

**IN THE CROWN COURT
SITTING AT WOOLWICH:**

R

-v-

**(1) TYRONE GORDON
(2) RYAN STEADMAN**

**SENTENCING REMARKS
OF
HIS HONOUR JUDGE GROUT**

1. Tyrone Gordon and Ryan Steadman, I must sentence you for your involvement in a conspiracy to import cocaine, which is reflected by count 1 on the indictment, and a conspiracy to import heroin, which is reflected by count 2 on the indictment. You were both found guilty of these offences by the unanimous verdicts of the jury, following a 9-week trial, on 4 June 2024. Moreover, you, Tyrone Gordon, were found guilty of possession with intent to supply cocaine (count 3) and offering to supply cocaine (count 4).
2. There is a third defendant who falls to be sentenced for his involvement in the conspiracy to import cocaine (count 1), namely Jack Williams. He pleaded guilty to this offence on 15 March 2024. For reasons which it is unnecessary to go into, it has not been possible to sentence Mr Williams today and so, whilst it would have been preferable to sentence you altogether, I am content to sentence the two of you separately in circumstances where (a) I heard the evidence at trial and (b) arranging a future date

at which all counsel can be present will incur a significant delay in you being sentenced which I do not consider to be fair.

3. No application is made for a pre-sentence report in either of your cases and I am satisfied that it is appropriate to sentence you both without one.

The Facts

4. Save where I indicate otherwise, I am sure of the following facts which are consistent with the verdicts of the jury.

Count 1

5. The two of you, along with others known and unknown, participated in an enterprise to import cocaine from Brazil aboard Air Europa flights which were bound for London Gatwick Airport via Madrid. Suitcases loaded with cocaine would be checked in at Sao Paulo Airport, but the passengers would not ultimately seek to collect their luggage once they arrived at London Gatwick. Rather, once the aircraft had landed, corrupt baggage handlers working at London Gatwick would seek to identify and offload the luggage, removing it from the airport using company vehicles in order to avoid it being checked by airport security or customs officials. The plan was audacious but successful, albeit not as successful as you would have liked.
6. The prosecution case, at trial, was that you, Tyrone Gordon, were at the top of the tree of the conspiracy, with contacts in South America who would ensure that the drugs were loaded aboard the various flights. You then, it was said, had overall control of what would happen to the drugs once they arrived in the UK. During the relevant period, you controlled an Encrochat device so that you could communicate with Ryan Steadman and others about drug importation and supply. You used multiple mobile telephones throughout the period- 18 in total- in order to conduct your business and, along with the use of the Encrochat device, help to reduce the risk of being caught by the police.

7. The prosecution put you, Ryan Steadman, as the number two. You did not, it would appear, have overseas connections but you did have contact with two people in particular who were instrumental in the success of the conspiracies, namely Jack Williams who sourced the corrupt baggage handlers at London Gatwick, and Gairy Thompson who, himself a Class A drugs importer, had access to a corrupt insider or insiders working for DHL, the courier company, which proved to be an alternative means of importing drugs into the country and to which I shall return in due course. You too communicated through the use of an Encrochat device as well as 22 mobile telephones in total throughout the relevant period for much the same reason as Tyrone Gordon.
8. Jack Williams, as I have said, was the link to the corrupt baggage handlers at London Gatwick and had attributed to him 35 mobile telephone numbers throughout the relevant period. As I have already indicated, he pleaded guilty to his involvement in the conspiracy.
9. Christopher and Nicholas Darby, two brothers, worked as baggage handlers at London Gatwick, along with Hugo Baltasar. Mr Baltasar has not been arrested in relation to this matter as it is believed that he is currently in Portugal. Christopher and Nicholas Darby were arrested and did stand trial along with the two of you but were found not guilty. Having listened to the evidence at trial, I have no doubt at all, for reasons I shall touch upon in due course, that they were involved in this offending, but it is not inconceivable that they were not parties to the specific agreement to import cocaine. It is entirely possible, for example, that they were instructed by Jack Williams to identify and retrieve the relevant bags from the aircraft without being told what, precisely, was in them. Not guilty verdicts in their respective cases is consistent with that position.
10. At trial, the prosecution case centred around four key dates.
11. The first key date was 8 February 2020. Shortly after 9am on that date, Air Europa flight UX1013 arrived into London Gatwick. CCTV footage played to the jury showed that flight being unloaded. Nicholas Darby, who was a co-defendant at trial, was one of the individuals involved in the unloading of that aircraft. He worked, at that time, for a company called Menzies which was based at London Gatwick, and which was

