Darknet

Since March 2020, unknown persons have posted alleged vaccine sales on several Darknet marketplaces, with payment requested in cryptocurrencies, which represents a serious risk for the public, not only because the origin of these products (if they even exist) cannot be traced, but also in terms of cyberthreats and financial crime, especially malware and non-delivery fraud respectively.

There is also a significant risk of personal identifiable information, including health and social security details, being stolen and then sold or used to carry out other profitable activities by the threat actor. Online marketplaces present opportunities for criminals to distribute falsified/counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines, while posing serious personal security risks.

Other > Drug Test Kits , Self Defense , Other

### GET CORONA VIRUS VACCINE OVERNIGHT DELIVERY

Vendor: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A vaccine against the novel coronavirus is under urgent development as the number of people infected with COVID-19 increases. Scientists around the globe are racing to develop a vaccine but have warned it is not likely one will be available for mass distribution before 2021.

[REDACTED]

Price: \$ 0.064483 ( 400.00000000 USD )



Example of an advertisement posted on a Darknet marketplace in April 2020


### HELLO buy fast... CORONA-VIRUS VACCINE. is out now

Vendor: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

As they race to test an experimental coronavirus vaccine, researchers aren't waiting to see how well it prevents infection in animals.. now its probably out for humans and animals.. and has been fully tested an confirmed...

FOR FASTER RESPONDS AND MORE INFO'S ABOUT PRODUCT .. CONTACT



Example of an advertisement posted on a Darknet marketplace in September 2020

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

IN ORDER TO ADDRESS THIS THREAT, INTERPOL HAS STARTED OPERATION VIGILANT INTERDICTION, WHICH AIMS TO TARGET ALL CRIME ASSOCIATED WITH ILLICIT VACCINES.

**Points of contact:** INTERPOL Illicit Goods and Global Health Programme  
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### Recommended precautionary action:

We strongly recommend that you circulate this Orange Notice to your country's law enforcement bodies to alert them about these modus operandi, to allow them to take whatever preventive and precautionary measures they deem necessary. All recipients are strongly encouraged to share any data they may have concerning these threats.

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