

Dover people smuggler jailed

A Romanian man who attempted to smuggle two Albanian nationals into the UK hidden in a specially adapted minibus has been jailed for more than two years.

On the evening of 5 May, Border Force officers at the Port of Dover stopped a Romanian registered minibus that had arrived on a ferry from Dunkirk.

The vehicle was being driven by Razvan-Iulian Petraru, 34, who was the only visible occupant.

The minibus had been split between a seated passenger area and a rear void – partitioned off by a wood panel – which was loaded with tyres.

An X-ray scan of the vehicle revealed two people hidden in a false roof concealment. The hiding space had been screwed in place and was just 25cm deep, leaving just enough room for the men to lie prostrate in the hiding space. There was no way the men could have accessed the void without assistance.

When removed from the vehicle the men both produced passports that identified them as Albanian nationals with no permission to be in the UK. Petraru was then arrested on suspicion of assisting unlawful immigration into the UK and the investigation was passed to officers from Immigration Enforcement's Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) team.

In subsequent interviews Petraru, of no fixed UK address, declined to answer any questions put to him by CFI officers.

On Monday, 8 June, at Canterbury Crown Court, Petraru admitted charges of assisting unlawful immigration to the UK. He was sentenced immediately to 27 months imprisonment.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Criminals like Petraru, who perpetrate heinous acts like this, have no consideration for the safety of the people they are smuggling – in this instance trapped inside a cramped partition with no means of independent escape.

The message is clear, if you are involved in immigration related criminality you will be caught and jailed.

The two Albanians found in the minibus are being dealt with in line with the immigration rules.

Anyone with information about suspected immigration abuse can contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 anonymously or [visit the Crimestoppers website](#).