



HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
INDEPENDENT AUTHORITY FOR PUBLIC REVENUE



OPERATIONAL COORDINATION CENTER

Athens 21/05/2018

## Press Release

**SUBJECT:** DISMANTLING CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION SPECIALISED IN MANUFACTURING AND TRAFFICKING ILLICIT TOBACCO PRODUCTS. TRACKING AND LOCATING OF ILLEGAL FACTORY OF PROCESSING TOBACCO AND CIGARETTE PROUCEMENT. ARREST OF 18 PERSONS.

A criminal organization that was manufacturing and trafficking illicit tobacco products depriving the Greek Estate of significant revenue has been dismantled, thanks to the activities of Operation Coordination Center, the Direction of Financial Police and the General Director of Customs. It is one of the most important cases that have been revealed in the field of criminal smuggling of tobacco products.

Following an information that was received from OLAF, by AFCOS about six months ago, and after the channeling of almost all the information facts to OCC, that thoroughly coordinated the investigation with the cooperation of the Direction of Financial Police and the General Direction of Customs of Hellenic Republic Independent Authority of Public Revenue (IARP), led to the full identification of the actions of a structured criminal network, whose members were dealing with the continuous manufacturing and trafficking illicit tobacco products in our country and abroad as well.

The dismantling of this criminal network confirms that combating illegal trading and smuggling in one of the most important priorities of the enforcement authorities.

On Saturday 19 of May 1918 took place a large scale coordinated operation by the Financial Police, in order to disrupt the criminal organization.

The evaluation of the operation is the arrest of 18 people of foreign nationality, aged between 21 and 82 years old, among them the "leaders" of the organization and the research continues for another 3 persons that are being sought. Court files have been formed against the above persons for the criminal actions of the organization if applicable, for violation of the National Customs Code, of the Law on VAT and for violation of the Law for the protection of antiquities and the cultural heritage.

Through the ongoing investigation and the preliminary investigation, that was based on the combined study and analysis of facts and data, came the conclusion that the members of the organization were acting in a global aspect.

The aim of the organization was to fabricate cigarettes using the name of existing brands and smuggling them inside the country and abroad, avoiding to pay the proportionate excise duties and taxes for the purpose of unlawful gain.

More specifically, it was revealed that the arrested members, kept warehouses in the area of Koropi (suburbs of Athens), that were turned into fully equipped factories in order to manufacture and produce cigarettes, to fulfill their criminal purposes.

Through the investigations it was revealed:

- Fully supporting structure for the activities of the criminal organization, involving buildings, factory of producing, warehouses and locations for parking and reloading and
- Machinery for the produce of illicit tobacco that consists of a fully processing line, of branding and packaging.

It is important to describe the professional way the criminal organization was acting avoiding to be noticed by the Authorities:

- The packages that were intended for export were stored inside packaging with the description of candy products with similar size and shape to cigarette packages,
- The walls inside the installations-warehouses that were used as laboratories were covered with layers of insulation in order to avoid the noise of the machinery.
- The installations that were used by the criminal organization for the produce and storage were located in a place extremely difficult to access, making the surveillance of the place very difficult.

Under their procession and after conducting research in warehouses, factories, houses the following were found and seized:  
At the first location (factory- warehouse) were seized:

- Machinery for the manufacture and preparation of tobacco, that was consisted of two separate units connected to each other,
- A unit for reception and cutting tobacco
- A unit for blending and exporting tobacco
- 105.900 cigarettes of several existing brand names
- 9.500 leaves of raw tobacco
- 3.550 kilos of manufactured tobacco
- Several materials that were used to manufacture tobacco
- Metal tank used to blend tobacco

In the second location (warehouse- laboratory) were seized:

- Machine used to produce cigarettes
- Machine used to package cigarettes
- Machine for the absorption double collecting
- Machine for filtering tobacco
- 879.940 cigarettes of several existing brand names
- 2.000 approximately kilos of non-packed tobacco
- 6.509.000 filters for the manufacturing of cigarettes
- 117 pots with glue and several material used for the manufacturing of cigarettes

In the surroundings were found and seized:

- Container with 5.700.000 cigarettes
- Container with 3.450.000 filters of cigarettes
- Container with insulation material that was used in the walls of the warehouse
- 2 clarks and 2 cars

Moreover, inside of a container there were found items for which a person from the Antiquities Authorities was called to estimate and verified that were pots or broken pieces of them, dated from 2.000 B.C.

In the houses of the arrested members were found and seized:

- Part of a machine used to produce cigarettes and an accuracy weighing device
- Several packages of cigarettes without the excise belt
- 2.340 euro and 1.200 hryvnia (currency of Ukraine)
- 2 portable pc and 1 USB
- Many manuscripts with telephone numbers and brand of cigarettes
- Many cell phones
- Manuals for the assembly and the operation of the machinery of the cigarettes produce.

The activities of the organization deprived the Greek Estate of important revenue, as just the manufactured cigarettes and the 5 tones and 450 kilos of manufactured tobacco that were intended for the cigarette produce exceeds the amount of 2,5 million euros.