**PRESS RELEASE**

**Operation ATOLL**

An organised crime group who stole more than £400,000 in a series of armed robberies across London and England have been jailed, following an investigation by the Met's Flying Squad.

Four men were sentenced on Monday, 14 November at Kingston Crown Court for conspiring to commit a series of automated teller machine (ATM) robberies, following a trial which lasted five months. They were sentenced to a total of 40 years' imprisonment.

A further six offenders - aged between 29 and 36 years old - the senior members of the organised crime group (OCG), were jailed in July 2021 and April 2022. They were sentenced to a total of 101 years’ imprisonment at the same court for their part in armed robberies across the country. Reporting restrictions were put in place covering the six offenders until all sentence outcomes were reached.

**Detective Constable Stephen O’Connell, from the Met’s Flying Squad, said:** “This was an immensely complex investigation which demanded dedication and skill to manage the extensive amount of evidence. Our officers have worked day and night to achieve this outcome. I would like to thank all those involved for their dedication and professionalism.

“The group caused havoc in and outside of London with high value cars being stolen and a huge amount of money laundered and spoilt. These men have since discovered that crime does not pay and thanks to the complex investigative work by the Flying Squad, they will instead be spending time behind bars. Investigations continue to track down and bring to justice outstanding suspects who are believed to be involved in these offences.”

Those sentenced are:

Brooklyn McFarlane, 27 (12.02.95) of St. John’s Drive, Wandsworth was sentenced to a total of 13 years’ imprisonment for two counts of conspiracy to commit robbery; threatening another with an offensive weapon; having an article with a blade or point; two counts of handing stolen goods and possession of an offensive weapon.

Abdi Omar, 27 (01.05.95) of St. John’s Drive, Wandsworth was sentenced to nine years’ imprisonment for conspiracy to commit robbery; possession of an offensive weapon and handling stolen goods.

Mahdi Hashi, 29 (20.11.92) of Wandle Way, Wandsworth was sentenced to nine years’ imprisonment for conspiracy to commit robbery and threatening another with an offensive weapon.

Noaman Amin, 26 (25.01.96) of Aliwal Road, Clapham Junction was sentenced to nine years’ imprisonment for conspiracy to commit robbery and threatening another with an offensive weapon.

On 28 June 2018, the Met’s Flying Squad began to investigate an emerging linked series of robberies under Operation Atoll. Detectives undertook extended hours of covert surveillance. They also used automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) and extensive analysis of the movement of phones attributed to the offenders to bring them all to justice.

Armed robberies took place between May 2018 and November 2019 across London, with a fleet of stolen cars valued at £243,000 used to commit the offences.

Some of the stolen cash was damaged with security dye during the robberies and rendered useless. Cash was also laundered by being used through Fixed Odds Betting Terminals in betting shops.

The series of offences took place in London, Oxford, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. The gang operated out of Wandsworth, Banstead, Brixton and Clapham and often congregated on the Henry Prince Estate in Earlsfield, Wandsworth.

In many of the offences the suspects were in possession of loaded handguns, metal crowbars, axes, knives and other weapons. They often wore ballistic body armour and balaclavas while committing the offences.

CCTV showed them associating, meeting together and conducting reconnaissance of banks and Cash and Valuables in Transit (CViT) vans. They were also seen moving stolen cars and changing the number plates to obscure their dishonest activities as well as disposing of evidence by fire.

On 25 November 2018, senior members of the OCG loaned McFarlane a stolen grey Volkswagen Golf, which was displaying cloned number plates, so that McFarlane and Omar could commit a robbery of their own.

Flying Squad detectives already had the Golf under surveillance as they believed it was being used in a number of armed robberies by the six members of the OCG who had already been jailed.

The surveillance team followed the car, unaware McFarlane was the driver and Omar was hiding in the back, to a CViT van depot in Feltham. They then trawled around south London trying to find a CViT van to rob. By 08:40hrs they had failed to locate a van and returned to the Henry Prince Estate.

On 3 December 2018, shortly after 04:30hrs the same Golf was again driven by McFarlane with Omar hiding in the back. McFarlane was armed with a knife and Omar a metal crowbar. Both wore gloves and had balaclavas with them.

