



AN GARDA
SÍOCHÁNA



POLICE SERVICE OF
NORTHERN IRELAND



CROSS-BORDER ORGANISED CRIME ASSESSMENT 2008

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FOREWORD



Fachtna Murphy
Commissioner
An Garda Síochána



Sir Hugh Orde
Chief Constable
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Cross border cooperation is a mainstay at every level of law enforcement in both jurisdictions, north and south of the border – from Commissioner/Chief Constable level right through to those officers who are responsible for the organisation and management of operations and investigations against criminals. Law enforcement on both sides of the border continues to enjoy an extremely effective working relationship; one which has resulted in a large number of successful cross border operations and investigations. This relationship is recognised as being a key component in the successful fight against criminal gangs actively involved in serious organised crime on both sides of the border.

On a tactical, short-term level, law enforcement teams north and south of the border regularly work together in a variety of ways, including sharing intelligence, carrying out joint operations and taking part in joint training courses. Examples have included the formation of a Cross Border Intelligence Exchange Sub Group; the facilitation of joint Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána training courses in organised immigration crime; and a seminar for analysts working in the specialised field of financial analysis which included representatives from PSNI, the Serious Organised Crime Agency and the Criminal Assets Bureau.

The annual Cross Border Seminar and the bi-annual Cross Border Organised Crime Assessment provide opportunities to examine organised criminal activity in both jurisdictions at a more strategic, long-term level and to use this information to strengthen resilience to the threats posed by serious and organised crime.

Cross border cooperation is vital in order to increase our understanding and effective investigation of organised crime. We hope this joint publication will provide an insight into the cross border nature of organised crime and highlight some of the work being carried out to impede those intent on criminality.

The threat posed on both sides of the border is considerable but this challenge is not insurmountable. Our law enforcement agencies will work together to ensure a robust and effective response to organised crime, whenever and wherever it surfaces.



INTRODUCTION

This report constitutes the third bi-annual Cross Border Organised Crime Assessment for both jurisdictions, north and south. The aim of the report is to offer an overview of organised crime in both jurisdictions, with particular focus on identifying similarities in serious and organised criminal activity identified by law enforcement on both sides of the border, and also to illustrate how organised criminal gangs attempt to exploit jurisdictional anomalies.

Each section of the report details key areas of criminality favoured by organised criminal gangs as well as offering case studies giving examples of effective cross border law enforcement activity.

The Cross Border Organised Crime Assessment offers an insight into the work being done by the

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and An Garda Síochána, in conjunction with other law enforcement bodies and relevant stakeholders on both sides of the border, in order to identify and effectively tackle organised crime threats.

Organised crime gangs work on both sides of the border and often attempt to use the existence of two jurisdictions to frustrate law enforcement. In other cases organised criminal gangs will attempt to take advantage of the differentials a land border provides.

Law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border work closely together in partnership to ensure that those involved in cross border criminality are identified and dealt with using all the powers at their disposal, be it through prevention activity, arrests or seizure of assets.

Acknowledgements

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- An Garda Síochána
- Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)
- Revenue Commissioners
- HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
- Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA)
- United Kingdom Border Agency (UK BA)

Methodologies and sources of information

This report draws on intelligence and information provided specifically for this undertaking by the agencies listed here as well as material already held to inform other strategic projects and open source research.

ALCOHOL FRAUD

Alcohol fraud occurs in three main ways:

- Smuggling of alcohol from countries with lower alcohol taxes
- Excise diversion fraud
- Production and distribution of counterfeit spirits

Alcohol Smuggling

Comparatively high tax rates in the UK and Ireland make them attractive targets for organised criminal gangs involved in smuggling alcohol from continental Europe. The majority of seizures are made at the point of importation – for example, from January to July 2008, 89,000 litres of smuggled alcohol valued at €530,000 (£418,700¹) were seized by Customs south of the border.

Excise diversion fraud

Alcohol, like tobacco, is a 'duty suspended' good within the European Union (EU). This means that it can be legitimately produced, stored and moved by registered traders within the EU without payment of duty. Duty only becomes payable when the goods are released for sale or passed to any unregistered person. The aim of the Duty Suspension System is to allow freer movement of goods within the EU and to postpone the point of taxation to the end of the supply chain to facilitate legitimate trade.

