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Albania: Availability of fraudulent identity documents, including incidents where individuals were detained for using these false documents and government measures designed to address this situation (2005-September 2006)

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Government and media sources from 2005 and 2006 report on the availability of false identity documents in Albania, including forged travel documentation such as passports and visas (US 18 Jan. 2005; *ibid.* 3 June 2005; *ibid.* 14 Aug. 2006; AP 18 Sept. 2006). In particular, the news reports focus on the detection and seizure of false travel documents linking the use of false documents to illegal human-trafficking activities involving citizens trying to leave Albania (ATA 7 Oct. 2005; *Rilindja Demokratike* 21 Feb. 2006).

In January 2005, police agents of the economic and financial crimes unit at Rinas Airport arrested an individual, whose nationality was not disclosed, for using a "forged Greek identification card and a forged Macedonian visa in his attempt to get to the West" (US 18 Jan. 2005). Other news items from January 2005 reported on the suspected complicity of an Albanian border official in allowing illegal migrants with false documents to pass through the Port of Vlore immigration checkpoint (*ibid.* 25 Jan. 2005). In a separate incident, an individual from Sherishti, Vlore who was returning from abroad was detained by Tirana police officers for a number of offences he had committed earlier; it was also discovered that he had been using false travel documentation to enter and exit Albania to avoid arrest (*ibid.*).

A February 2005 news article reported on the arrests of two individuals in separate incidents in Rinas and Kavaje for using falsified travel documents (US 21 Feb. 2005). The Kavaje resident was reportedly arrested for "submitting a falsified personal identification certificate with his passport" (*ibid.*). A resident of Libofsha, Fier was detained by Rinas police before being handed over to the Tirana Directorate of Police where officers from the economic and financial crimes police unit arrested him for attempting to travel to Italy with a false Italian stay permit (*ibid.*).

In June 2005, the United States' Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) reported on the May closure of a passport forgery operation by police in Tirana (US 3 June 2005). A resident of Tirana was charged with falsifying Albanian and international "official" documents following three months of surveillance by the economic crimes unit (*ibid.*). The passports were reportedly being sold for 1,000 Euros (EUR) [approximately