

Two drug suppliers will spend longer in prison

Two prolific drug suppliers will spend longer in prison after their sentences were referred to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme by the then Solicitor General Edward Timpson CBE KC MP.

Keith Davis, 56, from Buckinghamshire, and Andrew Gurney, 51, from Birmingham, were both involved in a professional conspiracy to produce tons of amphetamine sulphate, a class B drug. Davis was also involved in further conspiracies to produce other drugs.

Both offenders were involved in the construction and operation of a laboratory that was capable of producing 136kg of amphetamine sulphate per week, meaning that around 6 tons of the drug with a wholesale value of £11m could have been produced during the laboratory's period of operation between June 2020 and April 2021.

On 10 June 2022, at Kingston upon Thames Crown Court, Davis was sentenced to 5 years and 3 months' imprisonment for conspiracy to supply and produce a class B drug and conspiracy to transfer criminal property. Gurney was sentenced to 6 years and 3 months' imprisonment for conspiracy to produce a class B drug and possession of criminal property.

Following the sentencing, the then Solicitor General referred the sentences of both offenders to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme as he felt that they were too low.

On 21 September 2022, the Court found the sentences of both Davis and Gurney to be unduly lenient. Davis received a new sentence of 10 years' imprisonment, while Gurney will now also serve a sentence of 10 years' imprisonment.

Speaking after the hearing, the newly appointed HM Solicitor General Michael Tomlinson MP said:

The illegal and dangerous drugs produced and supplied by both Davis and Gurney will have ruined lives, and so I am satisfied with the decision of the Court to order both offenders to serve longer prison terms.

The new sentences are a better reflection of the seriousness of the crime of drug dealing and supplying at this level.

Fusion leaders elected to Royal Academy of Engineering Fellowship

The Royal Academy of Engineering has elected two more UK Atomic Energy Authority leaders to its prestigious Fellowship having made exceptional contributions to fusion energy.

Professor Ian Chapman, Chief Executive, and Chris Waldon, Chief Engineer and Deputy Director for STEP (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production), join leading figures in the field of engineering and technology.

Both were admitted to the Academy, which comprises around 1,700 distinguished engineers including UKAEA's Dr Rob Buckingham, Director of RACE, at its AGM in London last night. In joining the Fellowship, they will add their capabilities to the Academy's mission to create a sustainable society and an inclusive economy for all.

Ian Chapman said: "Delivering fusion energy is a huge challenge which requires the very best scientists and engineers in many disciplines working together – I am hugely fortunate to be able to represent a diverse and brilliant team and this honour from the Royal Academy of Engineering is really recognition for all of them."

The Royal Academy of Engineering brings together the knowledge and experience of some of the best and brightest engineers, inventors and technologists in the UK and from around the world.

Chris Waldon added: "I am really humbled by this peer recognition. I have been fortunate to work with truly exceptional people and teams delivering exciting programmes that can make a difference. As we strive to deliver fusion energy to a world that needs it, joining the Royal Academy community represents a wonderful opportunity to widen the network of those involved so we can deliver ever better and faster."

Fellowship of the Academy is considered one of the highest national honours an engineer may receive, with every person admitted subscribing to an obligation to promote its charitable aim.

This centres around the "pursuit, encouragement and maintenance of excellence" in the whole field of engineering to promote the advancement of the science, art and practice of engineering for the benefit of the public.

Fusion energy has great potential to deliver safe, sustainable, low carbon energy for generations to come. STEP is aiming to deliver a prototype UK fusion energy powerplant producing net electricity in the 2040s. It is of strategic importance to UKAEA, as well the national and global effort to harness fusion technology in the fight against climate change.

For more information visit step.ukaea.uk

[Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine: UK statement – OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation](#)

Thank you Mr Chair. Over the past weeks, we have seen that the strong will, courage and remarkable military skill of the Armed Forces of Ukraine has not only minimised Russian gains, but also enabled substantive advances through counter attacks in eastern and southern areas of Ukraine.

As Ukraine continues offensive operations in the north-east of the country, Russian forces have sought to establish a defensive line between the Oskil River and the town of Svatove. This zone is important to Russia, it contains one of the few main resupply routes Russia still controls from the Belgorod region of Russia into Ukraine. Additionally, this line sits along the border of Luhansk Oblast which Russia declared its intent to seize as one of its immediate war aims.

