



Lorry driver Andrzej Krasnodebski (inset) was caught at Dover smuggling 9.5 million cigarettes into the UK

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Air filter cigarette smuggler jailed

A lorry driver, who smuggled more than nine million cigarettes into the UK hidden inside air filter units, evading £2.5 million in duty, has been jailed for three years after an HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) investigation.

Andrzej Krasnodebski, 45, was arrested by Border Force officers at Dover Eastern Docks on 13 June 2017. A scan and search of the lorry's trailer revealed it was packed with cigarettes.

Officers discovered that the load contained 1,056 cardboard boxes, each

containing a bubble-wrapped air filter unit. When the casing was removed, each unit had 9,000 cigarettes inside, with a total of 9,504,000 'Pect' cigarettes.

The case was referred to HMRC for criminal investigation who discovered the import documents were false, and the legitimate UK business named on the paperwork was not expecting a delivery of air filters.

Tim Clarke, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“This was a well-planned criminal operation with millions of cigarettes concealed within individual air filter units. Had the smuggled cigarettes made it on to the UK’s streets they would have ripped off honest retailers. Krasnodebski thought he’d avoid detection, but his crime was uncovered and he’s now paying the price with a prison sentence.

“HMRC continues to work with other enforcement agencies to reduce the availability 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 cigarettes and tobacco to contact our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.”

Krasnodebski pleaded guilty to evading excise duty at Maidstone Crown Court on 13 July 2017. He was immediately jailed for three years.

Upon sentencing, His Honour Judge Smith, said:

“You are a man of good character with responsibilities, but the decision to involve yourself in this was yours.”

Notes for Editors

1. Andrzej KRASNODEBSKI, DOB 16/09/1971, a lorry driver of Wegrow, Poland. He pleaded guilty to the fraudulent evasion of excise duty, contrary to section 170(2) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979
2. Photographs are available from HMRC’s Flickr channel www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk
3. 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>

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Issued by HM Revenue & Customs Press Office

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is the UK's tax authority.

HMRC is responsible for making sure that the money is available to fund the UK's public services and for helping families and individuals with targeted financial support.

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