

CASE STUDY

Digital Intelligence Leads to Multiple Arrests in Nepal Drug Bust

Nepal police used leads from extracted phone and cloud data to arrest multiple suspects and discover links to higher-ups in a drug cartel.

Law enforcement worldwide cannot defeat the war on drugs alone. This worldwide crisis must adapt a multi-faceted, digital intelligence strategy that combines modern policing practices and robust solutions.

In a recent case in Nepal, police were able to parlay digital intelligence gleaned from a single mobile device (including cloud data) to find additional criminals in the network farther up in the supply chain.

The Case

The journey for investigators began when police in Kathmandu, Nepal, arrested a foreign citizen scheduled to fly abroad, on suspicion of trafficking narcotics. During the arrest, the authorities confiscated approximately 5 kgs of "ICE" (a smokable methamphetamine) that was in his possession.

More valuable than the seizure of the drugs, however, was the suspect's Samsung Galaxy J2 Pro mobile phone (model number: SM-J250F). The data proved invaluable in leading investigators to other suspects connected to a larger criminal network.

Case Snapshot

**Date**

2019

**Challenge**

- The suspect refused to cooperate
- Accessing data from the device

**Tools**

- UFED 4PC
- UFED Physical Analyzer
- UFED Cloud Analyzer

**Result**

- The Suspect's Trail is Revealed
- Local Drug Dealer Network Discovered
- Cartel Connections Found
- Photos Lead to Accomplices
- Cloud Sources Revealed
- Three More Suspects Arrested
- International Arrests Sought

The Solution

Once at the lab, digital intelligence specialists were able to use UFED 4PC and UFED Physical Analyzer to glean information and move the team's digital intelligence strategy forward by:

1. **Performing a full physical extraction** of the device using the Bootloader method—a workaround that allowed technicians to unlock a secured phone and start the boot-up process to access data.
2. **Decoding and analyzing data** including Wireless network data history that clearly identified the places where the suspect had connected his smartphone to a Wi-Fi network.
3. **Surfacing cloud data** that uncovered even more leads.



Lab technicians were able to perform a complete physical extraction of data from the suspect's phone revealing contacts, communications, and other valuable information.



Using UFED Cloud Analyzer, forensic experts were able to extract data from 14 different sources including Google and WhatsApp, which provided leads to other criminals linked to the suspect.

The Investigation Continues

The court remanded the suspects into police custody for 90 days to complete the investigation and file a charge sheet with the court. The maximum sentence for a narcotics-related offence in Nepal is up to 20 years of imprisonment.

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Nepal Digital Forensic Investigator.

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While making arrests is always positive, what's noteworthy about this case study is that by analyzing the data found on the original detainee's phone, and then following it along all its avenues and connections, authorities were able to arrest three additional suspects and identify possible leads to the cartel itself—a discovery that would never have surfaced using conventional investigation techniques.

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