

# International drug trafficking a drug officers perspective

## Abstract

Those who traffic controlled drugs could be considered to be the scourge of modern society, the substances are many and varied, but the methods remain very similar almost globally. Because of this analogy it is prudent to examine the trade, methods and routes of what could be considered to be the two main Class A controlled drugs globally, Heroin and Cocaine. The roles of both the drug traffickers and law enforcement will also be explored to give a greater understanding of the roles and procedures undertaken by those on both sides of the law.

**Keywords:** drug trafficking, heroin, cocaine, globally controlled drugs law enforcement

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**Andrew O'Hagan**

School of Science & Technology, Nottingham Trent University,  
United Kingdom

**Correspondence:** Andrew O'Hagan, School of Science & Technology, Nottingham Trent University, Erasmus Darwin, Room 230, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Lane, Nottingham NG11 8NS, UK, Tel 01158483153, Email [andrew.ohagan@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.ohagan@ntu.ac.uk)

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## Introduction

### Heroin

Heroin has been aptly described by law enforcement and abusers of the drug alike, as the 'filthiest drug ever discovered' and 'you will sell you own grandmother for the next fix'. The street names afforded to the substance would tend to reinforce this view, skag, smack, shit, mud and junk to name but a few. The drug is administered by two methods, smoking or injection, the former being referred to as 'tooting' or 'Chasing the dragon' and the latter 'shooting up and 'digging'. It matters not which method of delivery is preferred by the user, the drug is so ferociously addictive that a person can fall victim to its addictive properties after using only once.

When smoked the preferred method is to take a piece of common kitchen foil, approximately 200mm x 100mm, this is the base or the run. The drug which is in a powder form will then be placed on the foil and heated from below with the use of a cigarette lighter. As the drug starts to melt it emits a vapour that is inhaled by placing a tube in the mouth, this could be the body of a biro pen, a straw or even just a piece of foil rolled up.

Heroin is not water soluble, so in order to inject the substance has to be mixed with an acid based medium such as citric acid, vinegar and jiff lemon. A small amount of the drug will be placed on a spoon mixed with the citric acid and then heated from below with the use of a cigarette lighter. As the substance heats the heroin reacts with the citric acid and starts to boil. A cigarette filter is then placed in the liquid in order to filter out any lumps, the liquid is then drawn through the filter into a hypodermic syringe. The drug is then injected into a convenient vein in order to enter the blood stream; this could be in the arm, in-between the fingers or the groin area, indeed, any site that the user can find a vein will be used.

It is said that the first hit gives the user a feeling of immense peace and wellbeing, "It's like being wrapped up all cozy in front of a log fire in your favorite fluffy blanket," one addict stated. However, this feeling soon subsides as the addiction takes hold, the user will never achieve the feeling provided by the first hit ever again and will no doubt spend the foreseeable future attempting to achieve the unachievable. Another user who had been clean for a year stated "I spent 14 years begging on the streets, eating out of bins, almost dying from infections and having hell inside my skull."<sup>1</sup>

Heroin is available in varying deal sizes on the streets of the United Kingdom in order to meet the needs and means of a cross section of abusers. In order to put the deal sizes into perspective it is worthy of mention that those who traffic drugs will use both imperial and metric measures when presenting weights for sale. These range from the Kilo down to the ounce (28.35grams) other weights include an eighth (3.5grams) commonly referred to as a Henry and a tenth or sixteenth of an ounce.

The most popular deal size is 0.1 gram (point or bag) which can be purchased on the streets of the United Kingdom for £10, a regular user could be expected to use between five and ten deals (approx one gram) in a day although one gram a day could be considered heavy use.

