

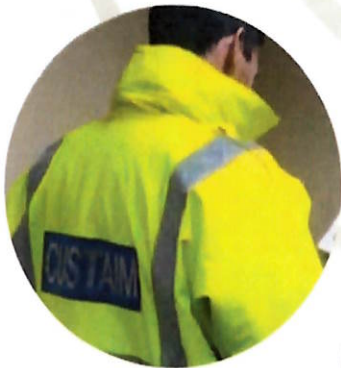
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CROSS BORDER JOINT AGENCY TASK FORCE



Operational Report

1st April 2025 to 30th September 2025



 **NCA**
National Crime Agency



**CRIMINAL
ASSETS
BUREAU**

 **Revenue**
Cáin agus Custaim na hÉireann
Irish Tax and Customs

 **Immigration
Enforcement**

 **HM Revenue
& Customs**

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Foreword

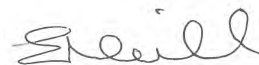
As the joint Chairs of the Operations Co-ordination Group, we are pleased to provide the nineteenth Cross Border Joint Agency Task Force (JATF) operational report, covering the period from 1st April 2025 to 30th September 2025.

November 17th 2025 will mark the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Fresh Start Agreement which precipitated the formation of the Joint Agency Task Force. As a key part of the accountability mechanisms set out in the 2015 agreement, this report highlights key operational cooperation between law enforcement agencies.

Once again we wish to highlight the immense professionalism and hard work of all of the agencies who contribute to the wider work of the JATF. This report reflects a snapshot of enduring multilateral partnerships from all areas of the UK and ROI under six key themes; rural crime, drugs, financial crime, trafficking in human beings including children, excise fraud and organised immigration crime.



Cliona Richardson
Assistant Commissioner
An Garda Síochána (AGS)



Emma Neill
Detective Chief Superintendent
Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)

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Part A: Executive Summary

This report sets out the operational activity of the Joint Agency Task Force partner agencies in the most recent reporting period, 1st April 2025 to 30th September 2025. The themes, challenges and emerging threats are summarised below in each of the six designated priority areas that JATF works towards, explored in more detail in part B.

Rural Crime

We would like to welcome Superintendent Peter Stevenson, who recently took over as PSNI lead for the rural crime portfolio from Superintendent Bob McGowan. The most recent rural crime cross border meeting was held in Dungannon on 30th September, bringing together senior police officers from PSNI and AGS.

The predominant trends in the rural crime continue to be burglaries and thefts of tools, plant machinery and valuable materials, especially in border regions. The majority of reported incidents involved theft of easily transportable items, followed by livestock. In countering these threats there is significant cooperation with partner agencies. JATF partners continue to focus resources on tackling Mobile Organised Crime Groups (MOCG's), through ongoing joint working and dedicated Days of Action. These operations are driven by joint analytical work by Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána. JATF rural crime partners continue to innovate and collaborate in order to share information and protect rural communities across the entire island of Ireland.

Drugs

The Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau (GNDOCB) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland Organised Crime Branch (OCB) continue to lead JATF activity against the importation and supply of controlled drugs across the island of Ireland.

Abuse of the Common Travel Area (CTA) is a consistent and continuing theme, with large quantities of cocaine and cannabis being recently seized in both jurisdictions. Criminals continue to employ an array of methods to transport drugs, with large quantities discovered concealed in lorries and shipping containers. Irish and Northern Irish ports are a consistent transit route for drugs between GB and the Republic of Ireland. The largest ever seizure of

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cocaine in NI history occurred in May 2025, with 185kg of cocaine discovered by UK Border Force and PSNI, with a suspect arrested by NCA as a result. The drugs were concealed in a sophisticated hide inside a vehicle which had travelled from mainland Europe to Dublin and was bound for GB.

Despite the evident increase in drugs entering the island, JATF partners continue to work closely in sharing information, as well as tracking and disrupting organised crime groups engaged in drugs activity. A significant number of the most recent substantial seizures in both jurisdictions involved cross border collaboration by JATF partners.

Financial Crime

The Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB), Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB), PSNI, His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), and the National Crime Agency (NCA) continue to work together to tackle threats within the Common Travel Area and beyond.

Investigators across the island of Ireland continue to see jurisdictional differences between NI and ROI being exploited to transfer, convert and attempt to hide proceeds of crime. Criminals are constantly adapting their methodology, with sharp rises in reported crime associated with online auctions and marketplaces. Financial investigations by their nature are complex and protracted. The JATF provides excellent working channels for partners to legally acquire and share records including banking transactions through the MLAT (Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty) and ILOR (International Letter of Request) processes.

Trafficking in Human Beings including Children

An Garda Síochána's Human Trafficking Investigation & Coordination Unit (HTICU) and An Garda Síochána's Organised Prostitution Investigation Unit (OPIU), continue to engage with the PSNI's Organised Crime Branch, who lead on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking for the police service.

Key legislative differences between NI and ROI continue to feature in MSHT investigations. There is a significant difference between both jurisdictions in how potential victims of

trafficking are identified through victim referral mechanisms. Both PSNI and AGS continue to share information and investigate groups who have a footprint on both sides of the Irish border. Online messaging platforms, websites and the dark web are consistent features in cases linked to sexual exploitation and trafficking through organised prostitution.

Excise Fraud

There is close cooperation between Irish Revenue Commissioners and His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Due to legislative and tax differences across the Common Travel Area, there are numerous established and emerging threats that can be exploited by criminals. With the significant increase in freight traffic across the island of Ireland, criminals continually seek to avoid duty on tobacco, alcohol, fuel and other commodities. Excise partners have discovered and dismantled a number of purpose built factories manufacturing illicit tobacco products for onward sale in both the UK and ROI.

Vapes are increasingly featuring in excise related cases, with recent legislation passed in ROI and GB, but with no commensurate legislation in NI as yet. With fuel, alcohol, tobacco and vapes being high tax products and with a tax disparity across both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland, both are susceptible to continued excise related offending. Both agencies continue to implement new technology to both detect and prosecute excise related offending.

Organised Immigration Crime

UK Home Office Immigration Enforcement (HOIE) and An Garda Síochána National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) continue to work closely together to combat the threat of Organised Immigration Crime. As ever, the nexus of the current arrangement between UK, NI and ROI provides unique benefits to citizens as well as unique challenges to law enforcement partners. Free movement protocols for Irish and UK nationals across the CTA, as well as free movement for Irish citizens across Europe continue to be heavily exploited for Organised Immigration Crime (OIC).

Greater sophistication has been detected in use by OIC OCG's, as well as larger numbers of smuggled persons. Linking to the trends observed by excise partners in the previous section, new freight routes and an overall increase in freight and passenger traffic

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from mainland Europe into and out of the CTA continues to present challenges for partners seeking to detect illegal activity. Technology also provides partners with enhanced information sharing and more effective operations at sea ports, airports and borders.

Part B: Operational Activity Overview

1.0 Rural Crime

The operational leads of this priority area held their meeting for this reporting period on Tuesday the 30th of September 2025 in Dungannon Police Station. This forum continues to be the central mechanism for oversight of the work being carried out under the auspices of this priority area in both jurisdictions. The agenda is designed to assist the co-chairs in ensuring that any identified actions are progressed, the tactical assessment prepared jointly by analysts from AGS and PSNI is reviewed, and an update is provided on current relevant investigations. Intelligence is briefed, tasked and planned activity is agreed, including any crime prevention initiatives.

Detailed presentations by the PSNI and AGS were given to attendees on Operation RUSSET (PSNI) which includes burglaries involving mainly ethnic minorities of the Asian community and Operation THOR (AGS) that includes all burglaries in the Republic of Ireland. This was followed by a question and answers session. Recent ATM thefts in both jurisdictions were discussed along with Copper thefts, fuel drive offs, shop lifting and other crimes that impacts both jurisdictions.