Organised criminal gangs attempt to exploit the Duty Suspension System by diverting duty suspended alcohol onto the home market without payment of duty. HMRC and the Revenue Commissioners work closely together with a view to identifying hijacked System for Exchange of Excise Data (SEED) and VAT numbers as well as duplicated consignments.

CASE STUDY

In January 2008 an offender pleaded guilty to alcohol fraud and was given a two year suspended prison sentence at Dundalk Circuit Court. The case referred to the discovery of an illicit distillery in a shed located near the border in Castletowncooley, County Louth, in 2005, in which alcohol valued at €65,767 (£51,884¹) was seized.

In the 2005/06 financial year alcohol fraud and smuggling cost the UK Exchequer up to £400 million (€505 million¹) in lost revenue and the market share of illicit spirits was anything up to 10%².

Counterfeit alcohol

The production of counterfeit alcohol can have serious consequences for the health of the consumer, as well as the loss of income it causes to legitimate traders and the Exchequers in both jurisdictions. Counterfeit alcohol, usually spirits, is produced illicitly and is bottled and packaged to look like the genuine product.

In the Republic, in operations involving law enforcement agencies from both jurisdictions, there were 12 detections of counterfeit spirits in the 2007 calendar year, with over 1,900 litres seized. In a follow-up operation in 2008, counterfeit spirits were discovered in a further 13 premises.



¹ Calculated using an exchange rate of £1 = €1.26, €1 = £0.79.

² HMRC (December 2007). *Departmental Autumn Performance Report*. Pg. 42

CASE STUDY

In October 2007 PSNI officers working close to the border in Northern Ireland arrested two men following the discovery and seizure of 1,100 counterfeit closures (bottle tops and seals) for a popular spirit brand. Such items are used in the packaging of illicit spirits in order to make the bottles appear more like the genuine article.

CASE STUDY

In December 2007 two people were charged (one in each jurisdiction) after 15 kilograms of heroin with an estimated street value of £2 million (€2.52¹ million) was seized south of the border as a result of a proactive anti-drugs investigation involving the Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána.

DRUGS

The drugs market provides an important source of income to many organised criminal gangs throughout the world and this is no different in either jurisdiction. There is evidence of cross border cooperation between some drugs gangs, whilst others will often operate on both sides of the border with the difference in jurisdiction having little effect on their business practices.

Whilst the border appears to have little effect on drugs gangs' operating methods, there remain marked differences between the scale and scope of the drugs markets on each side of the border.

One of the most notable differences between the two jurisdictions is the level of heroin seizures. Seizure levels in Northern Ireland remain much lower than those seen in the Republic of Ireland, with the market remaining confined to key groups of users in specific geographic locations. In the 2007 calendar year, for example, An Garda Síochána seized 117,854 grams of heroin and PSNI seized 222 grams.

Cocaine remains an area of high growth in both jurisdictions. Cocaine is known to be cut locally (a



process by which adulterants are added in order to bulk out the product and thereby increase potential profits) which often results in very low purity levels. Cocaine seizures north of the border examined between October 2007 and March 2008 revealed mean purity levels of 15.9%³, and in the early part of 2008 cocaine examined south of the border was showing purity levels averaging 10%⁴.

In the past year both the jurisdictions have seen the emergence of large-scale cannabis factories. These sophisticated facilities have been connected with organised criminal gangs predominantly based outside the island. The set-up, management and operation of these factories follow a clear and unique template, making them easily distinguished from sites set up by local criminal gangs. This follows a trend previously seen in other countries,

³ Figures provided by Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI).

⁴ Figures from Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) quoted during the launch of the National Drugs Awareness Campaign in February 2008.

including Great Britain. Large-scale production of cannabis by locally based organised criminal gangs is also being seen but cases are much less frequent.

CASE STUDY

In September 2008 eight suspects were arrested (three in the south, one in the north and four in Amsterdam) after the following seizures were made:

- Twenty-seven firearms, six silencers, assorted magazines and speed loaders, 5kg of herbal cannabis and heroin worth an estimated £3.25 million (€4.1 million¹) were recovered south of the border,
- Fourteen firearms plus ammunition and €402,350 (£317,856¹) were recovered in Northern Ireland,
- 192 firearms, ammunition, assorted firearms related accessories including silencers and laser pointers, three hand grenades and €20,000 (£15,800¹) were recovered in Amsterdam.

The operation was against a major drugs and firearms trafficking network and involved joint working between PSNI, An Garda Síochána, Dutch police, HMRC, Revenue Commissioners and the Criminal Assets Bureau.



