

Pages 1 through 8 redacted for the following reasons:

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Subject: FOR INFO: AFP-led Taskforce Vanguard - Press conference tomorrow [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 27 October 2021 4:59:20 PM
Attachments: [TF Vanguard Infographic.pdf](#)
[20211028 Media Alert - New AFP-led Taskforce Vanguard_FINAL.docx](#)
[20211028 Media Factsheet - TF Vanguard_FINAL.docx](#)
[20211028 Media Release - EC - TF Vanguard announcement_FINAL.docx](#)

OFFICIAL

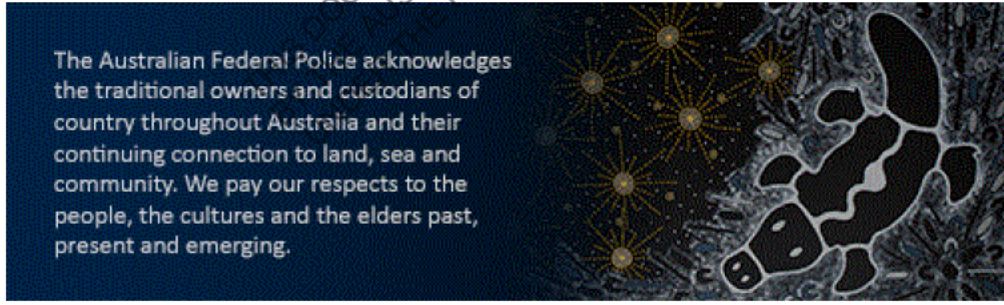
Good afternoon,
Please see attached media materials for the announcement tomorrow for AFP-led Taskforce Vanguard in NSW.
The taskforce has about 30 investigators operating across four teams in NSW, targeting drug crimes and money laundering activities.
Press conference will be held at AFP Sydney Office tomorrow at 10am with AFP, ABF and HSI spokespeople addressing media.
Vision and media grabs are available via hightail links included in the attached media release.
Kind regards,

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MEDIA ALERT

Thursday, 28 October 2021

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL MIDNIGHT

New AFP-led Taskforce Vanguard makes significant impact to high volume crime

The Australian Federal Police, Australian Border Force and U.S. Homeland Security Investigations will address media in Sydney today (28 October 2021) to announce new AFP-led Taskforce Vanguard in NSW.

The taskforce was fully established in July 2021 with four investigative teams targeting drug crimes and money laundering activities.

It was purpose-built to combat the increasing trend of organised crime syndicates sending high volumes of illicit drugs in lightweight packages through air cargo and parcel post systems.

More than 11 tonnes of drugs have been seized entering Australia this year alone through air cargo and parcel post systems, with NSW processing approximately 85% of Australia's incoming mail.

[Vision of the search warrants, clan lab, arrests and seized drugs and cash are available via hightail.](#)

Where	AFP Sydney Headquarters 110 Goulburn Street Sydney NSW 2000
When	10:00AM Thursday, 28 October 2021 Media are requested to arrive by 9:45AM to allow time for set up and sign in.
Who	Detective Superintendent Craig Bellis Australian Federal Police Inspector Tony Wheatley Australian Border Force HSI Attaché to Australia, Adam Parks U.S. Homeland Security Investigations

Media enquiries

POLICING FOR A SAFER AUSTRALIA



AFP Media: (02) 5126 9297

ABF Media: (02) 6264 2211



**Australian
BORDER FORCE**



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Media Factsheet

High Volume Crime Taskforce Vanguard

What is AFP-led Taskforce Vanguard?

AFP-led High Volume Crime Taskforce Vanguard was fully established on 1 July 2021 in New South Wales, with four operational teams of approximately 30 members investigating money laundering activities and illicit drug importations.

TF Vanguard investigators in Eastern Command operate in a high-tempo operational environment in an effort to deliver quick outcomes (seizures/arrests) that collectively have an impact on the operations of organised crime syndicates and their aggressive output of illicit drugs and money into our communities.