responsible for, among other things, the unloading of baggage from aircraft. The luggage was loaded into a single cage which was being pulled by a tug save in respect of one bag which was separated from the rest by being placed into a separate cage being driven by the same tug. Nicholas Darby is seen driving the tug to the baggage drop off point where he unloads all the bags from the first cage, but not the single bag in the second cage, before driving off. At 09:44 a Menzies van is seen leaving the airport though the driver of the vehicle cannot be ascertained. However, at 10:05, that same vehicle returns to the airport being driven by Nicholas Darby. Having arrived back at the airport, he then exits via the staff car park at 10:28. During his 21-minute absence from the airport, cell site analysis puts him and Jack Williams in the vicinity of his home address, close to the airport. Based on the evidence I heard and saw at the trial, I am sure that Nicholas Darby delivered that bag to Jack Williams, and, for reasons which I will return to, that that bag contained a significant quantity of cocaine. I do not consider this factual finding to be at odds with the verdict of the jury in acquitting Nicholas Darby as it is perfectly possible that, in his case, the jury were unable to be sure that he was a party to the specific agreement to import cocaine which the two of you undoubtedly were. It may very well be the case that he, along with others at the airport, were tasked with identifying the relevant bag and, in his case, bringing it out of the airport- which I am sure is precisely what Nicholas Darby did do.

12. Meanwhile, a 28-year-old male passenger called Vinicius Rodrigues Silveira, who had caught a 3pm flight, Flight UX0058, from Brazil on 7 February 2020 to Gatwick Airport via Madrid, was stopped by Border Force officers after disembarking from the aforementioned Air Europa Flight from Madrid, namely Flight UX1013. Mr Silveira was only carrying a rucksack. He had checked in a suitcase weighing 16kg. He was escorted to the baggage reclaim area in the South Terminal at 09:52. His suitcase did not show up on baggage reclaim. I am sure that that is because it had been spirited away by Nicholas Darby to Jack Williams. Border Force Officer Marsh tested Mr Silveira's rucksack and some clothing within, and both gave a positive reading for cocaine.
13. Later that afternoon, cell site evidence suggests that you, Ryan Steadman, and Jack Williams co-located in Maidstone. Thereafter, Nicholas Darby and his brother Christopher Darby, who also worked for Menzies at London Gatwick and had been involved in the unloading of the Air Europa aircraft, were cell-sited travelling to

Maidstone and back again. In his evidence at trial, Christopher Darby gave an account that he and his brother had travelled to meet Jack Williams in order to drop off a car and that there had been nothing untoward about the meeting at all. I have no hesitation in rejecting that account. Whatever the precise purpose of the meeting, given what had happened earlier on that day, the inescapable conclusion is that it was to discuss matters relating to the smuggling of that bag out of the airport.

14. In addition, I note that on that date there were also numerous telephone interactions between Jack Williams and Ryan Steadman, Nicholas Darby and Jack Williams, Christopher Darby and Nicholas Darby, and Tyrone Gordon and Jack Williams.
15. The second key date was 24 February 2020. Air Europa flight UX1013 arrived into London Gatwick at about 08:59. Once again, Christopher and Nicholas Darby, along with others, were involved in the unloading of that aircraft. On this occasion, during the unloading process, a piece of luggage is singled out and wheeled off screen by a Menzies crew member. Once all the other luggage is loaded onto the tug, Nicholas Darby can be seen driving the tug away. The tug goes off screen but not in the direction of the baggage drop off point. Shortly thereafter, it is followed by a black Menzies vehicle. Minutes later, the tug reappears this time being driven by the man who had wheeled away the single piece of luggage. At 09:13, a black Menzies vehicle is seen leaving the airport with it not being possible to identify the driver. However, at 09:43, the vehicle returns being driven by Nicholas Darby. At the time, cell site evidence put Jack Williams in Redhill, just north of Gatwick Airport. Telephone evidence suggested that during this time he was in contact with you, Ryan Steadman.
16. Meanwhile, a 32-year-old Brazilian male passenger called Jonhy Soares-Esteves was stopped by Border Force officers coming off the aforementioned Air Europa flight from Brazil via Madrid. He had checked in one bag weighing 22 kilos which did not turn up on the carousel at London Gatwick. When stopped, Mr Soares-Estevez was only carrying hand luggage. Border Force officers tested his hand luggage which gave a positive reading for cocaine.
17. The similarities between what happened on 8 and 24 February 2020 are obvious, and I am sure that, once again, Nicholas Darby had managed to successfully remove a piece

of luggage containing a significant amount of cocaine from London Gatwick delivering it, ultimately, to Jack Williams.

