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## Cigarette smuggling gang jailed

Three men who were caught red-handed unloading more than three million illegal cigarettes that had been hidden in air conditioning units, have been jailed for more than 11 years.

The gang, who were under surveillance by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) investigators, were arrested as the smuggled cigarettes were delivered at industrial units in Brandon, Suffolk. Arnoldas Gefel, 27, and Tomas Mazilius, 35, were arrested at the site. A third man Mantas Vasylius, 28, was arrested at home.

Paul Barton, Assistant Director, Criminal Investigation, HMRC, said:

“This gang were caught taking delivery of millions of smuggled cigarettes which they wrongly thought were well hidden inside air conditioning units. Not only does this type of criminal activity harm the livelihoods of honest shopkeepers but it is estimated to cost the UK economy £2 billion a year in much needed revenue that should be funding public services. Don't let criminals profit – report it.

“Anyone with information about the storage or sale of illegal tobacco in their area should contact the Customs hotline on 0800 59 5000.”

Shop owner Manta Vasylius from Thetford in Norfolk was jailed for five years. Shop assistant Arnoldas Gefel, also from Thetford, was given three years and four months. Tomas Maziulis from Leicester was jailed for three years and two months. They were sentenced yesterday, 18 May 2015, by Ipswich Crown Court.

## Notes to Editors

1. Mantas Vasylius, 07/06/1986, of Peter Drive, Thetford, a Lithuanian national was arrested on 15 November 2013. He was charged with the fraudulent evasion of excise duty and was found guilty after a four week trial.
2. Arnoldas Gefel, 06/03/1989, of St Johns Way, Thetford, Norfolk, a Lithuanian national, he was arrested on 11 November 2013. He was charged with the fraudulent evasion of excise duty and pleaded guilty before the trial. The judge reduced his sentence from four and a half years to three years and four months for an early plea.
3. Tomas Maziulis, 31/07/1979, of Leicester – a Lithuanian national. He was arrested on 11 November 2013 and charged with the fraudulent evasion of excise duty. He pleaded guilty on the first day of the trial. The judge reduced his sentence from three and a half years to three years and two months for an early plea.
4. A fourth man was charged but found not guilty by the jury after the four week trial.
5. The industrial unit where cigarettes were seized: Brandon Business Centre, Putney Close, Brandon, Suffolk.
6. On 3,300,180 cigarettes the revenue evaded is approximately

- £741,064.
7. Photographs can be found on HMRC's flickr site [www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk](http://www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk)
  8. Follow HMRC's press office on Twitter @HMRCpressoffice'

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