There are three main heroin producers in the world with Afghanistan accounting for in the region of 75% which goes a long way to supporting almost half of the country's economy, in the recent past, the consumption and annual global usage of heroin was in the region of 430 - 450 tons of which it is estimated that 18-23tonnes were destined for the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> The other two areas are firstly the golden triangle (Myanmar, Burma and Laos) and more recently but to a lesser degree Mexico now supplying the United States.<sup>2</sup> The majority of Heroin consumed in the United Kingdom and indeed western Europe is transported via the varying trafficking routes and is ready for onward profitable supply to the end users on its arrival.<sup>3</sup> By far the most popular route is from Afghanistan through to Iran using the major land border crossings, heroin, is clearly the major controlled substance trafficked by this overland method. Camels are often used, carrying large loads, they are sent on their way often unsupervised because they are able to travel vast distances unsupported in extremely high temperatures. Once in Iran the drug is then moved onwards over the boarder to Turkey from where it will continue using the Balkans and onwards to Western Europe. This is the route of choice in the majority of cases because it is the shortest, reducing travel time and of course maximising profit, organised crime groups have a vice like grip on this route because of the high profit markets, including Germany, France and The Netherlands all providing easy access to the United Kingdom. The traffickers will despatch vast amounts of the drugs by varying modes of transport with the expectation that only relatively small amounts will get to the final destination. However, the consignments that do slip the security nets do represent vast profits for the traffickers, because generally they will be conjoined in and around

the final destination. The importance of Turkey as a drug trafficking base, cannot be underestimated, this view is reinforced by a steady increase in heroin seizures since the expansion of boarder force controls. These special measures have included the use of specialist officers together with High tech scanners and specially trained drug dogs, however, in contrast once the drugs have entered Turkey, the exit routes into the Balkan countries have a far lower level of security reducing the risks to the traffickers. It is believed that this could be due to the low employment and poverty in the border areas, which, coupled with minimal customs control and open borders also allows the transport of the chemicals required for heroin refining to supply clandestine laboratories.<sup>1</sup>

It is worthy of note that although believed to be the 'route of choice' the Balkans is not the only route there are many others, which employ, land, sea and air modes of transport; the Northern route from Afghanistan passing through central Asia in the direction of Russia destined for Germany, Bulgaria and Scandinavia is worthy of mention. However, because of the distances involved and of course the expense of air and sea travel together with what is considered to be poor organisation, a low percentage of the drug is transported via this route. This is in stark contrast to the comparatively primitive methods employed by the local traffickers in Afghanistan, which consist of trekking long distances on foot and also the use of camels and donkeys. The donkey and camel trains are loaded with vast amounts of heroin and because of the animal's familiarity with the route they are sent on their way often unaccompanied reducing the risk to the traffickers of detection and apprehension by the authorities. However, this method is not without its problems, the authorities do appear to have a high success rate in relation to the interception of the animal trains whilst still inside Afghanistan territory.<sup>4</sup> Countries such as Bulgaria and Romania, accepted re-located organised crime groups with all the expertise they provided, but after the Romanian authorities increased the boarder control these groups are now favouring the other EU Schengen area. This area does not have any boarder control, which allows freedom of movement throughout member states counteracting the Romanian investment allowing easy access to Poland, Germany and Norway.<sup>5</sup>

After negotiating the European drug trafficking routes, with the packages passing through the many hands of the varying organized crime groups, large quantities will pass through Belgium and Holland inventively bound for the lucrative United Kingdom market. Lucrative, indeed it can be considered to be, because of the figure of £10.7 imported annually into the United Kingdom published by the National Crime Agency. The street prices mentioned above are considered to be amongst the highest within Western Europe.<sup>6,7</sup>

## Cocaine

Cocaine is a class A controlled drug in the United Kingdom with similar enforceable classifications worldwide. Colombia, Bolivia and Peru produce the majority of the world's cocaine, refining via a systematic chemical process from the leaf of the coca plant. A natural product cocaine can be produced from the coca plant which is a species of the *Erythroxylon* genus within 18 months of planting with the bushy plants growing to eight feet in height. It is not uncommon for a mature bush to have a life span of in the region of 40 years, which represents a considerable yield in leaf which could easily convert to as much as 1.2% of their weight in cocaine. These leaves are known to only contain a very small amount of cocaine alkaloid illustrating why such vast amounts are required to produce the concentrated cocaine. As much as 112 kilograms of leave matter can be required in order to produce on kilogram of actual cocaine.<sup>8</sup> One of the main

problems encountered during the production stage is the speed with which the harvested leaves lose the active cocaine ingredient making it imperative that this leaf matter is processed as soon as possible. The production of the cocaine from the leaf involves soaking in kerosene or petrol together with other solvents. The leaves are often placed in large vats and mixed with the chemicals by 'treading' in bare feet, rather like the production of wine in some countries. The final solution is then filtered making a thick paste or base product containing in the region of 40-50% cocaine alkaloid. The next stage being final refining into cocaine powder by adding hydrochloric acid to produce cocaine hydrochloride, a process usually undertaken in the source country, but usually away from the production areas to avoid detection. The production process, is overseen from start to finish by the para military drug cartel organisation who will often construct refinery laboratory's in heavily guarded compounds often adjoining their places of residence.<sup>8</sup>

