

**Steve Bennett, Head of European Operations, UK's National Crime Agency:**

“The National Crime Agency’s mission is to lead the United Kingdom’s fight to cut serious and organised crime. An important part of our work is with overseas partners to dismantle organised crime groups.

Locating, capturing and extraditing criminals wanted in the UK is essential. Many believe they can use Cyprus as a base to continue their illegal activities, which still have an impact on the UK, but they are finding out that it is not a safe haven.

The exceptional level of collaboration and intelligence sharing with the Cypriot authorities has resulted in many fugitives being captured in recent years.

Not only have targets from the first Operation Zygos campaign been caught, joint working has also led to the capture of other fugitives such as Louis Larsson.

Larsson was captured only last week in Paphos and extradition proceedings are now underway. He was wanted in the UK for serious firearm offences.

Then there were suspected fraudsters John Leigh and Deborah Hancox who were wanted in connection with a £1million National Health Service fraud. They were arrested after entering the Republic of Cyprus through a crossing point.

Fugitives don’t just give up their criminal behaviour, they typically remain part of the criminal world, creating harm and causing damage, sometimes to the new communities they live in. We are determined to ensure life on the run is intolerable for them and that they are brought back to face justice.

There is a very definite sense that if a fugitive is known to be in Cyprus, then our officers and the Cypriot authorities will find them and they will be arrested.

In fact we believe that Operation Zygos does have a significant unsettling impact on British criminals living here. They have found Cyprus a far more hostile environment to operate in.

The successes we have had so far could not have happened though without the dedication and persistence shown by the Cypriot authorities. I also want to pay tribute to all the work done by Crimestoppers, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and my officers in the National Crime Agency.

The most important thing is the power of this campaign to harness the eyes and ears of the public, both in Cyprus and the UK. If you have information on the whereabouts of our targets, no matter how small or trivial it seems, call Crimestoppers anonymously and let us know”.