

NCA Northern Ireland Performance Narrative
Quarter Two (July - September 2015)

Summary

Since 20 May 2015, the National Crime Agency (NCA) has been able to operate fully in Northern Ireland. Upon the activation of NCA's constabulary powers in Northern Ireland, the scope of NCA's crime-fighting capability within the jurisdiction expanded. This has been reflected in the breadth and nature of the new activity that the NCA has undertaken and the enhanced support that the NCA has been able to provide to law enforcement partners, especially the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

The NCA has recorded 29 disruptions in 2015/16 against Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) operating in Northern Ireland and high priority threats; with four occurring in Quarter two (Q2). Three of these related to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) (Operation JARRA) and one to the Drugs threat (Operation DEFORMABLE). This is a reduction in the number of disruptions reported in the previous quarter (25), the higher figure for Quarter one (Q1) was due to surge CSE activity in Northern Ireland under Operation JARRA. The branch is heavily involved with ongoing investigative work on the original cases.

Having been in receipt of constabulary powers within Northern Ireland since late May 2015, the NCA is extremely appreciative of the ongoing and invaluable support of our operational partners within the jurisdiction. The PSNI is the NCA's closest operational partner within Northern Ireland and both organisations provide ongoing mutual assistance.

NCA Investigations

NCA officers in Northern Ireland have undertaken a range of criminal investigations and collaboration with PSNI on these investigations has been successful. In addition, the wider capabilities and resources across the NCA have been well utilised to progress these investigations where needed. Examples include:

- **Operation JARRA** - A significant joint PSNI/NCA investigation into the accessing and sharing of indecent images of children (IIOC) by individuals within Northern Ireland continued in the reporting period. To date, following operational deployments with PSNI's Child Internet Protection Team, there have been 32 searches, 25 arrests, 7 charges and 32 children safeguarded. Further charges are expected. Large volumes of digital media containing pertinent data including IIOC have been recovered. This investigation is ongoing and the case files are being led by NCA Northern Ireland officers. PSNI and CEOP's Child Protection Advisers are providing assistance around child safeguarding matters arising.



- **Operation PUMPLESS** - An ongoing investigation into allegations of financial irregularities and corruption arising from the purchase of the Irish National Assets Management Agency's Northern Ireland loan book. This investigation is being led by NCA and has received the support of a number of PSNI officers attached to the case team.
- **Operation ITALICI** - An ongoing investigation into the international trade in steroids and illicit pharmaceuticals. Northern Ireland was being abused by a crime group as one of a number of UK redistribution hubs to service the illicit market. NCA has seized in excess of one ton of these commodities. The NCA's investigation into this network has engaged international partners and NCA have made five arrests in relation to this to date. Feedback suggests that the availability of the network's particular brand of drugs has since been severely restricted.
- **Operation DEFORMABLE** - An ongoing drug trafficking investigation led by NCA officers in Northern Ireland following the seizure of in excess of 45kg of various class A drugs and precursor chemicals, capable of producing £10m worth of amphetamine sulphate. Some of these were destined for Northern Ireland. To date the NCA has made two arrests and received support from PSNI, An Garda Síochána and other European partners. One of the arrested parties pleaded guilty to assisting importation of Class B drugs into UK at Leeds Crown Court on 18 November 2015 and is to be sentenced on 22 December 2015. This investigation has resulted in 'upstream' protection of Northern Ireland by preventing the drugs from reaching or entering the supply chain.
- **Operation TORCEL** - An NCA Investigation into the postal importation of cocaine from South America to Northern Ireland. During the course of the investigation in excess of 2kg of high purity cocaine was seized before entering the market. Three subjects were arrested in Northern Ireland.
- **Operation PREWILLING** - Following an investigation undertaken by NCA officers in Northern Ireland, with the support of PSNI, relating to the importation of 24kg of class B controlled drug mephedrone seized by UK Border Force (UKBF) officers, a suspect pleaded guilty and was sentenced to five years imprisonment at Belfast Crown Court on 24 September 2015.
- **Operation CONJOINED** - An NCA investigation into the importation of controlled drugs into the UK led to significant operational activity in Northern Ireland. NCA Officers in Northern Ireland, with the assistance of PSNI, seized 167kg of cannabis resin that had been smuggled into Northern Ireland. There have been four arrests to date.
- **Operation CONNING** - An NCA investigation into money laundering offences following on from the UKBF seizure of in excess of 30kg of cocaine from an aircraft at Brighton aerodrome in Yorkshire in November 2014. This investigation spanned into Northern Ireland, with support from PSNI.