Cocaine imported into the UK is generally between 50% and 89% pure and is in the form of a thick, damp, off-white paste; a liquid paste or a white or cream coloured powder pressed in blocks. As with cannabis, blocks of cocaine are often stamped with a logo. These logos are impressed on the blocks by the producers in South America. Their purpose is to identify the producing laboratory to the South American trafficker and further, to act as a guarantee of quality. Once the cocaine has reached its destination however, the logo becomes immaterial because further adulterants are added to the product to maximise profits.<sup>8</sup>

Users may ingest cocaine in several ways, although the most common, is to sniff it forcefully up the nose—"snorting". At consumer level, cocaine is commonly encountered with purity levels as low as 10%. This low a level of purity would appear to be sufficient to satisfy consumer demand for quality.

Given this fact, it is clear to see that cocaine is a drug that is vulnerable to adulteration. This means that it can be 'cut' with other non-controlled substances in order to bulk its mass and increase profit for the suppliers. If 1kg containing cocaine with a purity of 70% is adulterated by adding 1kg of adulterant, the trafficker has 2kg of cocaine at a purity that will double the trafficker's profit and still satisfy consumer demand.

This consumer demand has a clear influence on the main cocaine trafficking routes, previously the Unites States was thought to be the main arterial route used, the cocaine. However, the Columbian cartels, seemed to lose their grip on this market as the Mexican Cartels began to dominate this market, in view of this the bulk of cocaine destined for Western Europe is trafficked through the Caribbean and onwards with the use of air and sea transportation. The main European transport hubs being Spain and in particular Holland because of the easy access to both countries and the maritime communication routes. One of the largest markets for Cocaine in Europe is the United Kingdom, the product being easily imported via a variety of methods from Spain, Holland and Jamaica and other Caribbean islands.<sup>8</sup>

In the Caribbean, a transshipment point for trafficking cocaine to Europe, it is possible to buy cocaine for £4000 per kilo. It is possible, to purchase a kilo of cocaine in Spain for approximately £15,000. It is easy to see the vast profits involved when the drug can be purchased for as little as £900 per kilo in the countries of origin. Cocaine, like Heroin is available in varying deal sizes on the streets of the United Kingdom in order to meet the needs and means of the market place. As with Heroin and indeed all other controlled substances that those who traffic drugs will use both imperial and metric measures when presenting weights for sale. These range from the Kilo down to the

ounce (28.35 grams) other weights include an eighth (3.5grams) commonly referred to as a Henry and a tenth or sixteenth of an ounce. The most popular deal size in relation to cocaine 1 gram which can be purchased in the United Kingdom for prices ranging from £40 to as high as £100 per deal depending on the street level purity, a regular user could be expected to use as much as five or six grams in a session but this would be considered to be excessive heavy use.

The methods of trafficking and concealment are varied and getting more and more sophisticated, both private and commercial vessels were for many years the mode of transport of choice for the cartels. In recent times, both fully and semi-submersible vessels have been used to traffic the cocaine by sea, but by far the most successful mode of transport by sea is the 'Picada' or go-fast boat. The cartels will dispatch numerous vessels at a time being well aware that the authorities do not have the resources to intercept every consignment. One favoured route is by sea across the Gulf of Paris between Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago, the distance being 19 kilometres at the Dragons mouth in the north and 14 kilometres at the Serpents mouth in the south. One on the island the drugs are concealed and then moved on to other destinations in the supply chain. As previously stated in the case of Heroin, body packing is a common method used when smuggling by air, but the methods are many and varied. If an item has a cavity it is possible to conceal cocaine. From luggage to motor parts, all are popular ways of concealment, however, cocaine is often transported in vast quantities concealed in all manner of methods.<sup>8</sup>

