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Police operation targets “prostitutes” in Playa de Palma: See Page Eight



Safebreaking gang arrested at sea: Inside

THE GREAT ESCAPE

- Balearics are the **top holiday destination for Britons** over the Bank Holiday weekend.
- Almost **two million British tourists** will be heading overseas.
- Palma airport **prepares to welcome 550,000 passengers**. See Page Three Inside.



Top spot for the British this weekend.



Spain police raid offices of foundation linked to Catalan ruling party

Barcelona.— Spain’s Civil Guard raided the offices of a think tank linked to the governing party in independence-minded Catalonia yesterday, the region’s highest court said, as part of a judicial investigation into suspected corruption.

The search by the national military police force came one month before a regional vote in Catalonia, Spain’s richest area, that separatists bill as a proxy vote on independence. The election is likely to provoke renewed tension between the region and the national government. Magistrates are investigating whether the Fundacio CatDem funnelled illegal payments related to building contracts to Convergencia Demo-

cratica de Catalunya (CDC), the region’s pro-secessionist ruling party.

Police later searched the office of the think tank’s administrator, which is located in the headquarters of the CDC, a party spokeswoman said.

“We deny that there have been any illegal payments,” said Josep Rull, a spokesman for CDC, who confirmed the details of the raid and said it was politically motivated. “We are very accustomed to this kind of action being taken for political reasons,” he told reporters. “But we have no problem handing over the information. Everything here is clear, clean and transparent.”

Pro-independence Catalan parties have agreed to present a joint list of candidates in the 27 September regional ballot. They say victory would lead to a “road map” to independence within 18 months. Spain’s deputy prime minister, Soraya Saenz de Santamaria, told reporters after the weekly cabinet meeting the judiciary acted regardless of political parties or electoral dates.

Jordi Pujol, a Catalan regional head for more than a decade and a proponent of independence, admitted last year that he had avoided paying tax on an inherited fortune he stashed outside Spain. The judicial investigation of his case was announced a few months before a non-binding referendum on independence which the Madrid government opposed.

Massive police operation ahead of elections.