

Vietnamese reportedly among smuggled individuals in reefer in Ireland

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Pham Thu Hang – credit Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam

Three Vietnamese are believed to be among 14 illegal immigrants who hid in a reefer container to enter Ireland.

The reefer box, which was transported on a ferry from Belgium's Zeebrugge port to Ireland's Rosslare port, was uncovered around 3 am (local time) on 8 January, two hours after a woman inside the container made an emergency call to the UK Coast Guard.

The UK Coast Guard alerted its Irish counterparts, which contacted the ferry crew for help in identifying the container. When the reefer was intercepted, it was already loaded onto a trailer truck.

Irish broadcaster RTE said that nine men, three women and two girls were found in the container and all were in good health, although the emergency call came from one of the women who was struggling to breathe. Apart from three purported Vietnamese nationals, 10 are believed to be Kurds from Iran and Iraq and the remaining individual is Turkish.

RTE quoted Irish Road Haulage Association president Eugene Drennan as saying that the container had been loaded onto a truck south of Paris before being transferred to Zeebrugge.

During a press briefing on 11 January, Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' spokesperson Pham Thu Hang said that the Vietnamese embassy in the UK has informed the ministry about the incident and efforts are being made to understand the situation and provide consular assistance.

It is yet another people smuggling attempt to enter the United Kingdom via Europe.

The Gardai (Irish police) stated that it is investigating the incident as a human smuggling attempt and nobody has been arrested yet.

The BBC quoted Irish journalist Pdraig Byrne as saying that more people have been trying to enter Ireland through Rosslare port, which handles passengers as well as freight from the UK and Europe, with connections to France and Spain.

In one of the worst cases, in October 2019, 39 Vietnamese were discovered dead inside a container that was already loaded onto a truck in southeast England in an unsuccessful human smuggling operation.

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