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***News Release***

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**Crime duo jailed for running tobacco factory**

Two men have been jailed for a total of more than 11 years after HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) dismantled a tobacco factory that could have swamped the UK with millions of illicit cigarettes.

North London crime bosses Mariwan Fatah, 43, from Enfield, and Ali Jamal, 44, of Wood Green, ran the London-based Kurdish organised crime group that smuggled the raw materials into the country and processed it in Essex to be sold across the UK.

In August 2015, a van was stopped by police as it travelled north on the M1 near the Coventry exit. During a search, officers found more than a tonne of hand-rolling tobacco (HRT) hidden in black plastic bags.

A week later on 3 September, 2015, HMRC officers raided Oakleigh Nursery in Nazeing, Essex and seized 323kg of HRT with a range of machinery that was used to process the raw tobacco. £1.2 million of duty and VAT was evaded on the tobacco.

Richard Mayer, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“Fatah and Jamal were overseeing a huge operation, flooding the streets of the UK with illicit tobacco with absolutely no regard to the potential harm such criminal acts cause to individuals, communities and legitimate businesses.

“Disrupting criminal trade is at the heart of our strategy to clampdown on the illicit tobacco market, which costs the UK around £2.5 billion a year and by dismantling this illegal operation, we have prevented millions of pounds from being stolen through the evasion of duty.

“We would urge anyone with information about people dealing in illicit cigarettes or tobacco, to report it to HMRC online, or contact our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.”

Fatah and Jamal denied being involved in tobacco smuggling but were found guilty at Snaresbrook Crown Court on 23 May, 2018.

They were each sentenced today to five years and nine months in jail.

Two people who skipped bail after being arrested at the Nazeing nursery on 3 September 2015, were found in April 2016 working at an illegal tobacco factory in Manchester. They were jailed in July 2016 along with one other.

**Notes for Editors**

1. Mariwan FATAH, DOB 01/01/1975, shop assistant, of Millicent Grove, Enfield, London, N13 denied excise offences contrary to CEMA 170(2) at Snaresbrook Crown Court on 16 April, 2018. He was found guilty on 23 May, 2018 and sentenced to five years and nine months in jail at Snaresbrook Crown Court on 24 May, 2018.
2. Ali JAMAL, DOB 01/02/1974, unemployed, of Crescent Road, Wood Green, London, N22, denied excise offences contrary to CEMA 170(2) at Snaresbrook Crown Court on 16 April, 2018. He was found guilty on 23 May, 2018 and sentenced to five years and nine months in jail at Snaresbrook Crown Court on 24 May, 2018.

Three people were jailed in July 2016 and two more people were jailed in October, 2016 for similar offences as part of this operation. See <http://www.mynewsdesk.com/uk/hm-revenue-customs-hmrc/pressreleases/multi-million-pound-tobacco-racket-smashed-1605258>

- Hua Tang Chen, 42, of High Road, Tottenham, London, N17, was sentenced to three years in prison;

- Cui Wang, 34, of Sunningdale Avenue, Barking, London, IG11, absconded before trial and was sentenced to five years in prison in her absence;

- Shuai Fang, 24, of Oldham Road, Failsworth, Manchester, was sentenced to six months in prison;

- Suo Mei Fang, 49, of Oldham Road, Failsworth, Manchester was sentenced to six months in prison;

- Fu Cai Chen, 48, of Oldham Road, Failsworth, Manchester, was sentenced to six months in prison.

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 call our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.
3. Follow HMRC Press Office on Twitter @HMRCpressoffice

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