

Operation 'Trumpet'

By Detective Sergeant B. R. Bennett

On 20 September 1991, a 17-year-old investigation came to an end with the sentencing of an American, Steven Franklin Shore, to six years' imprisonment for conspiracy, proving the long arm of the law reaches through time as well as distance.

OPERATION 'Trumpet' began in Sydney when in August 1974, intelligence was received by the former Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) that two Britons, a Miss T and a Miss G, had successfully couriered four suitcases of Pakistani cannabis resin into Sydney on behalf of an American syndicate. Approximate arrival dates had been supplied. FBN inquiries soon confirmed that the pair had, in fact, arrived and stayed at the now defunct Noah's Hotel at Rose Bay, before departing for overseas.

The information supplied by HM Customs and Excise advised that this group used couriers of both sexes, but mainly young females, and that the hashish was carried in false lidded 'American Tourister' suitcases. Couriers wore items of green clothing for identification by the waiting controllers. British Customs stated that a British courier, Michael Alistair Suttie, was en route to Sydney with a load, and was due to arrive by air on 10 August 1974.

FBN members covered the arrival of Suttie's nominated flight; however he was not on the passenger list. Observations of passengers from that flight settled on an American, Karen Denise Logan, who wore a green scarf. At the same time, Customs drug detector dogs reacted to two American Tourister suitcases consigned to Logan, who subsequently claimed them under FBN observation.

Logan was given a 'free run' and followed to the Wentworth Hotel, Sydney, where she made contact with a fellow American guest, Marlana Davine Gish Marlowe, who had arrived from New Delhi on 7 August. Logan and Marlowe

were later surveilled to the nearby Menzies Hotel and seen to meet a male. He was later identified as an American, Steven Franklin Shore, a guest there, who had arrived from India on a separate flight on 7 August 1974. Meanwhile, using their wide powers under the then existing Customs Schedule 4 Search Warrants, FBN agents had probed



Steven Franklin Shore (1974)

the cases of Logan and Marlowe and confirmed the presence of hashish.

Late on the evening of 11 August, an American couple, Janet Alveda Geissel and Joseph Thomas Damillio, checked into the Wentworth Hotel on arrival at Sydney Airport via New Delhi. The pair went directly to Marlowe's room, where they were arrested.

A search of their room revealed four American Tourister cases with false fibreglass lids, two holding 11.41 kg of hashish, the remainder containing 12.55 kg.

Both were interviewed and stated that they had been recruited jointly by Steven Shore to courier the cannabis resin from India to Australia for cash fees plus tickets and expenses.

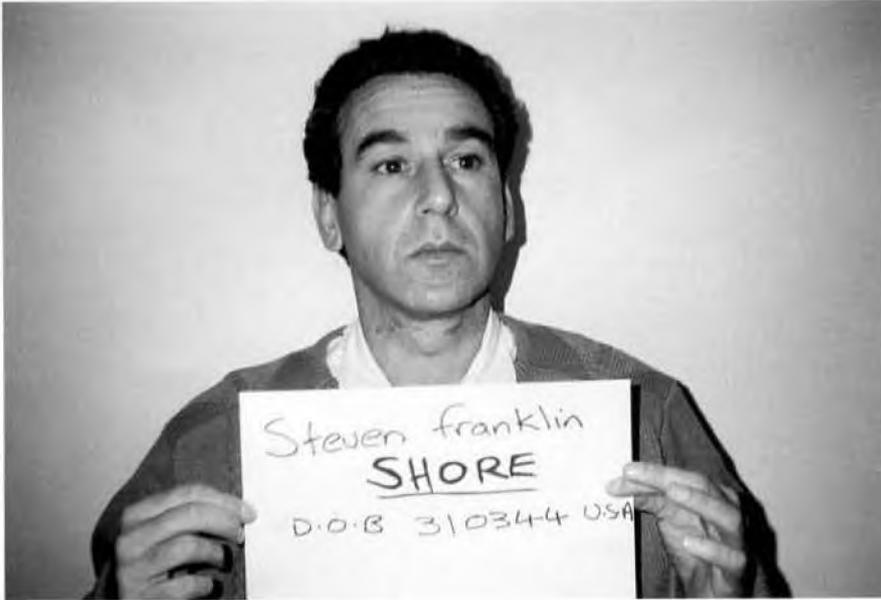
The decision to commence arrests at that time boiled down solely to resources. The operation had now been running for some 42 hours over a weekend, with all Sydney members of the FBN involved (the total strength then being only about 35 investigators) plus borrowed staff from other areas of Customs. Four different hotels were being covered and the targets were very active (Shore, Logan and Marlowe were out dining and dancing until 4 am). It would be fair to say that the surveillance was starting to wilt.