18. I note that, later that afternoon, cell site evidence suggests that Jack Williams was in an area close to Nicholas Darby's home address before later appearing in Croydon, co-locating with you, Ryan Steadman. There was also telephone interaction that day between Jack Williams and Ryan Steadman, Nicholas Darby and Christopher Darby, Christopher Darby and Jack Williams, and Nicholas Darby and Jack Williams.
19. Before moving to the third key date, I observe that, on 25 March 2020, Jack Williams, was arrested whilst staying at The TLK Apartments & Hotel in Orpington. In order to avoid arrest, he climbed up onto the roof of the building and whilst up there smashed two mobile telephones which he then threw from the roof into a nearby stream. Those telephones were recovered and, although badly damaged, the numbers for them were identified. Analysis of the available data reveals that the numbers were in contact with numbers attributed to Christopher and Nicholas Darby, as well as you, Ryan Steadman and you, Tyrone Gordon.
20. The third key date was 23 January 2021. Police observation evidence revealed that the two of you met, along with Jack Williams, the night before in Longheath Gardens in Croydon. The suggestion made by you both at trial was that this meeting was in order to sell a small bit of cannabis, which I do not accept as truthful. The overwhelming inference from all of the available evidence is that the purpose of that meeting was in connection with a planned importation which was due to take place the following day. After that meeting, you, Ryan Steadman, along with Jack Williams, take a taxi to Oaklands in Horley which is where the two Darby brothers live. You, Tyrone Gordon, activate a new mobile telephone number following which you make a call to Ryan Steadman.
21. Ryan Steadman, you, along with Jack Williams, then both take a taxi to the East Surrey Hospital where you loiter about before taking a different car to the Best Western Hotel in Horley. Whether the detour to the hospital was, as the prosecution suggested at trial, part of an effort to avoid police surveillance or, as Ryan Steadman said in his evidence, a failed meeting arranged by Jack Williams with one of his contacts, I do not know.

22. What I do know is that there was nothing coincidental about arranging to stay at the Best Western Hotel that night. I am sure that you wanted to be close to Gatwick Airport for the delivery of cocaine which you were expecting the following day.
23. As to the following day, Air Europa flight UX1013 arrived into London Gatwick at about 08:57. It was met by a team of Menzies employees in order to be unloaded- a team which once again included Christopher and Nicholas Darby. There were contemporaneous telephone interactions between Jack Williams and Tyrone Gordon, as well as Jack Williams and Christopher Darby. Jack Williams had by now left the Best Western Hotel and was in the vicinity of the respective home addresses of the Darby brothers- no doubt waiting for delivery of a suitcase filled with cocaine.
24. However, it is evident from the CCTV footage that was played at trial that the delivery you were all expecting that day did not turn up. Why it did not is not clear. But, on this occasion, it is clear that no luggage is identified and isolated and, shortly after the aircraft is unloaded, Nicholas Darby is seen leaving the airport empty-handed. What is worth noting, additionally, is that, on this occasion, whilst Christopher Darby was in the hold of the aircraft, he placed a call to Jack Williams. He suggested in his evidence that that call must have been an accidental pocket dial. I have no hesitation in rejecting that explanation. The reason he called Jack Williams, I am sure, is to discuss the problems he was having in locating the luggage which he had been tasked to find.
25. Whilst all this is happening, the telephone evidence reveals interactions between Tyrone Gordon and Ryan Steadman, as well as, and as I have already alluded to, between Christopher Darby and Jack Williams.
26. The fourth key date was 30 November 2021. Between the late evening of 28 November and midday on 29 November, telephone evidence suggests interaction between you, Tyrone Gordon, and Jack Williams. Jack Williams then sends a text message to an unidentified recipient requiring him to book a cab to Carlton Tyne, i.e., close to where the Darby brothers live. Throughout the afternoon and evening of 29 November 2021, the telephone evidence suggests a variety of interactions between numbers attributed to Jack Williams and Tyrone Gordon, Ryan Steadman, and Christopher Darby.

