

Press release: Man who attempted to smuggle people hidden in cabinets convicted

Canterbury Crown Court heard how on 14 February 2016 a van was stopped by Border Force officers at the UK Control Zone in Coquelles, France. The driver was Huzaiifa Hasan Musa, 22.

Border Force officers searched the van which was filled with furniture. A woman and child were found hidden in 1 cabinet in the load, and 3 men in another. All 5 Iraqi nationals were handed to the French Police Aux Frontieres.

Director Paul Morgan, from Border Force South East and Europe, said:

Musa expressed surprise when the 5 people were found, but they had been quite deliberately hidden. They could not have got there by themselves.

People smugglers like Musa exploit the vulnerable and put lives at risk. Border Force targets its resources on prevention, protection and prosecution activity, working in close partnership with other law enforcement agencies, to prosecute those involved in this criminal trade.

Musa, of Mary Street, Scunthorpe, was arrested at the scene and the case was passed to Immigration Enforcement's Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) team.

Musa claimed that he had been to visit his step-grandmother near Dunkirk, though he couldn't provide an address to officers, and said that he had taken her furniture because she had intended to throw it all away. He later changed his story to say he had taken the furniture with him when he left for his trip.

However, analysis of Musa's mobile phone identified a string of suspicious messages including one Musa had sent saying as soon as he got through the tunnel he would get paid.

After a 2 day trial at Canterbury Crown Court, Musa was found guilty of assisting unlawful immigration into the UK and sentenced to 3 and a half years' imprisonment.

Assistant Director David Fairclough, from the Immigration Enforcement Criminal Investigations team, said:

Our officers built a compelling case to prove that Musa's story was a pack of lies. He claimed the purpose of his visit was to visit family, when in reality he was engaged in people smuggling in order to line his own pockets and with no thought for the safety of those he was transporting.

I hope this case serves as a clear warning that those who try to break the UK's immigration laws will be brought to justice.

Anyone with information about suspected immigration abuse can contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 anonymously or visit <http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org>.