

Cocaine haul Bag missed in search

Trial aborted as police admit drug raid errors

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The trial of a Sydney man charged with importing 400 kilograms of cocaine on a yacht in 2010 has been aborted after Australian Federal Police denied on oath the existence of certain video footage – only for it to be found on their own website.

The video fiasco was just one embarrassing revelation for the AFP that came to light in the short-lived trial in the Queensland Supreme Court.

It was also revealed that when AFP officers searched a hire car in which the Sydney man, Simon Charles Golding, was a passenger, they allegedly found 20 kilograms of cocaine in an olive green bag in the boot – but they failed to look inside a second olive green bag clearly visible on the back seat.

The hire car was subsequently parked for three days – unguarded – in the AFP's Brisbane car park. It was only when the hire car company asked for the return of the vehicle that the second bag was opened and found to contain 25 kilograms of cocaine.

Under cross-examination, by Saul Holt, SC, for Mr Golding, the AFP's field

commander for the operation, Paul Robert Watt, admitted it was “unprofessional”.

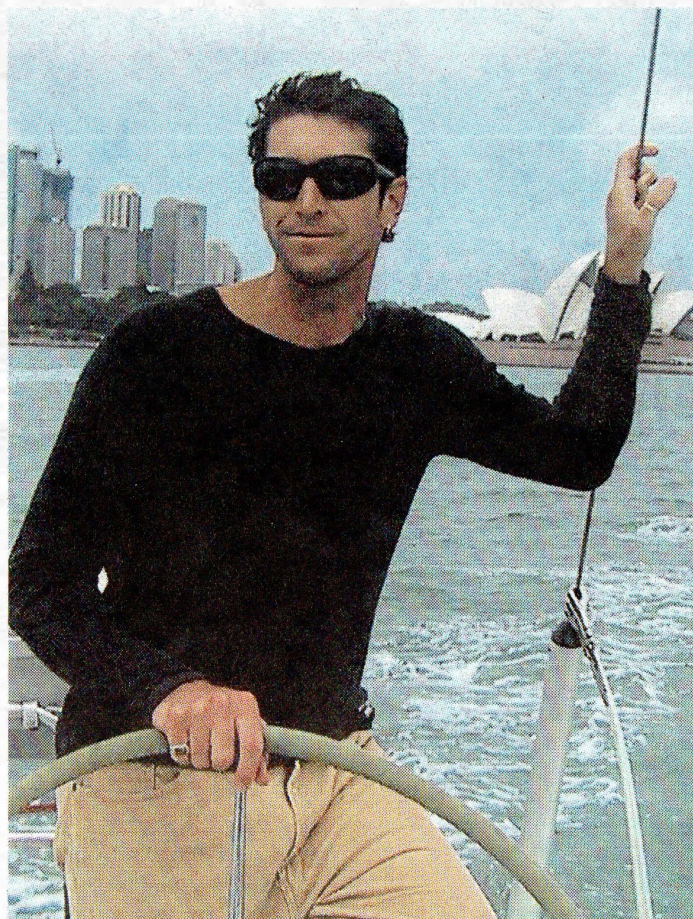
Mr Golding, 45, from Waterloo, Terrance Elfar, 54, from Eden and a German national, Holger Sander, 49, were on trial last month for allegedly importing 400 kilograms of cocaine into Australia on board the 16-metre yacht *Mayhem of Eden*, which the court heard was normally moored at Burraneer Bay in Sydney's south.

The Crown case was that the yacht, crewed by Mr Golding and Mr Elfar, met with another vessel, the *Edelweiss*, skippered by Mr Sander, 514 kilometres off the coast of Brisbane, where the cocaine was transferred.

When *Mayhem of Eden* returned to the Scarborough Marina in Brisbane on October 12, 2010, it was under surveillance by police, who then observed Mr Golding and Mr Elfar leaving the marina in a taxi with two bags.

The Crown Prosecutor, Glen Rice, QC, told the jury the men headed to a shopping centre where the bags were given to an accomplice.

Shortly after, AFP agents arrested Mr Elfar and Mr Golding, the latter



No trial: Simon Golding's trial for allegedly importing cocaine on board the yacht *Mayhem of Eden* was stopped after investigators admitted irregularities in evidence.

being a passenger in a Toyota Corolla hire car driven by another man.

The search by AFP agents of the car's boot was videotaped and one bag containing 20 kilograms of cocaine was seized. Despite police seeing the second bag on the rear seat, it was not inspected.

Asked if he took responsibility for the failure, Agent Watt replied: “No.”

He described how later that day the drugs were unloaded from the yacht.

He said two AFP officers inside the vessel handed the packages to himself and one other officer. The drugs were placed in evidence bags.

Under cross examination he admitted he had told an earlier committal hearing there had been a third person helping with the bagging but he couldn't remember who that was.

He told Mr Holt the labels on the evidence bags did not have “a unique identifying number” as required under AFP guidelines and that in fact the number of bags had been miscounted.

He also said there was no video footage of the drugs being taken off the boat and down the walkway of the marina. But two days later the defence revealed there was video footage on the AFP's own website. It emerged it had been taken by AFP media officers – and an investigator.

Transcripts from the aborted trial show the AFP has given varying estimates of how much cocaine was on the boat.

A new trial is expected next year.