

# Friends dispute China's 'godfather' tag for Welsh drug dealer

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A SHEEP farmer from the mountains of central Wales will go on trial in Shanghai on Tuesday accused of being the mastermind behind an international drug smuggling ring based in the far western Chinese city of Kashgar.

But Robert Hugh Davies is no Mafia-style godfather, say friends of the 32-year-old Welshman who was arrested in October and faces up to life imprisonment for his alleged crimes.

Davies, who first settled in Kashgar in 1986, did not make vast profits from his drug dealing operation and lived in a modest farmhouse on the outskirts of the city.

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"Robert was certainly dealing in large amounts of hashish but he never made any money out of the business. He always travelled third class wherever he went in China and generally lived in a very modest way," said one of Davies' friends now based in Hongkong.

"He is just a farm boy from Wales who has a very romantic image of Chinese Turkestan. He is certainly no Don Corleone."

Davies only started dealing in narcotics recently and operated out of a small bar, she said.

"He was fascinated by Chinese Turkestan culture and history, spoke the local Uighur dialect fluently and was married to an Uighur woman. He just liked being there, in fact his biggest joy was to be as far away from England as possible," she said.

Davies is a passionate Welsh nationalist with an intense dislike of the English Government and, in fact, refused the British consulate in Shanghai access for several weeks after his detention in October last year.

But despite his views on Welsh nationalism, his friends say Davies was in no way involved in the Mus-

lim separatist movement in Chinese Turkestan.

"Robert never even talked about the separatist movement. He knew that if you even talked about it you could get in trouble and that was the last thing he wanted," one friend said.

The Shanghai Public Security Bureau and Procurators Office, however, have different ideas about Davies.

As far as they are concerned, Davies is a major drug dealer who for more than a year distributed large amounts of narcotics to Japan, the United States and Europe, using other foreigners passing

through Kashgar to act as couriers.

Davies is the prize catch in a year-long operation to crackdown on drug smugglers using Shanghai as a gateway to Japan and the US, and the authorities are determined to make an example of him, according to legal sources in Shanghai.

The Ministry of Public Security in Beijing spent more than a month conducting an in-depth "scientific investigation" into the properties of hashish in a bid to prove it is a more potent drug than marijuana.

The results of the investigation were used extensively by the prosecution in the trials of three other

Europeans in Shanghai last week in the hope of winning harsher sentences than the four years imprisonment given convicted marijuana smuggler Mark Baber last year. All three defendants were accused of either smuggling or transporting hashish.

Last week's trials are being seen by legal observers in Shanghai as laying the groundwork for Davies' hearing on Tuesday. Two of the defendants, Germans Dieter Hauser and Werner Schmidt, obtained five kilograms of hashish from Davies in Kashgar and could be called as prosecution witnesses in Davies' trial.