

Firearm parts investigation leads to major drug find

By Rod Daniels

Customs key role in screening all international mail has been highlighted in a case relating to the illegal importation of firearm parts.

A major investigation began in Adelaide in 2003 after officers at the International Mail Centre in Melbourne detected a number of parts for a Colt semi-automatic .45 and a .38 Colt diamondback handgun sent from the United States.

Customs screens all international mail to ensure that weapons and other prohibited items are not illegally imported into Australia.

Investigations officers in Adelaide, assisted by the South Australia Police, executed a search warrant on an Adelaide property where evidence was found relating to the purchase of firearm parts.

Customs then Regional Director South Australia Virginia Lynch said: "This should serve as a severe warning to anyone contemplating smuggling firearms. The illegal importation of parts for prohibited weapons is a very serious criminal offence."

Computer forensic examination of a computer seized during the warrant action identified evidence of a suspect buying firearm parts via the Internet. Also seized were firearms parts relating to two Uzi sub-machine guns and four Sten guns.

"While these weapons and parts may be freely available on the Internet and for sale in some other countries, they cannot be imported into Australia without appropriate permission," Ms Lynch said.

Also found at the property was a large quantity of high purity MDMA (ecstasy), and two laboratories producing MDMA. There were 544 tablets and enough powder to produce another 8700. These tablets are valued at \$50 each on the street. Police seized four handguns, two semi-automatic assault rifles and a quantity of cash.

Although these matters started with relatively small detections in Melbourne, results highlight the success of cooperative work between law-enforcement agencies and excellent analytical work.

Cumulative sentences handed down for all State and Commonwealth offences totalled five years.



Some of the seized firearms.