Detective Superintendent John O'Flaherty, Detective Chief Inspector Paul Grattan, Detective Superintendent Joseph O'Reilly, Superintendent Peter Stevenson at the Rural Crime JATF meeting in Dungannon Police Station on the 30/09/2025

1.1 Challenges and Emerging issues

Burglaries and thefts continued across the border region with clusters of incidents occurring in the Louth Cavan Monaghan Division. The majority involved theft of tools or easily transportable items followed by livestock. Quads, boat engines, kayaks and a tractor GPS system were also items stolen during this period.

Thefts from sheds, garages and non-residential properties have been consistently targeted for metal, tools, gardening equipment, trailers, etc. It is likely that organised criminals are carrying out spates of these crimes in rural areas. This area in the west of the province may be an emerging hotspot; a quad was stolen from a shed in Strabane in June, and the next day it was reported that a shipping container on a building site in Omagh was forced open and tools and a generator were taken. A tracker on the generator showed the item to be in the Sligo area; thus demonstrating a cross border link. A few days later a spate of burglaries took place in the Coagh area. Four victims had bicycles, tools and other equipment stolen, with an estimated value of £10,000. Then in Omagh, an injured party reported a quad and a number of battery powered tools stolen from a locked shed overnight. The next day in Lisnaskea a person reported a trailer and tools worth £1,600 were stolen from a yard.

Fermanagh and Omagh District were particular hotspots in May and June with over 20 burglaries mainly in sheds and outbuildings. Many of these have been linked, and the majority of incidents involved the theft of tools such as chainsaws, quads, strimmers, power washers, lawn mowers, “qwikcuts” as well as drills, sanders, shovels, cash and jewellery. Additional items taken included thermal deer stalking equipment such as spotters and a rifle scope.

Burglary levels in border areas recorded a rise during the months of May – July; Fermanagh & Omagh, Derry City & Strabane, and Newry, Mourne & Down all experienced significant upturns in the summer months, the most notable concern being levels in Newry, Mourne & Down in May when numbers recorded were double those of both April and June.

Theft of livestock may be re-emerging in recent weeks. AGS in the Louth Cavan Monaghan Division noted an increase in the number of cattle reported as lost or stolen. PSNI noted reports of high value bullocks worth around £20,000 to 30,000 stolen, and a few days later there were two reports of sheep theft – sixty two stolen and a further fifty stolen in close proximity to each other. Earlier in August, a shorthorn cow was stolen in Portadown, worth around £3,000.

Fuel ‘drive offs’

Fuel Drive offs on both sides of the border continue to occur where criminals use the close proximity of the border to avoid detection. Liaison between both police services continues to occur in a bid to detect these criminals through vehicle checks and enquiries at the address of the registered owner of the vehicles involved.

Metal Thefts

Analysis by the Garda Síochána Analysis Service of metal thefts in the North Western Region shows that Copper thefts across the region appear to be lower than in previous years however there have been a number of large incidents recently which occurred in July in counties Monaghan and Donegal.

PSNI report copper cable theft has been an ongoing concern throughout 2025, and sporadic reports continue across NI in the spring and summer. A concrete plant premises in Lisburn was entered in April and multiple metres of copper wiring was cut with bolt cutters and removed. Like many other cable thefts, a lack of crime prevention measures was noted; a concrete business in Derry / Londonderry had also been targeted in April; £100,000 worth of metal was stolen. In early May, a commercial burglary at Gortrush Industrial Estate saw another theft of cable from a business unit; armoured cable, estimated value £2,000. A week later in the Strabane area, a further outdoor business site was targeted, with four rolls of copper wire stolen overnight, valued at two to three thousand pounds. In mid-June a theft took place in Ballynahinch whereby 400-500 feet of copper electrical cables and water pipes were taken from outbuildings at a rural property, with an estimated value of £10,000.

ATM Burglaries/Thefts

ATM thefts have re-emerged across the province this year, beginning with several linked incidents in the North Belfast and Newtownabbey areas. At the end of May in Portadown a filling station's external ATM machine was targeted overnight. £66,000 was stolen. Their modus operandi was similar to an ATM theft in Jonesborough in February 2024. July and August saw a further spate of thefts in PSNI south region, cementing ATM theft as the most concerning acquisitive crime trend at that time. In Jonesborough on 24th July, a shop was entered during the night and an angle grinder used to steal £60,000 from the ATM machine. In Clough on 1st August a Eurospar was targeted however the safe inside the machine was not breached by the two suspects captured on CCTV. AGS reported a similar theft in Clones, County Monaghan on the same night, and the ATM cartridges from this theft were found

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discarded the next day near Armagh. On 7th August the attempted theft of an ATM machine at a service station near Portadown was detected by the alarm system, however the suspects had made off on Police arrival. The door locks to the housing had been tampered with but no entry had been gained to the machine.

Counterfeit currency

Incidents where counterfeit notes were used have been reported on both sides of the border with the majority of them being in County Donegal and a possible link to suspects in Omagh having been identified through this forum.

Livestock Theft

The Livestock Taskforce remains actively involved in investigating incidents related to livestock theft, the most recent taskforce meeting taking place in October 2025.

The Garda Síochána Analysis Service has recently carried out an analysis of incidents of lost/stolen cattle for the Louth Cavan Monaghan Division. Some of the findings included that the vast majority were of lost cattle, rather than stolen cattle and these incidents accounted for 89% of all animals.

It also appears that a number of individuals made multiple reports of lost cattle over the period. Both the PSNI and AGS continue to work closely with officials from Departments of Agriculture focusing on a collaborative approach to tackling livestock related offences.

1.2 Operational Activity & Results

Operation one

In April 2025 a number of burglaries occurred in County Monaghan with large amounts of jewellery stolen. Investigating Gardaí liaised with their PSNI counterparts in County Armagh and provided them with details of the suspect vehicle. Community text alerts also warned the public of ongoing criminal activity. That same day, the PSNI located the vehicle at an address in Armagh. During a search of the vehicle police found axes and crow bars. A search of the property resulted in the recovery of a large amount of jewellery. Continued cross border collaboration identified some of this jewellery as belonging to the injured parties in the County Monaghan burglaries while more of the jewellery recovered

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had been stolen in a burglary in Northern Ireland. Three Romanian males were subsequently arrested and were later charged with handling stolen property and were remanded in prison. In this case “real time” communication between both police services resulted in the recovery of stolen property, the disruption of an active cross border burglary gang and ultimately, an increase in public confidence in both police services.

Operation two

In April 2025, three females filled two shopping trolleys with groceries at a supermarket in a border town in County Cavan. They left the store without making any effort to pay for the goods. Gardaí established that the females left the scene in a silver Audi A6 and travelled towards the border. Immediate contact with the PSNI led to a check at the address of the registered owner of the Audi and confirmation that the vehicle had returned home. The PSNI consequently searched the property and recovered the stolen groceries. Gardaí identified one of the females as the wife of the registered owner of the vehicle involved. She was arrested and admitted to her involvement in the theft. As a result the subject has been reported and a PSNI case file has been submitted to the NI Public Prosecution Service for consideration. The stolen goods were returned to the owner of the shop. In this instance collaborative working with real time sharing of information and the timely response by the PSNI led to a successful outcome for all concerned.

