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 ***News Release***

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**On-the-run cigarette smuggler**

**behind bars**

A cigarette smuggler who went on-the-run before being sentenced has been caught and sent straight to jail.

Al Gui He, 38, from Charlton, south-east London, failed to appear in court in August, but was sentenced in his absence to four years imprisonment, for his part in a scam where illegal cigarettes were found hidden in fish pumps, dummy camera boxes and toys.

However, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) officers found him in Dunstable, Bedfordshire. On 17 September 2018, Gui He appeared in court where he was ordered to begin his prison sentence.

Simon Kiefer, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“Gui He thought he’d got away with it after going on the run, but he couldn’t have been more wrong and now he is exactly where he should be - behind bars.

“We need the public’s help to track down one of his accomplices in the smuggling operation, Shou Chen, who also absconded, so he too can begin his prison sentence. If you know Chen’s whereabouts, or suspect anyone of committing tobacco fraud, please report it to HMRC online or by calling our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.”

HMRC investigators discovered that Gui He and two others imported illegal tobacco into the UK through Heathrow hidden in table tops destined for Chinese restaurants.

The trio used lock-ups at six storage facilities across London including Charlton, New Cross, Bermondsey, Eltham and Beckenham to store the illegal cigarettes and hand-rolling tobacco (HRT), which were discovered hidden in fish pumps, dummy camera boxes and toys. The duty evaded on the tobacco was £475,000.

Gui He was sentenced to four years in jail in his absence at Woolwich Crown Court on 13 August 2018. His accomplice, Shou Chen, 48, who absconded prior to the trial at the same court, was sentenced to five years imprisonment in his absence and a the third member of the smuggling group, Ya Ming He, 44, of Greenwich, was jailed for 16 months.

The seized tobacco was forfeited to the Crown along with £1,315 cash found during searches.

**Notes for Editors**

1. Al Gui He, of Sunbury Street, Charlton, London, SE18, DOB 03/10/1979 was sentenced in his absence to four years in jail. He was charged with fraudulent evasion of duty, contrary to section 170(2) of the Customs and Management Act 1979, unauthorised use of a trade mark in relation to goods, contrary to section 92(1)(c) of the Trade Marks Act 1994. He was caught in Dunstable on Sunday 16 September and brought before trial judge His Honour Judge David Miller at Woolwich Crown Court on 17 September where his sentence was confirmed and he was taken to prison.
2. Shou Chen (aka Chuanshou CHEN or Huang XIN), address unknown, DOB 08/04/1970, was sentenced in his absence to five years in jail at Woolwich Crown Court on 13 August, 2018. He was charged with fraudulent evasion of duty, contrary to section 170(2) of the Customs and Management Act 1979, unauthorised use of a trade mark in relation to goods, contrary to section 92(1)(c) of the Trade Marks Act 1994 and possession of an identity document with improper intention, contrary to section 4(1) and (2) of the Identity Documents Act 2010. He remains on the run.
3. Ya Ming He, of Ridge Close, Greenwich, London, SE28, DOB 21/04/1974. She was charged with unauthorised use of a trade mark in relation to goods, contrary to section 92(1)(c) of the Trade Marks Act 1994 and sentenced to 16 months in jail.
4. A link to the news release issued when sentencing took place <http://www.mynewsdesk.com/uk/hm-revenue-customs-hmrc/pressreleases/fishy-tale-of-cigarettes-smuggled-to-uk-hidden-in-aquarium-pumps-2641582>
5. Anyone with information about the whereabouts of Shou Chen (his photo is in the link in point 4) or people suspected of smuggling, selling or storing illegal tobacco should report it online at: <https://www.gov.uk/report-tobacco-or-alcohol-tax-evasion> or contact our hotline on 0800 788 887.
6. Follow HMRC Press Office on Twitter @HMRCpressoffice

**Issued by HM Revenue & Customs Press Office**

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