

Hong Kong Customs detects suspected scheduled hippopotamus ivory and live tortoise smuggling case involving speedboat (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs early this morning (July 12) mounted an anti-smuggling operation in the southern waters of Hong Kong and detected a suspected smuggling case involving a speedboat. About 60 pieces of suspected scheduled hippopotamus ivory, about 3 300 live tortoises, and about 500 boxes of medicines for dogs, with a total estimated market value of about \$2 million, were seized.

Customs officers conducted an anti-smuggling operation in the waters near Ap Lei Chau and spotted a suspicious speedboat heading towards the Ap Lei Chau Public Pier with its navigation lights off in the early hours today. A light goods vehicle then arrived near the pier and the male driver, together with three men in the vehicle, immediately moved a batch of goods from the vehicle onto the speedboat. They were suspected of participating in smuggling activities. Customs officers swiftly took action and a man on the shore immediately jumped onto the speedboat and fled.

Later, Customs officers seized the batch of suspected scheduled hippopotamus ivory, live tortoises and medicines for dogs off-loaded from the light goods vehicle.

During the operation, three men, aged between 33 and 44, suspected to be connected with the case were arrested and the light goods vehicle was also detained.

An investigation is ongoing and further arrests are not ruled out.

Customs stressed that it will keep up its enforcement action and will continue to vigorously combat sea smuggling activities through proactive risk management and intelligence-based enforcement strategies, along with mounting 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.

Under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting an endangered species without a licence is liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 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) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).