27. Air Europa flight UX1013 landed at about 08:55. Nicholas Darby had by now left the employ of Menzies and the aircraft was unloaded by his brother along with others. Jack Williams had meanwhile made his way to a petrol station close to Gatwick Airport awaiting, I am sure, information that the latest importation of cocaine had arrived and was on its way to him.
28. There was, however, a problem. The cocaine on this occasion was being brought by a French national, Ms. Enora D'Hont. She had departed Sao Paulo airport headed for London Gatwick via Madrid on Air Europa flight UX058. She had checked in 2 bags, each weighing 20kg. However, before she could board the connecting flight UX1013, she was stopped by Spanish customs officers. Her luggage was opened, and officers found 13 boxes of what purported to be soup but which in fact contained 247 pouches of cocaine with a purity of 87.5% weighing 19,840 grams. This was valued at 870,000 Euros wholesale or 2,229,515 Euros if the drugs were sold on the street. She was arrested and so did not board her connecting flight to London Gatwick. Consequently, her luggage was not loaded aboard the connecting flight and so did not make its way to London Gatwick to be retrieved.
29. There was a flurry of telephone interaction that day between Tyrone Gordon, Ryan Steadman, and Jack Williams. At trial, it was suggested that that was to do with a cannabis debt which you, Tyrone Gordon, owed to Jack Williams. I do not accept that. Those calls were undoubtedly about the near 20kg of cocaine that had, so far as you were concerned, gone missing.
30. That is a summary of the relevant facts pertaining to what happened on and around the four key dates. It was far from the only evidence in the case. Tyrone Gordon and Ryan Steadman, both of you were owners of Encrochat devices using the handles "packfrog" and "swankyeagle" respectively. You both initially denied involvement with those devices but accepted, at trial, that they had been correctly attributed to you.
31. I will not go through the content of those messages in any great detail save to note that they revealed the following:
- (a) First, that you were both involved in an agreement to import cocaine, referred to, in the main, as "tops" throughout the Encrochat communications.

- (b) Secondly, that cocaine was not the only drug you were concerned with, there being numerous references to heroin- often referred to as “bottoms” or “dirty”- throughout the Encrochat communications- as well as some references to cannabis.
- (c) Thirdly, that you were both connected to Jack Williams who, in turn, had the connections based at Gatwick Airport which included, but I am sure were not limited to, Christopher and Nicholas Darby.
- (d) Fourthly, that utilising the Air Europa method of importing cocaine from Brazil, was not the only way you discussed getting Class A drugs into the country. You, Ryan Steadman, had a neighbour, Gairy Thompson, who is a convicted Class A drug importer. He had access to a corrupt worker, or workers, employed by DHL, the courier company. The Encrochat communications are littered with discussions about trying to import Class A drugs into the country using the “DHL method”. That method involved, in brief, (i) identifying companies in the UK that shipments could be sent to, (ii) styling the drugs in a way which concealed them within legitimate products, (iii) shipping those products, with the drugs concealed inside, to the relevant company, and (iv) intercepting the shipments with the assistance of the corrupt DHL worker or workers. One example of that, revealed in the Encrochat communications, was a discussion about concealing drugs within tubs of Botox cream which would be addressed to Boots. Another example involved a discussion about concealing drugs within electronic goods which were destined for TK Maxx. The two of you accepted, in your evidence, that you were involved in these discussions but maintained that the plan was to import cannabis, not cocaine. I have no hesitation in rejecting that suggestion which was wholly inconsistent with the content of the messages and the other evidence in the case.
- (e) Fifthly, that you, Tyrone Gordon, were the one with the contacts in Brazil. Whether you were in direct contact with people in Brazil, as the prosecution suggest, or whether it was through another Encrochat user known as “bumpyjohnson”, as you suggest, I cannot be sure. On the face of the messages, you could have little complaint if I concluded that you were in direct contact with the Brazilian senders, but I am conscious of the fact that, for all the phone evidence in this case, there was

nothing which purported to be evidence of direct communications with people in Brazil. I cannot rule out the possibility that you were one step removed from the actual senders though, ultimately, I do not consider that this will make much of a difference to the sentencing exercise.

- (f) Sixthly, that you, Ryan Steadman, had access to a person who could press drugs, i.e., mix drugs with adulterants in order to bulk them out and, ultimately, make more money from sales.

