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 ***News Release***

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**HMRC spearheads worldwide tax fraud probe**

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has helped spearhead a global day of action against the suspected tax evasion and money laundering of more than £200m in the UK alone.

The action occurred as part of a series of investigations in Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, the US and UK into a Central American financial institution, whose products and services are believed to be facilitating tax evasion and money laundering for customers across the globe.

It is believed that through this institution, a number of clients are using a sophisticated system to conceal and transfer wealth anonymously, to evade their tax obligations and launder the proceeds of crime.

As part of yesterday’s (22 January 2020) day of action, HMRC officers executed a search warrant in the Stoke area and arrested a man as part of their enquiries.

HMRC officers have also visited several businesses and sought information from them to assist with their ongoing investigations.

This is the first major operational activity for the Joint Chiefs of Global Tax Enforcement (J5), which was established to tackle international tax crime and money laundering. The group brings together leaders of tax enforcement authorities from Australia, Canada, the UK, US and the Netherlands.

Significant information has now been gathered as a result of the investigations and it is expected further criminal, civil and regulatory action will arise from this work in each country.

This action is the first phase in what is expected to be a series of large and far-reaching investigations by the J5 countries.

Simon York, Director of HMRC’s Fraud Investigation Service, said:

“Tax evasion is a global problem that needs a global response and that is what the J5 provides. This kind of international action shows that we can and we will take on the most harmful, sophisticated and complex crimes and that we are committed to levelling the playing field for honest businesses and taxpayers.

“International tax evasion robs our public services of vital funds, undermines economies and, left unchecked, can enrich the dishonest at the expense of the honest majority.

“Working together, HMRC and our J5 partners are closing the net on tax criminals, wherever they are, to ensure nobody is beyond our reach. The message to them is clear – the J5 are closing in.”

The J5 brings together tax, crypto and cyber experts to target those who enable global tax evasion by gathering information, sharing intelligence and collaborating on operations.

The man arrested in the UK was questioned by HMRC and then released pending further enquiries. Investigations are ongoing.

Anyone with information on tax evasion should report it to HMRC [online](https://www.gov.uk/report-an-unregistered-trader-or-business), or call our fraud hotline on 0800 788 887.

**Notes for editors**

1. A 59-year-old man of Stoke, Staffs, was arrested in the UK on suspicion of Cheating the Public Revenue and money laundering.
2. Background info on the J5:
* It was formed to lead the fight against international tax crime and money laundering.
* The group contains leading tax experts, offshore, crypto and cyber experts from UK, USA, Australia, Canada and the Netherlands to share intelligence at speed, build capacity and carry out operational activity.
* The J5 is working on more than 50 investigations including those involving sophisticated international enablers of tax evasion, a global financial institution and its intermediaries who facilitate taxpayers to hide their income and assets.
* The crimes the J5 are tackling often fund other serious criminality including illicit drugs, guns and trafficking.
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