Operation three

Towards the end of April 2025, a spate of hijackings and burglaries took place in Counties Armagh, Down and Louth. The MO for the hijackings was that the suspects would collide with a vehicle and when the driver got out, thinking it was a standard road collision, their vehicle was taken by force. High powered vehicles were usually targeted which would then be used to commit burglaries. Additional units from AGS and the PSNI were deployed to the border area in an attempt to intercept this gang while real time information was shared between units. Through the sharing of this real time information AGS were able to position themselves in an intercept location following an attempted hijacking in Northern Ireland. This led to the suspect vehicle being detected and stopped by AGS and although it made good its escape, one of the suspects was identified which assisted both AGS and the PSNI in focusing their resources. A few weeks later, the suspects struck again and this time were arrested by Gardaí and were charged with a number of offences and were remanded in

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custody. AGS forwarded all identifications to the PSNI in order to assist with their investigations.

Operation four

In June 2025, investigations into a cross border burglary and theft from MPV series involving a black VW Passat and a Honda Civic commenced. Investigations in both jurisdictions linked these vehicles to 18 incidents in Counties Cavan, Leitrim, Donegal and Meath with a further 2 burglaries and 4 theft incidents in County Fermanagh. Both vehicles were bearing different false registration plates on each date the incidents occurred. The property stolen in these incidents ranged from power tools to designer clothing, handbags, and cash. In one burglary, a safe containing €18,000 was stolen. Cross border liaison and concerted enquires led to the identification of a Kildare based MOCG as being responsible. In early August, Gardaí in Leitrim stopped a Honda Civic and recovered stolen power tools and designer clothing. The head of this MOCG and his son were arrested and later charged with handling stolen property. The father has been remanded in custody since this date having been denied High Court Bail. Cross border collaboration and the gathering of evidence against this MOCG continues with plans for future searches and arrests in respect of incidents in both jurisdictions in progress.



4th June 2025: PSNI Erne North Neighbourhood Police Team took part in a joint Vehicle Check Point (VCP) with AGS colleagues at border crossing 197, Garrison.

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Operation five

On the 26th July 2025, a Cross Border Policing Operation took place along the Cavan, Monaghan and Fermanagh border. The operation consisted of high visibility patrolling and checkpoints targeting traffic travelling on the national roads mainly the N3, N54, N55 and N87. While the primary objective was to detect road traffic offences, the operation also acted as a high visibility deterrent to travelling criminals, using the road networks along the border to commit crime.



PSNI & AGS conduct cross border checkpoint at Keady Road

Operation six

Between 29th September and 2nd October 2025, the PSNI completed a five-day proactive operation in joint partnership with Gardaí. An operational plan was put in place to target a particular group identified and specific locations near to the border, through careful analysis, of reported incidents and information sharing between Gardaí and PSNI to build a picture of suspects and patterns. It was established that quad theft gangs were operating across a large area of both Fermanagh and Omagh and Mid Ulster's borders with ROI - County Monaghan in particular. On 25th August, the subjects were observed in a vehicle and made off before being stopped by AGS in Monaghan and identified. In addition information suggested that southern registered vans were involved in three separate reports of quad thefts or attempts. On 15th August 2025, AGS received a report of two stolen quad bikes in Emyvale – one of which was subsequently located in Rosslea.

Rural Crime Week

The second week of September was PSNI rural crime week. During the course of the week several cross border checkpoints were conducted targeting all forms of rural crime and specifically those who use border roads to advance their criminal activity. As part of the five-day dedicated operation, the PSNI and Gardaí worked in partnership in order to provide visibility to the community on the following identified themes:

Day 1: Rural Crime Partnership - who we are, what we do; serving rural communities.

Day 2: General security protocols for farm and rural premises - lock up, mark property, secure high value machinery, tag livestock etc.

Day 3: Firearms security - the law, regulations and obligations, security protocols, help and advice etc.

Day 4: Tackling Violence against Women and Girls - as a policing priority, violence is sadly a reality for many - we can help, signposting to services etc.

Day 5: Road Safety - The Fatal Five, focus on drink driving, use of agricultural vehicles on public roads, use of ATV s etc.

During the past six months of this reporting period the PSNI and AGS have continued to collaborate on numerous investigations which include but are not limited to, the Clones ATM theft, the discovery of Improvised Explosive Devices in Counties Monaghan and Limerick and policing operations linked to numerous frauds on the Agri-Business sector in both jurisdictions. The ATM and IED investigations are still progressing with PSNI assisting AGS with enquiries, including a follow up search in south Armagh.

2.0 Drugs

The Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau (GNDOCB) and the PSNI's Organised Crime Branch (OCB) have a long relationship of close collaborative working, including in the covert as well as overt policing spaces, targeting organised crime groups suspected of involvement in the importation and supply of controlled drugs onto the island of Ireland.

There continues to be successes in both jurisdictions with interventions conducted which have both removed illegal drugs from circulation and resulted in the arrest of suspects. In July 2025, eight men were jailed for their roles in the September 2023 attempt to smuggle 2.2 tonnes of cocaine into Ireland, aboard the MV Matthew container ship. The drugs seized were estimated to be worth more than €157m (£135m). Interception of the vessel off the south-east coast of Ireland was as a result of complex multinational law enforcement cooperation. The vessel had travelled from the Dutch-Caribbean island of Curaçao. The interception was conducted by members of An Garda Síochána, Irish Revenue Customs Service, and the Irish Naval and Air Corps, and is the largest cocaine seizure in Irish history. The investigation was led by Irish agencies, with follow up searches by AGS and PSNI resulting in the seizure of a vehicle and mobile phones from an address in Newry. Eight men were subsequently jailed for their part in the operation, receiving sentences varying in length from thirteen and a half years to twenty years each.

Both organisations have ongoing covert investigations with cross border elements, which have been supported by their strong partnerships. This has facilitated quick access to information thus enabling the development of diverse tactics and investigative strategies into significant OCG's exploiting the border and Common Travel Area. Additionally during this reporting period, there were a number of strategy meetings held between the PSNI and AGS senior leaders and tactical leads where ongoing operations were discussed and information and evidence shared.

2.1 Challenges and Emerging issues

Exploitation of the open land border combined with the alternating of entry and exit points at Belfast and Dublin Ports continues to be a modus operandi being utilised frequently by Organised Crime Groups in efforts to reduce recognition of travel patterns and to avoid law enforcement. New and additional ferry routes direct from Dunkirk and Cherbourg to

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Dublin and Rosslare have added a new potential dimension of drugs bound for the UK entering via Irish ports and then land bridged to the UK via Belfast to minimise custom checks. Items continue to be concealed within legitimate loads or concealed in specially adapted trailers with sophisticated hides to avoid detection by law enforcement at ports.

The Ports of Cork, Rosslare and Dublin continue to experience an increase in haulage traffic sailing directly from mainland Europe, thus avoiding the traditional UK land-bridge, travelling via Northern Ireland for outbound sailings via Belfast, Larne and Warrenpoint Ports. Hauliers involved in organised crime utilise these routes to import and distribute controlled drugs throughout Ireland, Northern Ireland and Britain and to smuggle the proceeds of their criminality.

There is clear interconnectivity of organised crime groups operating on both sides of the border with a number of cross border meetings between various targets under different operations identified. Real time collaboration between the PSNI, NCA and GNDOCB on both sides of the border has allowed for identifications of significant attendees at meetings to help progress investigations. There is significant covert joint working between Senior Investigating Officers on both sides of the border, to continue building our joint understanding of how the CTA is being exploited and by whom in order to continue devising effective and coordinated responses. Both agencies assist each other on a continual basis when operationally required in the targeting of OCG's who operate across the land border and who exploit the ports on the island to avoid detection.

As noted in the increased levels of detections at ports on both sides of the border in Ireland, OCG's are using highly sophisticated methods of concealment, particularly for the purposes of drug importation and for the export of the cash proceeds to fund future importations. The haulage industry is the main method by which large-scale importation is being facilitated. However, there is now also clear evidence of exploitation by OCG's of coastal areas of the island of Ireland as a pathway for drugs into Ireland, UK and Europe from South America. This is corroborated by an increase in operational deployments, seizures and arrests linked to OCG's exploiting the coast of Ireland.