Count 2

32. I turn next to the facts relating to count 2 which concerns only the two of you.

33. The conspiracy which is the subject of count 1 had two major setbacks. The first was the intervention of Covid-19. The lockdowns proved to be a major disruption to activity at London Gatwick (as well as elsewhere) such that the plan to utilise Air Europa flights from Brazil was, for a time, not going to work. The second issue was the temporary incarceration of Jack Williams. He was your link to the corrupt baggage handlers at London Gatwick and, with him temporarily out of the picture and the baggage handlers unwilling or unable to work with you directly, the Air Europa method of importation could not succeed.

34. Consequently, the two of you looked for other means to import other drugs, in this instance, heroin. The Encrochat material relied upon by the Crown at trial centred around communications between the two of you on 27 April 2020. The drugs expert witness, DS Stanley, told the Court that the discussion appeared to be about importing heroin which would cost USD 2,000 per kilo to buy from source with a wholesale value of about £17,000 per kilo to sell in the UK. There appeared, he said, to be some discussion about sharing the cost of the importation with the two of you agreeing to buy 20 kilos and another buyer taking 30 kilos. Within the material there was reference to Ramadan and Pakistan, with DS Stanley telling the Court that importing from Pakistan is consistent with importing heroin.

35. Your respective explanations at trial about this were that you were again talking about the importation of cannabis. Ramadan had been mentioned because, you said, others involved in the planned importation were Muslims and so would not be available to engage in such criminality until after Ramadan was over. The reference to Pakistan, you said, was nothing more than a joke, to be read in the context of the reference to Ramadan. I have to say that it is wholly unsurprising that the jury rejected those attempts at explanations.

Counts 3 and 4

36. Count 3 affects only you, Tyrone Gordon, as indeed does count 4. The facts can be briefly summarised.
37. Between the 2 April 2020 and 5 June 2020, Encrochat material demonstrated ongoing discussions between you and someone with the handle imbackinsouth. The messages culminate, on 26 May 2020, with imbackinsouth setting out a list of figures and dates which DS Stanley interpreted as indicating that, between the aforementioned dates, you had purchased 7kg of cocaine at a cost of between £33,000 and £40,000 per kilo. At trial, you accepted that you were involved in the sale of 7kg of cocaine during this period but said that you did not actually purchase the cocaine and was never in possession of it. Rather, you said that you were acting as a broker on behalf of third parties. The prosecution agreed that if your account was, or might be, true, then you were not guilty on count 3 but, instead, guilty of an offence of being concerned in the supply of Class A drugs which was ultimately reflected by the addition of a count 5 to the indictment which you pleaded guilty to. All of this was explained to the jury, but they ultimately rejected the account you gave in relation to your dealings with imbackinsouth and convicted you on count 3.
38. Count 4 pertains to the 27 April 2020 when you offered to supply Ryan Steadman with half a kilo of cocaine. You ask Mr Steadman, via Encrochat communications, whether he needs any “work” which DS Stanley told the Court was a reference to drugs. Mr Steadman asks how much for half a kilo to which you respond with “19”, i.e., £19,000, which DS Stanley said was within the range for half a kilo of cocaine. You agreed in

your evidence that this discussion was indeed about cocaine but said that you were not offering to supply it but were simply saying that you could sort it out for Mr Steadman if he wanted it which, in the end, he did not. Once again, that explanation was not accepted by the jury.

Arrests and Interviews

39. You were both arrested on 12 October 2023- you, Tyrone Gordon, at your girlfriend's home address and you, Ryan Steadman, at the home address of your parents. You were both interviewed in the presence of your respective solicitors and provided no comment to questions asked by the police.

Approach to Sentencing

40. In sentencing you both, I have had regard to the relevant offence-specific sentencing guidelines, as well as the guidelines on the imposition of community and custodial sentences and totality. I have also had drawn to my attention, and have considered, the judgments of the Court of Appeal in *R v Sanghera* [2016] 2 Cr App R (S) 15 and *R v Bhagani* [2016] EWCA Crim 2109.

41. I intend to sentence you both principally by reference to count 1, the conspiracy to import cocaine offence, but in so doing, will also take into account your offending on count 2, the separate conspiracy to import heroin. In your case, Tyrone Gordon, the offending reflected by counts 3 and 4 is, in its own right, serious, but, in light of the inevitably lengthy sentences that must be imposed for the conspiracies, and mindful of the principle of totality, I shall not add to the overall length of the sentence you will serve because of these offences and will instead pass concurrent sentences in respect of those matters.

