



Robert Doran

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Tax fraudster stripped of River Thames land

A Dubai-based British businessman, who financed a major cigarette smuggling gang, has been stripped of prime Thames-side land to pay back £4.5 million.

Robert Doran, 51, was jailed for four-and-a-half years in 2012 for bankrolling a large-scale smuggling operation and his now main asset – land in Dartford, Kent – has been sold to repay the public purse.

Doran took the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Proceeds of Crime Unit all the way to the Supreme Court to claim that the confiscation order, made at Ipswich Crown Court, breached his human rights.

His case was not only dismissed but the amount he had to repay tripled from £1.45 million to more than £4.3 million – plus interest.

HMRC, working jointly with the CPS, secured a restraint order to help force Doran into parting with his prime asset in the UK and the land was sold this month (October 2016).

The order was the result of a lengthy HMRC investigation which untangled a complex web of companies, ownerships and leases to confirm Doran – who lived in a multi-million pound Dubai apartment, drove sports cars and flew first-class – was the owner of the valuable land.

David Cowie, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“Doran bankrolled a criminal enterprise, thinking he was above the law. His brazen attempts to have the confiscation order quashed backfired spectacularly. Doran lived the high-life in Dubai but has already spent years behind British bars - there is no hiding place.

“HMRC and our partner agencies will work together to strip criminals of the proceeds of their crimes and put the money back where it belongs – funding vital public services in our country.”

Lorraine Lally, Specialist Prosecutor in the CPS Proceeds of Crime Unit, said: “Doran has spent years trying to avoid paying what he owes to the taxpayer and he has failed.

“Fraudsters need to realise that we will go further than just imprisonment. If convicted, we can and will track down and confiscate the proceeds of their crimes.”

Doran and his accomplice Patrick Gray, 57, supplied the finance for the smuggling operation. The pair were also involved in the purchase, packaging and shipment of the cigarettes.

The crime was discovered after documents were examined from two freight containers that arrived at the Port of Felixstowe. These stated that the containers were filled with 1,020 cartons of baby toys; but instead they were crammed with more than 20 million cigarettes, evading £3.8 million in duty and taxes.

Doran was originally ordered to repay £1.45m or face more time behind bars. He challenged the confiscation order, arguing at the Court of Appeal that it was “disproportionate” and contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights.

The judges rejected his claim in March 2015 and imposed a new confiscation order of nearly £4,368,975 – the total benefit of the criminal enterprise. The decision was upheld by the Supreme Court last year.

Notes for editors

1. Robert Doran, DOB 24/12/1964, Al Seef Towers, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
2. Doran has repaid £4.5m – the £4.3m confiscation order plus interest.
3. Follow HMRC’s press office on Twitter @HMRCpressoffice and the CPS @CPSuk

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