There continues to be significant seizures of cannabis at Dublin and Belfast Airports via both postal and foot "mules" from countries such as Thailand, which has reduced regulation regarding cannabis. There have been a number of arrests of Irish nationals arriving from Thailand with suitcases containing significant amounts of cannabis. Multi-use of Belfast and

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Dublin airports by both mules and postal packages is an area that requires close monitoring and GNDOCB and PSNI are collaborating and sharing information surrounding this emerging trend.

The illegal use of self-service parcel lockers has increased significantly within Northern Ireland. They are used to import and store for collection, illicit goods, including drugs. In the past, the main parcel locker provider on the island of Ireland was a company with its HQ and lockers based in Ireland. This company ceased operations in January 2023, however the former founder then went on to found a second company, supported by a second individual from Dublin. This is essentially the same business, but registered, and with lockers, predominantly based in NI, often in locations close to the border. Jonesborough remains a key hub for drugs importation, predominantly of cannabis and prescription only medications. 68 sites have been identified, 59 in Northern Ireland and 9 within Ireland, primarily close to the border.

The operations in relation to encrypted criminal communications has provided significant insight into the sophistication of OCGs and the lengths to which they will go to avoid detection by law enforcement. It has also revealed that OCGs do not operate alone, rather they form part of a much wider organised crime network with many International dimensions and collaboration with organised crime stretching across the UK, Europe and further afield. Collaboration with other Law Enforcement Agencies is key to success in tackling these challenges and to keep communities safe.

2.2. Operational Activity and Results

Operation one

The PSNI are currently liaising with AGS with regards to a number of foreign nationals involved in drug related criminality within the Republic of Ireland. Two suspects are assessed to be living in Northern Ireland, within Counties Fermanagh and Armagh. A meeting is presently being arranged with AGS to discuss opportunities to progress this investigation.

Operation two

Officers within the PSNI's Organised Crime Branch have been working with AGS on the extradition proceedings against the principal of a large scale OCG operating on both

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sides of the border. The suspect absconded to Tralee in 2022, prior to sentencing following convictions linked to an ongoing PSNI investigation into the importation and distribution of Class A and Class B drugs. They have also been involved in firearms criminality. PSNI Detectives from Organised Crime Branch, in conjunction with various partners on both sides of the border, secured a High Court order in Dublin resulting in the surrender of a suspect to the PSNI in mid-October 2025.

Operation three

The PSNI have been liaising with AGS detectives from Monaghan in respect of two ATM attacks, one in Jonesborough and one in Monaghan. A meeting took place on 7th August 2025 in Armagh where the respective investigation teams shared common details of the MO and confirmed each other's hypothesis that it was likely that the same OCG had carried out both attacks. Following this meeting, there has been an exchange of evidence and intelligence. PSNI officers have also jointly attended a scene to secure recovery of CCTV footage, the cameras for which were in ROI but the server was located in NI.

Operation four

In May 2025, Police stopped two males acting suspiciously in Belfast who were found to be in possession of covert cameras and a thermal monocular. Items were subsequently seized. A monocular SD card was downloaded where images identified three properties being monitored. A cross border Organised Crime Group was identified, which led to close collaboration between the PSNI and AGS. One property was identified in County Monaghan. Details were shared with AGS Regional Drugs Team who conducted a search of the property. One male was discovered in a bedroom on the second floor. In another locked bedroom on the same floor, cannabis with a value of €92,000 was found in two vacuum pack bags. One male was arrested, detained and interviewed at Monaghan Garda station. Of the two other properties in Northern Ireland, one was a Vietnamese cannabis grow house. A third property in Armagh was also searched and further quantities of cannabis was recovered and one male was arrested.

Operation five

Within this reporting period, PSNI officers from Organised Crime Branch shared details with AGS detectives relating to a Chinese national suspected of involvement in cannabis grow houses in Northern Ireland, in addition to Albanian males based in County Cavan. Ongoing enquiries are being conducted and a number of searches have been

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conducted by AGS, including searches, arrests and the discovery of a cannabis grow house in Drogheda.

Operation six

The 15th September 2025 saw a joint meeting with PSNI /AGS, Dutch, Portuguese and English police at Europol, in respect of an ongoing investigation into a Dutch based OCG suspected of involvement in smuggling vast quantities of cocaine into the UK and the Island of Ireland. This is part of a wide ranging and complex international investigation into organised crime.

Operation seven

On 8th October 2025 a search and interview was conducted of a key suspect in Manchester. This is a joint investigation between the AGS regional team in Limerick, PSNI and Greater Manchester Police. It originated with seizures in May 2025 of 100 kilos of cannabis by the PSNI and 500 kilos by AGS. The suspect is believed to be the organiser of both.

Operation eight

On 28th May 2025 a meeting was held at AGS Headquarters between PSNI, AGS, Irish Customs and NCA where agreement was reached to provide evidential material relating to the importation of cannabis by a named suspect from Northern Ireland with extensive links to organised crime. An International Letter of Request has been issued and AGS are in the process of compiling material to share with the PSNI to progress the investigation.

Operation nine

Working as part of the Joint Agency Task Force, An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland have been engaged since October 2024 in a collaborative investigation targeting a transnational organised crime group (TNOCG) involved in importations of controlled drugs to Ireland (both North & South). A number of key logistical hubs were identified in the Republic and in Northern Ireland which were being used by the TNOCG.

Over €20 million in controlled drugs have been seized across both sides of the border with eight persons charged and before the Courts in both jurisdictions. A number of operational

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meetings were held in this reporting period with regard to sharing of evidence including a Europol coordinated meeting held in The Hague in September involving AGS, PSNI and Dutch police collaboration.

Operation ten

In October 2025, an operation was put in place targeting suspects in an OCG assessed as travelling to Northern Ireland and involved in money laundering on both sides of the border. As part of this operation, on 5th October 2025, cash to the value of £185,000 sterling and €48,000 was seized in Dublin and one male arrested who had travelled from Northern Ireland where he is suspected of collecting it. Working as part of the Joint Agency Task Force, collaboration has been ongoing with both GNDOCB and PSNI in relation to this investigation.

3.0 Financial Crime

The Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) remains actively engaged in multiple cross-jurisdictional investigations in cooperation with An Garda Síochána (AGS), the Revenue Commissioners, Customs, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the UK National Crime Agency (NCA), and His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

3.1 Challenges and Emerging Issues

Analysis of the August 2025 Fraud and Economic Crime Statistics shows several developments of note for cross-border investigations. Offences categorised as deception, forgery and false instrument, shopping, online auction fraud and money laundering have all risen sharply compared with the same period last year. This pattern suggests that offenders are diversifying their methods and maintaining the capacity to move illicit funds through both domestic and cross-border channels.

The availability of high-quality forged identity documents, in some cases produced using advanced digital tools, is becoming a persistent feature. These documents are being used to open accounts and facilitate frauds that can pass initial verification checks, creating additional challenges for both financial institutions and investigators.

Cross-jurisdictional laundering remains a consistent element in many cases. Accounts in both jurisdictions are being used in quick succession to layer and obscure the movement of criminal proceeds, with the recruitment of money mules through online platforms continuing to play a central role.

There has also been a shift in fraud typologies. While reports of phishing, vishing and smishing have declined, there has been a corresponding increase in online marketplace and auction fraud. These offences often involve lower individual transaction values but occur in high volumes, making them more difficult to detect and disrupt.

High-value cases under active investigation continue to demonstrate the involvement of organised crime groups in complex fraud and laundering schemes. The scale and sophistication of these operations underline the need for sustained, intelligence-led cooperation with partner agencies, including the PSNI, NCA, and HMRC.