The Individual Sentences

Tyrone Gordon

42. Tyrone Gordon, I shall deal with your case first.

43. The maximum sentence for conspiring to import Class A drugs into the UK is life imprisonment. To identify a starting point for sentence, it is necessary to identify your culpability and the harm caused by your offending. As to the former, I am satisfied that you performed a leading role in this conspiracy. First, you were organising the importing and onward distribution of cocaine on a commercial scale. Secondly, you also had substantial links to, and influence on, others in a chain- directly so in the case of Ryan Steadman and Jack Williams and indirectly in the case of those who were working at London Gatwick. Thirdly, you did have close links to those in Brazil who were exporting the cocaine. As I have already indicated, whether those links were direct, or whether they were through bumpyjohnson, I cannot be sure, but on any view the link was close. Fourthly, I am driven to the conclusion that there was, in your case, an expectation of substantial financial advantage- that is the only sensible conclusion I can reach given the scale of the operation with which you were involved. I note, in passing, that the Encrochat communications reveal that you were quite comfortable in dealing in substantial amounts of money for kilos of cocaine. I also note the ownership of two Rolex watches which you yourself accepted had been purchased with at least some money which had come from your drug dealing.

44. As to harm, that is assessed by reference to the quantity of the drug concerned. In respect of cocaine, the guideline only goes up to 5kg which puts harm into category 1. However, as the guideline then makes clear,

“Having determined the category at step one, the court should use the corresponding starting point to reach a sentence within the category range below. The starting point applies to all offenders irrespective of plea or previous convictions. A case of particular gravity, reflected by multiple features of

culpability or harm in step one, could merit upward adjustment from the starting point before further adjustment for aggravating or mitigating features, set out below.

Where the operation is on the most serious and commercial scale, involving a quantity of drugs significantly higher than category 1, sentences of 20 years and above may be appropriate, depending on the offender's role."

45. The starting point, based upon a leading role and category 1 harm, is 14 years' custody with a range of 12 – 16 years' custody. But that presupposes, as I have said, that the weight of the cocaine was 5kg. In this case, it is impossible to know how many kilos of cocaine were the subject of successful and/or attempted importations into the country. What is clear is that, on 30 November 2021, just short of 20kg of cocaine was on its way to London before being intercepted by the Spanish authorities. That was just shy of half of the total weight of the two suitcases that had been checked in in Brazil (which, together, weighed 40kg). The luggage which was checked in on 8 and 24 February 2020 was never recovered by the authorities, but the weights of the suitcases are known as a result of evidence obtained from the airport. The total weight of the checked-in luggage on 8 February 2020 was 16kg and, on 24 February 2020, 22kg. The prosecution suggests that, based on the evidence taken from 30 November 2021, it can be safely inferred that half of the weight of the suitcases was attributable to cocaine, i.e., 8kg and 11kg respectively. Across the three dates, that produces a total of 39kg which, on the evidence the Court heard, would have had a wholesale value of between £1,240,902 - £1,575,756 or a street value of £3,126,279 - £3,907,878. How much was intended to have been imported on 23 January 2021 is unknown. The prosecution suggests taking an average derived from what was imported on the other three dates, i.e., an average of 13kg. If that average is taken, the total value of 52 kilos would be a wholesale value of £1,654,536 – £2,101,008 or a street value of £4,168,372 - £5,210,504. I readily acknowledge that those figures are not perfect but that is unsurprising when one is dealing with a conspiracy of this sort. I am satisfied that those figures based, as they are, on the evidence that is available, provide a fair and proper basis upon which to sentence you. To the extent that the figures might be slightly too high or slightly too low, that makes no material difference to the sentence that I shall pass.

46. As to factors which increase the seriousness of the offence, I start first with your previous convictions. You have a number of them. Putting to one side your convictions obtained up to your early twenties, you have a conviction for robbery in 2007 for which you received a sentence of 7 years' custody. In 2018, you received a total sentence of 4 years' custody for possession with intent to supply heroin and dangerous driving. In 2020, you then received a day's detention for theft and resisting a constable. Of those offences, the drugs matter is a relevant aggravating feature. Secondly, and whilst not reflected by any further conviction, I cannot ignore the fact that, even on your own evidence, you were, at the time of this offending, a prolific drug dealer. Though you sought to downplay your involvement to being mainly concerned with cannabis, you acknowledged that you dealt in both cocaine and heroin as well. Thirdly, there was in this case the use of sophisticated methods or technologies in order to avoid or impede detection, most notably the use of an Encrochat device along with numerous other burner phones. I must also, as I have already alluded to, take into account (a) the fact that the amount of drugs involved was in excess of that which the starting point in the guidelines is based, (b) that this was a conspiracy which lasted for a not insubstantial period of time, and (c) the separate conspiracy reflected by count 2 pertaining to 50kg of heroin whilst noting that, in respect of that count, it is not suggested that any heroin was actually imported.

