



WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE

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GANG JAILED FOR 100 YEARS FOR FIREARM IMPORTATION FROM AMERICA INTO WEST YORKSHIRE

EIGHT people have been jailed for their part in the smuggling of illegal firearms into the UK from America.

Over a 12-month period, the gang was involved in smuggling a total of 13 firearms into the country, concealing them within 27 packages containing electrical equipment including DVD players and portable radios.

Following hearings at Bradford Crown Court, the following people pleaded guilty to possessing firearms with the intent to endanger life and the importation of firearms. They are:

Sakawat Shah [29] of Manningham, Bradford – sentenced to 8 years.

Mohsin Hussain [29] of Toller Lane, Bradford – jailed for 8 years.

Mohammed Tariq [33] of Bradford – received 24 years

Atique Arif [32] of Bradford – was ordered to serve 24 years in jail

Mudasser Iqbal [29] – sentenced to 12 years

Feroz Khan [24] – jailed for 10 years

Debbie Jefferson [34] and her son Jamie Jefferson [18] of Bradford but formerly of Mixenden, both pleaded guilty to the importation of firearms. Debbie Jefferson was given a one-year suspended sentence, with her son receiving a community order.

After a two-week trial, Akbar Sultan [24] and Raees Khan [33] of Bradford were found guilty of conspiracy to import firearms and both received 7 years imprisonment.

Four women and one man were found not guilty of conspiring to import firearms by the jury.

Operation Lapworth, an investigation led by West Yorkshire Police supported by the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) and the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) commenced in July 2010 when two parcels, destined for two addresses in Bradford and Fagley, had been intercepted by the UK Border Agency at East Midlands Airport.

West Yorkshire Police's Organised Crime group were alerted to the packages and search warrants were executed at the two addresses where nine people were arrested.

Tariq, Arif and Iqbal were all arrested several days later at Manchester Airport as they disembarked a flight from Morocco.

NEWS RELEASE

Enquiries revealed that Tariq and Arif had been the main co-ordinators of the conspiracy which began when Tariq ordered a Taser gun from an American website. The pair then purchased guns from the seller in Texas, who would break down the gun parts and conceal them within the consignments destined for addresses across Bradford. Tariq and Arif would then instruct Iqbal to collect the parcels.

Officers liaised with the US' Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) who arrested the seller and two women in Texas for their involvement in the importation. All three have since been dealt with by the American authorities.

In December 2010, the ATF were informed that Tariq and Arif, while on bail following their initial arrest, were continuing to contact the American seller with a view to purchasing further firearms.

Operation Lapworth 2 commenced after further packages were intercepted and destined to be delivered to two new addresses in Leeds and Pontefract and be collected by Feroz Khan.

West Yorkshire Police delivered four 'dummy' parcels to the addresses which contained deactivated parts of a gun belonging to the Force.

Tariq and Arif were re-arrested along with Feroz Khan, Akbar Sultan and two others on 7th April 2011.

Covert enquiries revealed that Tariq and Arif were in contact with Mohsin Hussain and Sakawat Shah once the firearms had arrived in the country.

On 14th April, a search warrant was executed at a pool hall in Bradford, owned by Shah. A magazine belonging to the gun sent in by West Yorkshire Police was recovered at the premises and Shah and Hussain were subsequently arrested.

Detective Inspector Gary Curnow of the Force's Organised Crime Group, led the investigation.

He said: "While the scale of these crimes were significant, firearm importation is extremely rare. This was an unusual case involving a highly organised enterprise of criminals. Tariq and Arif demonstrated a concerning determination to continue to import weapons despite police intervention.

"This case has been a fine example of partnership working at its best, on a local, national and international scale. As a result, we have ensured an effective and robust response to this illegal and dangerous activity.

"Today marks the conclusion of a complex and challenging investigation and I am delighted with sentences passed down by the court."

Matt Lewis, Head of Knowledge and Communications for the National Ballistics Intelligence Service, said: "NABIS has developed the most comprehensive knowledge base of illegal firearms and gun crime intelligence of any country in the world. Our ability to trace, track and forensically examine illegal firearms was central to the success of this investigation.

"This complex investigation has demonstrated the value of NABIS to UK Policing. By using the Forensic, Intelligence and Knowledge capabilities of this unique service NABIS was able to successfully assist West Yorkshire Police in this international investigation.

“Gun crime has a devastating impact on victims and their families. NABIS will continue to work with partners such as the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), UK police forces and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to keep illegal firearms out of the country and keep our communities safe from harm.”

Margaret Taylor, from CPS Yorkshire and Humberside’s Complex Casework Unit said: “This was a very serious and complex case involving investigations on both sides of the Atlantic. This revealed a well-planned, organised and determined conspiracy to import Glock pistols into the UK – particularly into Bradford. As a result of these investigations the defendants were arrested and their dangerous activities terminated. Ongoing liaison between the Crown Prosecution Service, the Federal Authorities in the USA, West Yorkshire Police, SOCA, UKBA enabled us to build a strong prosecution case against these defendants, who will now be facing substantial jail sentences.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

To download images and CCTV footage please click on the following link and go into the Operation Lapworth folder in the Media Bank <http://80.193.87.20/>

DISCLAIMER: Please note, all individuals pictured in the video clips that are not highlighted, are in no way connected with this case.

For more information contact Sarah Barthorpe at the HQ Press Office on 01924 292045.