

Drugs factory: Apartment where the haul was found



Enormous haul: 'It would be the most significant seizure, probably in the history of the State, in any one place for heroin'

Hunt for drug Mr Big

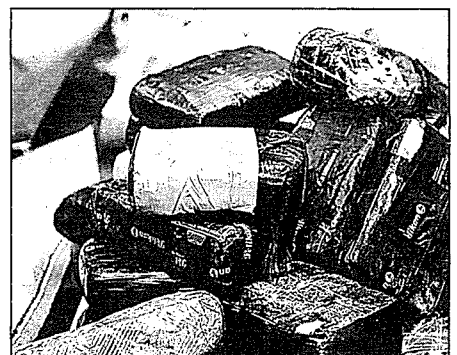
Gardaí begin search for men who left behind €11m worth of drugs as they jumped 30ft from apartment to evade capture



Serious weapon: The submachine gun found at the scene



Arsenal: Ammunition and cannabis that gardaí seized



€11million: Some of the 53kg of heroin and paraphernalia

THE men at the heart of the €11million drug seizure were the subject of a massive Gardaí manhunt still under way last night.

It emerged that these drug underworld figures gave gardaí the slip by jumping from the balcony of the second-floor apartment where 53kg of heroin and 25kg of cannabis were found in what has been described as Ireland's biggest heroin seizure.

At least one of the men is understood to be a well-known west Dublin drug courier in his 20s.

It is believed he was dividing the huge stash of heroin into bags with another man when gardaí called to the apartment located off the Nangor Road in Clondalkin in southwest Dublin.

However, the men fled what has been described as a drug-mixing

By **Kate Chambré**

factory after coming face to face with officers, jumping at least 30ft from a balcony as they escaped the crime scene.

Last night, gardaí were spreading the net beyond Clondalkin, as they carried out raids on houses in Ballyfermot and Crumlin.

The drugs are believed to belong to a Crumlin-based criminal gang, although Ballyfermot drug dealers are also suspected of being involved.

The raids came one day after Dublin gardaí surprised two men bagging the massive stockpile of drugs as they tried to execute a warrant on Tuesday.

In the apartment at Aras Na Cluaine, officers found drugs wrapped in brown and blue cellophane packed into sports bags and boxes.

Amid fears that the Irish drug trade is becoming increasingly vio-

lent, gardaí also seized a submachine gun and thousands of rounds of machinegun ammunition, together with a handgun silencer. Drug paraphernalia, including electronic weighing scales and mixing agents, were also found in the apartment.

On Tuesday night the Clondalkin flat was sealed off as Garda forensic and technical experts continued

'It's a huge hit against gangland activity'

to sweep the area for evidence.

It has since been alleged that gardaí were initially concerned that several drug dealers who have access to guns were planning to return to the scene and confront officers.

Det. Superintendent PJ Browne

said in relation to Operation Anvil: 'It's a huge hit against gangland activity in the south city, south central area, and in the city itself and we are following very, very good leads.'

'All the gardaí involved in this, uniformed and plain-clothes, should be congratulated on this success.'

Yesterday, the area where the drugs were seized remained sealed off as groups of gardaí, some of whom were armed, searched vehicles and people leaving the apartment complex.

Less than two weeks ago, another 10kg of heroin was also seized during a search of a car in Clondalkin.

Det. Superintendent PJ Browne said: 'This is huge. It would be the most significant seizure, probably in the history of the State, in any one place for heroin. I should hope organised crime gangs that would have brought this into the country have received a serious dent.'

Detectives now fear there could be recriminations in the drugs world as dealers look for someone to blame. But it is too early to link the drugs with any single crime gang according to senior sources.

Local Fianna Fáil TD for Clondalkin, John Curran, praised the gardaí involved.

He said that crime bosses are beginning to feel 'the squeeze' making it a great victory for our security forces.

'Reports that gardaí are close to making arrests as a result of this ongoing operation is a further indication that crime gangs are feeling the squeeze, and are finding it increasingly difficult to operate,' he said.

'The haul, together with the recovery of thousands of rounds of ammunition and a submachine gun, represents by far the greatest victory for gardaí involved in Operation Anvil,' he added.