3.2 Operational Activity and Results

Operation One

This investigation relates to a series of alleged deceptions and thefts by a company director involved in the buying and selling of gold and other precious metals, including the provision of insurance and storage options, based in Dublin and London. Certificates outlining the value and location of items were provided to injured parties, but these individuals were unable to sell their products or retrieve them from the vaults when requested.

Following extensive enquiries, seventy complaints were received by GNECB, leading to the arrest of a person of interest in June 2023. Total losses to date amount to approximately €1.2 million. Liaison took place with the PSNI by way of a mutual assistance request (MLAT) to retrieve material relating to this company, including a desktop computer, a painting and two boxes of financial documents stored in a container in Northern Ireland. This material was transferred to An Garda Síochána in early 2025. A file is currently being prepared for submission to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Further collaboration will continue as partners seek to trace assets linked to the suspect.

Operation Two

The GNECB is investigating an alleged large-scale insurance fraud in which false identification documentation was submitted as part of multiple personal injury claims. A Northern Ireland-based solicitor is a central figure in the fraud.

A Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) request has been forwarded to the UK authorities to retrieve evidential material believed to be contained in client files held by solicitor firms representing the interested parties. An additional mutual assistance request has been sent to the PSNI to uplift evidential material from a solicitor firm based in Northern Ireland.

Operation Three

This investigation concerns an investment fraud in which injured parties were led to believe they were investing in legitimate bonds and other guaranteed investments, resulting in losses upwards of €1.4 million. One suspect in receipt of the stolen funds resides in

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Northern Ireland and is currently before the court charged with the attempted murder of a PSNI police officer. Liaison continues between the GNECB and the PSNI.

Operation Four

Assistance is being sought from the PSNI in respect of ongoing investigations into international cyber-enabled frauds, including business email compromise, invoice redirection, romance fraud, and the laundering of proceeds through accounts in the Republic of Ireland.

Preliminary assessments indicate the involvement of an organised crime group operating across multiple jurisdictions. Investigative enquiries to date have linked this network to the theft and laundering of significant criminal proceeds, with additional parallel investigations believed to be connected. One suspect is believed to have created a number of companies, websites, and associated bank accounts with other individuals to deceive victims and launder the proceeds of cyber-enabled frauds across Europe.

Multiple incidents have been confirmed in which fraudulent payments from overseas entered business accounts believed to be controlled by the suspects. At least one suspected fraudulent company is registered in Northern Ireland and holds a UK-based business account with a financial service provider. As it is a UK account, formal legal assistance is required before the account can be accessed for evidential purposes.

The company is believed to be a front entity created to launder the proceeds of crime. The investigation is at an early stage, with further collaboration planned with partner agencies in the coming reporting periods.

Operation Five

The GNECB is conducting an investigation involving a suspect who has relocated to Northern Ireland. The individual is wanted for questioning regarding organised crime, specifically multiple sophisticated fraud operations. Collaborative efforts are underway with the PSNI to locate the suspect and gather intelligence to facilitate arrest within this jurisdiction.

Operation Six

The GNECB is conducting an investigation into a large-scale VAT carousel fraud involving a network of companies registered in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. Following the submission of a file, directions have been received from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to charge a suspect based in Northern Ireland.

Work is currently underway to draft and apply for the necessary instruments under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement to facilitate the prosecution of the suspect before the Irish courts. Assistance from the PSNI will be required in order to secure the return of the suspect to this jurisdiction. It is noted that the PSNI is conducting a parallel investigation in respect of the same individual. The GNECB investigation team remains available to provide any assistance required in support of that enquiry.

Operation Seven

This investigation was discussed with the PSNI at a meeting on 29th May 2025. It concerns two suspects who submitted false invoices to the Irish Revenue Commissioners in relation to a shell company. The investigation established that Revenue had been defrauded of a significant sum of money. A portion of the stolen funds was used to pay off a mortgage on a property in Northern Ireland. The assistance of the PSNI has been sought in progressing this matter in obtaining relevant records from Northern Irish banks.

Operation eight

PSNI ECU are investigating an international fraudster who is currently a sentenced prisoner. Enquiries into his network identified a cross border link involving a fraud perpetrated against on a business in ROI where the victim lost over €300,000. Detectives from ECU adopted evidence and material from the AGS investigation, as it contains vital information of use in supporting the PSNI case. In addition to incorporating the material into their file, colleagues in AGS Serious Crime Unit are assisting PSNI ECU by conducting a number of enquiries in ROI.

Operation nine

On 27th August 2024, the Police Service of Northern Ireland received a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) request from the Republic of Ireland. The request seeks banking

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production material in relation to twenty three First Trust bank accounts connected to an individual who is the subject of a suspected money laundering investigation in the Republic of Ireland by The Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) in Ireland, the National Asset Recovery Office of Ireland which includes members of An Garda Síochána. After extensive liaising with CAB, NI Courts and legal representation, twenty three PACE production orders were obtained by PSNI in June 2025, and the information derived as a result was successfully shared with CAB.

4.0 Trafficking in Human Beings including Children

An Garda Síochána's Human Trafficking Investigation & Coordination Unit (HTICU) and An Garda Síochána's Organised Prostitution Investigation Unit (OPIU), continues to engage with the PSNI's Organised Crime Branch, who lead on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking for the service.

In January 2025, the PSNI's Organised Crime Branch decentralised its MSHTU portfolio, moving responsibility for MSHTU investigations from a single team to all six investigative teams. This reflects the heavily interwoven nature of organised criminal exploitation and "conventional" organised crime. This model has now been in place for 9 months and is proving successful, with increased knowledge shared across the branch and thus increased confidence for investigators in dealing with MSHT related matters.

During this reporting period, due to work commitments and limited resources, AGS and the PSNI have only been in a position to carry out one multi-agency cross border "day of action". This day of action also marked anti-slavery week, and consisted of safeguarding visits at suspected brothels in both jurisdictions. AGS officers were accompanied by staff from Ruhama, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) who offer support to those impacted by sex work, whilst PSNI conducted checks in conjunction with the Welcome Centre, a local charity that supports vulnerable individuals including those operating as sex workers. As a result, fifteen women were given safety information and advice. These visits prove vital in demonstrating to those involved in sex work that the police are here to help and support them, this in turn builds trust, which often results in increased reporting linked to human trafficking.

"In-person" planning and co-ordination meetings in the past have proved vital in the sharing of emerging trends in the crime areas of human trafficking and organised prostitution on both sides of border. It is recognised that human trafficking and organised prostitution are often heavily interwoven. These planning meetings are also used by AGS and the PSNI to plan for multi-agency joint days of action. These meetings must be prioritised going forward if joint cooperation and joint cross border days of action are to be maintained.

In the crime area of human trafficking and organised prostitution the rapid exchange of information between the PSNI and AGS needs to be prioritised, as it will give both police

forces the best opportunity to identify suspects and most importantly protect the vulnerable victims.

4.1 Challenges and Emerging issues

A continuing challenge when investigating MSHT related offences is the use of online platforms by traffickers. Social media, Adult Services Website (ASW's), messaging apps and other digital platforms are all methods being used to recruit, advertise, co-ordinate and exploit victims. These online operations span across international borders, making jurisdiction and digital evidence gathering more complex. It is also assessed that the dark web is being used for human trafficking.

Apart from sexual exploitation, labour exploitation is becoming more visible. There has been a rise in intelligence regarding cases of exploitation involving migrant workers. However, difficulty arises in proving coercion versus bad employment, especially for migrants whose status may be precarious.

