

Heroin most smuggled drug – Police

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and Joan Murungi

Two foreign courier companies (names withheld) and landing sites on Lake Victoria are the main entry and exit routes for trafficking narcotic drugs in Uganda, the Police have revealed.

The Criminal Investigations Directorate's (CID) Anti-Narcotics Department boss, Tinka Zarugaba, said Uganda is a growing and transit country for narcotic drugs.

In June, a Ugandan suspected drug baron, Ismail Ongarambe Balinda, was tracked by American operatives over drug trafficking, leading to his arrest in Kenya.

Subsequently, it was established that Balinda used UN planes as a cover to traffic drugs.

Detectives at the CID revealed that Balinda would transport his parcels containing drugs, disguised as luggage for UN staff. Balinda was charged with conspiracy in trafficking heroine, in a New York Court and sent on remand, until August 31.

Yesterday, while reading a report on drugs to the British High Commissioner



Akullo receiving computers from British envoy West yesterday. Photo by Eriya Luyimbazi

to Uganda, Peter West, at the CID headquarters in Kibuli, a city suburb, Zarugaba said the drugs grown in Uganda include cannabis sativa (*njaga*), khat (*Mairungi*), and other intoxicating products used are smokeless tobacco and psychotropic substances, such as jet fuel and stringer weed.

Zarugaba said the most hard drugs that are trafficked and abused in Uganda are cocaine, heroine and amphetamines

such as methamphetamines and mandrax.

"Heroin is the most smuggled drug, mainly originating from Tanzania and Kenya," said Zarugaba.

"Trafficked drugs are concealed in many ways, but the notable ones include; in the stomach by swallowing pellets, false bottoms of suite cases and bags, computers, phones handsets, women wigs, breasts, hand crafts, car spare parts

(driving shafts) and already made furniture from Asian countries," said Zarugaba.

Shot in the arm

Yesterday, West donated equipment to the CID chief, Grace Akullo. The items included cameras and computers to aid Police detectives during investigations.

"The donation was a small token of appreciation to CID. Drug trafficking is a

A foreign courier company has been linked to drug trafficking in Uganda

transnational crime and global co-operation is key to thwart the increasing crime," he said.

Explaining drug trafficking, West said heroine sold on the streets in UK was from Afghanistan, but with 'transport' routes in Uganda.

West said the donation is part of the big picture in terms of co-operation of the two countries (Uganda and UK).

Akullo said lack of enough trained officers to handle narcotic-related crimes, especially precursor identification, clandestine lab investigations, backtracking investigations, and control delivery investigation is leading to an increase in drug trafficking in Uganda.

"Most of the exhibits that are

impounded are expensive to dispose of. CID impounded about 130 drums of acid that were meant to be used to manufacture narcotic drugs, last year," she noted.

She stressed that a new Act has been passed to strengthen the punishments of dealers once caught.

"A drug dealer is tasked with paying a \$30,000 (about sh100m) fine or face a lengthy imprisonment," she explained.

Akullo said the department needs to be facilitated with funds to carry out massive sensitisation, buy equipment, and train narcotics officers.

Seizures

A copy of the report on narcotic drugs seen by *New Vision*, indicates that CID intercepted 14.6kg of cocaine, 64.7kg of heroine and 1760kg of cannabis.

A kilogramme of heroine goes for \$18,000 (about sh65m), while that of cocaine is valued at \$50,000 (about sh181m) on the international market.

A total of 15 cases of narcotic drugs trafficking were registered in 2016. The drugs were trafficked through a courier company (names withheld) to Europe.