

Hong Kong Customs detects three seaborne illicit cigarette smuggling cases with seizure worth about \$128 million (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs detected three illicit cigarette smuggling cases involving seaborne containers on July 11, July 17 and August 7 in Kwai Chung. A total of about 28.5 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$128 million and a duty potential of about \$94 million were seized.

Through risk assessment and intelligence analysis, Customs on July 11 and 17 selected and inspected two 40-foot seaborne containers, arriving from Singapore and re-exported to the Mainland and declared as carrying plastic particles and beddings, at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound. Upon inspection, Customs officers seized a total of about 20.5 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside the two containers.

Upon follow-up investigation, Customs on August 7 inspected a 40-foot seaborne container, arriving in Hong Kong from Singapore and declared as carrying plastic pellets, at the same compound. About 8 million suspected illicit cigarettes were further seized.

Investigations of the three cases are ongoing.

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis, and step up enforcement actions to combat smuggling of illicit cigarettes. 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 upon conviction.

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/).