As Russia digs in and attempts to defend this zone, Ukrainian Forces have now begun to conduct offensive operations east of the Oskil River and reports indicate that they are now in control of Bilohorivka, a village located in the Luhansk oblast. It is increasingly unclear whether Russia's front-line forces have sufficient reserves or adequate morale to withstand another concerted Ukrainian assault.

Mr Chair, recent reporting indicates that, despite their purported overall size, sufficient Russian manpower for its invasion of Ukraine remains a key challenge for the Russian military and presents a stark mismatch between ambition and reality. Last July, in this Forum, we discussed the attempts by the Kremlin-linked Russian private military company, Wagner Group, to recruit Russian convicts for service in Ukraine. This has been reinvigorated. A video recently posted online appears to show Wagner owner Yevgeny Prigozhin making a recruitment pitch to prisoners. In the video, Prigozhin emphasises that he is only seeking "fighters for assault units". In return, prisoners have been offered commutation of their sentences as well as cash incentives.

Additionally, numerous reports indicate that the Russian military is deploying mobile recruitment offices throughout Russia to attract "contract soldiers" to fight in Ukraine, selling the proposition as "the choice of a real man". A significant monetary incentive is also being offered to these potential "contract soldiers".

It is a telling indication that the Russian leadership has resorted to bribing its citizens and convicts to join the so-called "Special Military

Operation" in an attempt to bolster its force levels.

Separately, Russian military academies are now shortening training courses and bringing cadets' graduation dates forward. Almost certainly to enable the early release of cadets so that they can be deployed more quickly in support of the Ukraine operation.

Mr Chair, in sum, the impact of Russia's manpower challenge has become increasingly severe. The acceleration of officer cadets' training, the recruitment of "contract soldiers" and Wagner's demand for assault troops suggests that two of the most critical shortages within the Russian military manning crisis are combat infantry and junior commanders.

Further to this, President Putin's decision to impose a partial mobilisation shows he is willing to break his own promises and also sacrifice citizens of Russia for his so-called "Special Military Operation". This mobilisation is a clear admission that President Putin's mission is failing. He and his Defence Minister have sent thousands of their own citizens to their deaths, poorly trained, poorly equipped and poorly led. No amount of threats and propaganda can hide the fact that Ukraine is winning this war, the international community are united and Russia is becoming a global pariah.

Meanwhile, at the FSC, our Russian colleagues would rather we did not focus on Russia's struggles to resource its illegal war of choice. Last week we saw efforts to distract from these setbacks and shift blame onto others by doubling down on tired old narratives, seeking to justify the unjustifiable, to this Forum and the Russian population.

These maladroit attempts to obfuscate the truth fool no one. The clear and unambiguous fact is that it is the Russian leadership who decided to conduct its unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine. Russia was warned that such a reckless act would be a strategic mistake, a strategic mistake that would have strategic consequences. The blame for the impact of these consequences lies solely with the Russian leadership and military – no one else.

Russia's aggressive actions have brought into sharp focus for many countries what was once unthinkable – Russia's willingness to invade a sovereign neighbour. In response, the UK, along with others who seek a secure and stable future in the Euro-Atlantic area, is strengthening its defensive capabilities, including through the NATO Defensive Alliance, to protect against Russia's chosen path of naked aggression.

Mr Chair, the Kremlin's conspiracy theories and self-serving propaganda that seek to portray Russia – the aggressor who has unleashed horrendous violence on Ukraine – as the victim, is nothing more than the textbook delusion of an oppressor who has severely miscalculated.

As our Ukrainian friends have so aptly demonstrated: "Courage is fire, bullying is smoke."

Finally Mr Chair, I would note that just yesterday, it was reported that Russia is pressing ahead with plans to carry out a referendum in temporarily

controlled areas. Any Russian attempt to hold sham referenda on the sovereign territory of Ukraine would have no legitimacy and will be met with a coordinated response from Ukraine's partners.

Mr Chair, the UK stands in solidarity with Ukraine, including through the ongoing provision of military assistance, as Ukrainians defend their homeland and fight for the simple right to a free, peaceful and prosperous future. Thank you

[Death of Mahsa Amini in Iran: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon's statement](#)

Press release

Foreign Office Minister Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon has issued a statement following the death of Mahsa Amini in Iran.



Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

The death of Mahsa Amini in Iran following her arrest for alleged dress code violations is shocking. We are extremely concerned at reports of serious mistreatment of Ms Amini, and many others, by the security forces.

We urge the Iranian government to investigate the circumstances of her death with rigour and transparency, and to hold to account anyone responsible.

