



Home Office

PROCEEDS OF CRIME ACT 2002

PART 5, CHAPTER 3

REPORT OF THE APPOINTED PERSON FOR ENGLAND AND WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND

2005 - 2006

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(PROCEEDS OF CRIME ACT 2002, PART 5, CHAPTER 3)

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Introduction

The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (“the Act”) received Royal Assent on 24th July 2002. Chapter 3 of Part 5 provides powers for police and customs officers to seize and then apply for the forfeiture of cash which is or represents property obtained through unlawful conduct, or which is intended to be used in unlawful conduct.

The commencement date for these provisions of the Act was 30th December 2002.

To support the power to seize cash, there is a power of search. This is a power to search private premises where a police or customs officer has lawful authority to be present, and a power to search a person.

Search powers should normally only be exercised where prior judicial authority has been obtained. In circumstances where it is not practicable to obtain such authority then approval of a senior officer should be obtained, and if that is not practicable then an officer can search without authorisation.

In all cases where judicial approval is not obtained prior to a search of either private premises or a person and cash is not seized or cash is seized but is not detained for more than 48 hours, then the police or customs officer concerned must prepare a written report and submit it to an independent person referred to in the statute as “the Appointed Person” appointed by the Secretary of State in relation to England and Wales and Northern Ireland (Section 290).

The Secretary of State appointed me as the Appointed Person with effect from 30th December 2002 to coincide with the introduction of the cash seizure powers.

Role of the Appointed Person (Section 291)

The Appointed Person is required to submit a report as soon as possible after the end of each financial year (ending 31st March) with effect from March 2003. The report is to the Secretary of State who must lay it before Parliament.

In the report, the Appointed Person must give his opinion as to circumstances and manner in which the powers of search are being exercised in cases where he has received a report and he may make any recommendations he considers appropriate.

Search Powers (Section 289)

A police or customs officer may only exercise the power to search if the following criteria are fulfilled:

(1) Premises

- (a) The officer must already have lawful authority to be present on the premises either in the exercise of a power of entry conferred by other legislation or by invitation
- (b) There must be reasonable grounds for suspecting that there is “cash” on the premises which is either “recoverable property” or is intended for use in “unlawful conduct”
- (c) There must be reasonable grounds for suspecting that the amount of “cash” is not less than the “minimum amount”

(2) A person

- (a) There must be reasonable grounds for suspecting that a person is carrying cash which is “recoverable property” or intended for use in “unlawful conduct”
- (b) There must be reasonable grounds for suspecting that the amount of “cash” is not less than the “minimum amount”

(3)

In the case of customs officers the powers may only be exercised if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the unlawful conduct relates to an “assigned matter” under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979

“Recoverable property” is property obtained through unlawful conduct and includes cash (Section 304).

“Unlawful conduct” is conduct unlawful under the criminal law of the part of the United Kingdom in which it occurs, or if it occurs abroad is unlawful in the country in which it occurs and would also be unlawful if it occurred in a part of the United Kingdom (Section 241).

The “minimum amount” is an amount set under Section 303 of the Act by the Secretary of State and was set at £10,000 by the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (Recovery of Cash in Summary Proceedings: Minimum Amount) Order 2002 (SI 2002/3016). The Secretary of State has altered the minimum amount to £5,000 with effect from 16th March 2004 by the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (Recovery of Cash in Summary Proceedings: Minimum Amount) Order 2004 (SI 2004/420).

“Assigned matters” under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 include such conduct as drug trafficking, money laundering, evasion of VAT, excise and other indirect taxes and duties and evasion of a wide range of import and export prohibitions and restrictions.

“Cash” means money and coins in any currency, postal orders, cheques (including travellers’ cheques), bankers drafts, and bearer bonds and bearer shares (Section 289(6)).

Prior Approval (Section 290)

Powers of search may only be exercised with prior appropriate approval unless in the circumstances it is not practicable to obtain prior approval.

Prior appropriate approval is the authority of a justice of the peace, and if that is not practicable then the authority of a senior officer. For police officers a senior officer in this context is an Inspector or above, and for customs officers an officer of equivalent rank to a Police Inspector.

Seizure and Detention of Cash (Sections 294, 295)

A police or customs officer may seize cash at the borders or inland if he has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the cash is recoverable property or intended for use in unlawful conduct. The cash must not be less than the minimum amount.

The cash may be detained initially for a period of up to 48 hours, and that period can only be extended by an order of a magistrates' court or a justice of the peace.

Report to the Appointed Person (Section 290(6)(7))

In all cases where powers of search are exercised without prior authority of a justice of the peace and either no cash is seized or any cash seized is not detained for more than 48 hours, the police or customs officer concerned must make a report to the Appointed Person.

