



Operation Navigate Uganda

APU is a bespoke anti-fraud unit uniquely comprised of ex-Police and Fraud Squad officers. Originally set up to protect the fleet assets of the AIS Group (hence the name Asset Protection Unit), the team has developed into one of the foremost anti-motor fraud operations in the UK, liaising with Police forces across the UK as well as insurance and other investigatory bodies.

APU manages the risk of more than £50 million worth of fleet vehicles for corporate clients. It is responsible for the recovery of stolen vehicles worth over £200,000 and the halting of fraudulent insurance claims topping £150,000 in the last year.

Organised car theft from the UK is on the increase, with an estimated £100 million worth of vehicles stolen in the first quarter of 2015 alone.

THE SET-UP

A stolen Lexus tracked and protected by APU was flagged by its unique, fourth-generation technology when it left the UK on May 1st. This started an investigation, as the client who had the car on loan was not authorised to take it abroad.

The car had been loaned to the client after he reported being in an accident in his own vehicle in the W9 area of London but further investigations proved that RTC claim was fraudulent.

The car was reported stolen with the Met Police when APU was able to prove that it was in a shipping container in Oman Port that originated from a UK container port.

At this point, APU was contacted by the National Crime Agency (NCA), which was initiating a covert operation to dismantle a high-level, international car crime syndicate. The NCA had identified an opportunity to carry out the operation using the stolen Lexus.

They needed APU's co-operation and bespoke technology to make it work.

THE OPERATION

The NCA, led by Paul Stanfield, regional manager of the NCA's Intelligence and Operations Directorate, championed the partnership with APU after finding out how the unit's tracking technology could keep tabs on the Lexus wherever it was in the world despite it being in a steel container, which would render any other devices useless.

It was the fusion of cutting-edge technology and the human intelligence and forensic expertise offered by the hundreds of combined years of Police experience within the APU team that really made the operation a success.

APU agreed, in confidence, to support Operation Navigate and provided essential intelligence to the NCA and the National Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service (NVCIS) on a 12-hourly basis throughout the operation.

This enabled the law enforcement agencies to focus on their work and provided them with the confidence they needed to manage the ongoing risk of compromise alongside the financial implications of such an operation.

Meantime, APU's business decision to risk the loss of its prestige vehicle in order to assist the law enforcement agencies for the greater good showed a level of private and public sector co-operation that was unprecedented.

The policing experience of the APU team meant they knew how and when to provide intelligence to the law enforcement agencies, allowing them to covertly track the vehicle from the Middle East to the port of Mombasa, by road across Kenya and, finally, to Kampala in Uganda, where a sting operation was carried out to arrest the syndicate ring-leaders and seize the container carrying the Lexus.

THE OUTCOMES

In total, 36 stolen vehicles collectively worth more than £1 million were recovered and repatriated to the UK and the criminal network behind the syndicate was identified and dismantled. Uganda, previously one of the primary destinations for cars stolen from the UK, has been effectively shut down as a hotspot for stolen cars, according to the NCA.

Paul Stanfield said: "This investigation is an excellent example of the close cooperation between the UK National Crime Agency (NCA), National Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service (NVCIS) and APU to tackle the increasing threat from organised vehicle crime. Working with police and security services in Kenya and Uganda, we have been able to dismantle an international criminal network that has been responsible for stealing high-value cars from the UK and exporting them to East Africa."

"The role that APU and its unique technology played in the operation was crucial; without its innovative method of locating the asset and its team's experience in both converting location data into usable content as well as understanding how such a complex investigation is executed, we would not have been able to bring this operation to a successful conclusion."

"Having seen how private and public sectors have worked hand-in-hand so perfectly during this investigation, I am in no doubt what it means for the success of future operations and the importance of collaboration and looking at innovative solutions from organisations like APU."

Operation Navigate has identified APU's combination of services, expertise and technology as a tool that could be vital to the continuing crackdown on international vehicle theft as well as insurance fraud in the UK.

ASSET PROTECTION UNIT

- + Hundreds of years of combined experience in the Police and Fraud Squad
- + Expert forensic analysis techniques
- + Cutting-edge, fourth-generation technology
- + Experience in recovery of £200k worth of stolen vehicles and the halting of £150k in false insurance claims in the last 12 months