

Press release: Charges in suspected people smuggling investigation

The operation targeted seven addresses in London and Kent aimed at dismantling a suspected organised crime group (OCG) believed to be involved in the facilitation of Georgian nationals into the UK through Ireland.

The investigation, which started in June 2017, is being led by Immigration Enforcement CFI in the UK and supported by the Joint Agency Task Force (JATF). The JATF comprises Immigration Enforcement, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) and other law enforcement partners. The task force enables cross-border cooperation across a range of policing areas, as well as intelligence sharing, which helps keep communities safe and secure.

The seven appeared at Uxbridge Magistrate's Court on Wednesday 27 June.

The following were each charged with conspiracy to facilitate illegal immigration:

- George Kupatadze, aged 43, of Windmill Street, Gravesend, DA12
- Gurami Shariashvili, aged 26, of Carlton Avenue, Bedfont, TW14
- Givi Shariashvili, aged 44, of New Road, Bedfont, TW14
- Mikheil Tchotashvili, aged 34, of Market Street, Newham, E6
- Leri Mgaloblishvili, aged 45, of Talbot House, Ladbroke Crescent, W11

Ilia Diasamidze, aged 34, of Lewisham High Street, SE13, was charged with assisting unlawful immigration. Sidonia Gulbani, aged 26, of Market Street, Newham, E6, was charged with identity document offences.

They have all been remanded in custody to appear at Isleworth Crown Court on 25 July 2018.

Deputy Director Dave Magrath, from Immigration Enforcement CFI said:

Our investigation is targeting an organised network suspected of being involved in a systematic attempt to help individuals evade the UK's immigration controls.

We have been working closely with the PSNI in Northern Ireland and the GNIB in the Republic of Ireland and that vital co-operation will continue as the investigation proceeds with the evidence we have seized today.

Detective Chief Superintendent David Dowling of the Garda National Immigration Bureau said:

This is an example of the continued cooperation between the relevant agencies in our efforts to target all types of criminal activity, including illegal immigration in both jurisdictions.

In addition to the six men and one woman charged, two further arrests were made for identity document offences. The two Georgian men, aged 28 and 31, were given police cautions and detained pending their removal from the UK.

Officers also arrested four people, two men and two women, all Georgian nationals, who immigration checks found had either entered the UK illegally or overstayed. They will have their cases progressed in accordance with the immigration rules and if it is found that they have no right to remain in the UK, steps will be taken to remove them from the country. Approximately £1,800 in Russian currency was seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

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