AFP-led TF Vanguard works closely with Commonwealth government and international law enforcement partners to share intelligence and combine resources to tackle organised crime syndicates in Australia and offshore.

These criminal groups are attacking Australia with a tidal wave of high volume small-scale illicit drug importations, funded through their ongoing criminal and money laundering activities.

Why was AFP-led Taskforce Vanguard established now?

Two drug investigation teams were developed this year under AFP-led TF Vanguard to tackle the rising trend of organised crime syndicates using parcel post and air cargo services to import large volumes of illicit drugs in multiple lightweight packages.

Money laundering and drug crimes often go hand in hand, therefore, two further teams were developed to investigate money laundering organisations and seize the proceeds of their illicit activities.

Which agencies are involved in the taskforce?

AFP-led TF Vanguard combines resources from Australian Border Force, AUSTRAC, Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission and Department of Home Affairs to combat money laundering and drug crimes in NSW.

The investigators share intelligence with U.S. Homeland Security Investigations to disrupt the operations of transnational serious organised crime syndicates offshore and in Australia.



What has AFP-led Taskforce Vanguard achieved since it began?

As of 25 October 2021, AFP-led TF Vanguard has executed more than 50 search warrants, made 30 arrests, seized more than \$3.5 million in cash and seized hundreds of kilograms of illicit drugs and tobacco.

Since 1 July 2021, approximately 60 drug detections have been referred to law enforcement partners for further investigation.

What is the volume of lightweight illicit drug importations coming into NSW?

More than 11 tonnes of drugs have been seized entering Australia this year alone through air cargo or post systems.

Since 1 July 2021, there have been approximately 2,000 parcel post detections in NSW.

What types of drugs have been seized?

- Fentanyl
- 4-fluoromethylphenidate (A BCD analogue)
- Methamphetamine
- Cocaine
- Heroin
- Cannabis

Where are the drugs going?

Drug imports investigated through AFP-led TF Vanguard are going beyond distribution in major metropolitan areas, with ongoing investigations linked to consignments bound for regional NSW.

What countries are the drugs coming from?

TF Vanguard investigators have seized illicit drugs arriving into NSW from Thailand, Canada, USA, Germany, Belgium, Colombia and France.

TF Vanguard Operation Pilum began after US authorities in California intercepted approximately 15 kilograms of methamphetamine hidden in six mailing tubes said to contain blueprints.

US authorities reported the seizure to AFP Liaison Officers based in Los Angeles in September 2021, before forwarding the consignment to Australia for delivery. AFP and ABF officers – as part of TF Vanguard – conducted a controlled delivery of the consignment to a home in the Sydney suburb of Jordan Springs on 29 September 2021. A 31-year-old New Zealand national



was subsequently arrested and charged with attempting to possess a commercial quantity of methamphetamine. He is next due to face Sydney Central Local court on 24 November 2021.

What are the drugs concealed in?

Law enforcement agencies have identified a variety of concealment methods, including illicit drugs hidden in coffee beans, exhaust pipes, a baby rocking chair, water filtration unit, handbags, whey protein, massage cream, adult toys and drugs impregnated into documents.

TF Vanguard Operation Beccles centres on a consignment of 24 handbags that arrived into Sydney from Thailand in March 2021.

ABF officers examined the package and found what is alleged to be heroin within the linings of the bags. The heroin, weighing approximately 4.8 kilograms was replaced with an inert substance and a controlled delivery of the package was made to a home in Shellharbour, NSW. AFP officers charged two men on 13 August 2021 with attempting to possess a commercial quantity of heroin. The two men are scheduled to next face Sydney Central Local Court on 24 November 2021.

How are law enforcement agencies tackling the delivery of drugs into Australia?

Australian authorities are working closely with international law enforcement partners to take the fight against transnational serious organised criminal syndicates offshore.