ILLEGAL DUMPING OF WASTE

As members of the European Union, both the UK and Ireland must adhere to certain standards of waste disposal. However, these standards are achieved through domestic legislation which cannot only differ between Member States but may also be at different stages of implementation.

Disparities in the cost of landfill between the two jurisdictions in the past led to organised criminal gangs becoming involved in the practice of illegal dumping, with waste from one jurisdiction being transported into the other and illegally put into landfill sites, licensed or otherwise. Joint work between agencies on both sides of the border along with some significant convictions led to an initial downturn in large-scale cross border waste dumping. However, since the beginning of 2008 there has been evidence of it becoming a problem again, albeit on a smaller scale than been. Some of those identified as being involved have been linked to other types of organised criminality.

Landfill costs are expected to continue to increase over the next few years, with increases in landfill tax and a reduction in licensed sites, and it seems likely that this will result in an escalation in the problem of illegal dumping of waste.

Law enforcement and government bodies on both sides of the border remain committed to a cross border approach to dealing with illegal dumping of waste between the two jurisdictions and also into other jurisdictions within Europe and further afield.



INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY CRIME

Intellectual property crime (IPC) refers to the counterfeiting or pirating of goods for sale without the consent of the rights holder and it is a growing global industry. Technological advances increasingly allow counterfeit products such as CDs and DVDs to be produced locally. However, other goods such as clothing and footwear are more often imported from countries where IP laws are absent or inadequate or where there is a general lack of enforcement action.

Organised criminal gangs will attempt to counterfeit almost any product currently in demand and items seen locally, in both jurisdictions, include DVDs, CDs, clothing, footwear, handbags, computer games, cigarettes and hand rolling tobacco, alcohol, watches, toys and razor blades.

The past year has seen an increase in counterfeit clothing in both jurisdictions, a trend being mirrored in other parts of Europe⁵. Also being seen in both jurisdictions is a move towards importation of counterfeit products in smaller quantities via airfreight, as well as the increasing use of internet sites to sell products. In some cases these websites may appear to be completely legitimate with the customer only discovering their error when the goods actually arrive.

Counterfeit pharmaceuticals are yet to be discovered north of the border however there have been seizures in the Republic including of counterfeit Viagra imported from India⁶.

As well as internet purchases, counterfeit products are sold from a variety of locations including in



workplaces, door-to-door, from vehicles, in pubs and clubs, under shop counters and at markets and car boot sales. In the majority of cases organised criminal gangs involved in IPC operate without any regard for the border, selling goods wherever there is a demand. It is not uncommon for those involved in IPC to be linked to other types of organised criminality including drugs supply, weapons, money laundering, armed robbery, extortion and vehicle crime.

An Garda Síochána, the Revenue Commissioners, HM Revenue and Customs and the Police Service of Northern Ireland continue to work in partnership to address IPC, for example by mounting joint operations. Ongoing partnerships also exist between law enforcement and industry representatives, such as those working in the film, music, alcohol, pharmaceutical, clothing, footwear and tobacco industries. To this end, the Irish Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, recently launched a report from a high level working group, representing key stakeholders from the industry and law enforcement, which contained a number of key recommendations designed to further improve an integrated strategy to combat this type of crime.

⁵ Further information in relation to levels of Customs' seizures of counterfeit goods, including clothing, can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/resources/documents/customs/customs_controls/counterfeit_piracy/statistics2007.pdf

⁶ Revenue Commissioners (2008). Annual Report 2007, pg. 31.

MONEY LAUNDERING AND FRAUD

Money Laundering

Money laundering refers to the processes by which criminals attempt to legitimise the proceeds of their illegal activities. There are a vast array of methodologies used by criminals in order to try and conceal the proceeds of crime, including by changing currency through bureaux de change, the use of 'shell' companies, through cash businesses and by filtering small amounts of money through a large number of accounts. The existence of a border provides criminals with opportunities to launder money by taking advantage of differing legislation and law enforcement agencies. In moving money between jurisdictions criminals push the investigation to an international level, believing this will complicate the investigative process.

