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CEMENT MIXER DRUG GANG JAILED

Photographs and footage available

A network of career criminals who were planning to flood the streets with drugs have been jailed for a total of over 44 years following a joint operation between UK and overseas law enforcement agencies.

The quantities of drugs they were going to import were so large they bought an industrial cement mixer to help them bulk the drugs with cutting agents.

Anthony Spencer, aged 61, of Keresley, Coventry, who has been in and out of prison for over 40 years for drugs, firearms, fraud and theft, was head of the 15-strong network. He was jailed again today for another five years three months at Birmingham Crown Court after pleading guilty to conspiracies to supply and import amphetamine and cannabis.

The Serious Organised Crime Agency worked jointly with Warwickshire Police, West Midlands Police and the Dutch Police to dismantle the entire network.

Spencer and his criminal associates were under surveillance for months. Officers watched meetings at locations in Coventry, Sheffield, Kent and Amsterdam. They saw the gang burying purpose-built safes which could store up to 140 kilos of drugs, filmed a cash handover, and watched as drugs changed hands.

Intelligence sharing with the Dutch Police led to the discovery of a farm in Zwanenburg, Amsterdam, which was being used as a drugs warehouse, and a flat in Ijplein, Amsterdam, that officers described as 'an Aladdin's cave' of drugs paraphernalia, including a pill making machine. Class A and class B drugs were also recovered.

Spencer and the network's Dutch contingent were arrested in January 2009 when a team of heavily armed officers used a bulldozer to get into the farm. One hundred kilos of amphetamine and fifty kilos of cannabis were seized. Spencer was extradited to the UK in April 2009. At this point, officers moved in to arrest the UK end of the operation.

They recovered the cement mixer from a caravan in Coventry. Four buried safes were found - two at Spencer's home, one at a derelict site at Castle Road, Nuneaton, and one in the garden of a house in Synkere Close, Coventry.

Evidence indicates that the gang was planning to significantly increase the scale of their operation. Early success in bringing amphetamine and cannabis into the UK had led to considerable investment in the logistics for transporting, storing and distributing

much larger quantities of all classes of drugs. At the time of Spencer's arrest, he was talking about importing two to three loads a week.

SOCA Deputy Director Andy Sellers said:

"These are career criminals who wanted to make a lot of money through drug trafficking with no regard for the harm they would cause communities and individuals. They spent a long time planning how they were going to flood the UK with vast quantities of drugs but we were one step ahead of them. We were watching their every move and the evidence obtained was so strong they had no choice but to plead guilty".

Seven members of Spencer's network, all of whom have previous convictions, pleaded guilty to a mixture of conspiracy to supply and import offences and were sentenced today as well:

Christopher Pollock, 37, of Exhall, Coventry, was a trusted member of Spencer's network. He was involved in organising the delivery of drugs and controlled some of the stash locations. Pollock was seen visiting Spencer's home address on a daily basis and at numerous meetings with other network members and dealers. He was jailed for three years three months. Upon completion of his sentence, Pollock will be extradited to Spain to serve a six-year sentence for drug trafficking.

Jogendranath Rajcoomar, 57, of Exhall, Coventry, who was a former prison governor, provided financial and logistical support for the network. He made large cash deposits into his accounts to fund Spencer's travel to and from Holland. One of the safes was found in his garden. A large number of mobile phones and SIM cards were also recovered. Sentenced to three years nine months.

Sunil Rajcoomar, 25, of no fixed abode, is Jogendranath's son and is also from the Coventry area. He was involved in the movement and stashing of drugs in the UK and Holland. After receiving Western Union payments from his father, he paid a month's rent on the farm being used in Amsterdam. He was regularly seen with Spencer. Sentenced to two years.

Michael McGlinchey, 58, of Coventry, had a long association with Spencer and was a trusted member of his network. He drove cars to Amsterdam for Spencer to use, booked travel, and was seen at a number of meetings. During a search of his address officers recovered five kilos of cannabis. Sentenced to three years two months.

John Mitchell, 40, of Greenhithe, Kent, was used by Spencer because of his links to the transport industry. He was going to make arrangements for lorry drivers to bring Spencer's drugs into the UK. Officers recovered two kilos of amphetamine from a freezer in an outhouse at his home. Sentenced to four years three months.

Mark Adderley, 52, of Harborne, Birmingham, was a close associate of Spencer and was involved in the importation of controlled drugs. He travelled with Spencer to Amsterdam and met him on numerous occasions. Sentenced to three years nine months.

Stephen Lismore, 41, of Grantham, Lincolnshire, had known Spencer for a number of years. He transported drugs for the network and was seen handing a box containing five kilos of amphetamine to a man called Thomas Andrews at a meeting in Sheffield. The drugs were later seized. Sentenced to three years two months.

The Dutch Police prosecuted five members of the network who were jailed for a total of 15 years. Two of these were British nationals from Coventry who were living in Amsterdam – Simon Ford and David Woodings.

Thomas Andrews who received the five kilos of amphetamine from Lismore pleaded guilty to possession of amphetamine with intent to supply. He is being dealt with by South Yorkshire Police and will be sentenced at a later date. The fifteenth member of the network is due to stand trial in June for money laundering offences.

During the investigation officers found numerous copies of a comic book publication entitled 'Him and Hers Smuggling Vacation', which was written by Spencer's son, and credited Spencer as the crime consultant. Copies also appeared at nearly every location where search warrants were executed as well as in the box of amphetamine Lismore delivered to Andrews in Sheffield.

Deputy Director Andy Sellers added: "The success of this operation is down to joint working with police forces here and overseas. SOCA is committed to tackling drug trafficking and we will continue to work with our partners to dismantle criminal networks. Our message to other criminals is a simple one - if you come onto SOCA's radar, you stay on it for life."

Detective Superintendent Noel McMenamin, from Warwickshire Police, said: "These convicted individuals were members of an organised crime group intent on importing large amounts of controlled drugs into the UK. This protracted and complex investigation demonstrates how effectively Warwickshire Police operate with our partner agencies, on a regional, national and international basis, to protect our communities from harm.

"Further action to recover their criminal assets will now take place under the Proceeds of Crime act. This investigation is just one example of a number of very successful operations carried out by the Warwickshire Police Serious and Organised Crime Team, in collaboration with SOCA and West Midlands Police, and reflects our continued commitment to deter and detect serious and organised crime."

Notes to Editors

1. Pictures of all the criminals, the drugs, the warehouse in Holland, the cement mixer, the safes and the comic book are all available by contacting the SOCA Press Office on 0870 268 8100.

For more information contact the SOCA press office on 0870 268 8100