

News story: People smuggler from Newport jailed for 5 years

Adriano Bettoja-Allen, a British national aged 37, was sentenced at Blackfriars Crown Court on Thursday 14 December after pleading guilty to 2 offences of assisting illegal immigration which happened on 2 October and 9 October 2016 at Calais and Coquelles ports.

Sentenced alongside Bettoja-Allen for 1 count of the same offence was 50-year-old Wendy Thomas, also British, who was his co-conspirator in the Coquelles smuggling attempt. She received a jail sentence of 2 years and 9 months having also admitted the offence. Bettoja-Allen's wife Jeanette, aged 49 and from the Philippines, was linked to the Calais incident and was sentenced to 11 months, suspended for 2 years, 150 hours unpaid work, and a curfew. She pleaded guilty to assisting illegal immigration 3 days into her trial.

The Calais incident was uncovered after the arrest of Dawood Shahbeik at St Pancras International station on 2 October 2016. Shahbeik, a British national, was questioned and had his luggage searched by Border Force after arriving on the Eurostar from Calais. Examination of his mobile phone revealed several suspicious text messages referring to an individual who had been transported to a house in Newport. The luggage search also revealed a damaged Iranian passport and a large amount of cash. Shahbeik was arrested on suspicion of facilitating illegal immigration, an offence which he later admitted*.

One week after the Calais incident on 9 October, a second people smuggling attempt was identified, this time at the UK juxtaposed controls in Coquelles. On this occasion, Border Force officers stopped and searched a car driven by Wendy Thomas. A large black holdall covered by pillows and a large soft toy was discovered filling the entire boot space. When Thomas was asked what was inside she claimed it contained towels. When an officer unzipped the bag, two women were discovered lying side by side. Both were unresponsive and were taken to hospital for medical attention before being handed to the French authorities.

Officers then opened the rear passenger door and found a man hiding underneath two cushions and quilt spread across the car covering the foot wells. The man subsequently claimed to be an Iranian national and he was handed to the French authorities to be removed from the UK control zone. Thomas was arrested on suspicion of facilitating illegal immigration.

Both cases were passed to Immigration Enforcement Criminal and Financial Investigation officers.

Analysis of mobile phones belonging to Shahbeik and Thomas found that both of them had been in regular contact with Adriano Bettoja-Allen.

Bettoja-Allen and his wife Jeanette were both arrested and further enquiries revealed they had travelled through Calais on 2 October having earlier met up with Shahbeik in Dunkirk. When questioned about the text messages exchanged with Shahbeik the pair initially claimed that they referred to a soft toy which they had carried back to the UK on his behalf.

Checks also confirmed Thomas and Adriano Bettoja-Allen had travelled in separate vehicles from Folkestone to Coquelles on the same Eurotunnel train on 8 October. Bettoja-Allen returned to the UK alone the next day less than 2 hours after Thomas had been stopped by Border Force. Financial checks also confirmed a large cash deposit into Thomas' bank account in September 2016.

Assistant Director David Fairclough, from the CFI team, said:

Adriano Bettoja-Allen was revealed by our investigations to be the common link between what initially appeared to be unconnected incidents. Our investigations showed that far from being opportunistic attempts to undermine the UK's border controls, the offences had been carefully planned. The fact that two women ended up in hospital demonstrates the dangerous lengths people smugglers will go to.

We work closely with Border Force colleagues to rigorously investigate allegations of immigration related criminality. This case should serve as a warning to anyone tempted to get involved with this kind of criminality. We will catch you, and put you before the courts.

Anyone with information about suspected immigration abuse can contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 anonymously or visit the [crimestoppers](https://www.crimestoppers.co.uk/) website.

*Dawood Shahbiek pleaded guilty to assisting illegal immigration and was sentenced at Blackfriars Crown Court in May 2017 to 18 months imprisonment.

[Press release: Pig keepers warned not to feed kitchen scraps to pigs due to African swine fever risk](#)

The warning comes after the risk level of African swine fever entering the UK was raised over the summer following spread of the disease in Eastern and Central Europe.

There has never been a case of African swine fever in the UK and it does not

affect humans, but it is potentially fatal to pigs. If the disease were to reach the UK it could have a devastating effect on our export market and would also mean the humane culling of pigs on infected premises to prevent further spread.

Keepers are being reminded that it is illegal to feed catering waste of any description or domestic food waste to farm animals in the UK, including pigs kept as pets, as some of the outbreaks of African swine fever in Europe have been attributed to wild boar or domestic pigs consuming contaminated pork or pork products. Viruses such as foot and mouth disease could also be introduced to the UK through food products. This includes food from vegetarian kitchens, as there is still a risk of cross contamination from products of animal origin such as milk.

Strict hygiene measures are essential in preventing disease – people should not take meat or meat products into areas where pigs are kept and should only eat food in designated areas such as staff rooms or the farm kitchen. Pig keepers, farm staff and anyone in contact with pigs should wash their hands before and after eating or preparing food.