## Discussion

### Worldwide trafficking methods

The trafficking methods employed for the drugs bound for the United Kingdom are many and varied and consist of trafficking via cargo container ships, mailing of packages containing concealed drugs, camouflaged in luggage and more drastically body packing. All of these methods are becoming increasingly more difficult to detect, especially since the inception of the European Union which provides many cultural links to the areas producing and trafficking the drugs. Organized crime groups are becoming increasingly more skillful, arranging and controlling the imports making detection extremely difficult. Because of the vast resources owned by these groups, they are able to conceal the drugs in the linings of suitcases and handbags at the point of manufacture on the factory production lines. They are able to conceal the drugs in buttons, clothing, paintings, sweets, fruit and even wheelchair seats, indeed, where ever a cavity is to be found the drugs will be hidden, especially inside motor cars and Lorries on either ferries or by land via the channel tunnel. In some extreme cases, the drugs have been placed inside the stomachs of pet dogs and cats. Very well organized and high-level traffickers have been known to change the chemical structure of the drug and in particular cocaine, by suspending it in a chemical complex. This method serves to mask the cocaine and makes detection by conventional field testing almost impossible. Once in the country of destination, the cocaine is extracted again by chemical process and made ready for onward sale and distribution.

### Body packing and stuffing

By far the most extreme and dangerous method is that of body packing and body stuffing, a single person, known as a drug mule will swallow of stuff up to and in excess of 1kg of drugs in small packets weighing 8-10g, each of which if punctured would be fatal to the carrier. The term "stuffers and swallowers" refers to the individuals who smuggle drugs by concealing them internally. A "swallower" is a person who has "swallowed" a number of packages,

usually containing Class A drugs. (There have been instances of high denomination paper money being rolled into small balls, wrapped up into pellets, and swallowed).

The "swallower" will be met by either a representative of the supplying organisation, or a local representative of the purchasing organisation, in the country from where the drugs are being smuggled from. This representative will have the packages to be swallowed. It is most likely that the representative will meet the swallower at their hotel, and they will go to the swallowers room, or that the swallower will be taken to another private place. The "swallower" will then begin the process by taking a substance that will prevent them from defecating for 1-3 days. This will enable them to contain the packages within their person for the duration of their journey, and through Customs controls. They will then begin to swallow the packages one at a time, slowly ingesting the package to allow it to settle into their stomach/intestine. It has been known for the last package swallowed to be of a different colour to the other packages. This acts as an indicator that all the packages have passed through the courier.

This "swallowing" process will occur 1-2 days before travel is due to take place. The "swallower" will usually be watched, or will be in the presence of, a member of the organisation supplying the drugs/organisation purchasing the drugs, to ensure that all of the packages that can be swallowed are swallowed. This person can also be there to ensure that the "swallower" does not "pocket" packages for themselves, or decides that they do not want to go through with the attempted smuggling operation. The subject will lubricate the throat with petroleum jelly and start to swallow each packet, which consists of an egg shaped solid plug of heroin which is wrapped in a condom and cling film. As the packages are swallowed it becomes more difficult and they will often employ the services of another person or the representative who will help to push the packages down the throat into the stomach.

Once the packages have been swallowed, and have settled, the "swallower" will be ready to travel. It is commonly found that "swallowers" are taken to the point of departure by either the supplying organisation or a local representative of the purchasing organisation. This behaviour suggests that the organisation is ensuring that the "swallower" does not attempt to get rid of the packages, fails to go to the point of departure, or hands themselves over to local law enforcement. It could be described in terms of "escorting the goods".

At this stage, it is not unusual for contact to be made with the purchasers informing them that the goods are on their way. The "swallower" will then embark on their journey. Prior arrangements may have been made for the "swallower" to be met on their arrival; this is suggestive of the purchasing organisation ensuring that the "swallower" still has the packages, and that they will not have an opportunity to get rid of them. However, the "swallower" may have instructions as to what steps to take upon arrival e.g. to call a given telephone number and to await instructions. The "swallower" is then taken to a safe premise where, over time, all the packages should pass naturally through the body, and are retrieved.

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In terms of the overall profit being made from the drugs being sold in the United Kingdom, the “swallower” receives a very small fee, which can be as little as £500 per journey, the promise of a place to stay and work in the United Kingdom, or the threat of violence to the family of the drug mule.

