

Border Force stop £15 million of cocaine hitting streets

In the first incident, at around 6.40am on Sunday (6 September), officers stopped a Slovenian registered lorry which had arrived on a ferry from Calais carrying electronic equipment. They searched the vehicle and found 96 kilos of the drugs which had been hidden in a pallet and had a potential street value of around £4.3 million.

Shortly afterwards a second lorry, also Slovenian registered, was stopped and found to contain items removed from the first lorry to make room for the drugs. Both drivers were arrested and the investigation was referred to the National Crime Agency (NCA).

In the second incident, which happened at around 10am on the same day, Border Force officers stopped a British-registered coach which had also arrived on a ferry from Calais. They searched the vehicle, which was not carrying any passengers, and found 240 kilos of cocaine with a potential street value of around £11 million in a space behind the steps onto the coach. A 53-year-old British man, who was driving the vehicle, and a second man, also British, were arrested and the investigation referred to the NCA.

Chris Philp, Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts, said:

These were both excellent seizures and prevented a substantial amount of lethal Class A drugs from reaching the UK's streets.

Working with our partners at the NCA we will continue to do all we can to arrest and prosecute those involved in drug smuggling.

NCA regional head of investigations Andrea Wilson said:

These are 2 significant seizures of cocaine that have deprived criminal networks of commodity and, most importantly, potential profit. This is why this work at the border is so crucial.

The NCA is determined to do all we can with our partners like Border Force to cut the supply of drugs which make it to our streets, where they fuel violence and exploitation.

Bosnian nationals Miodrag Ivankovic, 44, and Mile Pajic, 45, both of no fixed UK address, were charged with the attempted importation of a Class A drug in relation to the first incident. They appeared at Folkestone Magistrates Court on Monday (7 September) and were remanded in custody until their next appearance at Canterbury Crown Court on 5 October.

Mark Tucker, 53, of Longshaw Street, Blackburn, Lancashire, and Christopher Bullows, 50, of Lord Street, St Helens, were charged with the attempted importation of a Class A drug in relation to the second incident. They appeared at Medway Magistrates Court yesterday (8 September) where they were remanded in custody until their next appearance at Canterbury Crown Court on 12 October.

Border Force officers use hi-tech search equipment to combat immigration crime and detect banned and restricted goods that smugglers attempt to bring into the country.