

Hong Kong Customs detects three smuggling cases with seizure of tobacco products worth about \$49 million (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs on August 4 and 5 detected three smuggling cases of tobacco products in Kwai Chung and Tuen Mun, and seized about 11 million suspected illicit cigarettes and about 1 400 kilograms of suspected duty-not-paid manufactured tobacco products in total. The total estimated market value was about \$49 million, with a duty potential of about \$32 million.

Through risk assessment, Customs officers on August 4 at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound selected for inspection a 40-foot seaborne container, declared as carrying household products, arriving in Hong Kong from Vietnam. Upon inspection, Customs officers seized about 6.4 million suspected illicit cigarettes therein.

On the same afternoon, Customs conducted an anti-illicit cigarette operation in Tuen Mun and intercepted a lorry at a car park in an industrial building on Tin Hau Road. About 2 million suspected illicit cigarettes were seized inside the lorry, marking the successful detection of the second case. Two men, aged 28 and 38, suspected to be connected with the case, were arrested.

In the third case, Customs officers seized about 2.6 million suspected illicit cigarettes and about 1 400kg of suspected duty-not-paid manufactured tobacco products in an industrial building on Tsing Yeung Circuit, Tuen Mun, in the evening of August 5. A 35-year-old man suspected to be connected with the case was arrested.

After preliminary investigations, Customs believes that the suspected illicit cigarettes and duty-not-paid manufactured tobacco products seized in the above three cases would have been transshipped to Australia.

An investigation is 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.

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/).

