

In the meantime other members of the Toggle team had observed an Asian man leave the hotel with a briefcase and had recognised him by chance as a passenger on an incoming overseas flight that had arrived at Mascot airport earlier that day. At that stage they were unable to follow him but through a slip of paper found in the overseer's room the Toggle team were able to track him down to another Kings Cross hotel and seize the remaining 12 blocks of 'heroin'.

There was the added concern among the Toggle team members to find the substituted heroin for fear of heroin addicts using the substitute.

Five syndicate members were arrested.

One of those arrested was Prasert Piyathubthim, who had been the subject of a number of investigations by police in Europe. He was wanted by Danish police in relation to an importation of 10 kgs of heroin in 1979. Danish police sent a congratulatory telegram to the AFP upon hearing of his arrest. Piyathubthim was also believed by Toggle members to have instigated at least two other earlier heroin importations into Australia.

Piyathubthim was tried and sentenced to 14 years goal.

Another of those arrested was the overseer of the shipment. Investigations of his movements here indicate that the heroin was to have been delivered to a Sydney man well known to police and Customs. This man had close links to Tony Eustace Anderson and Danny Chubb, both of whom were later to be victims of gangland killings.

Toggle Juliet

Again through intelligence from Thailand, Toggle members were aware of a 28 kg heroin shipment which arrived in Sydney on a flight from Bangkok on 19 April 1984. The 68 blocks of heroin were substituted and David Chow and Chareon Rirasatik collected the suitcase containing the "heroin" from the Thai courier. The "heroin" was then taken to the home of a prominent Sydney restaurateur Tina Wong, in the Sydney suburb of Castlecrag.

After some days of surveillance Rirasatik, Chow and Wong were arrested and charged. Rirasatik and Chow were convicted of trafficking and are serving long prison sentences.

Platypus 25, March 1989



(From left) Saepang and Prasertchang in Kings Cross with the package containing the pictures.

Wong was acquitted and suffered a stroke shortly afterwards and died. Three other local Chinese were also subsequently arrested in possession of some of the heroin.

The Australian Connection

Throughout the period 1982 to 1984 surveillance was conducted on Keowkanchanaskul and his associates during their visits to Australia. It was learnt for example that Keowkanchanaskul had made contact in Sydney with a major Lebanese Australian heroin trafficker, Najee (Neil) Chidiac, through Chidiac's brother-in-law, Peter Nassif, also a major drug trafficker. Nassif, who had pioneered the movement of Thai heroin to the Lebanese traffickers in Sydney, had been arrested for heroin trafficking but had been 'sprung' from a dentist's chair in Bankstown during a visit for treatment from Long Bay Gaol. Nassif has never been recaptured.

Faction fighting took place among senior members of the Thai syndicate during 1982, leading to Keowkanchanaskul being shot while leaving home in Bangkok. He received four shots to the head and back from a gunman pillion passenger on a motor cycle, but he survived. Intelligence suggested a rival syndicate member had attempted to take control of his activities.

The Toggle team believed that because of the number of successful seizures of heroin in Australia Keowkanchanaskul had become increasingly unfinancial to the point where in 1984 he was forced to involve himself directly in the purchase of heroin, rather than distancing himself through the use of couriers.

In June 1984 Keowkanchanaskul and an associate were arrested by Thai police in the possession of 2.4 kgs of heroin. The associate had collected the heroin from a Bangkok address and drove to a meeting with Keowkanchanaskul. Police interrupted the meeting and arrested both men and found a loaded revolver in Keowkanchanaskul's possession as well as the heroin. His arrest meant that some restructuring occurred within the syndicate but it did not end the syndicate's importations of heroin into Australia. Several significant heroin seizures were later made in Eastern Region that were sourced to elements of the same Thai-based syndicate.

In the three years that the Toggle team were targeting the Thai syndicate, more than 100 kgs of heroin were seized and some ten people were either successfully prosecuted for drug trafficking or deported from Australia. Operation Toggle was an outstanding success and it served to hone the AFP's drug interdiction skills.