

Ecstasy powder worth \$37m seized

April 23, 2007

Police say they have prevented about 1.2 million ecstasy tablets reaching the streets after seizing 113kg of the synthetic drug MDMA in Sydney.

The MDMA powder, usually found in ecstasy, was discovered inside 172 tennis ball containers packed in three of six solar hot water systems in a cargo shipment at Port Botany.

Australian Customs Service (ACS) officers last month spotted the cans during an x-ray of the container, sent from Israel.

Australian Federal Police (AFP) officers substituted the drug with a second substance and monitored its delivery to a warehouse in Artarmon, in Sydney's north.

Israeli national Benjamin Rosenfeld, 46, who had travelled to Australia for just a few weeks, was arrested yesterday during a raid on a property in Bellingen, on the NSW mid-north coast.

It's alleged Rosenfeld was the "primary facilitator" of the shipment for an international drug syndicate.

Appearing in Coffs Harbour Local Court today, he was charged with one count of importing a commercial quantity of a border controlled drug and one count of attempt to possess a commercial quantity of a border controlled drug.

He was refused bail and ordered to face Sydney's Downing Centre Local Court on July 3.

AFP Sydney Office manager David Stewart said the Australian operations of an international syndicate had been disrupted and more arrests could follow.

Mr Stewart said that based on the calculation that ecstasy contained about 25-30 per cent MDMA, the powder could make about 1.2 million pills.

The seizure would have a short-term effect on the availability of ecstasy, he said.

"We don't often see MDMA powder of this scale and magnitude, but certainly it is on the increase as criminal syndicates internationally look at new opportunities in the market," he told reporters.

He said police had raided the Artarmon warehouse, a property in Marrickville, in Sydney's inner-west, seized a car in the inner-city and raided another house in Melbourne, where officers confiscated \$25,000 in cash.

AAP

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