47. As to factors which reduce the seriousness of the offence, along with your personal mitigation, I have listened very carefully to everything that has been said on your behalf. The reality, unfortunately, is that there is not much that can be said in your favour that will have an impact on the sentence I will pass. You are 40 years' old and a father and stepfather to three children. I have read the thoughtful letter that you have written to me as well as the very many character references that have been submitted on your behalf. I confess that it has saddened me to read the references that have been supplied by members of your family- all of which speak about you in glowing terms. Taking, just by way of example, the reference from your niece, Taisha Samuels, she describes you as an amazing father, protective brother, and the only consistent male role model she has had. She talks about how you stood by her during a difficult period when she was 17 and helped her to turn her life around, ensuring that she obtained her GCSEs. She describes you as a pillar of the community and calls, along with other members of

your family, for leniency given the impact that a period of imprisonment will have on your children and other members of your family.

48. The reason I say that reading these references has saddened me is because it is quite clear that there is another side to you, not seen at trial, which involves you being a loving and supportive father, stepfather, brother and uncle. But, with respect to the various authors of these references, they do not appear to comprehend the gravity of the offending with which you have been involved. Class A drugs destroy lives and not just the lives of the people that use them and deal in them. The families of those people- your family- suffer as well. So too does the wider community that has to live with the side effects of drug misuse which includes related criminality- such as robbery and theft- which addicted users of such drugs often commit in order to fund their habits. You are responsible for contributing to this misery in a major way. I make that point because, in cases of this seriousness, the impact that lengthy custodial sentences may have on children and family members cannot take priority over the wider societal interest in the enforcement of the criminal law which, in this case, involves the imposition of a significant custodial sentence not only to punish but also to deter others from like offending.

49. Tyrone Gordon, the conclusion that I have reached is that the aggravating features of this offending far outweigh what little mitigation you have. I have reached the conclusion that the appropriate sentence in your case is as follows:

- (a) On count 1- conspiracy to import Class A drugs (namely cocaine)- 26 years' custody.
- (b) On count 2- conspiracy to import Class A drugs (namely heroin)- 26 years' custody (to run concurrently).
- (c) On count 3- possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (namely cocaine)- 14 years' custody (to run concurrently).
- (d) On count 4- offering to supply Class A drugs (namely cocaine)- 9 years' custody (to run concurrently).

(e) I order that count 5- being concerned in the supply of Class A drugs (namely cocaine)- is to lie on the file and is not to be proceeded with further without the permission of this Court or the Court of Appeal.

That means that the overall sentence in your case is one of 26 years' custody which I consider to be the shortest sentence commensurate with the seriousness of your offending. You will serve up to one half of that in custody, less the days you have already spent on remand in relation to this case, before being released on licence. Your licence will be subject to conditions which you must adhere to, failing which, you risk being recalled to prison to serve the remainder of your term.

50. As the prosecution has confirmed that there will be no Proceeds of Crime Act proceedings, I impose the statutory surcharge in the relevant sum.

Ryan Steadman

51. Ryan Steadman, I turn to deal with you.

52. As to culpability, I am satisfied that you also played a leading role in these conspiracies, albeit secondary to that of Tyrone Gordon. It is clear from the Encrochat messages that you did not have the overseas contacts and was reliant upon Mr Gordon in this regard. Nevertheless, it is clear that you were heavily involved in organising the buying and selling of Class A drugs on a commercial scale. It was you who had the links to Gairy Thompson who had the contact or contacts within DHL, and it was you who introduced Jack Williams to Tyrone Gordon, Mr Williams, of course, having access to the corrupt baggage handlers at London Gatwick. Whilst I accept what your advocate says about there, on the available evidence at least, being nothing to show for your offending, I am driven to the conclusion that your high-level involvement of offending on this scale could only have been with the expectation of substantial financial advantage. My observations as to harm are the same in your case as they are with Mr Gordon.

