



**OPERATION GRAFTON
BUSINESS NEWS
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Title:	OPERATION GRAFTON BULLETIN
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Summary:	Summary of Operation Grafton activities in March 2005
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Issue **13**

Period **March 2005**

Foreword by Detective Inspector Paul E DOUGLAS

Welcome to the thirteenth issue of our Operation GRAFTON bulletin for the industry. As mentioned previously, all MPS documentation is written in order to comply with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, 2000. Accordingly, this Bulletin reflects the terms being applied corporately within the MPS, which are required in order to adhere to this legislation. Once again I have annotated this issue as having no restriction on publication under this Act.

Just to remind you that the Operation GRAFTON terms of reference are: -

- *Any allegation where the value of property stolen, or attempted to be stolen, is in excess of **£10,000** and where*
- *There is a connection with Heathrow Airport*

The £10,000 base figure is effective for crimes occurring post 1st January 2005.

Information highlighted in this bulletin will once again not disclose any details of Operation Grafton tactics; however if you have information about any of the crimes listed please do not hesitate to contact us on the above telephone number.

Details of all previous Operation Grafton bulletins for the industry can now be found at www.aimss.info.

Court Success –

- Five men have admitted robbery charges, after they were arrested following a joint initiative between Operation Grafton and the Metropolitan Police's Central Task Force.

Operation Merwin was set up last year to investigate an established team of criminals who over a long period of time had targeted high value warehouse premises around Heathrow Airport, Surrey and Thames Valley. This was a complex operation, which ran over several months involved working in close liaison with county forces.

On Boxing Day 2004, the Central Task Force supported by Operation Grafton mounted an armed operation involving the MPS and Thames Valley Police specialist firearms units.

On 28 December 2004, officers arrested five males wearing balaclavas as they attempted to force entry to a high-value warehouse in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire that at the time contained multi-million pounds worth of computer equipment and software.

The five men, 32-year-old Billy Hearne, 35-year-old Darren Chadband, 28-year-old Lee Bannister 42-year-old Daniel Crawley and 24-year-old Frank Stevens, appeared at Aylesbury Crown Court on Friday 4 March 2005, where they pleaded guilty to all offences. Sentencing is awaited.

CRIMES

- On 13th March 2005, suspects gained access to a warehouse premise in Ruislip by knocking a hole through a wall. They then stole 200 flat screen monitors. Grafton enquiries indicate that this may be a part of a linked series. Operation Grafton has asked local officers to reopen the investigation
- Armed Robbery/Aggravated Burglary on a warehouse premises in Maidstone, Kent. Property stolen - £250,000 of flash memory, USB's and computer SD RAM. At approximately 19:00 hrs, a lone female at the premises was locking up. When she closed the front door, a male in a balaclava holding an automatic pistol approached her. Having been threatened, she was taken back inside and made to 'unset' the alarm. The assailant then demanded access to secure cages containing stock. The employee does not normally have any access to this area, or the associated keys. Remarkably, she saw a set of keys in the ignition of a forklift truck and the cages were opened. Two other suspects subsequently joined them from outside.

The victim was then taken into an office and tied with plastic cable ties. Having managed to free herself she left the building and ran to a nearby venue where she raised the alarm. Local officers attended and enquiries revealed that a white Transit van had been seen "cruising" the locality prior to the offence. Maidstone Police subsequently had cause to stop a Peugeot motor vehicle containing three occupants. They arrested the driver who was disqualified from driving and on searching the vehicle found a balaclava and Ford car key. All persons were then arrested and taken to Maidstone Police Station.

