

Police: Sicily's Mafia still a force

by UPI

PALERMO, Italy -- Italian police who busted up an alleged major cocaine and marijuana ring Wednesday said Sicily's Cosa Nostra remains a power in global drug trafficking. About 300 police officers, abetted by several helicopters and drug-sniffing dogs, rounded up about 40 suspects across Italy, ANSA reported. Investigators allege the Palermo drug ring had imported more than 220 pounds of drugs annually with a street value of about \$117 million, the Italian news agency reported. Authorities said the arrests show Italian drug dealers have not been replaced by the "Ndrangheta" drug trafficking operations of Columbia and Peru. "This operation shows that Cosa Nostra is still a major player in drugs," said Carlo Vizzini of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. "Sicily is becoming, once again, a key crossroads for the international drugs trade." Recent estimates suggest the Italian Mafia accounts for about 7 percent of the country's gross domestic product, ANSA said.

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