The AFP International Network through its Liaison Officers works collaboratively with international jurisdictions to ensure illicit drugs are seized offshore and prevented from reaching Australia.

TF Vanguard Operation Specs involved AFP Bogota Liaison Officers worked closely with the Colombian National Police, who seized 35 kilograms of cocaine bound for Australia. The joint investigation resulted in one arrest in NSW, seizure of more cocaine during the search warrants and dismantling of a clandestine laboratory. Further details into this investigation are [located on the AFP website](#).

What is the role of money laundering syndicates?

An essential part of the AFP's strategy in disrupting organised criminal syndicates is to attack their operations from multiple sides.

TF Vanguard investigators have identified a strong link in a number of investigations between organised crime groups importing illicit drugs and subsequent money laundering activities to move the proceeds of the drug activities offshore.

Money laundering endeavours are commonly used to fund other criminal activities. TF Vanguard investigators expect a flow on effect and disruption to organised crime activities



when seizing cash and disrupting money laundering activities that would be used to fund illicit drug activities.

How do these organisations launder money?

Money laundering organisations often facilitate the laundering of proceeds of crime for multiple drug trafficking organisations through structured withdrawals and deposits.

TF Vanguard Operation Siltstone looked into the activities of a money laundering organisation operating in the Sydney region.

Enquiries led investigators to the activities of two alleged members of the money laundering syndicate. On 9 September 2021, police observed a 65-year-old Redfern man deposit large sums of cash at a bank. He was arrested with \$80,000 in cash and charged with a proceeds of crime offence. Ongoing enquiries led police to a 29-year-old former casino dealer who was also observed depositing large quantities of cash at a bank. He was subsequently arrested on 12 October 2021 with \$65,000 in cash and multiple bank cards. The 65-year-old is next due in Burwood Local Court on 24 November 2021, while the 29-year-old is next due in Southerland Local Court on 2 November 2021.

Where is the laundered money going?

TF Vanguard investigators have observed money being moved from Australia to the Middle East (Dubai), Vietnam and China.

What is the largest amount of cash seized?

TF Vanguard Operation Apis investigated the alleged money laundering activities of a Vietnamese organised crime syndicate.

The investigation resulted in AFP officers executing a search warrant at an apartment in Liverpool on 25 August 2021. Police seized more than \$2 million in cash alleged to be the proceeds of crime and charged one man for dealing with money or property that is the proceeds of crime and another man with both a proceeds of crime offence and for manufacturing a commercial quantity of drugs. The two alleged members of the syndicate are scheduled to next appear in Liverpool Local Court on 6 December 2021.

Are there links to Outlaw Motor Cycle Gangs (OMCG)?

TF Vanguard investigators identified alleged links between Comanchero OMCG and a money laundering organisation that is allegedly laundering millions of dollars of proceeds of crime to Dubai.

TF Vanguard Operation Ghibli looked into the alleged laundering of millions of dollars to the Middle East on behalf of Outlaw Motor Cycle Gangs based in Australia and offshore.



The investigation resulted in multiple search warrants being executed in Fairfield, NSW in May 2021. Police seized more than \$850,000 in cash and arrested two men with alleged links to a Middle Eastern organised crime syndicate. The men were charged with dealing in proceeds of crime and are scheduled to next appear in Parramatta Local Court on 12 November 2021.

Investigators have not ruled out the possibility of OMCG links to other TF Vanguard arrests and seizures. Investigations are continuing.

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Media Release

Thursday, 28 October 2021

New AFP-led Taskforce Vanguard makes significant impact to high volume crime

The new Australian Federal Police-led High Volume Crime Taskforce Vanguard has made a significant impact on the community, with the arrest of 30 people for drug and money laundering offences, and the seizure of millions of dollars in cash and hundreds of kilograms of illicit drugs and tobacco.

The AFP-led Taskforce Vanguard was fully established on 1 July 2021, with about 30 investigators operating across four teams in NSW targeting drug crimes and money laundering activities.

