# Four arrested in dawn raids on social media-backed people-smuggling gang in UK



Four individuals have been arrested as part of a coordinated National Crime Agency (NCA) operation targeting an alleged people-smuggling gang in the UK. The suspects—a woman from Moldova and three men from Albania—are being questioned over suspicions of involvement in advertising and facilitating illegal migrant crossings from France via social media. The group is also suspected of picking up migrants from heavy goods vehicle (HGV) stops in Kent and transporting them to London.

The arrests occurred during a series of dawn raids on Wednesday, with locations including Edmonton, Enfield, Gatwick Airport, and Leyton. In addition to these sites, officers searched five cafes across Walthamstow, Chingford, and Dagenham, believed to be connected to the gang’s activities. The NCA operation was supported by the Metropolitan Police and Home Office officials. Alongside these arrests, another two individuals were detained for immigration offences in Edmonton during a related enforcement effort.

NCA Branch Commander Adam Berry emphasised the importance of dismantling organised immigration crime, pointing out the dangers posed by illegal crossings, whether by boat or in HGVs, to both migrants’ lives and the security of the UK’s borders. He stressed the agency’s commitment to disrupting and dismantling people-smuggling networks through collaborative efforts with law enforcement and government partners. The NCA noted that in 2024 over 8,000 social media accounts used by people smugglers have been taken down, and currently holds around 80 investigations into illegal migration gangs.

This latest operation fits within a broader context of intensified UK efforts to combat human smuggling. Earlier in 2024, a string of arrests targeted multiple smuggling networks across the country. For instance, in April, nationwide raids led to the arrest of four men suspected of smuggling migrants via air, land, and sea, involving individuals of British and Kurdish nationality. Another investigation in February resulted in the detention of two Albanian nationals in London suspected of using fake travel documents and airline tickets to facilitate illegal entry, with additional connections to drug supply uncovered.

More recently, a notable operation in November targeted a network specialising in smuggling North African migrants from the UK to France in lorries, resulting in five arrests—including high-ranking suspects—and followed incidents where over 200 migrants, including children, were found in lorry trailers. These efforts coincide with international collaborations such as the NCA’s participation in INTERPOL’s ‘Operation Liberterra II’ in October 2024, which saw arrests of people smugglers and traffickers across multiple European countries, underlining the cross-border nature of these criminal activities.

Operations have also focused on cutting off exploitation within the Common Travel Area, as evidenced by a three-day crackdown in September 2024 that led to 31 arrests at major ports and airports throughout the UK. More recently still, in early 2025, joint NCA and Belgian police investigations culminated in the arrest of six Afghan nationals linked to a smuggling ring moving migrants across Europe.

Together, these coordinated actions reflect the UK’s strategic, multi-agency approach to tackling the complex and evolving challenge of people smuggling. The persistence of these illegal networks highlights the ongoing risks faced by vulnerable migrants and reinforces the necessity of sustained enforcement, intelligence gathering, and international cooperation to protect borders and dismantle organised criminal operations.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/four-arrested-after-dawn-raids-targeting-suspected-people-smugglers-H2TNX2UHEVPORKIEJG5Q54HWNY/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/four-arrested-after-dawn-raids-targeting-suspected-people-smugglers-H2TNX2UHEVPORKIEJG5Q54HWNY/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/four-arrested-after-dawn-raids-targeting-suspected-people-smugglers-H2TNX2UHEVPORKIEJG5Q54HWNY/), [[5]](https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/suspected-members-of-people-smuggling-network-arrested-in-nca-dawn-raids-across-london)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/four-arrested-across-the-uk-in-people-smuggling-raids), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/suspected-members-of-albanian-people-smuggling-ring-arrested), [[5]](https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/suspected-members-of-people-smuggling-network-arrested-in-nca-dawn-raids-across-london)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/nine-nca-arrests-during-major-international-operation-targeting-people-smuggling), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-than-30-arrests-in-crackdown-on-common-travel-area-abuse), [[7]](https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/alleged-members-of-small-boat-people-smuggling-network-arrested-in-uk)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/four-arrested-after-dawn-raids-targeting-suspected-people-smugglers-H2TNX2UHEVPORKIEJG5Q54HWNY/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/four-arrested-across-the-uk-in-people-smuggling-raids> - In April 2024, the Home Office conducted nationwide raids leading to the arrest of four men suspected of smuggling migrants into the UK via air, land, and sea. The operation targeted addresses in Huddersfield, Middlesbrough, Southampton, and Stockport, involving individuals of British and Kurdish nationality. The suspects are believed to have facilitated dozens of illegal entries since 2022, primarily involving Kurdish and Vietnamese nationals. The raids aimed to disrupt a prolific people-smuggling network operating across multiple transportation methods.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/suspected-members-of-albanian-people-smuggling-ring-arrested> - In February 2024, two Albanian nationals were arrested in Finsbury Park, London, as part of an investigation into a network using fake travel documents and airline tickets to smuggle Albanian migrants into the UK. The suspects allegedly booked 27 migrants onto UK-bound flights, instructing them to claim asylum upon arrival. The operation also led to the discovery of Class A drugs, with one individual later arrested on suspicion of drug supply. This action highlights ongoing efforts to combat people-smuggling operations exploiting air travel routes.
4. <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/nine-nca-arrests-during-major-international-operation-targeting-people-smuggling> - In October 2024, the National Crime Agency (NCA) participated in INTERPOL's 'Operation Liberterra II,' resulting in nine arrests of individuals wanted for people smuggling, human trafficking, or modern slavery offences in France, Germany, Belgium, and Romania. Extradition proceedings are ongoing for all nine suspects. The operation, conducted from 29 September to 4 October 2024, involved 116 countries and territories, leading to 2,517 arrests worldwide. The NCA's involvement underscores its commitment to international collaboration in tackling organised immigration crime.
5. <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/suspected-members-of-people-smuggling-network-arrested-in-nca-dawn-raids-across-london> - In November 2024, the NCA arrested five individuals aged 43 to 54, believed to be members of a people-smuggling network operating from the UK to France via lorries. The arrests were made during dawn raids across London, targeting Algerian and Egyptian nationals. One suspect, a 52-year-old Algerian, is suspected of being a high-ranking member of the network. The operation followed the discovery of over 200 North African migrants, including children, in lorry trailers traveling from the UK to France in separate incidents in 2023.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-than-30-arrests-in-crackdown-on-common-travel-area-abuse> - In September 2024, a three-day crackdown led to 31 arrests across the UK, targeting people-smuggling gangs exploiting the Common Travel Area (CTA). Immigration Enforcement teams, alongside UK police forces and international partners, conducted checks at major ports, airports, and road networks, including locations in Belfast, Scotland, Liverpool, and Luton. The operation aimed to disrupt smuggling routes and protect vulnerable migrants from exploitation, highlighting the government's commitment to securing borders and addressing illegal migration.
7. <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/alleged-members-of-small-boat-people-smuggling-network-arrested-in-uk> - In February 2025, six Afghan nationals were arrested in the UK as part of a joint investigation between the NCA and Belgian police into a major people-smuggling ring. The suspects were allegedly involved in organising the transport of migrants from Afghanistan through Iran, Turkey, and the Balkans into Western Europe, primarily France and Belgium. The operation underscores the NCA's ongoing efforts to dismantle international people-smuggling networks and prevent the exploitation of vulnerable migrants.