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***News Release***

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**Fugitive cigarette fraudster behind bars**

A man who went on the run before being convicted of a £579,000 illegal cigarette scam, is today behind bars after he was caught in Poland.

Bartosz Lewicki, 41, fled the country before being convicted for his role in a tobacco smuggling fraud investigated by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), but was arrested by Polish police and extradited to the UK last week (17 October 2019).

Brett Wilkinson, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“Lewicki thought he could avoid prison by fleeing the country. But he was wrong and is now facing justice behind bars. Tracking down fugitives like Lewicki demonstrates how far HMRC’s work with law enforcement stretches across the globe.

“We will relentlessly pursue those who commit this type of crime, which undercuts honest businesses and steals from our public services.

“HMRC has a strong track record of managing serious offenders and returning fugitives to face justice. In the last two years alone, we have returned more than 30 fugitives including some of the UK’s most harmful tax cheats.”

In 2016 Lewicki was caught red-handed as a consignment of 1.6 million cigarettes, hidden among car parts, was unloaded off a lorry at a storage depot in Stanmore, north-west London. HMRC officers also raided a garage he rented in nearby Greenford, where a further 490,000 illicit cigarettes were found. The total excise duty evaded was £579,536.

Lewicki was sentenced to four years in prison in his absence at Blackfriars Crown Court on 2 May 2017. An accomplice, lorry driver Przemyslaw Olszewski, 33, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 15 months in jail.

Today (25 October 2019), Lewicki appeared at Blackfriars Crown Court, where his four year sentence was confirmed.

**Notes for Editors**

1. Bartosz Piotr Lewicki. DOB: 06/07/1978, of Poland, appeared at Blackfriars Crown Court today (25 October 2019), where his sentence was confirmed.
2. Lewicki was convicted of excise evasion on 16 March 2016 and was sentenced to four years in prison in his absence on 2 May 2017.
3. Anyone with information about tax fraud should report it to HMRC [online](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/reporting-tax-evasion) or contact our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.

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**Press enquiries only please contact:**

Roger Kasper

Tel: 03000 525110 / 07388 955843

Email: [Roger.kasper@hmrc.gov.uk](mailto:Roger.kasper@hmrc.gov.uk)

OR

Ashleigh Prince

Tel: 03000 598834 / 07825 026303

Email: [Ashleigh.prince@hmrc.gov.uk](mailto:Ashleigh.prince@hmrc.gov.uk)

Out of hours

Tel: 07860 359544

**Website** [www.gov.uk/hmrc](http://www.gov.uk/hmrc)