UK Chief Veterinary Officer Nigel Gibbens said:

The introduction of African swine fever would have an enormous impact on our pig industry. No matter how many pigs you keep, you need to be aware of the potential consequences of feeding waste food to your animals. Not only is it illegal, but you run the risk of spreading disease which could be fatal to your livestock.

You can purchase a range of pig foods from your local agricultural merchant that can be safely fed to your pigs and which is the most reliable way of giving them a balanced diet. Good biosecurity is also essential for minimising disease risk, such as providing dedicated clothing and boots for workers and preventing vehicles which may be contaminated from entering pig premises.

The UK suffered the consequences of pigs being fed illegal waste food in the foot and mouth disease outbreak in 2001. That outbreak is thought to have originated from pigs being fed catering waste containing the virus, which came from outside the UK. The outbreak resulted in the destruction of more than 10 million cattle and sheep and cost the UK many millions of pounds.

Chief Executive of the National Pig Association, Dr Zoe Davies, said:

The health of our pigs is fundamentally important to our sector. A notifiable disease outbreak would not only needlessly result in the loss of many pigs and annihilate our burgeoning export market, but would significantly impact on countless families, their staff, local businesses and tourism for months. Feeding illegal food waste, however harmless it might seem at the time, is just not worth the risk.

1. This press release is issued jointly by the Animal and Plant Health Agency, The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Welsh Government, Scottish Government, The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Northern Ireland, The National Pig Association, The British Pig Association, The Pig Veterinary Society, The British Veterinary Association and Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) Pork.
 2. [EU-wide animal by-product legislation](#) states that feeding farmed animals with catering waste or feed material containing, or derived from, catering waste is illegal. Doing so can result in prosecution.
 3. Fruit and vegetable material that originated outside the kitchen, which has never entered the kitchen and which has not come into contact with material of animal origin can be fed, such as vegetables grown in domestic gardens. Some commercial food waste can also be fed if it has undergone the correct animal by-products processing and meets the requirements of the [Feed Hygiene Regulation](#). The safest option if you are in doubt is not to feed any food waste to your animals.
 4. [More information about African swine fever and how to spot it](#). Additional information can be found on [AHDB Pork's website](#). If you suspect African swine fever you should notify [the Animal and Plant Health Agency](#) immediately.
 5. For more information, contact Defra press office on 020 8225 7618 or out of hours on 0345 051 8486.
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[Press release: Next generation Road Communications Network](#)

The Government company has let the contract for the next generation road communications network which will help reduce congestion, make journeys more reliable, and help drivers who get into difficulty.

The National Roads Telecommunications Service (NRTS) connects the company's seven regional control centres, the national traffic operations centre and the 30,000 roadside technology assets including message signs, CCTV cameras and emergency roadside telephones.

Today, 18 December 2017, Highways England has announced the award of the £450 million second NRTS contract, to telent Technology Services Ltd.

Chief Information Officer at Highways England, Tony Malone said:

Safety is at the heart of everything we do and this network, the central nervous system for England's motorways, enables us to operate safe roads. We are pleased to be working with telent Technology Services to deliver the reliability, resilience and

innovation that will enable us to keep drivers safe and informed on our roads.

The 30,000-plus items of on road technology equipment for which Highways England is responsible, include 3,327 CCTV cameras, 3,774 message signs, 229 weather stations and 7,155 SOS phones. The network enables traffic information services to provide accurate, real-time travel information to drivers and travel news providers. The message signs help warn drivers of potential hazards and display real-time journey information.

The new service will renew equipment and deliver a service that will provide an open, flexible and scalable telecommunications network to meet the future needs of the business; it will also enable and support Highways England in the development of innovative services such as 'connected vehicles' and 5G.

Additionally the technology will continue to underpin the development and operation of the smart motorway and expressway programmes that are central to the modernisation of England's motorways and will help ensure the network continue to drive economic growth and prosperity.

The new contract will run from 16 March 2018 for 7 years.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Extra lanes to open before Christmas on Manchester smart motorway](#)

Highways England is opening a permanent fourth lane in each direction between junctions 18 and 20 of the M62 as part of a phased opening of the Manchester smart motorway scheme – increasing capacity on one of England's busiest stretches of motorway by a third.

Roadworks will be removed from the eastbound carriageway tonight (Monday 18 December 2017) and from the westbound carriageway tomorrow night (Tuesday 19 December 2017).

New electronic signs will also be switched on along this section of the M62 as well as on the M60 between junctions 8 and 10 near the Trafford Centre, providing drivers with journey time updates and details on incidents.

The opening of ten miles of extra lanes on the M62 are among almost 400 miles of roadworks across England being lifted or completed by Highways England in time for the Christmas getaway.

Almost 99 per cent of motorways and major A roads will be roadworks-free, meaning people travelling to meet up with families and friends can more easily reach their destinations.

