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***News Release***

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|  | For the attention of **News Desks** | | No. of pages: 3 | |  |
|  | Date: | 6 November 2017 | Ref: | LON 19/17 |  |

**‘Parasite’ tax adviser jailed for £150,000 fraud**

A self-styled tax adviser, who had no accounting qualifications, was branded a ‘parasite’ by a judge sentencing him to four and a half years’ in jail for committing a £150,000 tax fraud while living in Spain.

Leib Paul Berger, 53, also known as Lawrence Goldberg, hijacked identities of traders to falsely claim £150,000 in tax repayments from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

South African-born Berger succeeded in claiming £66,000 and laundered the proceeds through bank accounts, with accomplice, Seema Haider, from Edmonton, North London, who let him use her address and company bank accounts to facilitate the fraud.

Berger was extradited back to the UK to face justice in February. HMRC had obtained two warrants for his arrest after he absconded to Spain, failing to repay £1.5 million he’d stolen through another tax fraud between 2004 and 2007 when he lived in London.

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

“Berger thought he could resurrect his failed tax scam and get away with it this time – but he was wrong. He was abusing the tax system and depriving public services of vital funding to line his pockets. HMRC is making sure that crime doesn’t pay and no matter where you run we will find you.

“Tax fraud is not a victimless crime, it affects us all and I would ask anyone with information about people who may be involved to contact our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.”

On 25 September 2017, Berger admitted his latest crimes and was given a further four and a half years in jail at Wood Green Crown Court on 26 October 2017.

Haider admitted cheating the public revenue and money laundering and was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment, suspended for 18 months, ordered to do 250 hours of free work and pay £4200 costs.

Upon sentencing, Her Honour Judge Greenberg told Berger he was a “parasite, conman and fraudster.”

**Notes for Editors**

1. Leib Paul Berger (DOB 24/01/64), address unknown, admitted cheating the public revenue and money laundering and was sentenced to a total of four and a half years in jail to run consecutively. He was also given a five year Serious Crime Prevention Order to start when he leaves prison, meaning – among other restrictions - he cannot work as a tax adviser during this time.
2. In February 2017, Berger started a six year jail sentence, after being extradited back to the UK by HMRC for failing to pay a £1.5 million confiscation order. There is no appeal against default jail sentences issued in confiscation orders and the order for repayment remains in place after the entire default sentence is served by the fraudster. If the assets held by the convicted criminal at the time of the order are less than the benefit derived from the fraud, then any future assets can be confiscated up to the value of the benefit of the fraud.
3. Seema Haider (DOB 06/05/83) admitted cheating the public revenue and money laundering and was given a total of 15 months jail sentence, suspended for 18 months, ordered to do 250 hours of free work and pay £4200 costs.
4. Here’s a link to the news release issued in February 2017, when Berger returned to the UK: <http://www.mynewsdesk.com/uk/hm-revenue-customs-hmrc/pressreleases/straight-to-jail-for-fugitive-tax-fraudster-1819315>
5. Anyone with information about suspected tax evasion can contact our hotline on 0800 788 887 or report it online at <https://www.gov.uk/topic/dealing-with-hmrc/tax-compliance>
6. Follow HMRC Press Office on Twitter @HMRCpressoffice
7. HMRC's Flickr channel: [www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk](http://www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk)

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

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