- **UK Financial Investigation Unit (UKFIU)** - Between 1 July 2015 and 31 October 2015, 25 consent SARs were allocated to PSNI for advice with a total seized/restrained value of £490,270. Of the 25, consent was given on 17. Notable consent cases included PSNI obtaining restraint covering funds amounting to £182,824 connected to a confiscation investigation around drugs and money laundering offences whilst the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) restrained £74,310 in accounts connected to a subject convicted of illegal fly tipping. The fixed assets had been subject to restraint for several years. The consent requests identified accounts which the NIEA were unaware of.

NCA NI PARTNER SUPPORT

The NCA has provided support to PSNI activities within Northern Ireland, across the UK and internationally in investigations relating to human trafficking, murder, cyber crime, drugs importation and supply, among others. The nature of this support has included a broad range of operational and facilitating activities, such as:

- Providing specialist advice and guidance;
- acting as an intelligence conduit;
- brokering the operational support of other UK partners;
- obtaining the support of international partners;
- training and continued professional development; and
- intelligence collection and exchange.

PSNI has also provided NCA with support, such as:

- intelligence collection and exchange;
- premises searches;
- custody facilities;
- arrest activities;
- operational deployments; and
- training and continued professional development.

DEVELOPMENT & JOINT-WORKING

- **National Cyber Crime Unit (NCCU) – PSNI Operation THEOMAR** – The NCCU have provided data analysis assistance to a PSNI investigation of a criminal group engaged in human trafficking for Sexual exploitation.
- **NCCU – PSNI Operation WALLIS** – NCCU and NCA International assisted a PSNI investigation into computer misuse and blackmail offences connected to a Northern Ireland company. This involved NCA brokering operational intervention in a European partner state resulting in the suspect's arrest.

- **Human Trafficking (NCA NTS/15/0295 – PSNI Op LEPINE)**
Investigation into a criminal organisation with European scope, believed to be trafficking females into and out of Northern Ireland for sexual exploitation. NCA are exploring upstream and international elements to this criminal network.
- **Eastern European Criminal Organisation (NCA NT/15/0230 – PSNI Op BERNARD)**
This is an ongoing development activity and providing support to PSNI surrounding a Northern Ireland based crime group linked into an international criminal network.
- **Abuse of Common Travel Area (NT/15/0395)** This is an ongoing development concerning illegal migration abusing the common travel area.
- **The NCA Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS)** provided one positive report, highlighting potential links or suspects, in relation to 17 PSNI serious sexual offences cases referred to them over the reporting period.
- **The NCA Specialist Operations Centre (SOC) and Crime Operational Support (COS)** provided support and advice to PSNI on 13 instances in the review period, including cases of murder and attempted murder with support including forensics, deployment of National SIO Adviser, Behavioural Investigative Adviser and Geographic Profiler.
- **NCA CSE Referrals Bureau** has continued to provide intelligence leads which may help identify individuals with an apparent sexual interest in children. During the period July – September 2015, 33 disseminations were made to PSNI.
- Three extortion cases in Northern Ireland were notified to **Anti-kidnap and Extortion Unit (AKEU)** in Q2, all relating to sextortion. There were no kidnap cases reported in the period.
- The **UK International Crime Bureau (UKICB)** (hosted by NCA) provided assistance to a European partner against whom an individual from Northern Ireland had been making threats. Through UKICB, PSNI and other UK Law Enforcement Agencies were able to assist in evaluating the risk.

In addition to operational and investigative work to counter the threat from serious, organised and complex crime to the communities of Northern Ireland, the NCA also contributes on a more strategic level. The NCA produced strategic assessments and threat updates that were disseminated to law enforcement partners within Northern Ireland to ensure were aware of new and emerging trends and criminal modus operandi. The NCA houses a number of specialist departments who provide advice and guidance as well as UK bureau services.

For example, The UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC), the AKEU and SCAS. The NCA also houses the UKICB, host to the UK's Interpol and Europol service, providing evidential and intelligence assistance to UK partners and facilitating international support under the Schengen Convention.

Beyond this, the NCA has actively engaged with partners to share its knowledge and best practice through representation at:

- PSNI's multi-agency Crime Ops Tasking and Coordination Group
- Organised Crime Task Force groups and sub-groups
- PSNI training and CPD sessions
- Cross-Border Organised Crime Seminar

NCA Planning, Performance and Risk

9 December 2015