Lack of co-operation and engagement between victims and law enforcement continues to be a significant challenge. This is usually due to fear of retaliation from traffickers, who often threaten violence against them or their families if they talk to authorities. It is also regularly linked to a distrust of law enforcement, with many victims fearing arrest, detention or deportation if they speak to police. The result of this lack of engagement with police, is assessed to be directly linked to intelligence gaps in respect of MSHT in both jurisdictions. Both AGS and the PSNI continue to try to fill these gaps by regular communication with each other on emerging trends and by communicating and engaging with other police forces, charities and NGO's across Europe and beyond.

The use of short terms leases, such as Airbnb and Booking.com is becoming a more prevalent option for traffickers, as it is easier to avoid detection from law enforcement. Landlords and Estate Agents may be complicit in this criminality, working alongside the traffickers, but it can be difficult to prove their involvement and thus prosecute them. PSNI have been working with the NCA to try and address this issue, in turn sharing all relevant information with AGS.

There continues to be a considerable number of sex workers regularly working both north and south of the border, this continuing trend adds additional concern to the extent of cross border activity by the Organised Crime Groups involved in human trafficking and organised

prostitution on the Island of Ireland. Both organisations endeavour to monitor this trend and to share information on these trends on a police-to-police basis.

4.2 Operational Activity & Results

Joint co-operation between AGS and the PSNI has taken place in this reporting period in respect of two operations, one being investigated by AGS, namely Operation PERIDOTITE, and the other is a MET investigation, Operation HAKONE which both PSNI and AGS continue to assist.

Operation one

This is an AGS investigation, relating to the alleged human trafficking of two Latvian nationals for sexual exploitation and forced criminality. Both PSNI and Latvian authorities assisted AGS with enquiries connected to this operation, following a co-ordination meeting with all those aforementioned, at Europol. In June 2025, a male suspect was arrested by AGS for an offence contrary to Section 72 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006, and detained in Monaghan Garda station. Following a direction by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, he was charged with an offence contrary to Section 4(1) of the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008 and remains on remand.

Operation two

This is a London MET Police investigation into human trafficking for sexual exploitation of Chinese women. The OCG trafficked women from China and forcing them to be sex workers in a network of brothels around London and throughout the UK. They managed their brothel network from a call centre in Canary Wharf.

Following a day of action, when several people were arrested and the call centre closed down, a phone was seized belonging to an OCG member, which led to the identification of the principal, who was previously unknown. This individual is believed to be in NI or ROI and PSNI/AGS are actively progressing a number of enquiries with a view to locating them. It is also assessed that there may be further brothels linked to the OCG in NI, which are yet to be identified and enquiries are being made to progress the matter.

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During this reporting period, the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit has recorded three hundred and forty-eight (348) referrals of persons who are potential victims of trafficking. In the same period An Garda Síochána's Human Trafficking Investigation Co-ordination Unit have recorded fifty (50). Of note, two hundred and fifty-five (255) of the three hundred and forty-eight (348) recorded by PSNI were referred to the Home Office.

In Northern Ireland, Somalian nationals continue to be the most common nationality encountered as potential victims of human trafficking, followed by Eritreans. In the Republic of Ireland, Nigerian nationals represent a significant proportion of individuals encountered who are claiming or are being considered as being potential victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, whilst Vietnamese is the main nationality in respect of criminal and labour exploitation.

5.0 Excise Fraud

Cooperation between His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and Irish Revenue Commissioners plays a key role in targeting persons and organised crime groups (OCG's) that operate in both jurisdictions and are responsible for excise fraud. HMRC and Revenue use a combination of risk analysis, profiling, intelligence, and targeted investigations and operations to act against excise fraud so that the illicit products involved may be seized and, where possible, those responsible for smuggling or supplying such products can be prosecuted and the proceeds of crime recovered. HMRC and Revenue also conduct investigations into various types of tax fraud including Value Added Tax (VAT) fraud. Multi-agency cooperation is crucial to the process of gathering evidence to support investigations, prosecutions, and other interventions. The Joint Agency Task Force's priorities and activities are kept under ongoing review to ensure that the resources available are utilised to best effect in combatting the threat that excise fraud and tax related crime pose to legitimate business, consumers, and United Kingdom (UK) and Irish Exchequers.

5.1. Challenges and Emerging Issues

The overall threat level concerning the illicit **tobacco** trade is assessed by continuous review of all available intelligence, including data available from seized products. OCG's based on the island of Ireland continue to work with transnational OCG's to facilitate smuggling and the illicit manufacturing of tobacco products on both sides of the border. The capability and adaptability of OCG's involved in the illicit tobacco trade continues to pose challenges for law enforcement agencies. Illicit tobacco smuggling continues to be a significant threat to the UK and Irish markets. The majority of the supply comes from Eastern Europe via "roll-on roll-off" (Ro-Ro) ferry freight routes, as well as UAE produced product via container and deep-sea shipping. OCG's continue to use ferry routes from Continental Europe to ROI to smuggle illicit tobacco, before transporting the goods into Northern Ireland via the land border and then onto mainland UK via ferry.

As retail prices for tobacco products in the UK and Ireland are amongst the highest in Europe, with twenty cigarettes now retailing for approximately €18 in ROI and £15 in U.K, the volume of smuggling and counterfeit production targeting the UK and ROI remains high. Intelligence indicates that OCGs continue to operate manufacturing facilities for illicit

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tobacco products on the island of Ireland. HMRC and Revenue continue to work together to investigate and combat the activities of those involved in the illicit tobacco trade.

The introduction of new legislation in 2024 in both the Republic of Ireland and the UK in relation to **vapes**, has resulted in an emerging threat of OCG's diversifying into this area. In ROI the Finance Act 2024 provides the legislative framework for the introduction of a new tax on e-liquid products. The tax will come into effect on 1st November 2025 and will apply to all e-liquids (regardless of nicotine content) which are used in e-liquid inhalation products. The tax will be charged at a single rate of €0.50 per millilitre of e-liquid product. The average price of 2 ml disposable vape tanks increased from €8.00 to €9.23 (incl. excise and VAT) and the average price of 10 ml refill cartridges increase from €5.00 to €11.15 (incl. excise and VAT).

In the UK, a ban on single use vapes came into effect on 1st June 2025. Unlike the rest of the UK, in Northern Ireland there are no civil sanctions for continuing to sell single use vapes, however, if found guilty of stocking or supplying single use vapes traders may receive a fine of up to £5000 on summary conviction in a magistrate's court. The Tobacco & Vapes Bill 2024 was introduced to the House of Commons on 5th November 2024. This bill introduces restrictions on advertising targeting young people, restrictions on packaging and flavouring, a licencing regime for retailers and enforcement action in the form of fines. The Chancellor announced the introduction of a new duty on vapes commencing October 2026. The rate will be £2.20 per 10ml of e-cig liquid. At present only VAT is applied to vapes in the U.K – the addition of duty (plus VAT on duty) will result in ROI and UK becoming two of the most expensive countries for vape users. As with any high tax product there is an increased risk of black-market growth.

Driven by price differentials between North and South **fuel smuggling** and rebated fuel laundering remain lucrative to criminal elements. The new Euromarker, Accutrace™ Plus introduced by the ROI, UK and other member states of the E.U in January 2024 has added an additional layer of defence to the rebated fuel marking regime on both sides of the border. Nevertheless, the continued practice by criminals to dump laundering waste (known as sludge dumps) predominately in the border areas of Armagh, Louth and Monaghan indicates that criminals continue in their attempt to remove the markers from rebated fuel and divert the resulting white diesel into the legitimate supply chain. From 1st April to 30th September 2025, there were twenty seven instances of sludge dumps recorded in ROI dumped along the border in Counties Louth and Monaghan. The origin of the laundered fuel found in the

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sludge dumps indicates that the laundered fuel source is NI fuel. In response to the threat of mineral oil fraud, both HMRC and Revenue have introduced sophisticated new analysis equipment capable of detecting trace elements of markers. Both jurisdictions, working together with government chemists, remain confident that the full suite of rebated fuel markers cannot be removed to an extent that they cannot be detected.