However, it must be borne in mind that dependent upon the “swallowers” socio/economic background, and the economy of the country they come from, this fee may in real terms be rather substantial. Where this person sits in the hierarchy of a drug smuggling organisation is at the very bottom. They are the person who is at risk from the packages leaking whilst being concealed internally – this results in death in the majority of such incidents. They are also the person who faces a prison term if discovered to be carrying drugs, either at the point of departure to the United Kingdom, or upon arrival into the United Kingdom. This method of concealment is employed for all manner of substances, but primarily Heroin and Cocaine

### Drug trafficking industry overview

As previously mentioned the trafficking is controlled by organized crime groups operating throughout the United Kingdom, by virtue of the codes of silence traditionally employed by these groups detection is very difficult for law enforcement. These groups have a tried and tested structure, very similar to the Italian Mafia, with a clear hierarchical role for each of the members, they will also be involved in all manner of criminality from bank robbery to extortion and are often referred to as Cartels. These Cartels are all aware of the other groups, who although considered to be rivals, will be tolerated with a certain degree of cooperation in order to minimise detection and of course maximise profits. Their control over their employees will be exerted by the use of violence, putting those in fear diminishing the possibility of reports being made to the authorities.

Trafficking controlled drugs is a very lucrative business and operates with the same principles that legal businesses do. Its aim is

to make profits and in so doing it will structure its business to make it as effective as possible. Similar principles relating to profit apply to bulk purchase, repackaging and purchasing direct from source within both legal and illicit markets. Organised traffickers will often utilise opportunity through legitimate business particularly with regard to importation of controlled drugs into the UK.

The facilitation of trafficking drugs from the near continent into the UK is perceived as the greatest risk to any UK based trafficking group and as a result representative are often ‘sent’ to the country concerned. This has two effects; the first is to ensure a greater degree of control over transactions conducted abroad and secondly ensures a trusted contact as a go between. In terms of employment, it is common that groups frequently use relatives, friends or close associates for various tasks as this has an element of protection and success within its discipline.

UK groups will make contacts with other organised groups from countries all over the world in order to facilitate the movement of various controlled drugs. The more sophisticated the group, the wider the contact will be. The trade in controlled drugs does not follow the normal pattern of a legitimate business in so much as a legal process cannot be followed in order to recoup losses or obtain payment for goods supplied ‘laid on’ (the equivalent of supplied sale or return). Since all parties involved are criminals themselves there can often be problems in this area. If debts are not paid it is not uncommon for the party owed to use force, in some cases extreme force, to recover money or goods. Therefore, it is important to have a strategy for, and to be able to withstand losses within the organisation. These losses can be inflicted by Law Enforcement, other criminal groups or non-payment.

A sign of a well-structured and professional enterprise is the ability to withstand these problems when under attack and either money or drugs or both are being lost. This is much the same as if a well-known supermarket chain loses a load of produce compared to the effect that this same scenario would have on a smaller local business.

It is common for organized crime enterprises to build into their trafficking strategies a percentage of their shipments to be seized or stolen. Part of this strategy may be to diversify as it is uncommon for a criminal enterprise to specialise in one commodity particularly in the UK. Therefore, they tend to be far more entrepreneurial, taking advantage of any money-making opportunity that may present itself. It is also common for criminals involved in such a network to be involved in what appear to be legitimate businesses. These businesses will often be ‘cash rich’ in an effort to provide cover for the illegitimate profits. On an international basis, it would not be uncommon for that business to be more directly linked to the import / export industry.

### Drug trafficking – the roles within

A drug supply chain is generally made up in the following way: -

- a. Manufacturer or producer
- b. Global trafficker
- c. Continental distributor
- d. Importer
- e. National distributor
- f. Regional supplier
- g. Local supplier
- h. Street dealer

## Manufacturer or producer

Manufacturers of controlled drugs are more likely to have direct access to profit making opportunity than the farmers of natural crops, such as opium, coca and cannabis. Legitimate crops do not attract the prices of crops such as cannabis, coca or opium which the impoverished farmers grow in preference. However, the farmers are exploited and paid a fraction of their true value. A sequence of processes are then undertaken by a number of individuals who are again, paid a disproportionate wage in comparison to the profits earned by those persons who are members of organised criminal syndicates or 'cartels' (Global Traffickers) who control the activity.

## Global trafficker

The worldwide trafficking of controlled drugs is controlled by wealthy persons within highly organised crime syndicates with established infrastructures in many countries. The levels of profit are immense. Those within these syndicates would obviously obtain stock in substantial quantities at maximum discount. These 'cartels' then supply the commodity in very large consignments. In addition to having the ability to obtain the drugs from source they are able to control storage, haulage, shipping, security and couriers.

