

also a sizeable quantity of frozen meat in the truck. Each nylon bag held between 20 to 25 blocks of about 1kg of cannabis each. The blocks were vacuumed sealed and had hand-written numbers on them which were believed to be their individual weight. The truck and its contents were taken to AFP Brisbane for closer examination. The total weight was determined at 1.378 tonnes of compressed cannabis.

It was believed the brothers intended to take the truck to a rented house at Midge Point where they would repack the drugs into meat cartons including the frozen meat to try to hide the drugs. They then intended to take the drugs by road to a southern market.

The operation had started earlier that day with the AFP conducting surveillance on a mini storage shed in Edmonton, near Cairns. At 10.06am the brothers were seen opening the roller door to one of the storage sheds and reversing a Mitsubishi refrigerated truck up to it. They loaded a number of nylon bags into the back of the truck. About 10.30am they left Cairns travelling south on the Bruce Highway, only stopping to get fuel.

At the trial the brothers pleaded not guilty. They admitted they had loaded the truck, but claimed they believed the bags contained dried shark fins and they



When drugs were discovered in the rear of the truck, the suspects said they thought they were carrying meat.

didn't know that there was cannabis in the back of the truck. Their defence called a witness involved in the lawful importation of shark fin, who gave evidence that the size and weight of the bags would be consistent with them containing shark fins. However this defence was ultimately rejected with a guilty verdict.

The DPP prosecutor, Danny Boyle, told the court that the drugs could have fetched \$7,000 per kilogram if sold wholesale as lots rather than "street deals". He asked that the sentence reflect that the brothers had full knowledge of the quantity of drugs being carried and that they had been involved in the loading and transportation of the drugs. In a slight understatement, Mr Boyle said, "It could be comfortably inferred that they had participated in the exercise for personal gain". In sentencing both to 10 years jail Justice Byrne remarked on the enormous quantity of the drugs and the importance of his sentence acting as a deterrent to others. The truck was forfeited to the Crown.

By the end of August 1994, the AFP in conjunction with the French authorities had seized and destroyed 15 tonnes of cannabis from Operation Caribou and almost one-and-a-half tonnes from Operation Extra bringing the largest total seized and destroyed ever in Australia's law enforcement history. It was also significant that the AFP was able to successfully operate two major operations almost simultaneously.



The truck contained close to one-and-a-half tonnes of compressed cannabis.