A Code of Practice in connection with the search powers has been made under Section 292 of the Act and at paragraphs 20-23 it sets out the requirement for reports and the content of the reports in the following terms:

“Reports to the “appointed person”

20. If a search is conducted without prior judicial approval - whether with or without senior officer approval the officer is legally required to prepare a report in the following circumstances:
- if the search does not result in the seizure of cash, or
 - if cash is released before the matter proceeds to a detention hearing, or
 - if the court at a detention hearing does not authorise the detention of the seized cash for more than 48 hours after it was initially seized

Cash may not be detained for more than 48 hours except by order of a magistrate or sheriff, the application for an order is commonly known as a ‘detention hearing’.

21. This report must set out why it was not practicable to obtain judicial prior approval and why circumstances led him/her to believe that the search powers were exercisable. These factors could include why the officer was on the premises where the search took place, what aroused his/her suspicion and why there was a need for an immediate search. If the prior approval of a senior officer was obtained, the report should state this, with the senior officer’s reasons for approval, if practicable.

22. The report must be submitted to the independent person appointed by the Secretary of State.
23. The report should normally be submitted as soon as it is practicable and in any event no later than 14 days after the exercise of the search powers. Following the submission of his/her report, the reporting officer must also submit, to the appointed person referred to in paragraph 22, any supplementary information which the appointed person reasonably requires him to submit.

Detention and Forfeiture of Seized Cash (Sections 295-300)

In cases where seized cash is put before a magistrates' court it can be ordered to be detained for up to 3 months and the period can be extended by repeated applications up to a maximum of 2 years.

The magistrates' court, on application, can order forfeiture of the cash or any part of it if it is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that it is recoverable property or intended for use in unlawful conduct.

The Act

Section 289 (Searches), Section 290 (Prior approval) and Section 291 (Report on exercise of powers) are set out in Appendix I.

2005 - 2006

During the year HM Revenue and Customs Officers have made 411 seizures amounting to £19.47million and have conducted 16 searches of which 9 have resulted in reports to the Appointed Person.

Police officers have made no reports, but have made seizures. During the year they made 884 seizures and seized £43.34 million.

All reports received relate to searches of the person, and none relate to premises.

There were 6 reports of searches in London, with 2 from the provinces, 1 from Northern Ireland and none from Wales. Of this total of 9 searches, all were at airports.

In all cases senior officer approval was obtained prior to the search.

In all of the reported searches nothing was seized, and no cash was seized and returned within 48 hours. In only 2 reports monies in excess of the minimum amount were found, but an explanation was forthcoming which was acceptable and so no seizure was made.

At the conclusion of the searches the individuals searched have been asked to self-select their ethnic background. The largest selection made was White British in 6 cases. A full analysis is contained in Appendix II.

Statistical details extracted from the reports can be found in Appendix II.

There has again been a drop in the number of reports received from last year, when there were 30 in total compared to 9 this year. None were received from police this year, and 2 last year.

I understand from enquiries made of HM Revenue and Customs on my behalf by the Home Office that the reasons for the reduced number of reports are a change in operational procedures in relation to Bureaux de Change, and a continuing greater concentration on activities at frontiers rather than inland, (using powers under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 rather than the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002), and therefore the budget available for cash detection work continues to be focused at locations which they consider pose the greatest risk.

Similar enquiries made of the police reveal that criminal investigations usually lead to an arrest for drug trafficking, theft or money laundering and police invariably use their powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to obtain warrants and seize property including cash.

Conclusions

The reduced use of these search powers by HM Revenue and Customs have resulted in a corresponding reduction in the number of reports received, and Police have never used these powers to a significant extent.

The explanations made in the individual reports continue to be satisfactory and there is nothing to suggest that the procedures are not being properly followed in accordance with the act.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations that I consider it appropriate to make this year under Section 291(3) of the Act.

Andrew Clarke
Appointed Person
May 2006

APPENDIX I

289 Searches

- (1) If a customs officer or constable who is lawfully on any premises has reasonable grounds for suspecting that there is on the premises cash -
- (a) which is recoverable property or is intended by any person for use in unlawful conduct, and
 - (b) the amount of which is not less than the minimum amount, he may search for the cash there.
- (2) If a customs officer or constable has reasonable grounds for suspecting that a person (the suspect) is carrying cash -
- (a) which is recoverable property or is intended by any person for use in unlawful conduct, and
 - (b) the amount of which is not less than the minimum amount, he may exercise the following powers.
- (3) The officer or constable may, so far as he thinks it necessary or expedient, require the suspect -
- (a) to permit a search of any article he has with him,
 - (b) to permit a search of his person.
- (4) An officer or constable exercising powers by virtue of subsection 3(b) may detain the suspect for so long as is necessary for their exercise.
- (5) The powers conferred by this section -
- (a) are exercisable only so far as reasonably required for the purpose of finding cash,
 - (b) are exercisable by a customs officer only if he has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the unlawful conduct in question relates to an assigned matter (within the meaning of the HM Revenue and Customs Management Act 1979 (c.2)).
- (6) Cash means -
- (a) notes and coins in any currency,
 - (b) postal orders,

