

UK Mother Detained in Mauritius Drug Case

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A British woman is being held on remand in Mauritius after authorities allege she attempted to smuggle cannabis into the country using her young son's luggage. Natasha Artug, 35, from Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire, is one of several individuals arrested in connection with the case, which involves over 160 kilograms of cannabis worth an estimated £1.6 million.

Artug was reportedly among seven British nationals, including four other women from Cambridgeshire, and one Romanian man, arrested upon arrival at Sir Seewoosagur

Ramgoolam International Airport. According to local reports, Mauritian customs officers found approximately 14 kilograms of cannabis inside her six-year-old son's wheeled suitcase, concealed in cellophane-wrapped packages.

She is currently being held in the women's section of Beau Bassin Central Prison near Port Louis, where she could remain on remand for more than a year before her case is brought to trial. The prison, which houses around 135 female inmates, has previously been criticised for its poor conditions, including a lack of adequate sanitation and medical care. A 2014 report noted that Mauritian prison facilities did not always meet international standards, with issues including overcrowding, hygiene concerns, and limited access to healthcare services.

More than half of the women at Beau Bassin are believed to be foreign nationals, many detained on drug-related charges. The same report, issued by the U.S. State Department, pointed to systemic problems such as insufficient administrative remedies, prompting some inmates' families to raise complaints publicly through local radio stations.

Justice Abroad, a London-based non-profit organisation representing Artug, claims she was coerced into the trip by individuals who threatened her and her family. The group alleges that Artug had no choice but to travel and was unaware of the drugs concealed in her child's luggage.

Initially, Artug and her son were held under guard at the headquarters of the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit, allowing them to remain together temporarily. However, the child has since been returned to the U.K. after being collected by his father, and Artug was transferred to the Beau Bassin facility.

The U.K. Foreign Office has acknowledged the arrest and confirmed ongoing consular support. A spokesperson said, "We are supporting a British national detained in Mauritius and are in contact with the local authorities."

Artug has not made any public statements since her arrest. No trial date has been confirmed, and Mauritian authorities continue their investigation.