## Continental distributor

These distributors are again members of highly organised crime syndicates whose activities involve purchasing and storing drugs at regional locations where they are then sold to importers and exporters. This type of trafficking can be typically found in continental Europe and fuels the activities of those traffickers who have a direct impact on the United Kingdom.

## Importer

Importers of controlled drugs to the United Kingdom are also members of organised criminal enterprises and have their origins in many parts of the world as well as being established British nationals. Many importers deal in poly commodities but it is not unusual to encounter crime groups who specialise in a specific commodity. Methods of importation vary greatly according to the quantity of drugs involved. Couriers are employed for example, to smuggle smaller quantities of drugs that are often secreted internally or within luggage, clothing or disguised as another item such as shampoo. Larger quantities may be concealed within motor vehicles or, at the top end of the scale, very large concealments may be constructed in aircraft or shipping cargo. Profit margins continue to be very high although deductions for things such as transport costs, security and wages have to be considered.

## National distributor

These individuals form the customer base for the importers and purchase multi-kilo consignments which they distribute in similar multi-kilo 'deals' to persons lower down the supply chain within the United Kingdom. The profits attainable continue to be high, as drugs are purchased at the lowest wholesale price nationally.

## Regional suppliers

The lower down the supply chain you travel, the smaller the quantities and the higher the prices become. At this level it is common to find groups or individuals dealing in single kilo or low figure multi-kilo consignments. In the case of class A drugs the quantities may be reduced to multi-ounce packages. The commodity is transported around the country using all available transport routes and vehicles with the assistance of trusted couriers. Substantial profits can still

be achieved, which in the case of powder drugs can be increased by bulking the product with an adulterant thereby increasing its weight. This process is known colloquially as 'bashing', 'stamping' or 'cutting'. In the case of cocaine, profits can be increased by manufacturing 'crack' from the powder.

## Local suppliers

These groups almost certainly maximise their profit by increasing the quantity of their package of drugs by 'stamping on' their commodity as described above. They supply smaller quantities of drugs to the final group in the supply chain, the street dealer. Although they can't compete financially with persons higher up the supply chain, they often achieve a higher percentage level of profit by employing the method of bulking their drugs.

## Street dealers

These individuals represent the final part of the supply chain. Like local suppliers they also operate in localised areas. These persons will split their package into the smallest tradable quantity in the supply chain, often fractions of an ounce or even gram. At this level of supply, it is unlikely that the supplier would be able to adulterate the drug to increase its value, as this activity will almost certainly have been performed higher up the supply chain. The only realistic method of increasing the profit would be by division, packaging and a degree of deception by selling the drug below the purported weight. These dealers are often personally involved in drug abuse and by supplying to others; they are able to finance their own consumption. The profits made by street dealers are minimal but the impact of the sale of drugs to the end user is great. It is this figure, illustrating the final financial value of the commodity, which defines the *economic impact* of controlled drugs on the community.

## Cash in relation to drug trafficking

Legitimate business would tend to use the commercial banking system for obvious reasons; it is safe, transparent and lawful. In addition, by banking legitimately, considerable interest can be earned on the money deposited or business debts can more readily be addressed. Criminals obviously wish to conceal the financial benefit of their activity; they do this by ensuring that transactions are carried out almost entirely in cash or even in goods.

Large quantities of cash that are legitimate, are usually accompanied with items connecting it directly with one financial institution or other. For example, the notes are wrapped in paper bank wraps of £1000, the wraps being stamped with the bank details and date; or the money is accompanied by paying in slips indicating that the cash is to be paid into an account. This can often be contained within envelopes, either plain or bearing the bank details. It is also the worthy of note that bundles of legitimate money from financial institutions are generally of the same denomination.

Legitimate businesses move monies using the commercial banking system. The main reasons of course, are to ensure the security of the money, earn interest from investment and compliance with legislation.

Criminals will ensure the security of their monies primarily by employing very trusted members of their organisation to carry it and trying to make the commodity anonymous by concealing it in an everyday item such as carrier bags, sports holdalls or luggage. The chances are that a Securicor van driving along the road contains cash in transit but a male carrying a hold all along the High Street is very unlikely to attract attention.

