



SMARTWATER NEWS ALERT

Violent gang members jailed for vicious Cash-in-Transit attacks

Thomas Pulhofer, Nicholas Bidar and Christopher Ryan have all been jailed for their parts in the violent robberies in London, with the convictions owing much to traces of SmartWater (the invisible forensic liquid used by G4S in its cashboxes).-

At Southwark Crown Court, the final member of a violent gang whose members committed a number of robberies against Cash-in-Transit couriers was jailed for his part in these crimes.

Thomas Pulhofer, aged 21, was jailed for seven years on Friday 4 December for a series of violent 'strangulation' robberies, two Cash-in-Transit robbery offences and one aggravated taking and driving away offence.

It's understood that Pulhofer was the final member of a gang involved in a series of violent robberies on Cash-in-Transit couriers in the UK. Earlier this year, Christopher Ryan and Nicholas Bidar were sentenced for their part in these crimes, with Bidar receiving a 17-year term of imprisonment for two Cash-in-Transit robberies and using a firearm with intent to resist arrest.

His partner in crime, Christopher Ryan, was handed down a six-month sentence (which has been suspended for two years) as well as an 18-month supervision order for handling stolen goods.

SmartWater dye found on suspects

Bidar had traces of SmartWater security dye on his hands and clothing. The dye contains a chemical trace which placed Bidar at the scene. Bidar was also found in possession of dye-stained cash containing SmartWater samples from two separate robberies.

In the robberies, affluent-looking women were carefully selected and subjected to brutal ordeals. One of the victims was knocked unconscious, one was attacked in front of her young child and her baby threatened and another had her finger broken when her jewellery was seized.

Not surprisingly, the victims were left traumatised and suffering from the long-lasting effects generated by the sheer impact of the incidents. The robberies are believed to have netted in the region of £150,000.

Pulhofer and his 'associates' would target a victim on the driveway of their home or on the street nearby, attempt to strangle them and forcibly remove their rings/earrings, sometimes threatening them with weapons prior to seizing the jewellery.

Attacks of a violent nature

In the first incident, which took place on 12 May this year, a woman was walking with her baby in Dawson Place, Paddington when she was attacked. One of the robbers squirted the woman and her baby's pram with a washing up liquid-type substance prior to forcibly removing her jewellery and a bag. He also threatened to harm her baby. Pulhofer pleaded guilty to this assault.

The second victim was pounced upon on 15 May as she was getting out of her car on her driveway in Frognall, Hampstead. Pulhofer ripped off her jewellery, breaking her finger in the process. Another man, 22-year-old Thomas Knapper of Maida Vale, had also pleaded guilty to taking part in this attack, and was sentenced to 27 months and three weeks for one offence of handling a stolen vehicle in relation to the incident.

The following day, on 16 May, two women were walking along Maygrove Road, West Hampstead when two men, one of whom was Pulhofer (wielding a hammer) approached them. Pulhofer threatened his victims with the hammer before robbing them of their jewellery.

London Crime Squad undertook the proactive Operation Roby to investigate this series of offences. Following forensic work on samples recovered from the robberies, Pulhofer and Knapper were identified.

Background to the Cash-in-Transit robberies

At 15.17 hours on Wednesday 17 December 2008, two uniformed police officers in a marked police car spotted a stolen silver Audi in First Avenue, London W10. They followed the car to Herries Street, where it stopped.

One of the officers got out of the police car and one of the suspects got out of the rear of the Audi. He aimed a handgun at the female officer and was seen to pull the trigger at least twice. A bystander heard a number of clicks as opposed to a discharge coming from the gun.

The officer was able to shout a warning to her colleague who reversed the police car away.

The Audi drove off at speed pursued by the police car until it slowed down in Elkstone Road, also in London W10, where at least two further shots were fired at the officers.

As other police cars joined the pursuit, the Audi collided with one of the vehicles at the junction of Alfred Road and Harrow Road, injuring the officers inside. As a result, a male officer required hospital treatment for a head injury but, thankfully, has since made a full recovery and returned to work.

Pursuing the four suspects

Following the collision, the suspects ran from the Audi and it is believed further shots were fired.

Despite this, the unarmed officers pursued the four suspects and arrested two of them, pulling one out of the Grand Union Canal into which he had jumped in a failed bid to escape.

Area searches by officers led to the recovery of dye-stained gloves and a loaded 9 mm Baikal handgun. Traces of SmartWater dye were found on one of the suspect's hands and clothing.

A quantity of coins found in the Audi were traced back to the Cricklewood robbery, and other notes found in the suspects' possession were found to have traces of dye containing a SmartWater forensic signature which was traced back to the Queensway robbery.

Following enquiries, Pulhofer was arrested on 22 June this year and subsequently charged as above.

Total disregard for the public's safety

Speaking about the attacks and subsequent convictions, Kevin O'Connor – the risk director at G4S Cash Services (UK) – told SMT Online: "This particular case highlights the fact that those involved in Cash-in-Transit robberies are often embroiled in other criminal activities within their local communities."

O'Connor went on to state: "These individuals displayed a total disregard for the safety of members of the public, police officers and our crew members. We welcome this sentence, which sends out a strong message to those considering attacking a Cash-in-Transit courier."

Phil Cleary, the chief executive of Shropshire based SmartWater Technology, added: "In this instance SmartWater assisted the police to link the gang to more than one robbery, which had a significant impact on their sentences."

Continuing his statement, Cleary said: "The evidence provided by SmartWater is undeniable, and is the only forensic coding system in the world with such a successful track record in Court. We will continue to assist the police service and our partners within the Cash-in-Transit sector to help secure criminal convictions of this type."

By working closely with the police and key stakeholders, G4S will continue to play its part in developing a joint approach to tackling the wider issues of crime in the community on both a national and local level.

The Cash-in-Transit industry is vital to the economic liquidity of the UK, wherein cash remains the consumer's preferred method of payment. Each year, the cash-carrying service providers transport around £500 billion (the equivalent of £1.4 billion per day) thanks to 8,000 couriers using a fleet of some 4,000 vehicles