It was purpose-built to combat the increasing trend of organised crime syndicates adapting their methods of importing illicit drugs into Australia since the COVID-19 pandemic, and turning to a high volume of lightweight packages through air cargo and parcel post systems.

Australian Border Force detects and seizes hundreds of small-scale drug importations in international mail and air cargo shipments each week. This year alone, ABF has seized more than 11 tonnes of drugs entering Australia through air cargo and parcel post systems, with NSW processing approximately 85% of Australia's incoming mail.

Since its inception, the taskforce has resulted in more than 50 search warrants, 30 arrests, the seizure of more than \$3.5 million in cash and seizure of hundreds of kilograms of illicit drugs, including methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin.

Investigations have involved the seizure of illicit drugs hidden in a range of items, including handbags, whey protein, exhaust pipes, a baby rocking chair, water filtration units and mailing tubes said to contain blueprints.

Investigators have identified links in a number of investigations between organised crime groups importing illicit drugs and subsequent money laundering activities to move the proceeds of the drug activities offshore.

Taskforce investigations have seen money alleged to be the proceeds of crime being moved to Dubai, Vietnam and China, with links to Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMCG) allegedly identified during one operation. AFP officers have not ruled out links to OMCGs in other investigations.



AFP
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**Australian
BORDER FORCE**



The AFP-led Taskforce Vanguard brings together innovative officers with a keen ability to think outside the box to develop investigative strategies that bring police to the forefront of tackling the ever changing global criminal environment.

The dedicated investigators who make up the taskforce are developing new methods of evidence-gathering and targeting people of interest and criminal organisations. This has been possible through a network of strong agency partnerships.

The AFP has brought the skills and resources of Australian Border Force and AUSTRAC members into the taskforce, with strong collaboration and intelligence sharing with Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, Department of Home Affairs, and US Homeland Security Investigations.

Taskforce Vanguard officers operate closely with their offshore law enforcement counterparts to share intelligence and help investigate the activities of transnational serious organised crime syndicates through the AFP International Network and its Liaison Officers based in posts around the world.

AFP Detective Superintendent Craig Bellis said illicit drug importations and the movement of money go hand in hand, and the taskforce is going after both.

“The AFP-led Taskforce Vanguard has been purpose built to actively target organised crime networks that are exploiting mail systems, and to actively pursue money laundering organisations that are enabling this crime,” Det. Supt. Bellis said.

“The AFP and its partners have implemented a number of innovative techniques to make us faster, smarter and more agile than ever.”

“This taskforce is out there every day keeping Australians safe; we’re searching houses and cars, arresting people, tearing down labs, seizing drugs and bleeding the profits of these crimes.”

ABF Superintendent Regional Investigations NSW, Brett Totten said working with law enforcement partners to target organised crime is a priority for the ABF.

“Every week the ABF seizes hundreds of mail items containing illicit drugs. If not detected these importations would go on to destroy lives and tear apart families,” Supt. Totten said.

“This multi-agency task force has been stood up to target the criminals attempting to make money by harming our communities. We will continue to work with our partner agencies to bring those involved before the courts.”

AUSTRAC National Manager Intelligence Operations, Mr Michael Tink said, ‘Taskforce Vanguard’s role in targeting money laundering organisations is helping to take the profit out of crime.’

“AUSTRAC financial intelligence utilises multiple sources of information, including its traditional reporting mechanisms and partnerships with industry. Being able to leverage the Fintel Alliance public-private partnership is integral to AUSTRAC’s identification of emerging and complex financial crime activities warranting investigation.”

HSI Attaché to Australia, Adam Parks said “Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) is pleased to partner with Taskforce Vanguard toward our common mission to disrupt transnational organized crime.”

“HSI will support the taskforce here in Australia and through HSI’s Border Enforcement Security Taskforces (BESTs) located in 65 cities in the U.S. Together, we will deny transnational crime syndicates a safe environment from which to operate on both sides of the Pacific.”

