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PRESS RELEASE

Members of the Rhode Island State Police, Massachusetts State Police and Rhode Island Department of Revenue Division of Taxation Arrest a Pawtucket Man for Conducting a Large Scale Distribution of Untaxed “Other Tobacco Products” Operation.

For Immediate Release

October 16, 2015

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Colonel Steven G. O’Donnell, Superintendent of the Rhode Island State Police and Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety announces the arrest of a Pawtucket man for charges alleging the illegal distribution of untaxed “Other Tobacco Products”.

During the month of May, 2015, members of the Rhode Island Department of Revenue-Division of Taxation, advised members of the Rhode Island State Police Intelligence Unit of a possible distribution of untaxed other tobacco products operation. Throughout the course of the four month long investigation, evidence was gathered indicating that the primary target, identified as Yassine Nasser, was illegally distributing “Other Tobacco Products” to various convenience stores throughout the State of Rhode Island. “Other Tobacco Products” are defined as assorted brands, styles and flavors of other tobacco products to include little cigars, smokeless tobacco, rolling papers, pre-cylinderized rolling papers and heavy weight little cigars. Mr. Nasser was observed frequenting a UHaul storage facility located in Fall River, Massachusetts where he obtained tobacco products he later distributed.

The above mentioned investigation resulted in the acquisition of several court authorized search warrants. From Wednesday, October 14th to Thursday, October 15th members of the Rhode Island State Police, with the assistance of members of the Massachusetts State Police, Rhode Island Department of Revenue-Division of Taxation and Rhode Island Department of Corrections executed nine (9) search warrants at the following locations:

1. The person of Yassine Nasser
2. Yassine Nasser’s vehicle, described as a 2004 GMC Envoy
3. The residence at 60 Bloomfield Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island
4. TD Bank at 430 Central Avenue, Pawtucket, Rhode Island
5. Bahras Market at 900 Charles Street, North Providence, Rhode Island
6. Lafrontera Discount Smoke Shop at 1522 Broad Street, Cranston

7. 6-11 Deli and Market at 101 Cypress Street, Providence, Rhode Island
8. Castle Convenience at 316 Cranston Street, Providence, Rhode Island
9. U-Haul storage facility located at 110 Lewiston Street, Fall River, Massachusetts

These search warrants resulted in the seizure of approximately one and a half million retail dollars (\$1,500,000.00) in “Other Tobacco Products”, twelve thousand, five hundred dollars (\$12,500.00) in United States currency, two lap top computers, and video surveillance equipment. The total tax loss to the State of Rhode Island is estimated to be between eight and nine hundred thousand dollars (\$800,000.00/\$900,000.00) as the tax on “Other Tobacco Products” is eighty percent (80%) based on the wholesale cost of the item.

On Wednesday, October 14, 2015 at approximately 9:00 PM, members of the Rhode Island State Police arrested Yassine Nasser, age 36, of 60 Bloomfield Street Apt. 1 Rear, Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Nasser was held over night at Rhode Island State Police Headquarters and was arraigned in Sixth District Court in Providence on Thursday, October 15, 2015 before the Honorable Chief Judge Jeanne LaFazia on the following charges:

- Importation of Cigarettes with Intent to Evade Tax;
- Perjury;
- Laundering of Monetary Instruments;
- Reports and Records-Criminal Penalty for Fraudulent Offenses;
- Weapons other than Firearms (knife over five inches)

Mr. Nasser plead not guilty and was released on one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) Personal Recognizance and was given a Pre-Arrestment Conference date of Thursday, December 17, 2015. Chief Judge LaFazia ordered Nasser to surrender his passport as a condition of his bail.

The perjury charge pertains to documents provided by the Division of Taxation which indicate that on August 7, 2015, Yassine Nasser attended an administrative hearing conducted by the Rhode Island Department of Administration Division of Legal Services and Adjudication. He was placed under oath and testified that he was not nor would he act as a distributor of Other Tobacco Products.

Every person convicted of violating the provision of Importation of Cigarettes with Intent to Evade Tax is guilty of a felony and shall be fined one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00) or five (5) times the retail value of the cigarettes involved, whichever is greater, or imprisoned not more than fifteen years, or both.

Every person convicted of violating the provision of Perjury is guilty of a felony and shall be imprisoned not exceeding twenty (20) years.

Every person convicted of violating the provision of Laundering of Monetary Instruments is guilty of a felony and shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000.00), or twice the value of the property involved in the transaction, whichever is greater, or by imprisonment for not more than twenty (20) years, or both.

Every person convicted of violating the provision of Criminal Penalty for Fraudulent Offenses-Reports and Records is guilty of a felony and may be fined one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00), or imprisoned not more than fifteen (15) years, or both.

Every person convicted of violating the provision of Weapons Other Than Firearms is guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) or by imprisonment for not more than one (1) year or both, and the weapon so found shall be confiscated.



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