

Hong Kong Customs detects large-scale sea smuggling case involving cigarettes and seizes suspected illicit cigarettes worth about \$82 million (with photos)

â€‹Hong Kong Customs yesterday (July 8) detected a large-scale illicit cigarette smuggling case in the waters off Kwai Chung and seized about 22 million suspected illicit cigarettes, with an estimated market value of about \$82 million and a duty potential of about \$55 million, on board a cargo vessel.

Customs intercepted a suspicious cargo vessel in the waters off Kwai Chung yesterday night. Upon inspection, Customs officers seized the batch of suspected illicit cigarettes inside two 40-foot containers on board the vessel and the cabin of the vessel. Eight non-local men, including a captain and seven crew members, aged between 25 and 60 and suspected to be connected with the case were arrested.

An investigation is ongoing. Customs will continue to trace the source and the flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multipronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling to spare no effort in combating illicit cigarette activities.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Customs reminds members of the public that it is an offence to buy or sell illicit cigarettes. Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may report any suspected illicit cigarette activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).

