

News story: Man jailed for attempting to smuggle 22 people into the UK

Border Force officers made the discovery when they stopped a lorry driven by 32-year-old Tomasz Cierniak on 2 February 2016 after it had arrived at the port on a ferry from the Hook of Holland.

Cierniak, a Polish national, told officers that he was carrying electronic goods. When the lorry's rear doors were opened washing machines and tumble dryers were found stacked 3 high and 4 across.

Officers unloaded the lorry and 22 people, including 5 children, were found in a purposely created gap between the heavily loaded back and the front of the trailer.

Cierniak, who had no fixed UK address, was arrested on suspicion of facilitating a breach of the UK's immigration laws and the investigation was passed to Immigration Enforcement's criminal and financial investigations (CFI) team.

During the investigation, it discovered that the lorry Cierniak was driving had been branded in the livery of a multi-national haulage company but that business confirmed to investigators that the vehicle had never been owned by them.

Checks also showed that the company Cierniak was supposedly delivering the goods to has no dealings with the business he said he worked for.

Cierniak admitted the offence at Chelmsford Crown Court on Monday (10 July) and today (13 July) he was sentenced at the same court to 3 years and 8 months imprisonment.

Rebecca Webb, from the immigration enforcement CFI team, said:

The dangers of cramming this group into a small space behind a wall of heavy goods during a 6 hour ferry crossing are obvious, but Cierniak was content to put the lives of 22 desperate people at risk. People smuggling is a callous trade and those involved think nothing of treating human beings as commodities.

Following his initial arrest, Cierniak was bailed pending further investigation, but failed to report to Colchester Police Station. CFI officers obtained a European Arrest Warrant and on 23 May, 2017, Cierniak was arrested by police officers in Italy.

He was extradited to the UK and remanded in custody.

Rebecca Webb added:

Cierniak thought he could evade justice, but we, along with our law enforcement partners in Europe, never stopped looking.

As this case demonstrates, we work closely with Border Force and other criminal enforcement agencies both in the UK and abroad. Our net is wide and the message to anyone involved in immigration criminality is clear – we will catch you and bring you before the courts.

Border Force officers are the front line in protecting the country and play a key role in detecting illegal immigration, disrupting serious and organised crime and helping to prevent the threat of terrorism.

They use different search techniques including sniffer dogs, carbon dioxide detectors, heartbeat monitors and scanners – as well as visual searches – to find well-hidden stowaways, illegal drugs, firearms and tobacco which would otherwise end up causing harm to local people, businesses and communities.

Anyone with information about suspected immigration abuse can contact [Crimestoppers](#) on 0800 555 111 anonymously.