Criminals bundle cash into readily identifiable amounts of money. In the case of drug dealers, this is done at all levels of the supply chain, as it is often the case that from street level upwards, drugs are often supplied 'on tick' or 'laid on'. That is to say, a dealer supplies drugs to a dealer at a level below or equal to him and waits until it is sold to be paid. It is common practice amongst members of the drugs fraternity to supply drugs without receiving payment at the time. Dealers bundle money in identifiable quantities for ease and to prevent them continually having to count it. They can count it once, store it and then when it is required to be paid, they can easily identify the amount they intend to pay.

Sterling notes of denominations up to and including £20 are bundled into amounts of £100. Most commonly, one note is used to wrap each £100 bundle. Ten such bundles are further grouped into bundles of £1000 and in the case of substantially larger amounts; these are further bundled into amounts of £5000. Twenty £50 notes normally form a bundle of £1000 with 19 notes being wrapped with the 20<sup>th</sup> note.

Criminals are not in the least bit fussy about whether they bundle money of the same denomination together. If they receive £100 in payment for a commodity, they will count it and if it is accurate, they will invariably leave it in that bundle because they know what it is. They will subsequently wait until they have nine similar bundles and make a further bundle of £1000 and so on.

Regional suppliers may, over a period of time, supply twenty kilos of cocaine to several local dealers 'on tick' they in turn supply that cocaine 'on tick' to several street dealers in 9oz quantities.

The street dealers sell their cocaine in deals, making their profit and then pay their suppliers in the cash they have set aside for that purpose. Bundled however they like. The local suppliers take the cash and count it but leaving it in the bundles, pay their suppliers who may then be in possession of as much as £560,000. This money will be in the bundles that were prepared at the bottom of the supply chain. There is no need for the drug trafficker to alter the substance of the money because it is not intended to enter the legitimate financial system in this form.

### The relevance of €500 currency notes

The overriding reason that controlled drugs are manufactured, and distributed is to make as much money in the form of profits as possible, this will ultimately be in the form of paper money. Clearly the cash assets will have to be moved, sometimes long distances in order to pay for the commodity purchased, this could be the controlled drug itself; or the adulterants that are used to maximise profits as bulking agents. A tried and tested method of moving the cash in Western Europe is by converting sterling into Euro currency. This is of great benefit to the trafficker seeking to launder the cash accumulated because of the weight and physical dimensions of the euro notes and in particular the €500.

€500 notes and £50, £20 and £10 sterling notes all weigh approximately 1 gram. Taking £200,000 cash seized, as an example, if cash was seized consisting of sterling currency notes of the above denominations.

If this cash was converted to Euros at the exchange rate of approximately €1.45/£, then one could expect to receive €290,000 in exchange. If this was in €500 notes then one would have a quantity of notes weighing approximately 580g or 20oz. £200,000 (cash seized) x 1.45 (€/£) = €290,000 ÷ €500 = 580.

This same quantity of cash if it consisted entirely of £50 notes would be a total of 4,000 notes. This quantity of cash would weigh approximately 4kg (9lb). £200,000 (cash seized) ÷ £50 = 4,000.

This same quantity of cash if it consisted entirely of £20 notes would be a total of 10,000 notes. This quantity of cash would weigh approximately 10kg (22lb). £200,000 (cash seized) ÷ £20 = 10,000.

This same quantity of cash if it consisted entirely of £10 notes would be a total of 20,000 notes. This quantity of cash would weigh approximately 20kg (44lb). £200,000 (cash seized) ÷ £10 = 20,000.

From the above simple calculations it can be seen that not only must the drug trafficker consider the actual controlled drug itself, but the cash rewards accumulated from the sale.

### The drug dealers tool kit

**Criminal Use of Telecommunications:** Mobile phones are almost an essential tool for a criminal who must command and control others i.e. couriers, associates etc or arrange meetings with dealers and/or customers. These meetings are commonly clandestine and organised to avoid detection from law enforcement agencies or criminal rivals. Criminals today have become ever more aware of the tactics of law enforcement agencies and the often-incriminating evidence that can be obtained from telephone billing records and indeed from the memory of the telephone when it is subsequently recovered.

