

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024036332380 A haulage boss has been told he faces a long jail term after admitting drugs trafficking offences. Thomas Maher, 39, was originally arrested after the bodies of 39 Vietnamese people were found in a shipping container in Essex. As part of the deaths inquiry, Maher's home in Warrington, Cheshire, was raided, Liverpool Crown Court heard. The judge Brian Cummings QC told him he faces a "substantial" prison term over the drug offences. Maher, who was arrested after the bodies were found last October, has not been charged with any offences connected to the deaths. image copyrightPA Media Maher, a father of three, was re-arrested by the National Crime Agency on 30 June, and charged with the drugs offences. He pleaded guilty to four counts of conspiracy to commit a crime abroad, spanning 28 March and 11 May this year. They included two charges of conspiracy to import class A drugs into Ireland and two of transferring criminal property into Ireland, 300,000 euros (£274,000) in April and 600,000 euros (£549,000) in May. Catherine Rabaïotti, prosecuting, said the pleas entered were accepted by the prosecution and Maher will be sentenced on 1 December. Remanding Maher in custody, Judge Cummings told the defendant: "Plainly on the face of it, you are facing a substantial custodial sentence." Haulier admits manslaughter over lorry deaths Court orders extradition of lorry deaths suspect The facts of the case were not opened during the brief hearing. Maher pleaded not guilty to a single count of conspiracy to commit a crime abroad, that of conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm to fellow haulier Ronan Hughes in Ireland, between 21 April and 29 April this year. He will not be tried over this final charge, the court heard. In August, Hughes, 40, from Co Armagh in Northern Ireland, pleaded guilty at the Old Bailey to 39 counts of manslaughter, over the container deaths. He also pleaded guilty to conspiracy to assist unlawful immigration between 1 May 2018 and 24 October 2019.