
Cocaine trafficking on the rise

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April was a busy month for cocaine traffickers, who attempted to smuggle the narcotic to North America and the United Kingdom (UK) via Jamaica. According to police statistics, narcotics detectives seized 15.44 kilograms of the drug in April.

This is almost twice the amount seized over the comparable period last year. Speaking with The Gleaner last week, head of the Narcotics Division, Senior Superintendent of Police Carlton Wilson, disclosed that a total of 98 kilograms of cocaine was seized in 2007.

Increased attempts

Up to the first calendar quarter of this year, the narcotics cops had already seized 37 kilograms of the substance.

Speaking against the background of a number of arrests last week, Wilson said as summer approaches, the police had observed an increase in attempts by air passengers to smuggle cocaine.

"The methods are not new. What we are seeing is a resurgence of some of the old methods," said Wilson.

Some of the methods include liquefying the cocaine in rum, which is then packaged in sealed, transparent bottles, as well as concealing the drug in canned juices and shoes, which are usually packed in suitcases.

Last December, a Jamaica Information Service report quoted the outgoing commander in the Jamaica Defence Force, naval Captain Sydney Innis, as saying: "I have seen a significant fall in the importation or trans-shipment of cocaine through our waters."

Innis said there was a major reduction in cocaine seizures at sea.

His comments were also endorsed by the narcotics police, who reported that since the arrests of major drug kingpins four years ago, there has been a lull in cocaine seizures.

Referring to the recent increase in cocaine finds in Jamaica this year, Wilson explained that traffickers' had sought innovative methods of smuggling as a result of increased drug interdiction.

"Drug dealers are now finding innovative ways to facilitate their trade. We recognise that over the past four months, we have been arresting a number of persons coming from the Eastern Caribbean with cocaine," said Wilson.

In the early 2000s, Jamaican law enforcement authorities, in collaboration with their counterparts in the United Kingdom and the United States, made a significant dent in the international trade in cocaine with greater networking and the implementation of cutting-edge scanning technology.

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