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 ***News Release***

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|  | For the attention of **News Desks**  | No of pages: 2 |  |
|  | Date: | 08 December 2017 | Ref: | LON 26/17  |  |

**Cigarette smugglers didn’t box clever!**

Two men, who were caught receiving almost a million illegal cigarettes in East London, have been sentenced for evading more than £290,000 in excise duty.

Edvinas Zaranka, 36, and Vilius Zdancevicius, 31, were each jailed for a year after admitting handling 990,000 Minsk Capital cigarettes and 500kg of Shisha tobacco, at a self-storage lock-up in Dagenham.

They were caught unloading the stash, which had been smuggled in from Belgium hidden in a lorry load of flat-pack cardboard boxes, and were arrested by officers from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

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

“These criminals were aiming to undercut legitimate retailers in London with this large quantity of smuggled cigarettes and tobacco. HMRC continues to target the supply of illicit tobacco, which costs the UK around £2.4 billion a year.

“We encourage anyone with information regarding the smuggling, storage or sale of illegal tobacco to contact our fraud hotline on 0800 788 887.”

The men pleaded guilty to the fraudulent evasion of excise duty and were each sentenced to 12 months in jail on 5 December, 2017 at Snaresbrook Crown Court. They were both also ordered to pay a £140 victim surcharge.

**Notes for Editors**

1. Edvinas ZARANKA,DOB 30/08/1981, of Rainham Road South, Dagenham, pleaded guilty on 7 November 2017 at Snaresbrook Crown Court to the fraudulent evasion of excise duty, contrary to sections 170(2) and (3) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979. He was sentenced to 12 months in prison and ordered to pay a £140 victim surcharge.
2. Vilius ZDANCEVICIUS, DOB 16/07/1986, of Rainham Road South, Dagenham pleaded guilty on 7 November 2017 at Snaresbrook Crown Court to the fraudulent evasion of excise duty, contrary to sections 170(2) and (3) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979. He was sentenced to 12 months in prison and ordered to pay a £140 victim surcharge.
3. Photographs are available from HMRC’s Flickr channel [www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk](http://www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk)
4. Anyone with information about people suspected of smuggling, selling or storing illegal tobacco should contact our hotline on 0800 788 887 or report it online at: <https://www.gov.uk/report-tobacco-or-alcohol-tax-evasion>
5. Follow HMRC Press Office on Twitter @HMRCpressoffice

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

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