CRIMES OF INTEREST

- Following the £52million diamond robbery at Schipol Airport, which happened on the 26th February 2005, DI Douglas has been acting as a liaison between Operation Grafton and the Dutch investigating team.
- On 3rd March 2005, during the early hours, a lorry hijack occurred on a vehicle parked overnight in a street adjacent to the Altham Industrial Estate in Accrington, Lancashire. The victim was carrying 890 Fujitsu Siemens Notepads valued at £250,000. He was parked up and asleep at the time. His passenger side window was smashed and three masked suspects armed with knives entered the cab. The victim had a pillow- case put over his head and he was bundled into the boot of a hatchback car. He was then driven around for several hours before being released in Bury, Manchester. The lorry was later found in Wigan, with the tractor unit burnt out and the trailer partially damaged.
- On 9th March 2005, £7k worth of Fujitsu cameras were stolen from a Feltham freight forwarder at Heathrow. This company has been the “victim” of three similar offences in the last three months.
- Overnight 6-7th March 2005 a driver parked his loaded trailer in Colthorp Lane, Thatcham. The driver disconnected the trailer and collected an empty trailer for return journey to Belgium. On the 7th March, staff attended the site to discover that the trailer, which had been left parked, was missing. The plain white refrigerated trailer contained 3 pallets of perfume and £3.7 million worth of pharmaceuticals.
- On 15/16th March 2005, £100k of whisky was hijacked from a lorry near Glasgow Airport after the victims’ vehicle was blocked in on a roundabout. Two suspects entered the cab and threatened the driver with a handgun. The driver was then forced into the foot well of the passenger side of the vehicle. The vehicle was driven a short distance before the victim was forced at gunpoint into the rear of a second vehicle. He was subsequently bundled back into his own cab and tied up. A call was then made by one of the suspects using the victims mobile to a person listed on the victims phone telling him where the victim had been abandoned. Operation Grafton is assisting the OIC with his line of enquiry.

OPERATIONS

- Operation Grafton is currently engaged in a number of ongoing operations.

CRIME ENQUIRIES

- Operation Grafton is continuing to investigate the theft of children’s ‘designer’ clothing from a Slough trading estate. If you have any information regarding this matter please contact us on the number below. The company has also been the subject of a subsequent attempt, which was unsuccessful following a review by the company of its security.

- Operation Grafton is conducting enquiries into an apparent high value shipment, which was sent by a Slough based courier to Dubai as this was subsequently found to have been substituted for with bags of flour.
- Operation Grafton has for the first time utilised all its home and international contacts in order to circulate an appeal for Surrey Police with regards to the Danny Blackett murder (Op OREGANO). This individual had links to the Heathrow freight trade. Again, if you have any information regarding this incident and have not already spoken to the incident room, please contact us on the details below and we will assist accordingly.

MISCELLANEOUS

- **Work has continued with regards to the Operation Grafton Conference which will take place at Heathrow on the 12th / 13th May 2005. Further information can be obtained via tanya.panchal@met.police.uk. The conference will look at UK, European and international aspects of freight related. It will also highlight the expansion of the Grafton team, as it becomes the Fifth Scotland Yard 'Flying Squad' whilst retaining a pure freight crime remit.**
- It was also announced this week that Operation Grafton is through to the final selection phase of the Public Service Sector Awards. Winners will be identified at a formal function in April.
- Operation Grafton gave a presentation to the Special Branch National Ports Freight conference in Birmingham this month. It was also responsible reorganising the formation and future function of this group in liaison with a representative from the National Coordinator of Ports Policing office.
- HMCE have now agreed to place an intelligence officer from the crime team permanently within the Grafton team.
- An officer from US Customs CSI spent a day at the Grafton offices this month. Grafton has as a result now opened direct links to Miami Airport.
- In addition to linking to 'Transport for Canada' Grafton has also now linked into the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
- Operation Grafton officers gave a presentation to the Freight Forwarders International (FFI) security group this month.

CRIME PREVENTION

- **Operation Grafton crime prevention officers acting under the auspices of the Airfreight Industry Minimum Security Standards for cargo (AIMSS) have now certified 48 premises as meeting the standards required. If you require more information about this scheme please visit the www.aimss.info website where you can also obtain a self-assessment pack on line without cost.**

OPERATION GRAFTON SUMMARY

- If you require further information about any of the items contained within this issue please contact DI Paul Douglas on the number below or at the email address given. In addition, if you have information about the any of the above crimes or any other Grafton offences please contact us at: -

Tel: - 0208 246 9972/3

Email: - operation.grafton@met.police.uk

Alternatively you can call Crime Stoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111. All calls will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Thank you for your continued support.

**Paul E DOUGLAS
Detective Inspector
OPERATION GRAFTON**