Recent years have seen an increased emphasis by law enforcement on the confiscation, freezing and/or seizure of assets, with attacks on criminals' finances being used to take the profit out of crime. In the United Kingdom the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 provides the main legislative framework and in Ireland the Proceeds of Crime Act 1996 and 2005 is deployed. Powers of civil recovery, previously held exclusively by the Assets Recovery Agency (now merged with the Serious Organised Crime Agency – SOCA), were extended to the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland by the Serious Crime Act 2007, with investigative powers to be devolved to the PSNI as appropriate. The Act also extended these powers to SOCA, the Director of the Serious Fraud Office and the Director of Revenue and Customs Prosecution Office (RCPO). Similar powers are available to the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) in Ireland. SOCA and CAB recognise the importance of working together on cross-border criminality and are engaged in a number of joint operations to ensure that criminals are not able to exploit the opportunities presented by a shared border, to retain the proceeds of unlawful activity.

Increasing obligations on financial institutions to report suspicious financial transactions to law enforcement agencies has led to some criminal gangs resorting to physically smuggling criminal cash across borders. South of the border 25 cash seizures, amounting to €2.4 million (£1.9 million¹), were made by Revenue Commissioners during the first eight months of 2008.

CASE STUDY

In December 2007, following a joint investigation involving the Criminal Assets Bureau and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland High Court granted the confiscation of £22,000 (€27,720¹). The cash had been seized at Dublin airport from a man suspected of drug dealing in Northern Ireland.

CASE STUDY

In May 2008, following a joint HMRC/ Revenue Commissioners investigation, four people pleaded guilty to offences in relation to oil smuggling. Three of the four defendants were sentenced to two years imprisonment suspended for five years with the fourth defendant sentenced to nine months imprisonment suspended for two years. Three of the four defendants were also served with Confiscation Orders totalling £1.2 million (€1.51 million¹).

Fraud

Frauds range from the very basic to the very complex and are carried out by a wide range of criminals, ranging from individuals right through to organised criminal gangs specialising in this type of activity.

OILS FRAUD

Oils fraud in the form of fuel smuggling occurs as a direct result of the existence of the border and the price difference resulting from tax differentials and currency fluctuations. The border, however, has little influence on the misuse of rebated fuel, an offence which occurs on both sides of the border.

Fuel smuggling

Organised criminal gangs are involved in the illegal smuggling of oils across the border from south to north, taking advantage of disparities in duty between the two jurisdictions. When oils are brought over the border the relevant duty must be paid in the destination country. Criminal gangs have developed methods of evading these duties, such as false invoicing or concealment of the oil in hidden tanks.

Misuse and laundering of rebated fuel

Rebated fuels such as marked gas oil and kerosene are available on both sides of the border and are subject to reduced duty making them cheaper to purchase. The lower taxes are levied on condition that these oils are not used for propulsion in motor vehicles. Misuse occurs where rebated fuel is used in vehicles, and on a larger scale by organised criminal gangs engaged in fuel laundering. To evade detection organised criminal gangs have developed methods to remove the chemical markers and dyes from rebated fuels. This allows them to



The existence of a border can create opportunities for some types of fraud – for example fiscal frauds such as fuel fraud are made possible by duty differentials between countries. Additionally, as with other criminal activity, organised criminal gangs will attempt to use the border to frustrate law enforcement and avoid detection. One example of this has been seen in the area of ATM frauds where organised criminal gangs specialising in this activity have travelled from one jurisdiction to the other to commit offences. For this reason the Police Service of Northern Ireland and Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation have developed a joint investigation strategy for dealing with ATM fraud.

Cross border VAT fraud is another type of criminality seen in both jurisdictions. Organised criminals use a combination of hijacked and missing trader VAT numbers in order to obtain goods VAT free in one jurisdiction and then sell these goods in the other jurisdiction without accounting for VAT.

The Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation and PSNI Fraud and Cheque and Credit Card Unit enjoy an excellent working relationship which includes the participation in joint fraud and e-crime training courses as well as regular meetings together and also with external partners such as the Irish Payment Services Organisation and the Irish Banking Federation.

mask the misuse and sell the product as seemingly genuine, legal fuel.

The two main methods used to launder rebated fuel involve the use of acid or the use of a filtration agent such as cat litter and both methods result in large quantities of waste product. Acid laundering is the preferred method used by larger organised crime gangs as it is quicker and provides an effective way of producing high volumes of 'cleaned' fuel.

The waste produced during the laundering process is dumped with no regard for the environmental consequences. Laundered fuel can also damage vehicles' engines as well as causing a loss of revenue to the Exchequer and loss of business to legitimate retailers who cannot compete with the lower prices being offered by those selling illegal fuel.