- (c) cheques of any kind, including travellers' cheques,
 - (d) bankers' drafts,
 - (e) bearer bonds and bearer shares,
found at any place in the United Kingdom.
 - (7) Cash also includes any kind of monetary instrument which is found at any place in the United Kingdom, if the instrument is specified by the Secretary of State by an order made after consultation with the Scottish Ministers.
 - (8) This section does not require a person to submit to an intimate search or strip search (within the meaning of section 164 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 (c.2)).
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290 Prior approval

- (1) The powers conferred by section 289 may be exercised only with the appropriate approval unless, in the circumstances, it is not practicable to obtain that approval before exercising the power.
- (2) The appropriate approval means the approval of a judicial officer or (if that is not practicable in any case) the approval of a senior officer.
- (3) A judicial officer means -
 - (a) in relation to England and Wales and Northern Ireland, a justice of the peace,
 - (b) in relation to Scotland, the sheriff.
- (4) A senior officer means -
 - (a) in relation to the exercise of the power by a customs officer, a customs officer of a rank designated by the Commissioners of Customs and Excise as equivalent to that of a senior police officer,
 - (b) in relation to the exercise of the power by a constable, a senior police officer.
- (5) A senior police officer means a police officer of at least the rank of inspector.

- (6)** If the powers are exercised without the approval of a judicial officer in a case where -
- (a)** no cash is seized by virtue of section 294, or
 - (b)** any cash so seized is not detained for more than 48 hours, the customs officer or constable who exercised the powers must give a written report to the appointed person.
- (7)** The report must give particulars of the circumstances which led him to believe that -
- (a)** the powers were exercisable, and
 - (b)** it was not practicable to obtain the approval of a judicial officer.
- (8)** In this section and section 291, the appointed person means -
- (a)** in relation to England and Wales and Northern Ireland, a person appointed by the Secretary of State,
 - (b)** in relation to Scotland, a person appointed by the Scottish Ministers.
- (9)** The appointed person must not be a person employed under or for the purposes of a government department or of the Scottish Administration, and the terms and conditions of his appointment, including any remuneration or expenses to be paid to him, are to be determined by the person appointing him.
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291 Report on exercise of powers

- (1)** As soon as possible after the end of each financial year, the appointed person must prepare a report for that year.
- “Financial year” means -
- (a)** the period beginning with the day on which this sections comes into force and ending with the next 31 March (which is the first financial year), and
 - (b)** each subsequent period of twelve months beginning with 1 April.
- (2)** The report must give his opinion as to the circumstances and manner in which the powers conferred by section 289 are being exercised in cases where the customs officer or constable who exercised them is required to give a report under section 290(6).

- (3)** In the report, he may make any recommendations he considers appropriate.
- (4)** He must send a copy of his report to the Secretary of State or, as the case may be, the Scottish Ministers, who must arrange for it to be published.
- (5)** The Secretary of State must lay a copy of any report he receives under this section before Parliament; and the Scottish Ministers must lay a copy of any report they received under this section before the Scottish Parliament.

APPENDIX II

ANALYSIS OF REPORTS, 2005-2006

Total reports received	9
Reports received:	
(1) England	8
(a) London	6
(b) Provinces	2
(2) Wales	0
(3) Northern Ireland	1
Reports from HM Revenue and Customs	9
Reports from Police	0
Searches of persons	9
Searches of premises	0
Place of search	
(a) street	0
(b) railway stations	0
(c) coach stations	0
(d) airports	9
Searches where prior senior officer approval obtained	9
Searches where senior officer approval obtained retrospectively	0
Searches with no senior officer approval	0
Searches where nothing seized	9
Searches where cash seized and returned within 48 hours	0
Searches where nothing seized	
(i) person had less than the minimum amount in their possession	7
(ii) person had an accepted explanation for the cash	2
Reason for search	
(a) Intelligence received	1
(b) dog indication	7
(c) observation	1

Self-selection of ethnic background	
White British	6
Black African	1
Asian Indian	0
White Irish	0
Chinese	0
Any other white	0
Any other Asian	0
Any other	1
Not stated	1

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