Criminals at all levels employ tactics that are common to them all when it comes to communication; whether they are an international money launderer or drug trafficker transporting hundreds of thousands of pounds, or a street level drug dealer selling to the end user. The following is not an exhaustive list but they are, in my opinion the key issues.

### Unregistered none- contract phones

The use of "pay as you go" phones can be a convenient way to communicate without having to identify to law enforcement via the service provider, the registered subscriber of the phone. This again distances the caller from ownership of call data such as billing. The phones are commonly; either not registered; registered in false details or registered in the names and addresses of genuine but unsuspecting individuals, thereby breaking any evidential chain. The attraction of this type of phone as with other none contract phones is that they can be 'topped up' with the use of a voucher that can be purchased at numerous retail outlets. These can be purchased with cash and are untraceable, the purchaser will also, being aware of detection, usually chose a shop which has no CCTV. If enquiries are made by the law enforcement authorities the location of the purchase of the top up voucher can be established, so they are kept not to be captured on film.

### One deal/one person phone

A further development upon the "pay as you go" phone is the use of one phone to contact one person or to conduct one deal. As with "pay as you go", the advantage exists in that there is no evidential chain to the subscriber. Furthermore, the phone will only be used for the duration of the transaction or to talk to one person within it. It will then be discarded, breaking all links with the user or criminality concerned. This method is favoured by the regional suppliers who will purchase and register numerous sim cards as and when they need them and if they become compromised they will discard the sim and replace it with another. This enables them to continue business as before, they do, however, fall foul if the courier has a traceable telephone because of the volumes of calls around the time of the collection.

## Drug trafficking calculations - Dealer's lists or 'tick' lists

It is common practice amongst members of the drug fraternity to supply drugs without receiving payment at the time. This is popularly referred to by a number of slang terms including: 'laying on', 'on bail', or 'on tick'.

The relationship between supplier and customer is often important where this method is concerned. There is usually a high degree of trust between both parties indicating previous good business. One of the advantages to a customer of having drugs 'laid on' is that they can in-turn supply further down the chain, obtaining the monies for the commodity supplied. They can then pay the original supplier, keeping whatever profit they have made from their onward supply. As a strong degree of trust is needed, this method is seldom experienced from new customers and is often built up over a period of time.

This method of supply encourages people to keep lists often referred to as 'deal lists' or 'tick lists'. These usually comprise of names, nicknames, initials or a combination of all three, often included on these lists will be the quantity of the drug supplied and/or the amount of monies owed. These lists are often 'living documents' whereby the figures are crossed through and amended as the quantity/debt of the drug supplied increases or decreases. They will also be found to be calculations of profit, logistical costs and outlay in other words a form of ad hoc book keeping.

These lists will vary in sophistication according to both the author and the sophistication of the criminal enterprise. To the observer these lists will often appear to be a set of random calculations or lists of numbers and as such, all or parts of the lists may be indecipherable. Care must also be taken when interpreting these documents, as notations may be interspersed within more mundane documents such as shopping lists. Also it is commonplace for figures to be rounded up or down and for numbers to be shortened i.e. 22,000 to be written as 22 in a similar way to the way they are dealt with in everyday speech. It is only necessary for the author to be able to understand the content of the list as they alone are aware of the manner in which it has been written.

Numerous tactics have to be employed to combat this, inducements are given to those apprehended in order to obtain the necessary information, this could be anything from reduced prison sentences to cash payments. Covert human intelligence sources (informants) are also employed in order to obtain the necessary information, indeed law enforcement would find it very difficult to operate without the use of such resources.

It is clear that organised crime groups not only accumulate great wealth within their own organisations, but, come at a great cost to the United Kingdom's economy, this has been estimated to be in the

region of £20-£40 billion each year. A conservative estimate in recent times sets the number of UK organised crime groups at approximately 5,300 consisting of in the region of 35,000 active members. These groups are estimated to be responsible either directly or indirectly for as much as 50% of the crime taking place.<sup>1</sup>

Drug trafficking, led by the organised crime is constantly developing and evolving because of the vast network of contacts and associates throughout Europe and indeed the world. They have expanded into many diverse areas in order to launder the money forming networks all being controlled by high level organisation and a hierarchy that does appear to be un-touchable by law enforcement. Corruption at many levels is common place, but the war on controlled drugs continues and will continue making what appears to be very little impact.<sup>1</sup>

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