The threat of serious and organised **alcohol fraud**, involving product moving from continental EU to, and through Ireland as a whole, remains substantial. Criminal groups exploit the EU excise trade facilitation regime to move wholesale quantities of alcohol between Ireland and France utilising GB as a land bridge. Goods are removed en-route and diverted to the UK's illicit alcohol market with vehicles then travelling outbound from GB empty or substituted with surrogate goods, such as water. Upon arrival in France, the vehicle is restocked with French duty paid alcohol (which is significantly less expensive than UK duty) to replace the missing product which is then presented in lieu of the goods diverted in the UK. In addition, NI routes into GB's West Coast ports present smuggling opportunities for alcohol fraud where French duty paid product is moved under EU rules into Ireland, effectively smuggled, and through NI into GB. The ability for crime groups to utilise four ports across the island of Ireland, and enter GB through seven ports, provides ample opportunity to commit alcohol fraud without detection. The agility of these crime groups, to react quickly to border controls, has also increased recently. The likelihood of multiple crime types perpetrated by those involved in the illicit movement alcohol has also been noted and excise authorities frequently utilise long standing law enforcement partnerships to counter them when detected.

Data and intelligence sharing between HMRC and Irish Revenue assists in both quantifying the risk and provides interdiction opportunities. Joint working across HMRC to intercept vehicles at UK ports, along with Border Force and police, has resulted in significant seizures and is known to frustrate the crime groups involved and continued inter-agency collaboration is critical if we are to effectively respond to the threat of serious and organised alcohol fraud and the revenue lost to criminality as a result.

5.2 Operational Activity & Results

Operation One (HMRC)

On 23rd May 2025, UK Border Force (UKBF) Officers were on duty at Victoria Terminal 4, Belfast Port, where they identified an HGV hauling a 40-foot refrigerated trailer, waiting to board an outbound ferry to Cairnryan. UKBF Officers spoke to the Bulgarian driver and passenger who stated that they had travelled by ferry from France into Republic of Ireland, making a delivery in County Kildare, before travelling northwards to Belfast, they advised the trailer was currently empty, and they were travelling to mainland UK where they would go to Hull, in order to get another ferry back to mainland Europe. This route did not make commercial sense.

The HGV and accompanying vehicle were detained to carry out a search. UKBF identified a concealment believed to contain tobacco products and contacted HMRC. The concealed hide in the roof of the refrigerated trailer was sealed off from the rest of the trailer and appeared to be constructed in a manner to make it extremely difficult to be detected or accessed by any law enforcement agency. Officers found a commercial quantity of Dunhill branded cigarettes that were packaged into large bales wrapped in plastic in the hollow section between the ceiling and the roof of the trailer.

Checks established that the refrigerated trailer was transported on ferry crossings from Belfast to Cairnryan on nine different occasions and on four of these, was being hauled by the seized HGV. In addition, on each of these nine occasions, the tractor unit hauling this trailer made an onward ferry journey from Hull to Rotterdam. As the vehicle was not detected on these journeys, it is unknown whether it was transporting any illicit goods, but given the sophistication of the concealed hide and the level of investment, in terms of time and money, that would have been required to manufacture and operate this concealment it is suspected that these previous journeys were also used to transport illicit commodities and indicate a long running criminal operation. In total 616,840 non-UK duty paid cigarettes, the cab and trailer were seized with an estimated revenue evaded is £337,207.

Both Bulgarian nationals were arrested and interviewed under caution. They were subsequently charged for the fraudulent evasion of customs duty chargeable on goods, fraudulent evasion of VAT and being in possession of articles for use in fraud. Bail was refused and they are currently remanded in custody awaiting indictment.

Information has been shared with Revenue and enquires are ongoing with Bulgarian law enforcement partners.

Operation Two (Revenue)

In March 2025, Revenue officers detected three pallets of raw tobacco consigned from a tobacco company in Italy to a courier company in County Westmeath. In an attempt to establish if the tobacco was to be used in the illicit production of cigarettes, Revenue initiated a surveillance operation. The pallets were collected by the consigned courier company where it was housed for five days. The consignment was then collected by a transport company also based in Westmeath, travelled to the company depot before travelling to a courier company in County Dublin. The next day, the consignment travelled Northbound towards the border and it is believed the consignment left the jurisdiction on the same evening. A further two consignments were identified and seized by Revenue officers in the following weeks. Following a series of interviews with the courier and transport companies, it was established that the raw tobacco consignments were destined to travel to N.I with their final destination identified as a storage unit in the United Kingdom. It is believed the majority of Revenue raw tobacco detections and seizures from 2023 to 2025 are linked, with the modus operandi being the goods consigned from Italy to Ireland, to be moved into Northern Ireland and across to Great Britain.

A meeting between Revenue and the Manchester and Belfast teams of HMRC, was held in Dublin in May 2025 to discuss the information gathered from the investigation into raw tobacco seizures in IE, as all consignments were destined for GB and were likely transiting through Northern Ireland. HMRC established links based on the intelligence shared to an individual in the U.K with links to London and Manchester. In August 2025, further two pallets were detected consigned from the same company in Italy. Revenue again initiated a surveillance operation and identified that the pallets moved to two locations in ROI before again leaving the jurisdiction into N.I. Revenue identified the consignment booking details, both pallets were again destined for GB. It is now believed the tobacco consignments are destined for the U.K and are being used to make shisha. Revenue continue to engage with HMRC in relation to Raw Tobacco detections as HMRC further develop the operations in the full identification of the actors involved.

Operation Three (Revenue)

In mid-April 2025, on foot of routine risk profiling Revenue identified three container loads (approx. 66,000kg) of bentonite arriving at Dublin port. Bentonite is a substance which can be used in the fuel laundering process, in an attempt to remove the prescribed markers added to reduced rate fuel. The consignee was a company with a common director to a fuel company, based in County Armagh, who is adversely known to both Revenue and HMRC for excise fraud (both Oils and Tobacco). One of the container loads was collected by a vehicle registered to a separate, unrelated ROI based company, this company has historically been involved in fuel fraud with seizures of marked mineral oil and apparatus typically used in fuel laundering, recorded against both company and director. The director, of this ROI company has historic links to the illicit fuel trade and intelligence suggests the director is also involved in the facilitation of large scale cigarette smuggling. Surveillance deployed indicated the containers were picked up separately by vehicles registered to the ROI company and loaded into a UK registered lorry. It is suspected the truck and the bentonite cargo may have travelled to Northern Ireland. This intelligence was shared with HMRC colleagues. The consignment of bentonite and its use in the laundering of fuel, the volume of product, the N.I consignee company and its director and the ROI company engaged to move the product, strongly indicates cross border fuel fraud and has identified potential actors involved in this illicit activity. Revenue and HMRC continue to collaborate in relation to such movements. Investigations are ongoing.

Operation Four (Revenue)

Numerous alcohol seizures at Dublin Port in 2025 have been linked to an ongoing joint investigation into a suspected large-scale alcohol smuggling operation between Europe, Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Goods manifested as either “water” or “energy drinks” are consigned to businesses in ROI, who claim no association with the goods. Both Revenue and HMRC suspect that these goods are destined to travel towards the border area to be broken down into smaller consignments and smuggled to the NI/GB market. Revenue and HMRC are involved in regular communication in attempts to disrupt and halt this illicit activity. From 1st April to 30th September 2025 there have been five seizures at Dublin Port, linked to this investigation, with 82,923 litres of wine seized in one consignment, valued at approximately €178,395, which represents a potential loss to the exchequer of €95,472 and four consignments of beer, totalling 98,004 litres with a combined value of €481,926, representing a potential loss to the exchequer of €183,023.