Editor’s note

[Infographic and Media Factsheet containing operational outcomes and further details](#)

[Vision of the search warrants, arrests, and drugs and cash seizures](#)

[Media grabs from agency spokespeople](#)

Follow up interviews are available on request.

Media enquiries

AFP Media: (02) 5126 9297

ABF Media: (02) 6264 2211

AUSTRAC Media: (02) 9950 0488

AFP-led High Volume Crime Taskforce Vanguard



OVER
\$3.5 MILLION
CASH
SEIZURES



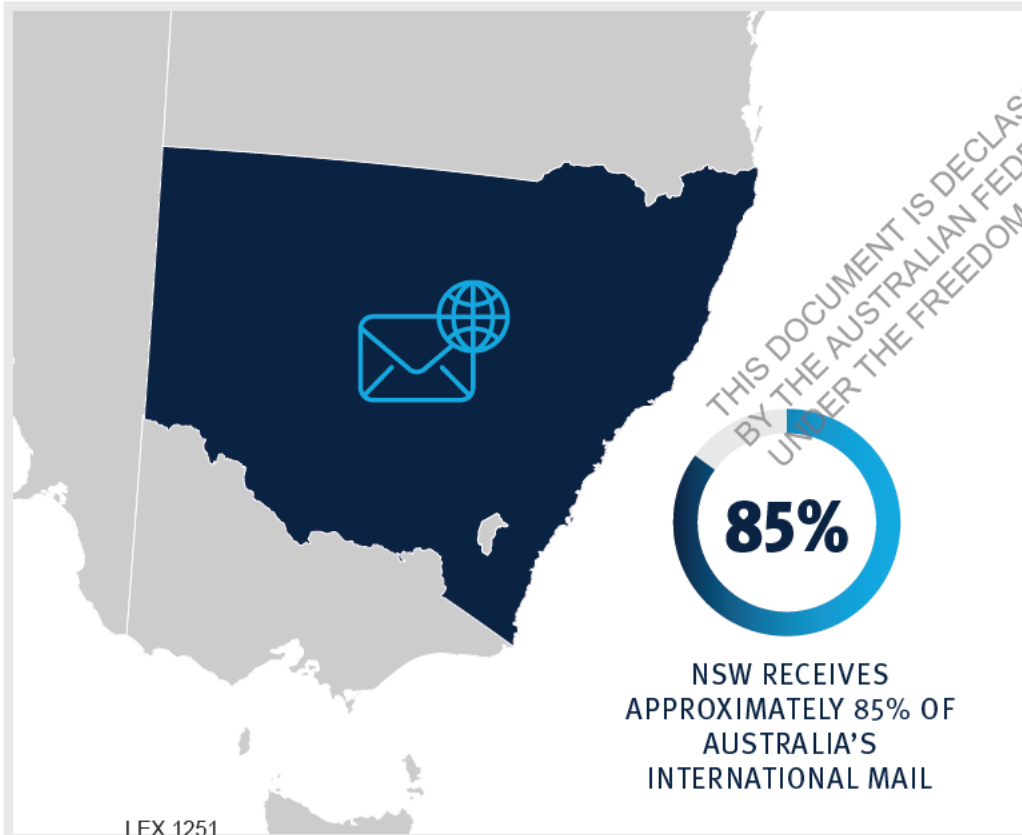
30
ARRESTS



52 TOTAL
PREMISES SEARCH WARRANTS
26 MONEY LAUNDERING | 26 DRUG CRIME



60
MATTERS REFERRED TO
STATE & TERRITORY POLICE
FOR INVESTIGATION



 **2,000**
PARCEL POST DETECTIONS
APPROXIMATELY SINCE JULY 2021

DRUGS COMING FROM:

-  BELGIUM
-  CANADA
-  COLOMBIA
-  FRANCE
-  USA

LAUNDERING MONEY GOING TO:

-  CHINA
-  MIDDLE EAST (DUBAI)
-  VIETNAM