



D W A N A

Press Release I002-18

The Malta Customs department has had a record breaking quarter, seizing nearly 6 tonnes of narcotics worth over 26.67 Million euros, in seperate cases, in just weeks.

Below are the seperate press releases for each and every case building up to today's 9.72 million euro cocaine haul.

Press release 21 Nov: Customs officials seize over 40kg of cocaine coming from Ecuador, heading to Cyprus

2018 seems to be one of the busiest and most positive years for Malta's Customs Department.

Today the Department continued to capitalize on this success with another substantial narcotics bust.

A refrigerated container coming from Ecuador and destined to Cyprus was selected for scanning following risk analysis carried out by the Department's Container Monitoring Unit.

Following a scan using the new Nuctech scanner, several packets containing a white substance were located, and consequently discovered hidden, behind a panel above the refrigerant compressor. A total of 35 individual packets weighing a total of 44kg were elevated. The substance was tested and preliminary results point to a positive indication for cocaine. The approximate street value is calculated to be 4.5 million euros.

The case was handed over to the Police Anti Drug Squad for further investigations, while duty Magistrate, Dr Joe Mifsud, is leading a magisterial inquiry.

Media assets: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1oNFIHhPY_8eLUr7eppwlmj6VD2yRzZ

Press Release Dec 20th: Second largest Drug haul in Malta by Customs as we end the year – 5,020 kilos of cannabis resin intercepted.

The Customs Department has registered the second largest drug haul in Malta's history, wrapping over a record breaking year in all aspects.

In an operation, which started on Tuesday late afternoon and spread, uninterrupted, till the early hours of today, a container, deriving from the port of Algeciras, in Spain, and heading to Malta, was intercepted by the Malta Customs Department at the Freeport. It was found to be carrying 5.02 tonnes (5,020 kg) of cannabis resin, with a street value of approximately €7,450,000. A company, registered in Malta, was declared to be the consignee.

The container was declared to be carrying large rolls of black mulch film, which is a type of thick plastic sheet used in the agricultural industry.



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Upon scanning the container, first with the ZBV Backscatter, and eventually with the Nuctech container scanner, Customs officials have noticed discrepancies in the images which led them to believe that narcotics were concealed in the cargo.

Upon physical inspection, the film was unravelled from the roll and a concealed cylindrical plastic tube was uncovered. This plastic tube was lined with thick lead in an attempt to trick the xray equipment. However, this attempt was in vain. Within the tubes several packets of narcotics were found embedded in expanded foam.

Following a preliminary narcotics field test, which proved positive to cannabis resin, the Customs Officials called for the assistance of the Police Anti Drug Squad, lead by Inspector Anthony Scerri, who is heading the investigation.

A Magisterial enquiry is underway, led by Magistrate Dr Rachel Montebello, and, apart from the Anti-Drug Police, she is also being assisted by a team of forensic experts..

This year has been the most positive year in the history of the local Customs Department in terms of narcotics hauls, having several large scale positive cases, including:

- 11,000kg of cannabis hidden in two containers arriving from Damascus, in September (the largest drug haul in Maltese history);
- 150kg of cannabis hidden underneath a container vessel moored at the Freeport, in January;
- 100kg of cocaine were detected, in February, with the scanner in a container at the Freeport but sent under a controlled delivery procedure to Croatia, where a huge criminal gang was arrested;
- 44kg of pure cocaine found in a container reefer arriving from Equador in November,
- 10kg of cannabis hidden in a car arriving from Sicily and spotted by the Canine Unit in November, and
- 5kg of cannabis and two kilos of heroin hidden in a passenger's luggage, arriving from Portugal, at MIA, by the Canine Unit in October.

Even though the holidays are with us the Customs Department, and other law enforcement agencies, work 24hrs a day, 7 days a week, to protect the citizen from harm and protect the nation's fiscal interest.

Media assets: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1hpLz-7z_deEKU22Fzi2ziQBCZy39RYaq



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Press release 21 Dec: Customs officials seize over 48kg of cocaine coming from Ecuador, heading to Greece

Following Tuesday's 5020 Kg cannabis bust, today, the Department of Customs registered another success with a 48kg cocaine seizure.

A refrigerated container coming from Ecuador and destined to Greece was selected for scanning following risk analysis carried out by the Department's Container Monitoring Unit.

Following a scan using the new Nuctech scanner, several packets containing a white substance were located, and consequently discovered hidden, behind a panel above the refrigerant compressor. A total of 40 individual packets weighing a total of 48kg were elevated. The substance was tested and preliminary results point to a positive indication for cocaine. The approximate street value is calculated to be 5 million euros.

The case was handed over to the Police Anti Drug Squad for further investigations, while duty Magistrate, Dr Caroline Farrugia Frendo, is leading a Magisterial inquiry.

Media Assets: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1CDdNZqvM3_4R0elyTNPgg_MXhnEdp2FS

Press Release 26 Dec: Customs Department seizes another 90kg of cocaine, in two separate cases on Boxing Day, worth 9.72 million euros.

Following the 40kg Cocaine seizure on the 21st of November, worth 4.5 million euros as street value, and the 48kg Cocaine seizure on the 21st of December, worth 5 million euros as street value, the Customs Department, today, has made yet another two Cocaine hauls at the Freeport. All containers made use of the same modus operandi, that is; a concealment of several packets behind the refrigerant panel.

In the early hours of today, Customs officials from the Container Monitoring Unit, following a risk analysis, have selected several containers for scanning and, in the afternoon, the Department's Scanning Team have spotted packets hidden in the reefer refrigerant compressor unit of the first container, using the Nuctech scanner. A total of 35 packets containing cocaine, weighing a total of 42kg, were elevated from the reefer with a street value of 4.72 million euros.

As the officials concluded the searches on the first container, the Scanning Team flagged another reefer container which was found to be carrying narcotics too. A total of 40 packets were elevated, from the second container, weighing 48kg, with a street value of 5 million euros.

Both containers, transiting through the Malta Freeport, from Ecuador en route to Thessaloniki, in Greece, were carrying shipments of bananas.



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Both cases were handed over to the Police Anti Drug Squad, who are conducting the investigations, led by Police Inspector Justyne Grech. Duty Magistrate Dr Gabriella Vella is leading the inquiry assisted by a team of experts from the Police Forensics Unit.

This is a remarkable year for Customs, in terms of Narcotics busts, with the last quarter of the year being the busiest, and most successful, ever. Indeed, the Nuctech scanner has proven very critical to the Customs Department in its fight against all sort of illegality, especially trafficking of narcotics.

Media Assets: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1D7cCkY3FmnboNeJ857j18za1k4gmnYIm>