Jon Stokes, Senior Project Manager at Highways England, said:

The extra lanes on the M62 will provide a significant increase in capacity on the busy stretch of motorway between Greater Manchester and Yorkshire, benefitting the 180,000 drivers who use the route every day.

We're now at a stage where we can open the extra lanes in time to benefit both Christmas shoppers and people travelling to visit family and friends over the festive season.

Nearly 600 people are currently working to complete the smart motorway and we will open each section along the route as soon as possible, improving drivers' journeys and supporting the economy.

Variable speed limits will be introduced on the M62 (junctions 18 to 20) and the M60 (junctions 8 to 10) in early 2018 which will automatically change in response to the flow of traffic. The speed limit will remain at 50mph while the new technology is being fine-tuned.

Construction work will continue between junctions 10 and 18 on the M60 in 2018 to complete the installation of over 350 electronic signs, over 100 traffic sensors and 50 CCTV cameras.

Resurfacing work will also take place along the entire smart motorway route using overnight carriageway closures. The project is due to be completed by summer 2018.

The scheme is Highways England's most complex smart motorway project, affecting the second busiest motorway in the country and covering 13 junctions – an average of one junction every 1.4 miles.

The full scheme stretches 17 miles between junction 8 of the M60 near Sale and junction 20 of the M62 near Rochdale.

More details on the Manchester smart motorway scheme can be found on the [scheme website](#).

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[News story: Defence Secretary and O2 team up for 2000th signing of Armed Forces Covenant](#)

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and O2 Chief Executive Mark Evans sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

The news comes after a record breaking year for the Armed Forces Covenant with more employers signing up in a single year than ever before.

O2 is the latest employer to sign the Armed Forces Covenant, bringing the total number of signatories up to 2,000. Today, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and O2's CEO Mark Evans co-signed the Covenant at a ceremony in London. The Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2017 by the Ministry of Defence was also published today, looking back at the achievements of this year.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation to those who serve or who have served, and their families, which says we will do all we can to ensure they are treated fairly and are not disadvantaged in their day-to-day lives.

Among O2's pledges of support for members of the Armed Forces and their families, O2 is offering paid leave for Reservists to complete their annual training as well as suspension of their mobile phone contracts in the event of deployment.

As part of their pledge to support Veterans and Cadets, O2 are offering them access to their WAYRA initiative. WAYRA is a world-leading start-up accelerator programme which takes between nine and 12 entrepreneurs for a nine month period in London, Oldham, and Birmingham to develop their business ideas.

By signing the Armed Forces Covenant, O2 joins large and small organisations

across the country who are helping to ensure that current and ex-Forces personnel and their families get a fair deal when accessing goods and services as well as equal opportunity when transitioning to civilian jobs.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood:

Britain prides itself on the professionalism of our Armed Forces, who are the best in the world. The transferrable skills they take into civilian life are phenomenal. They are natural leaders, can work in a team, are disciplined, reliable, committed, brave and extremely well trained. These attributes are not lost when veterans hand in their uniform for the last time, and I would encourage any organisation to reflect on the value veterans can bring to their business.

Since 2013, the number of employers turning their pledges into positive initiatives for the Forces through the Armed Forces Covenant has doubled every year. The Covenant has leveraged growing support from companies in many sectors such as education, manufacturing, construction, arts, entertainment, and recreation, to name but a few. From supermarkets to banks to football clubs and charities, the Covenant is also attracting wide support from companies of all sizes. The achievements of the Armed Forces Covenant over the last twelve months are set out in the 2017 annual report and include:

- Fairer mobile phone contracts, freezing the accounts of Armed Forces personnel and their families posted overseas and removing cancellation fees
- Better deals in motor insurance, allowing personnel to keep their no claims bonuses and avoid cancellation fees when posted overseas at short notice
- Better access to banking, such as savings accounts to Service families posted overseas
- Tackling commercial disadvantage previously experienced by the Armed Forces community in relation to credit rating and access to mortgages on offer, allowing Service personnel posted overseas or in the UK to rent out their homes without having to switch to a 'buy to let' mortgage and incurring additional fees.
- Over 12,800 payments and £193 million advanced to Service Personnel through the Forces Help To Buy scheme, helping the Armed Forces community get on the property ladder
- Committing over £22.5 million of Service Pupil Premium funding to

benefit over 75,000 eligible pupils from Armed Forces families in primary and secondary schools.

- Employer networks in a wide range of sectors to support Service leavers through their transition to new careers.
- Better access to mentoring, work placements and employment opportunities for personnel leaving the Services
- Increased funding and sponsorship of military charities and sports events such as the Invictus Games
- Flexible paid or unpaid leave for mobilised Reservists
- Employment support for Veterans, Reservists, Service spouses and partners, as well as support for Cadets
- Discounts and special deals for individuals and their families

The Armed Forces Covenant delivery partners include businesses and trade bodies, charities and community organisations, local authorities and government departments. Signatories tailor their own pledges to support the Armed Forces community and implement these promises through their choice of policies, services, and projects.