

Case 19 – Drug syndicate recruited heroin couriers from casino

A law enforcement investigation into a suspected drug importation syndicate led to the arrest of a number of suspects and the seizure of a large amount of cash and commercial quantity of drugs.

The investigation identified a syndicate using couriers to import high-grade heroin from Vietnam. The couriers were all members of the same community who were recruited by contacts at casinos and coerced into becoming couriers to pay their significant gambling debts.

The suspects were the subject of a number of suspicious transaction reports (SUSTRs) submitted to AUSTRAC by a casino due to a spike in their gambling activity. AUSTRAC also received significant cash transaction reports (SCTRs) detailing AUD710,000 worth of gambling activity by the suspects and reports of international funds transfers (IFTIs) to Vietnam worth AUD18,000.

As a result of the investigation, the suspects were charged with drug trafficking, conspiracy to traffic drugs and importation of drugs.

Offence	Drug importation Drug trafficking
Customer	Individual
Industry	Gambling Remittance services
Report type	IFTI SCTR SUSTR
Channel	Agent/third party Electronic Physical
Jurisdiction	International – Vietnam
Designated service	Gambling services Remittance services (money transfer)
Indicators	Customer undertaking transactions that appear to be inconsistent with their profile and/or transaction history: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase in gambling activity International funds transfers to a country of interest to authorities Use of cash couriers † Use of third parties to conduct transactions

† While this particular customer behaviour may not be directly observable by reporting entities, it is an activity commonly used to facilitate or hide money laundering and other offences.