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***News Release***

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**Chef jailed for using false identities**

**in £900,000 cigarette smuggling fraud**

A London woman who smuggled three million illicit cigarettes into the UK using false identities, has been jailed after an investigation by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

Xiou Yu Lin, 50, a chef from Walthamstow, set up mailbox accounts in false names to receive packages, mainly from the Far East.

The parcels – from China, Hong Kong, Japan, India and America - were wrongly declared as containing items such as ‘kids toys’ and ‘machinery parts’ to get through Customs and evade £904,865.73 in duty due to the UK public purse.

Southwark Crown Court heard Lin was involved in the scam between July 2011 and November 2016, illegally importing 3,175,360 cigarettes and 662.7 kg of tobacco.

HMRC investigators, swooped on Lin in Camden Town in November 2016 just after she had picked up 6,000 Marlboro Gold cigarettes. She was also carrying false documents used to open accounts at the mailbox depots where she received the parcels.

Mark Cox, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“Smugglers like Lin undercut legitimate retailers depriving the UK of money needed to fund our public services.

“HMRC will continue to target the supply of illicit tobacco, which costs the UK around £2.5 billion a year. Anyone with information regarding the smuggling, storage or sale of illegal tobacco can report it to HMRC online or call our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.”

At a hearing at Southwark Crown Court on 31 January 2018, Lin, admitted smuggling cigarettes and tobacco, and several counts of using false documents, She was sentenced to three years and four months in jail.

Judge HHJ Tomlinson told Lin: “It was a sophisticated, well planned operation which ran over a period of time. Your role was an important one within group activity.”

**Notes for Editors**

1. Xiou Yu LIN, DOB 08/12/1967, of Onra Road, Walthamstow, who worked as a chef in Whitechapel, East London was sentenced to:

\* Three years and four months for fraudulent evasion of duty, contrary to section 170(2)(a) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979

\* Two years and six months for two charges of possession of a false identity document with improper intention, contrary to section 4(1)(a) of the Identity Documents Act 2010 and two years and six months for two charges of possession of a false identity document with improper intention, contrary to section 4(1)(a) of the Identity Documents Act 2010.

\* The two years and six months sentences will run concurrently alongside the higher sentence.

1. Photographs are available from HMRC’s Flickr channel [www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk](http://www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk)
2. Anyone with information about 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.
3. Follow HMRC Press Office on Twitter @HMRCpressoffice

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

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