6.0 Organised Immigration Crime

UK Home Office Immigration Enforcement (HOIE) and An Garda Síochána – Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) work closely together to combat the threat of Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) posed by those seeking to exploit the Common Travel Area (CTA). This strong partnership includes joint operations, intelligence sharing, and coordinated training initiatives, enabling both organisations to deepen their understanding of each other's tactics and legal frameworks. Such collaboration not only enhances the security of our shared external border but also reflects the enduring and trusted relationship between the two nations.

The Common Travel Area (CTA) shared between Ireland and the United Kingdom delivers significant economic, cultural, and social benefits, enabling British and Irish citizens to live, work, and travel freely across both jurisdictions. However, this openness also creates opportunities for exploitation by organised criminal groups, who use the border to facilitate and enable various forms of criminality, including organised immigration crime.

Organised immigration crime groups exploit vulnerabilities in border security through sophisticated and well-coordinated operations. These networks often identify and target weak points to facilitate the smuggling of people across international borders, frequently using fraudulent documentation to enable illegal entry. They demonstrate a high degree of adaptability, quickly responding to changes in UK and Irish immigration policies by developing new routes and methods to evade detection. Leveraging extensive international networks, these groups are able to move individuals through multiple countries, posing significant challenges for law enforcement agencies seeking to track and disrupt their activities.

6.1 Challenges and Emerging Issues

There has been an overall increase in organised immigration crime activity impacting the United Kingdom and Ireland, with greater sophistication in methodology enabling OCG's to move greater numbers of migrants.

Opportunities to abuse the CTA have increased since the UK left the European Union in January 2020, and immigration offenders are encountered by authorities at ports and airports on a daily basis. The introduction of new and additional ferry routes between

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mainland Europe and Ireland has opened up new avenues for OCG's involved in smuggling both commodities and people.

Freight traffic on the island of Ireland has increased significantly, partly as a result of the new crossings and partly due to displacement of freight through Irish ports due to sustained disruption work, and the prevailing issue of small boat crossings at ports in the south of England, such as Dover. Law enforcement and partner agencies in Northern Ireland and ROI continue to work together to identify and tackle the emerging threats linked to these routes.

6.2 Operational Activity & Results

Operation One

An Organised Crime Group originating from Northern Ireland was identified in December 2024, facilitating Albanian Nationals into Ireland by dangerously concealing them in the rear of Heavy Goods Vehicles and subsequently onwards into the United Kingdom via abuse of the Common Travel Area.

An Irish National was arrested at Loch Ryan Port in Scotland in December 2024, following the detection and a criminal investigation was launched in both jurisdictions to establish evidence against the wider OCG and to implement a subsequent criminal justice strategy. The Irish National was charged with assisting unlawful Immigration and subsequently remanded into custody. Subsequently, a number of residential searches were conducted within the border region of Northern Ireland targeting criminal elements and a full file has now been presented to the Crown Office and Prosecutor Fiscal Service in Scotland.

Operation Two

In April 2025, authorities from the United Kingdom supported by colleagues from Ireland assisted a criminal investigation into an identified Organised Crime Group responsible for facilitating Afghani and Indian nationals unlawfully entering with no permission into the United Kingdom via Ireland and subsequent abuse of the Common Travel Area. Throughout this reporting period authorities have collaborated to progress the criminal investigation, through making arrests of suspects and co-ordination of cross-border evidence sharing.

Operation Three

In June 2025, authorities in Ireland arrested and detained a suspected OCG member in Dublin in relation to organised immigration crime offences and a subsequent criminal justice strategy has been implemented. In February 2025, operational activity was conducted at an identified residential property in the Dublin area, Ireland. Material of evidential value was seized, which included mobile devices during the search operation. A criminal investigation conducted by the Garda National Immigration Bureau identified a Nigerian national, believed to be involved in a conspiracy with a wider identified criminal organisation, responsible for facilitating the illegal entry of persons into the Irish State.

The principal target of this ongoing criminal investigation had a number of links to the Greater Manchester area of the United Kingdom. GNIB worked closely with the UK Home Office to conduct further investigative enquiries. UK authorities also assisted GNIB by identifying illicit finances associated to the OCG and linked businesses operating from within the UK. Through the sharing of intelligence, authorities identified smuggling routes used by the OCG, to travel to the EU and onwards to Nigeria. The criminal activities of the OCG are centered on the use of imposters using fraudulently obtained, genuine Irish and UK passports to facilitate illegal immigration of Nigerian nationals into Ireland.

Operation Four

In May 2025, a three day high-visibility policing operation at various CTA ports and airports within the United Kingdom identified and detected various criminality involving cross-border illegal immigration. Thirty-three (33) people were arrested for various immigration offences, various false identity documents were seized, £17,000 of suspected criminal cash was seized and subsequently forfeited. A heavy goods vehicle was seized in relation to an unpaid fine of £144,000 in connection to people smuggling offences. This operation was supported by various UK and Ireland Law Enforcement Agencies.

Operation Five

Since October 2023, Ireland has identified an emerging trend in the increase of non-nationals (of varied non-EEA nationalities) abusing the CTA by illegally crossing the land boundary from Northern Ireland. The operation specifically examines abuses of the CTA by way of implementing immigration checks on passengers travelling between NI and the ROI via public and / or private transport routes. The operation involves the deployment of GNIB officers in County Louth, near the ROI / NI Land Boundary.

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Vehicle checkpoint operations on the M1 motorway resulted in the inspection of public and private forms of transport and the detection of a significant number of non-nationals entering Ireland without the requisite visas or identity documents. These individuals were refused leave to land in Ireland.

7.0 Conclusion

Now in its tenth year, the working partnerships and collaboration set out under the framework of the Joint Agency Task Force continue to strengthen and evolve. This report highlights key multilateral partnership working as individual agencies work against their shared strategic objectives, every day.

Differing legislative frameworks in the relevant jurisdictions continue to be an issue that partners approach with a positive and constructive attitude. Similarly, the processes for sharing information of the standard required for prosecution are well established and are facilitating information exchange on a daily basis. Exploitation of the Common Travel Area by criminal groups and associated freedom of movement into and out of GB and the EU is a consistent feature across all six priority areas that the JATF is mandated to tackle.

Partners undertaking in depth investigations into criminal organisations are regularly reminded that modern Organised Crime Groups are agile, well-funded and ruthless in their pursuit of profits at any cost. New technology is constantly being employed to both mask the actions of senior group members, as well as attempting to conceal the money derived as a result. Notwithstanding the challenges, JATF continues to showcase what can be achieved by partners working collaboratively towards shared challenges and goals.

Glossary

AGS	An Garda Síochána
ANPR	Automated Number Plate Recognition
CAB	Criminal Assets Bureau
CTA	Common Travel Area
EU	European Union
EUROPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
FIU	Financial Intelligence Unit
JATF	Joint Agency Task Force
GNBCI	Garda National Bureau of Criminal Investigation
GNDOCB	Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau
GNECB	Garda National Economic Crime Bureau
GNIB	Garda National Immigration Bureau
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs
HTICU	Human Trafficking Investigation and Co Ordination Unit, An Garda Síochána
IBCs	Intermediate Bulk Containers
ILOR	International Letter of Request
LEA	Law Enforcement Agency
MGO	Marked Gas Oil
MOCG	Mobile Organised Crime Group
MSHTU	Modern Slavery Human Trafficking Unit of PSNI
NCA	National Crime Agency (UK)
NI	Northern Ireland
OCG	Organised Crime Group
PPS	Public Prosecution Service
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
ROI	Republic of Ireland
RLP	Revenue Loss Prevented
SIO	Senior Investigating Officer
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
VAT	Value Added Tax