



News Release

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Columbia Heights Man Charged With Tax Crime

ST. PAUL, Minn. – The Minnesota Department of Revenue announced today that the Ramsey County Attorney’s Office recently charged Hamza Abualzain, 32, of Columbia Heights, with a tax felony.

Abualzain has been charged with one count of possessing untaxed tobacco products. The charge is the result of a joint investigation by the Minnesota Department of Revenue and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

According to the criminal complaint, Abualzain used a rental van to travel to Chicago to purchase tobacco and return with it to Minnesota. Earlier this year, police searched the van and found untaxed tobacco products including chewing tobacco, loose tobacco and cigars.

After the search, Abualzain admitted to purchasing the tobacco products and planning to sell them to stores in the Twin Cities. The tobacco products had a wholesale value of \$33,430. By paying a lower tax rate in Illinois, he avoided more than \$23,300 in Minnesota taxes on the products.

The charge carries a maximum penalty of up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

The Minnesota Department of Revenue has a 24-hour tip line for anyone who suspects an individual or business is violating tax laws. That number is 651-297-5195, or 1-800-657-3500 (TTY users call 711 for Minnesota Relay). Tipsters may remain anonymous and can also email the department at tax.fraud@state.mn.us. So far this year, citizen tips have totaled 80 percent of the department’s criminal case referrals.

While most taxpayers comply with tax laws voluntarily, the Minnesota Department of Revenue takes progressive enforcement action against non-compliant taxpayers ensuring tax laws are fairly administered, collecting no more and no less than taxpayers owe.

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