

Hong Kong Customs detects suspected money laundering case relating to mailing cash

Hong Kong Customs on February 17 detected a suspected money laundering case relating to mailing cash involving an amount of about HK\$1.2 million at Hong Kong International Airport. Two non-local men suspected to be connected with the case were arrested.

Customs officers on that day inspected an air parcel, declared as carrying clothes and books, arriving in Hong Kong from Korea at the airport and found inside the parcel a batch of undeclared foreign currency banknotes worth about HK\$1.2 million, which has exceeded the limit of HK\$120,000 as stipulated by the Cross-boundary Movement of Physical Currency and Bearer Negotiable Instruments Ordinance (CBNIO).

After investigation, Customs officers yesterday (February 20) mounted a controlled delivery operation and arrested two non-local men, aged 48 and 51, suspected to be connected with the case in Tai Kok Tsui.

Customs today (February 21) laid a charge under the CBNIO against the two non-local men with one count of causing to be imported a large quantity of currency and bearer negotiable instruments (CBNIs) for which no declaration has been made. They will appear at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (February 22).

An investigation is ongoing and the likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out. Customs will continue intelligence exchanges with overseas law enforcement agencies and will seek legal advice from the Department of Justice and lay a charge against the concerned persons for conducting money laundering activities if any person is found to have dealt with suspected crime proceeds.

Customs reminds members of the public that an advance electronic declaration must be made to Customs via the Currency and Bearer Negotiable Instruments Declaration System for importing or exporting on a cross-boundary conveyance a large quantity of CBNIs as cargo in one batch. Customs also appeals to members of the public to stay alert and not to import or export a large quantity of unknown source of CBNIs on behalf of another party.

Under the CBNIO, a person commits an offence if he or she imports or exports, or causes to be imported or exported, in one batch a large quantity of CBNIs (i.e. the total value of which is more than HK\$120,000) for which no declaration has been made. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for two years.

Customs stresses that money laundering is a serious offence. Under the Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance, a person commits an offence if he or

she deals with any property knowing or having reasonable grounds to believe that such property, in whole or in part, directly or indirectly represents any person's proceeds of an indictable offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and imprisonment for 14 years while the crime proceeds are also subject to confiscation.

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