At 08:00hrs they located a CViT van which was parked outside of a Sainsbury’s Local on Haydon Road in Wimbledon. They parked the car and McFarlane walked to Haydon Road where he watched the van. Omar took a different route, creeping forward until he was just a few metres from the van, out of sight of the crew. He had his face covered with a snood, with his hood up. He wore an armoured motorcycle glove on one hand and a goalkeeper’s glove on the other.

McFarlane ran round to join Omar as they prepared to attack the guards. Armed Specialist Firearms Command teams intervened. Omar ran, discarding his crowbar but was detained after a short foot chase.

McFarlane also ran and was detained nearby. At some point during the incident he pulled a knife out of his pocket and discarded it.

Both men were charged with conspiracy to rob, handling stolen goods and possession of offensive weapons.

The investigation continued and officers identified McFarlane as being linked to another offence on 27 July 2018. Hashi and Amin were also identified. Just after 04:30hrs that morning, Amin rode his moped from his home in Clapham and met with the others on the Henry Prince Estate. All three left the estate in Hashi’s own vehicle, an Audi A3, and drove to a nearby road to collect a stolen Nissan Qashqai which was on cloned number plates. Both the Audi and the stolen Qashqai travelled to the vicinity of a cash depot in Feltham.

They then followed a CViT van to Staines Road in Feltham. The crew of the van were conducting a replenishment of the ATM at a Tesco Express.

McFarlane and Hashi attacked the guard using a claw hammer, repeatedly striking him around his head and upper body. The three then made off with the stolen cash box. The stolen car was abandoned nearby. They then drove the Audi a short distance to Barnela Close in Feltham where they attempted to smash open the cash box, triggering the box alarms. A witness in the street took photographs of Hashi driving the getaway vehicle out of the street.

The suspects were unable to open the box and left it at the scene. All three were identified by detectives and on 17 December 2019 Hashi and Amin were arrested and charged as above. McFarlane was further arrested for this offence, also on 17 December 2019.

In addition to the evidence obtained, McFarlane’s DNA was recovered from the driver’s airbag of a stolen Renault Capture which was stolen on 11 July 2018. He crashed it into a ditch in Kent.

+ Those previously convicted - and are currently in prison - are:

Basil Abdul-Latif, 36 (04.12.85) was sentenced on 28 July 2021 to 22 years’ imprisonment for offences including conspiracy to commit robbery; arson and conspiracy to possess a firearm with intent to cause fear of violence. He was a leading role within the OCG.

David Tesfaalem, 30 (07.01.92) was sentenced 28 July 2021 to 20 years’ imprisonment for offences including conspiracy to commit robbery and conspiracy to possess a firearm with intent to cause fear of violence. He was a leading role within the OCG.

Ibrahim Lyazi, 29 (15.06.93), was sentenced on 1 July 2021 to 18 years’ imprisonment for conspiracy to commit robbery and conspiracy to possess firearms with intent to cause fear of violence.

Ola Orulebaja, 36 (15.10.85) of was sentenced on 1 July 2021 to 13 years’ imprisonment for conspiracy to commit robbery and conspiracy to handle stolen goods.

Ihab Ashaoui, 30 (01.01.92) and Adam Salman, 32 (21.07.90) were both sentenced on 28 April 2022 to 14 years’ imprisonment for offences including conspiracy to commit robbery and conspiracy to handle stolen goods.

All six were sentenced at Kingston Crown Court.

Robert Hutchinson, Specialist Prosecutor from the Complex Casework Unit, said: “I am pleased that we have finally brought to justice Brooklyn McFarlane. He actively led the violent robbery of Loomis cash in transit van guardians on 27 July 2018, which he carried out with Noamin Amin and Mahdi Hashi, and planned to repeat this on 3 December 2018, this time with Abdi Omar.

“The case was further complicated due to the links to a number of other related cases involving conspiracy to rob cash in transit van guardians and conspiracy to use firearms to threaten fear of violence in order to do so.

“At the end of what has been a long and protracted case, exacerbated by delays caused by the pandemic, I am delighted that substantial sentences have been passed down on the individuals involved. I would like to pay tribute to all those involved for their hard work and commitment in achieving a successful conclusion.”