# Drug dealer Nicholas Knowles jailed after fleeing UK to Caribbean amid international manhunt



A drug dealer who orchestrated a criminal operation from the UK and attempted to evade justice by fleeing to the Caribbean has been jailed after a complex investigation spanning several years. Nicholas Knowles, aged 32, was a prominent figure in the 'Tommy' crime group, which was notorious for the supply of Class A drugs across Greater Manchester. He was convicted unanimously by a jury at Bolton Crown Court in 2018, receiving a sentence of 13 and a half years for conspiracy to supply heroin and cocaine.

On the day of his sentencing, however, Knowles feigned illness to avoid appearing in court, subsequently absconding to the Caribbean. He was apprehended and extradited back to the UK, finally facing the legal consequences of his actions. On May 16, 2025, he was handed an additional sentence of 34 weeks, to run consecutively with his initial term, highlighting the complexities associated with bringing criminals to justice when they attempt to flee their responsibilities.

The investigation into Knowles and his associates began in earnest in May 2015, when police began to unravel the operations of his gang. By this point, several gang members had already been arrested, with four individuals pleading guilty to their roles in the drug trade. The group's activities involved relentless distribution of Class A drugs, facilitated by a series of phone lines known as 'shot-lines', which were essential for coordinating their illegal business.

One notable figure in the gang was Cameron Johnson, whose arrest led to further disclosures about the group's network. During this investigation, police seized significant quantities of drugs, cash, and mobile phones, uncovering evidence of extensive dealings that significantly impacted local communities. Detective Inspector Ian Toole emphasised the relentless nature of these operations, stating, “The actions of the crime group blighted our local community and exploited vulnerable people further afield.”

The operational structure of Knowles’ organisation was characterised by a series of arrests and the gradual accumulation of evidence through diligent detective work. As the police closed in, Knowles’ network began to unravel, revealing not only the scale of their activities but also how the gang used vulnerable individuals to transport and distribute drugs. Despite multiple arrests, Knowles continued to manage operations even from behind bars, leveraging mobile phones to maintain contact with his underlings.

Following Knowles’ conviction and subsequent escape, the authorities intensified their efforts to locate him. This culminated in an international manhunt that saw various agencies collaborate to ensure his return to the UK. Speaking about the case, Detective Inspector Toole remarked on the unwavering commitment of law enforcement: “If you are a criminal that has fled the UK to live in another country and thinks they can enjoy a life of luxury, you can't; we will find you and bring you back to face justice.”

The broader implications of this case raise questions about the challenges faced by law enforcement in tackling drug-related crime, particularly those operations that utilise sophisticated methods to evade detection. The case of Nicholas Knowles serves as a stark reminder of the significant societal issues associated with drug trafficking, particularly in urban areas where such activities have devastating effects on local communities.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14773563/drug-dealer-faked-illness-Caribbean-jailed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.bahamasb2b.com/news/2006/08/ninety-is-extradited)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14773563/drug-dealer-faked-illness-Caribbean-jailed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.thenassauguardian.com/news/extradited-drug-smugglers-back-in-the-bahamas/article_5550c335-ff9c-5165-a5ef-cb27ac13792b.html), [[5]](https://www.bahamasb2b.com/news/2010/08/ninety-knowles-loses-appeal)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://old.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20020610/lead/lead4.html), [[6]](https://www.tribune242.com/news/2019/jun/13/knowles-walk-free-six-years/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14773563/drug-dealer-faked-illness-Caribbean-jailed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thenassauguardian.com/news/extradited-drug-smugglers-back-in-the-bahamas/article_5550c335-ff9c-5165-a5ef-cb27ac13792b.html> - Three Bahamians, including Nathaniel Knowles, were extradited to Florida in 2002 on drug smuggling charges. After serving time in the Bahamas Department of Corrections, they were sentenced to time served due to the appalling conditions they endured while on remand. They were deported to The Bahamas on April 21, 2025, after serving their time. ([thenassauguardian.com](https://www.thenassauguardian.com/news/extradited-drug-smugglers-back-in-the-bahamas/article_5550c335-ff9c-5165-a5ef-cb27ac13792b.html?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://old.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20020610/lead/lead4.html> - In June 2002, the U.S. government designated seven alleged drug traffickers, including Samuels 'Ninety' Knowles of the Bahamas, as appropriate for sanctions under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act. Knowles was indicted in 2000 for smuggling cocaine and marijuana, and was identified as a major Bahamian drug trafficker. ([old.jamaica-gleaner.com](https://old.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20020610/lead/lead4.html?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.bahamasb2b.com/news/2006/08/ninety-is-extradited> - In August 2006, alleged drug kingpin Samuel 'Ninety' Knowles was handed over to the American Drug Enforcement Agency and flown to Miami. This followed a six-year legal battle during which Knowles was detained at Fox Hill Prison. He was accused of channeling millions of dollars worth of drugs into Florida. ([bahamasb2b.com](https://www.bahamasb2b.com/news/2006/08/ninety-is-extradited?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.bahamasb2b.com/news/2010/08/ninety-knowles-loses-appeal> - In August 2010, drug kingpin Samuel 'Ninety' Knowles lost his appeal and was required to serve out the 35-year jail sentence imposed on him by a Miami court in 2008. The ruling also mandated the forfeiture of $14 million worth of his properties, assets, and money to the U.S. and Bahamas Governments. ([bahamasb2b.com](https://www.bahamasb2b.com/news/2010/08/ninety-knowles-loses-appeal?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.tribune242.com/news/2019/jun/13/knowles-walk-free-six-years/> - In June 2019, convicted Bahamian drug smuggler Austin Knowles was sentenced to 12 years in prison, with credit for time served, and ordered to forfeit $1 million for his role in an international conspiracy and drug trafficking scheme in 2002. He was extradited to the U.S. in May 2018, ending a more than decade-long court battle. ([tribune242.com](https://www.tribune242.com/news/2019/jun/13/knowles-walk-free-six-years/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://ewnews.com/knowles-tells-his-story/> - In May 2018, Austin 'Ozzie' Knowles, a suspected drug smuggler, spoke exclusively to Eyewitness News about his case. He had spent over 12 years on bail before being taken into custody in November 2017 after attempting to appeal his case to the Privy Council. He questioned the legal system and the conditions at the Bahamas Department of Corrections. ([ewnews.com](https://ewnews.com/knowles-tells-his-story/?utm_source=openai))