In the 2005/06 financial year £260 million (€328 million¹) in revenue was lost in Northern Ireland from oils fraud and smuggling. Non-UK duty paid diesel made up 43% of the market share⁷.

In the 2006/07 financial year 0.84 million litres of oils were seized in Northern Ireland. Additionally 18 laundering plants were uncovered and dismantled and two organised criminal gangs involved in this activity were disrupted.⁷

In the Republic, one laundering plant was detected in the 2007 calendar year and there were 33 detections of laundered fuel resulting in the seizure of 43,000 litres.⁸ In addition, there were 19 summary convictions for selling or using laundered fuel and a further 2 convictions on indictment for fuel laundering.

CASE STUDY

Following a joint HM Revenue and Customs and Revenue Commissioners operation, in May 2008 at Newry Crown Court, four defendants entered a guilty plea in relation to oil smuggling offences. The first was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment suspended for 5 years and served with a Confiscation Order of £975,000 (€1,228,500¹), with a 5 year imprisonment default for non-payment. The second was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment suspended for 5 years and served with a Confiscation Order of £175,000 (€220,500¹), with a 3 year imprisonment default for non-payment. The third was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment suspended for 5 years and served with a Confiscation Order of £50,000 (€63,000¹), with a 1 year imprisonment default for non-payment. The fourth, described as a "peripheral" figure, was sentenced to 9 months imprisonment suspended for 2 years.

Furthermore, all four defendants were served with some of the UK's first Serious Crime Prevention Orders. The first Order prohibits each defendant from dealing in oils in any shape or form, either as individuals or as an employee, for the next 5 years. The second Order directs the defendants to submit signed Affidavits disclosing their entire financial affairs, assets and bank accounts to HMRC and allows HMRC to inspect these records and accounts at any time during the next 5 years. If any accounts or assets are hidden from the Court – the defendants will face trial for perjury.

⁷ HMRC (December 2007). *Departmental Autumn Performance Report*. Pg 43.

⁸ Revenue Commissioners (2008). *Annual Report 2007*. Pg. 30.



This year has seen the formation of the Cross Border Fuel Fraud Enforcement Group as part of the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF). Members of the group include the Police Service of Northern

Ireland, HM Revenue and Customs, Serious Organised Crime Agency, Revenue Commissioners and Criminal Assets Bureau.

ORGANISED IMMIGRATION CRIME

Organised crime groups are involved in the facilitation of illegal immigration through the production and use of stolen and bogus travel documents and by other means. While trafficking in human beings does not necessarily involve the immigration process, victims are often immigrants who are exploited by organised crime groups.

Smuggling of illegal immigrants

Human smuggling involves facilitating the illegal entry of immigrants across an international border and frequently involves the use of stolen or bogus

passports or other travel documents. The smuggled persons are usually complicit in the criminal activity involved and can be charged with criminal offences, if not immediately removed from the jurisdiction to which they have travelled.

The existence of the Common Travel Area (CTA) results, on occasions, in organised crime gangs involved in smuggling of illegal immigrants, transporting their customers through one jurisdiction in the CTA en route to the other.

Trafficking of people

Human trafficking is the process of bringing people into the country by those who wish to exploit them, using deception, intimidation or coercion. The exploitation may take the form of forced prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. It is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence against the victim and their family.

The trafficking of persons is a criminal activity generally associated with migration. The fact that the UK and Ireland are destinations which are proving attractive to immigrants and those crime groups that facilitate illegal immigration, results in the increased possibility of human trafficking occurring in both jurisdictions. While no cases of human trafficking for the purpose of removal of body organs have been discovered in either the UK or Ireland, investigations involving suspicion of trafficking for the purpose of both sexual and labour exploitation, have been undertaken in both jurisdictions.

Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) officers work alongside UK Border Agency (UK BA) officers in Operation Gull, an ongoing joint initiative aimed at reducing the number of illegal immigrants exploiting the Common Travel Area to facilitate illegal entry and criminality. PSNI have a dedicated seconded team to the UK BA who offer a prosecution and investigation service to assist UK BA officers. Charges generally relate to false documentation used by illegal foreign nationals to travel within the UK and Ireland to gain employment and facilitate finance fraud. PSNI have also recently formed a specialist unit to deal specifically with human trafficking in Northern Ireland and this unit is already working in partnership with An Garda Síochána.

