

Hong Kong Customs detects smuggling case using containers with large-scale false compartments (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs conducted an anti-smuggling operation in the western waters of Hong Kong on November 5 and detected a suspected smuggling case using containers with large-scale false compartments. A batch of suspected smuggled goods, including expensive food ingredients and electronic products, with an estimated market value of about \$63 million was seized.

Customs officers intercepted a river trade vessel in the western waters of Hong Kong in the evening of that day when it was heading towards the Mainland waters. After inspection, the officers discovered large-scale false compartments under the floor of two containers, which were declared to be empty, on board. A batch of suspected smuggled goods, including expensive food ingredients and electronic products, with an estimated market value of about \$50 million was seized inside the false compartments.

Upon follow-up investigation, Customs officers raided a container yard in San Tin, Yuen Long, and further seized five containers with large-scale false compartments and a batch of suspected smuggled goods, also including expensive food ingredients and electronic products, with an estimated market value of about \$13 million.

During the operation, three men aged between 32 and 40 suspected to be in connection with the case were arrested and a container truck was detained.

Investigation is ongoing. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

With Hong Kong and Mainland law enforcement agencies' recent rigorous enforcement actions against sea smuggling activities, it has been noticed by Customs that criminals have switched to using different concealment methods for hiding smuggled goods in order to evade detection by law enforcement agencies. It is rare to see smugglers using containers with large-scale false compartments to conceal general commodities as found in the smuggling case detected this time. Criminals would use false compartments in containers to smuggle dangerous drugs in the past.

Customs stresses that it will keep up its enforcement action and will continue to fiercely combat sea smuggling activities by actively pursuing risk-management and intelligence-based enforcement strategies, along with mounting targeted anti-smuggling operations at suitable times to land a solid blow against relevant 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.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