We call on Iran to respect the right to peaceful assembly, to exercise restraint and to release unfairly detained protesters. The use of violence in response to the expression of fundamental rights, by women or any other members of Iranian society, is wholly unjustifiable.

[Defence Procurement Minister speech at Defence Vehicle Display 2022](#)

It's my pleasure to welcome you all to this year's Defence Vehicle Display.

Especially as this is not just my first DVD but my first official engagement as a defence minister.

It is an excellent venue to showcase our finest vehicles and equipment.

I'm not entirely new to Defence, having spent six years as the UK representative to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and latterly Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee on the assembly.

So, I am well aware of your many successes as well as some of the challenges you face.

But the truth is, for all of us here today, this event comes at a time of great change.

The passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has brought with it not merely a sense of deep loss for the wonderful monarch that led by example for more than 70 years.

But also, a sense of uncertainty, as the values she came to embody – kindness, tolerance, and a belief in democracy – now seem at risk across the world.

Indeed, even as we speak, Ukrainians are bravely pushing back the invading Russian force, and as we discover the atrocious war crimes committed by the Russians, our resolve must remain resolute.

If we are to protect our values and safeguard the international order in this new era, we need to strengthen Defence.

That's why last year our Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper began transforming our forces to make them more resilient, more persistent and more agile.

Our Armed Forces are now being instilled with a campaigning mindset, that enables them to be ever present wherever we are needed around the world.

A mindset epitomised by our new self-sufficient Brigade Combat teams and Ranger Regiments.

But those documents were also clear that we couldn't achieve our aims without the very best capability.

You only need to look to Ukraine and the incredible gains they've made in recent weeks to see the difference the most advanced kit can make on the ground.

I am proud that the UK has played a key role, foremost among European nations, in supporting those efforts, whether it's our armoured Wolfhounds or Stormer vehicles fitted with anti-air missile launchers.

And that kind of cutting-edge capability is what we're all here for today.

Take a stroll around the exhibition and you will see some of the finest examples of equipment in the land domain on display.

Not least our Boxers – the cornerstone of our Armoured Brigade Combat Teams – able to swiftly cover long distances no matter the environment nor the weather. And I am pleased to see so many of our partner nations on the Boxer programme here today.

As well as Boxer, you will find everything from our Challenger 3 main battle tanks in the Off-Road Area, to the latest drones and four-legged robots from our Future Capability Group, and much more besides.

Whilst we are still learning the lessons from Ukraine, it is clear that we cannot take anything for granted.

In the coming years, it is vital we continue to build on these successes in order to stay ahead of the curve.

That's why we launched the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy, which provided the foundations for a step-change in relations between government, industry and academia.

What's crucial about DSIS is the way it finally recognised industry as a strategic capability in its own right.

The purpose of the Land Industrial Strategy, which was published earlier this year, was to take those partnerships to the next level.

We've seen the success already of our Defence BattleLab in Dorset, which is uniting industry and academia with the facilities they need to test-drive innovative kit.

And today you will hear about how the Army are taking a major step forward in shaping investment over the next three years in new integrated protection systems for our land forces.

This funding marks an exciting opportunity for industry to work with our Defence Science and Technology Laboratory to make our vehicles so much stronger and more resilient.

Whether it's improved sensors and compact energy storage or new counter munition systems and directed energy weapons.

This isn't just a great chance to transform our Army but to drive growth in the economy at the same time.

The land industrial base already supports around 20,000 jobs across the UK, while our ground combat system exports comprise 7% of total defence exports – which is almost £6 billion over the past 10 years.

But as more and more nations increase their investment in Defence, there will be more and more opportunities arising to sell kit to trusted allies and increase our share of that £45 billion-plus ground combat systems market.

This will bring investment back so that we can then reinvest in the continued strengthening of our forces.

I began by talking about the end of an era. But I firmly believe that if we work together we can not only preserve the mighty values that were the hallmarks of Queen Elizabeth II, but seize the moment to turn this age of challenges into an age of opportunity.

Speaking of new eras, I'm delighted to hand over to Lieutenant General Sharon Nesmith, newly appointed Deputy Chief of the General Staff.

Sharon's appointment comes at a crucial time for Defence and I'm looking forward to hearing her thoughts as someone else who is adjusting to a new role.

I'm also looking forward to hearing the Director General for Land plans for how DE&S will equip and support our armed forces now and in the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you.