53. As to factors which increase the seriousness of the offence, I deal first with your previous convictions. You have a number for a wide range of different offences. In recent years, however, your offending has been relatively low level and the matters recorded against you do not aggravate the present offending. However, it is convenient at this point to note that you do have convictions, dated 17 June 2022, for possession with intent to supply Class A and Class B drugs and being concerned in supplying Class A and B drugs throughout the period 23 June 2021 – 15 March 2022, i.e., after the end of the period to which the present conspiracies are concerned. You received an overall sentence of 45 months' custody for those offences. I do not treat those offences as aggravating and will return to the reasons why in a moment. However, as with Tyrone Gordon, I cannot overlook the fact that, whilst not reflected by convictions, it is clear to me that throughout the conspiracy period you were a prolific drug dealer. In addition, and as with Tyrone Gordon, there was in this case the use of sophisticated methods or technologies in order to avoid or impede detection, most notably the use of an Encrochat device along with numerous other burner phones. I must also, as I have already explained, take into account (a) the fact that the amount of drugs involved was in excess of that which the starting point in the guidelines is based, (b) that this was a conspiracy which lasted for a not insubstantial period of time, and (c) the separate conspiracy reflected by count 2 pertaining to 50kg of heroin whilst noting that, in respect of that count, it is not suggested that any heroin was actually imported.

54. As to factors which reduce the seriousness of the offending, along with your personal mitigation, I have listened with care to what your advocate has said this morning. You are 39 years' old and are the father to 5 young children. I have read the very many character references from friends and family which speak of you as a dedicated father who is much loved by your children as well as someone who is loving and caring and liked by those around you. In some cases, they detail the difficulties you faced growing up; difficulties which you were ultimately able to overcome. I do not doubt what has been said about your qualities as a son, partner, father, brother, uncle and friend but, for the reasons I have already explained, little if any weight can be attached to the impact that a custodial sentence will have on your children and wider family in circumstances where the offending for which you fall to be sentenced is as serious as it is. A point which has been made on your behalf and which I do accept is this. Had your offending for which you most recently received a prison sentence for been dealt with at the same

time as the present offences, I would have approached the sentencing exercise in much the same way I have done with Tyrone Gordon, i.e., by passing concurrent sentences in relation to the substantive non-conspiracy matters. I cannot do that in your case because you have already been sentenced for those other matters. What I can do, however, is deduct 45 months from the overall sentence that I would have otherwise imposed to address the position and respect the principal of totality. The sentence that I am about to announce takes that deduction into account.

55. Ryan Steadman, the conclusion that I have reached is that the aggravating features of this offending far outweigh what little mitigation you have. I have reached the conclusion that the appropriate sentence in your case is as follows:

(f) On count 1- conspiracy to import Class A drugs (namely cocaine)- 20 years' custody.

(g) On count 2- conspiracy to import Class A drugs (namely heroin)- 20 years' custody (to run concurrently).

That means that the overall sentence in your case is one of 20 years' custody which I consider to be the shortest sentence commensurate with the seriousness of your offending. You will serve up to one half of that in custody, less any days you have already spent on remand awaiting sentence, before being released on licence. Your licence will be subject to conditions which you must adhere to, failing which, you risk being recalled to prison to serve the remainder of your term.

56. I impose the statutory surcharge in the applicable sum.

Concluding observations

57. Before leaving this case, I wish to say something about the enormous amount of work that has been undertaken by the police, Crown Prosecution Service, and prosecution and defence advocates in preparing this case and presenting it at trial.

58. As is clear from all that I have said, this was extremely serious offending which had many different components to it. The work undertaken by the police in investigating this matter, compiling the documents and evidence in a way that could be accessibly presented to the jury, and the diligence and helpfulness that was exhibited by the officers during the course of the trial, ought to be publicly acknowledged. In particular, the tireless efforts of Police Constable Stuart Parks and Acting Detective Sergeant Martin Stodel and Detective Inspector Gemma Jones. I am pleased to give the three officers a judicial commendation.

59. In addition, counsel on both sides deserve recognition for the meticulous and careful way the prosecution case was presented to the jury and the robust and skilful way in which the case was defended by all defence advocates, particularly in light of the enormous amount of material that had to be considered and dealt with. The efforts of counsel in this case demonstrate how important it is that the Bar of England and Wales maintains highly skilled and dedicated professionals who can ably deal with cases such as the present.

HHJ Grout
10 June 2024