Chief Investigator Max Rogers, the operational commander, made the decision to commence arrests. Geissel and Damillio were the first of 14 arrested, with 12 charged on multiple charges.

Marlowe returned to her room in the early hours of 12 August 1974 and was arrested by Investigator Brian Baker (recently retired as an AFP detective sergeant in Canberra). Her two suitcases were found to have been gutted, with only hashish traces remaining. She stated that Shore had earlier visited her room and removed the resin. She also had been recruited in India by him.

That morning, Logan and Shore were located together in his room at the Menzies. Hashish weighing 26.5 g and 6.7 g of cocaine (a rarity in those days) were found in her purse.

Logan was arrested and taken to her room at the Wentworth Hotel, where it was ascertained that one of her suitcases contained 5.71 kg cannabis resin under false lids, whilst the second case had been gutted, leaving only traces. It emerged that Shore had actually removed the drug and taken it away in a shoulder bag. He had, of



Steven Franklin Shore (1991)

course, been observed, but had been rightly allowed to proceed when not seen in possession of a suitcase. No one has X-ray eyes and there are instant, operational decisions which must be made daily during drug operations. Logan made full admissions to the importation of the two cases of cannabis resin, but denied ownership of the hashish and cocaine found in her purse, for which she implicated Shore.

Meanwhile, Shore's room was still being searched by then Senior Investigator Brian Bennett and then Investigator Kenneth Meredith (both later to be detective sergeants in Eastern Region) and others. A hashish slab of 26.5 g was located in Shore's coat, followed by the seizure of two bags of Australian currency totalling \$28,556. It was then that Shore offered Bennett the drug and cash as a bribe, saying, "Take the money, take the hash and let me walk out of here". Shore was arrested.

A further search revealed an aerosol deodorant spray can (especially designed for smuggling), which contained 1 g of cocaine, 17.6 g of cannabis and a 59.5 g slab of hashish. This spray can, which was the first ever seizure of its type in this country, contained a small reservoir of deodorant, allowing it to actually spray, if tested. The can also contained one US\$100 note (intended as a bribe if arrested in Asia).

Whilst Shore was being interviewed at Customs House, the

operation proceeded, with the arrest of Edward John Lucas at St Ives. Lucas, a Briton, was found in possession of 1 kg of the same Pakistani hashish and was charged by Frank Davies, later an AFP Detective Sergeant.

In an unsigned record of interview, Shore admitted to Bennett and Meredith that he had been propositioned by an 'English Roger' at Bombay, to recruit couriers for this run. He had later removed Marlowe's hashish and sold it to a local contact for \$17,000 at Kings Cross; likewise the contents of one of Logan's cases yielded \$11,556. He had been awaiting contact from 'English Roger' when arrested. He admitted recruiting Marlowe, Logan, Geissel and Damillio, plus a Briton named Lynda Rae Cox (whom he wrongly believed that we had already arrested).

Cox was met upon her arrival at Sydney Airport from New Delhi, a search yielding 11.27 kg of cannabis resin in her two suitcases. Of all the couriers, Cox was the only one who attempted to shield Shore, describing her recruiter as an Australian named Geoffrey. Her description of this man however, resembled Shore, even down to the cocaine and hashish he kept in a silver antique snuffbox. She was also charged, this time by Investigator Douglas Cogill, now a detective sergeant with the AFP's Southern Region.

The operation continued ('limped' might be the better term) into its

third day, with the arrest of Johanna Gezina Bonell, a Dutch woman, at Paddington on 12 August 1974, by Senior Investigator Phillip Lawrence, now an AFP superintendent in Eastern Region. She was charged over possession and importation of small quantities of cocaine, LSD 'window panes' and \$15,000 in Australian currency. She had possession of two gutted suitcases containing only traces of hashish.

Meanwhile, the members covering Noah's Hotel at Rose Bay had been wringing their hands over missing the action uptown. Their moment came with the arrival of two men, a British courier named Peter James O'Connor and an Australian local named Allan John Luxton. O'Connor had about 3.5 kg cannabis resin left in his suitcase and Luxton had small quantities of cannabis, cannabis resin and lysergic acid 'microdots'. Those arrests were made by Senior Investigator Denis Gray (now AFP Superintendent, Bangkok) and others.

Maria Anne Hisshion, an Australian, was also arrested for LSD by Investigator Terrence Grace (later a staff member in Canberra). Hisshion was murdered by a .32 gunshot at Sydney on 25 December 1975, an unsolved, but drug related killing. Others, including Mr W, an Englishman, and suspected overseas principal and Mr M, an Australian receiver, were questioned but released.

