



Briton and Irishwoman in Peruvian court on drug charge

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LIMA (Aug 21, 2013): Two women from Britain and Ireland appeared in a Peruvian court on Tuesday to face drug charges, in a case that has triggered sensational headlines in their homelands.

Two weeks ago, 20-year-old Michaela McCollum Connolly and 19-year-old Melissa Reid were arrested at Lima airport as they tried to board a flight to Spain carrying what Peruvian police said was 11 kilos (24 pounds) of cocaine.

Connolly had previously been reported missing from her job on the Spanish holiday island of Ibiza, and well-wishers had launched a large-scale Internet campaign to find her.

After their arrest, the women told British reporters that they had been kidnapped by a drugs cartel, taken to Peru and forced to transport drugs.

But the claim was met with widespread skepticism and the pair now face trafficking charges that could see them jailed for 15 years.

"They have left police custody and been handed over to state judicial authorities," Colonel Tito Perez, head of the Peruvian police's anti-drug command, told AFP.

The pair was led into the court in handcuffs, as photographers and Reid's British parents, who flew out in recent days to support her, looked on. – *AFP*