



From peanuts to prison for tobacco smuggler SE 12.17

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A lorry driver, who smuggled more than one tonne of hand-rolling tobacco into the UK hidden among a load of peanuts, evading £220,000 in duty, has been jailed for 22 months after an HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) investigation.

Import documents showed the lorry was carrying 24 pallets loaded with boxes of sesame and caramel coated peanuts. However, a search of the vehicle revealed that in three of the pallets the peanuts had been replaced

with 57 boxes of ‘Turner’ hand-rolling tobacco.

Georgi Ilchev, 26, was arrested by Border Force officers at Dover Eastern Docks on 2 August 2017, and the investigation referred to HMRC.

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

“Ilchev thought he could avoid detection by hiding the smuggled tobacco within a legitimate cargo of peanuts, but his crime was discovered and he’s now paying the price in prison. Had the smuggled tobacco made it to the UK’s streets it would have harmed honest retailers.

“HMRC continues to work with Border Force 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 tobacco to contact our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.”

Ilchev pleaded guilty to evading excise duty at Maidstone Crown Court on 31 August 2017. He was jailed immediately for 22 months.

Notes for Editors

1. Georgi Kostavinov Ilchev, DOB 19/12/1990, a lorry driver of Gotse Delchev, Bulgaria. He pleaded guilty to the fraudulent evasion of excise duty, contrary to section 170(2) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.

2. The total weight of the hand-rolling tobacco was 1050 kilos, with £220,393 in duty evaded.

3. Photographs are available from HMRC’s Flickr channel 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>

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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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