

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS BOOTHAM / MOKO, INCA AND CARDINIA

Operation Bootham / Moko – the ‘tomato tins’ importation prosecutions

Operation Bootham / Moko relates to the importation of more than 15,000,000 MDMA tablets, weighing approximately 1.4 tonnes (pure net weight), concealed within 3000 large cans labelled ‘peeled tomatoes’, in shipping container MEDU1250218 shipped from Naples to Melbourne. This container was unloaded onto the Melbourne wharf on 28 June 2007, having departed from Naples in late May 2007. These pills were never possessed or trafficked by anyone, as the consignment was intercepted by the Australian Customs Service upon its arrival into the Port of Melbourne and the tablets thereafter seized by the Australian Federal Police.¹

Eight offenders were charged and convicted, as co-conspirators, as a result of Operation Bootham / Moko:

1. **Pasquale Barbaro**
2. **Saverio Zirilli**
3. **Carmelo Falanga**
4. **Jan Visser**
5. **Rob Karam**
6. **John Higgs**
7. **Pasquali John Sergi, and**
8. **Salvatore Agresta.**

Operation Inca – the MDMA trafficking prosecutions

Operation Inca relates to a subsequent and separate lot of MDMA tablets. The MDMA subject to the trafficking in Operation Inca involved 1,200,000 tablets trafficked between February and August 2008. These tablets were supplied from Sydney and were received in two lots: 720,000 tablets in February 2008 and 480,000 tablets in May 2008. These MDMA tablets were distributed to a number of wholesale customers for on-sell.²

In total, 18 people were convicted for their various roles in respect of this aspect of Operation Inca. **Graham Potter**, another customer, was not prosecuted as he absconded and has not been located.

Pasquale Barbaro and Saverio Zirilli were charged and convicted for this trafficking of MDMA for their roles as being the heads of the syndicate and supplying the tablets to the wholesale traffickers.

The following customers were convicted for trafficking the supplied tablets:

1. **Salvatore Agresta**
2. **Antonino Di Pietro**
3. **Rob Karam**
4. **Mr Winters**

¹ Prosecution Plea Summary 17 January 2012, tendered at the Pasquale Barbaro and Saverio Zirilli plea hearing

² Ibid

5. Gratian Bran
6. Pasquali John Sergi (Griffith)
7. Pasquale Rocco Sergi (Sydney)
8. Frank Molluso
9. Antonio Sergi
10. Pino Varallo
11. Francesco Madafferi
12. Mr Khan
13. Paul Psaila, and
14. Alan Saric.

Another two offenders were charged and convicted relating to the transportation of the tablets from Sydney to Melbourne:

1. Mr Eddington and
2. Mr Maddox

Sharon Ropa was also charged and convicted for trafficking MDMA for her role, including:

1. Transporting 50,000 MDMA tablets from Sydney to Melbourne on 12 February 2008 for sale by Barbaro to Melbourne customers
2. Transporting tablets to Melbourne customers for on-sell, and
3. Generally assisting Barbaro with his trafficking business, for example renting premises, maintaining business records and providing phones and SIM cards.³

Operation Inca – money laundering

The following offenders were convicted for money laundering offences in respect of money derived from or related to the drug trafficking:

1. Pasquale Barbaro (*offence scheduled for sentencing purposes*)
2. Gratian Bran
3. Sharon Ropa
4. Mr Khan
5. Mr Huntley
6. Anvardeen Abdul Jabbar
7. Mohammed Nasfan Abdul Nazeer
8. Mr Emerson
9. Seyed Moulana, and
10. Mr Maddox (*state offence prosecuted by Victorian authorities*).

³ Prosecution Plea Summary 18 February 2013, tendered at the Sharon Ropa plea hearing

Operation Inca – the cocaine importation prosecutions

A container, imported from Colombia, was intercepted by the Australian Customs Service in late July 2008. The container was found to contain numerous bags of Colombian coffee beans and block cocaine. The blocks were found to contain a total of 99.9 kilograms of pure cocaine. This cocaine was seized by the Australian Federal Police.⁴

The following offenders were convicted in respect of this cocaine import:

1. **Pasquale Barbaro**
2. **Saverio Zirilli**
3. **Rob Karam, and**
4. **Giovanni Polimeni.**

Operation Inca – the precursor importation prosecutions

Telephone intercepts provided evidence to show that a shipment of pseudoephedrine, a precursor, was being imported from India. Ultimately the container arrived in Melbourne in early September 2008, being after the majority of arrests of the offenders on 8 August 2008.⁵

The following offenders were convicted in respect of this precursor import:

1. **Pasquale Barbaro (*offence scheduled for sentencing purposes*)**
2. **Rob Karam**
3. **Anil Suri**
4. **Phillip Batticciotto, and**
5. **Mr Khan**

Operation Cardinia

Operation Cardinia involved a conspiracy to import a precursor as well as the trafficking of MDMA.

The charge in respect of the import was ultimately discontinued following a trial where a jury was discharged after indicating that it was unable to reach a unanimous verdict.

The following offenders were charged and convicted in respect of the trafficking of MDMA in Operation Cardinia:

1. **Rob Karam, and**
2. **Fadl Maroun.**

A third offender, **Danny Moussa**, was convicted on a separate drug trafficking charge, not specifically related to the Operation Cardinia investigation.

⁴ Prosecution Plea Summary 17 January 2012, tendered at the Pasquale Barbaro and Saverio Zirilli plea hearing

⁵ Ibid