# British pensioner arrested in Chile over £3.7m crystal meth smuggling bid



A 79-year-old British pensioner has been apprehended in Chile after allegedly being lured by a Mexican gang with the promise of £3.7 million to smuggle a suitcase filled with crystal meth. The man was intercepted at Santiago Airport upon disembarking from a flight from Cancun, Mexico. According to reports, he intended to board a subsequent flight to Sydney, Australia, after spending a night in a hotel.

The police seized approximately 5 kilograms of crystal meth, an illicit product whose street value is estimated to be around £200,000 in Chile. The arrest occurred when airport authorities detected a "suspicious" substance during a luggage scan. Police chief Sergio Paredes explained that the pensioner revealed that the suitcase had been entrusted to him by individuals in Cancun, which raises questions about whether the drugs were destined for Chile or Australia. As Paredes noted, the case is under investigation to ascertain the intended purpose of the smuggled substance.

This incident is part of a concerning trend involving British nationals becoming embroiled in drug trafficking activities, particularly as it pertains to older individuals. Cases like Terence Smith and William Laing, arrested in Peru in 2018 for attempting to smuggle cocaine hidden inside children’s Bibles, demonstrate a pattern of elderly citizens being exploited for illegal drug transport. They claimed their involvement stemmed from a straightforward lottery-winning expedition, yet the authorities suspected a deeper entanglement with drug networks.

The phenomenon of older drug mules isn't entirely new. Notable incidents include John Powell, who was sentenced to ten years in prison for his role in a £200 million cocaine smuggling operation. Powell’s case highlighted the involvement of senior citizens in drug trafficking schemes, often intertwined with international networks spanning several continents. Recent arrests suggest a significant trend, ranging from relatively minor to substantial drug offences involving British nationals across various locations, including Spain and South America.

Moreover, the recent apprehension of a British couple at Valencia Airport, attempting to smuggle 33 kilograms of cannabis, further illustrates the escalating cases involving Britons abroad. Similarly, Charlotte Lee May, a 21-year-old arrested in Colombo, wrestling with 46 kilograms of a synthetic cannabis strain, underscores a broader issue concerning youth and drug trafficking. Even more alarming, a 23-year-old woman was apprehended in Ghana for allegedly attempting to smuggle 18 kilograms of cannabis into the UK.

These cases collectively reflect a growing concern regarding drug trafficking and the potential exploitation of vulnerable individuals. The utilisation of older and younger British citizens by drug syndicates raises serious ethical questions about the extent to which such individuals are aware of their involvement and are being manipulated into illicit activities.

As investigations continue into the case of the pensioner in Chile, the wider implications of these arrests will likely inform discussions on how law enforcement agencies can better address the issue and protect individuals from becoming pawns in dangerous trafficking games.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769907/British-pensioner-drug-mule-arrested-Mexican-gang-suitcase-meth.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769907/British-pensioner-drug-mule-arrested-Mexican-gang-suitcase-meth.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.iol.co.za/news/elderly-uk-man-arrested-for-unknowingly-smuggling-drugs-inside-bibles-16746848)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.theolivepress.es/spain-news/2018/01/09/british-fugitive-pensioner-wanted-for-drug-trafficking-found-hiding-in-malaga-campo/), [[5]](https://news.sky.com/story/pensioner-jailed-over-200m-drug-smuggling-plot-10362195)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/national-crime-agency-spain-british-britons-south-america-b2582643.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.canarianweekly.com/posts/British-fugitive-arrested-in-Los-Cristianos-will-be-extradited-back-to-the-UK)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769907/British-pensioner-drug-mule-arrested-Mexican-gang-suitcase-meth.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769907/British-pensioner-drug-mule-arrested-Mexican-gang-suitcase-meth.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/elderly-uk-man-arrested-for-unknowingly-smuggling-drugs-inside-bibles-16746848> - In August 2018, Terence Smith, 61, and William Laing, 60, were arrested in Peru for attempting to smuggle cocaine hidden inside children's Bibles. They claimed to be collecting lottery winnings but faced up to eight years in prison if convicted. Both men pleaded not guilty and awaited trial. Authorities believed they were unwittingly involved in the drug trade, having been lured by promises of large sums of money. The case highlighted the exploitation of elderly individuals by drug traffickers.
3. <https://www.theolivepress.es/spain-news/2018/01/09/british-fugitive-pensioner-wanted-for-drug-trafficking-found-hiding-in-malaga-campo/> - In January 2018, a 75-year-old British pensioner, wanted for drug trafficking, was found hiding in a country house in Alhaurín el Grande, Málaga. He had absconded before serving a five-year and nine-month sentence in the UK. The arrest followed a joint operation between the Guardia Civil and the UK's National Crime Agency. The fugitive was placed at the disposal of the Central Court of Instruction number 4 of the National Court in Madrid, awaiting extradition to the UK.
4. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/national-crime-agency-spain-british-britons-south-america-b2582643.html> - In July 2024, ten British nationals were arrested in an international operation targeting a drug trafficking cartel moving cocaine from South America to Europe. Seven were living in Málaga, Spain, and one in Portugal. The operation, initiated in 2020, led to the interception of a Spanish-registered yacht in the Caribbean, resulting in the seizure of 1.2 tonnes of cocaine. The National Crime Agency highlighted the dismantling of a major drug trafficking group and the importance of international collaboration.
5. <https://news.sky.com/story/pensioner-jailed-over-200m-drug-smuggling-plot-10362195> - In April 2015, John Powell, 70, was jailed for 10 years for his role in smuggling £200 million worth of cocaine across the Atlantic on a luxury yacht. The vessel, Makayabella, was intercepted 200 miles off Ireland's southwest coast, carrying 41 bales of cocaine weighing nearly a tonne. Powell, along with two other Britons, pleaded guilty to drug trafficking charges. The operation involved multiple international agencies, including the UK's National Crime Agency and Irish authorities.
6. <https://www.canarianweekly.com/posts/British-fugitive-arrested-in-Los-Cristianos-will-be-extradited-back-to-the-UK> - In August 2024, a British man wanted by UK authorities was arrested in Los Cristianos, Tenerife. He faces charges of large-scale drug trafficking and money laundering, linked to the trafficking of 12 kilograms of Class A drugs, including heroin, morphine, and liquid ecstasy, along with one kilogram of cocaine. The Spanish courts approved his extradition to the UK, where he could face up to eight life sentences if convicted.
7. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/invisible-cocaine-trafficker-captured-colombia-christopher-neil/> - In December 2024, Christopher Neil, a suspected British drug trafficker, was arrested in Medellín, Colombia. Described as 'invisible' due to his low-profile lifestyle, Neil was accused of coordinating cocaine trafficking from Colombia to the UK for the Clan del Golfo cartel. He had been living in Colombia since December 2018 and faced trafficking and money laundering charges in the UK. His arrest followed a multi-million-dollar transaction between the UK and Colombia.