On 14 August 1974, the fourth day of the operation (and for most involved, the fourth day without sleep), the original target Michael Suttie was arrested upon his arrival at Sydney Airport from India. There was no point in letting him 'run' under surveillance, as all known suspects had already been arrested, and in any case, every member was at the point of collapse. The hapless Suttie immediately 'fessed up' about the two suitcases of hashish he was carrying and was then charged.

Lucas and Hisshion were fined, all other offenders were jailed except those who absconded their bail, namely Shore, Logan, Cox and Bonell. This remains an indictment of the courts' views on bail in those days. Bonell was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, *ex parte* and remains wanted on Commitment Warrant. Excellent

work by Investigator Raymond Ingram (now a staff member at Eastern Region) led to Cox being traced to the United Kingdom, where she was arrested in possession of cannabis in 1975; however, she was not extradited on cost grounds. Logan and Shore remained wanted on warrants, all our inquiries being directed towards Shore's old stamping grounds of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal.

It had been a good bust, not the largest in terms of seizures, but middling. In excess of 46 kg of cannabis resin, plus quantities of cocaine, cannabis, LSD and about A\$44,000 cash were seized over four days. What made it unique was the number of couriers arrested (eight all told), plus Shore, a courier controller, plus the local offenders, Lucas, Luxton and Hisshion. Much intelligence was gained, leading to further arrests in India and the UK. Inquiries into the group continued with Operations 'Sherry', 'Alaska' and 'Vacuum'. It was noted that after their failure in Operation 'Trumpet', they changed their modus operandi to single larger importations of block hashish using motor vehicle concealment and, when that was broken, to bulk hash oil carried in typewriter cases and the like.

In 1982, the AFP was advised by the US Pennsylvania State Police that Shore had surfaced. Detective Sergeant Brian Bennett immediately organised an extradition hearing at Sydney and the extradition was approved by the Commissioner and the Attorney-General.

By the time the Provisional Warrant was issued in the USA, Shore had again 'gone into smoke'. For a while he was hunted by the DEA and later by the FBI, but each time the leads petered out.

Then, in a change of policy in 1986, all fugitive files were passed to the US Marshals Service. It was the beginning of the end for Steven Shore when his file hit the desk of the renowned fugitive hunter, Inspector John Stafford of their Northern California Office at San Francisco. Inspector Stafford chased Shore for three years, using informants, telephone intercepts and helicopters.



Brian Bennett, Jeffrey Searls, John Stafford and Mark Taylor, at the Headquarters of the United States Marshals Service in San Francisco, 18 March 1991.

His tenacity paid off on 17 November 1990, when his team, including Deputy Marshals Jeffrey Searls and Bernard Cummins, arrested Steven Shore at San Salmo, California. Shore was using false identification in the name of James Basehore and was found in possession of US\$5000 cash and a small quantity of suspected cannabis.

After the usual hearings and surrender order, Steven Shore was escorted from San Francisco to Los Angeles by his US arresting officer, Deputy Searls, together with Detective Sergeant Brian Bennett and Constable Mark Taylor of Eastern Region (unfortunately Detective Sergeant Meredith had just retired). At Los Angeles he was officially handed over to the AFP escort on 18 March 1991, and then flown to Sydney where, upon arrival on 20 March 1991, he was charged by Bennett with nine First Instance Warrants covering 'conspiracy', 'import', 'possession' and 'offer bribe to Customs Officer' as well as five counts of 'knowingly concerned', all charges relating to Operation 'Trumpet' in 1974. Shore did not apply for bail this time.

On 19 June 1991, he appeared at Central Local Court, Sydney, and pleaded guilty to the 'conspiracy' and 'possession' charges, with the remaining seven charges stayed from the list.

The chapter closed on 20 September 1991, when Shore was sentenced by the Sydney District court to six years' imprisonment for 'conspiracy' (the 'possession' charge was taken into account on a Schedule) with a non-parole period of three years from the date of his arrest in California. Judge Court indicated in his sentence that he had had some difficulty with the judgement, given that the court's view on drug offences had hardened considerably, as had actual punishments. He had, of course, to sentence Shore under punishments then in force in 1974: a maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment plus a fine not exceeding \$4000.

The author would like to thank all concerned in the 17 year saga of Steven Shore, especially those 34 living witnesses (two had died, many were retired) who gave fresh statements and all of whom were prepared to 'bat on'. Likewise Margaret Sproule of the A-G's Department, Canberra and AFP Liaison Officers Dennis Craft and Denis Pattle of our Los Angeles Consulate.

Most of all I would like to thank Inspector John Stafford and his team of US Deputy Marshals for their tenacity and great police work.

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