From October 2007 to March 2008 PSNI took part in Operation Pentameter 2, the second UK-wide operation against human trafficking representing the UK contribution to the European G6 Human Trafficking Initiative. Whilst Pentameter 2 was a UK initiative, An Garda Síochána and the Anti Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform were both represented on the Pentameter 2 senior decision-making group (known as the 'Gold Group') as it was recognised that there was a need for a joint UK/Irish approach to human trafficking issues which may arise due to the existence of a common travel area operating between the two jurisdictions. An Garda Síochána, through the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) and the AHTU also participate in the G6 Human Trafficking Initiative.

CASE STUDY

In June 2008 as the result of a joint investigation into people smuggling involving the Police Service of Northern Ireland and Garda National Immigration Bureau officers, a man was charged with six counts of facilitating the illegal entry of illegal immigrants into the Republic of Ireland and he is currently before the courts in Northern Ireland.

TOBACCO FRAUD

During the 2007/08 financial year HMRC seized almost 12 million cigarettes in Northern Ireland and in the 2005/06 financial year tobacco fraud and smuggling cost the UK Exchequer between £1.6 and £3.2 billion (between €2 and €4 billion¹) in lost revenue⁹.

In the 2007 calendar year the Irish Revenue Commissioners seized 74.5 million cigarettes and 1,516kg of tobacco with a combined total value of €26 million (£20.5 million¹). During the first eight months of 2008 the Revenue Commissioners have seized a further 88 million cigarettes valued at €33 million (£26 million¹).

Counterfeit tobacco

In addition to smuggling, organised criminal gangs are also involved in the supply of counterfeit tobacco products. In recent years additional controls and security measures by HMRC and the Revenue Commissioners as well as the tobacco industry have led to an increase in the proportion of counterfeit rather than smuggled cigarettes being seen. By the 2006/07 financial year, 70% of cigarettes seized by HMRC in the UK were counterfeit, compared to 51% in the 2005/06 financial year and 48% in 2004/05 financial year.⁹

Counterfeit cigarettes found in both jurisdictions usually originate in the Far East and can pose serious health risks to consumers, as they do not conform to acceptable international manufacturing standards.

Tobacco products, both contraband and counterfeit, are smuggled into the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in a variety of ways, including smuggling by passengers arriving by air and large-scale quantities smuggled in commercial

freight. A number of organised criminal gangs involved in cigarette smuggling are known to operate in border areas and are involved in smuggling cigarettes via one jurisdiction into the other. For example, in April 2008 an attempt was made to ship a container manifested as toys from Belgium to Northern Ireland via Waterford. The container was stopped by Customs in Waterford and 6.2 million cigarettes were seized.

A total of 30 summary convictions for cigarette smuggling have been obtained to date in 2008 south of the border.

CASE STUDY

In May 2008, as part of a multi-agency, international and cross border operation involving officers from HM Revenue and Customs, the Revenue Commissioners, An Garda Síochána, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Serious Organised Crime Agency, a total of 25,879,800 illegal cigarettes were seized. The cigarettes had arrived from Singapore via Le Havre and the potential loss of Revenue totalled £4.9 million (€6.17 million¹).



⁹ HMRC (December 2007). *Departmental Autumn Performance Report*. Pg 40.

VEHICLE CRIME

Organised criminal gangs are involved in the theft of plant machinery on both sides of the border and may transport these stolen goods from one jurisdiction to another, often for onward transportation to other parts of Europe or beyond. Similarly, goods stolen in other parts of Europe may be brought into the UK and Ireland for re-sale.

High performance vehicles and plant machinery, such as cement mixers, generators and diggers, are expensive goods and their theft and re-sale provide a lucrative business opportunity for organised criminal gangs. It is estimated that Europe has an equipment theft problem in the region of €10 billion (£7.9 billion¹⁰) per annum¹⁰.

The existence of the border allows vehicles and plant to be quickly and easily moved from one jurisdiction to another before being illegally re-registered, often using stolen or false documents.

¹⁰ Source – National Plant and Equipment Register.



CASE STUDY

In a Police Service of Northern Ireland/An Garda Síochána joint operation into theft of plant in Europe for re-sale in Ireland, plant machinery valued at €190,000 (£150,100¹) has been recovered to date, and €105,786 (£83,571¹) of suspected criminal finances frozen.



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