

Hong Kong Customs seizes dangerous drugs worth nearly \$600 million at airport in first half of this year (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs stepped up enforcement at Hong Kong International Airport from January to June this year to combat the smuggling of dangerous drugs through air cargo and air passenger channels. A total of 332 dangerous drug cases were detected and about 1.16 tonnes of suspected dangerous drugs with an estimated market value of nearly \$600 million were seized.

During the period, the amount of dangerous drugs seized and the market value have shown substantial increases of 98 per cent and 29 per cent respectively when compared with the figures from the same period in 2021. The major seizures in quantity order were methamphetamine (about 576 kilograms), ketamine (about 258kg), cannabis (about 114kg) and cocaine (about 82kg).

In the wake of the relaxation of entry restrictions at the airport, six dangerous drug cases were detected through the passenger channel with eight arrests and seizures of about 6kg of suspected dangerous drugs with an estimated market value of about \$6.2 million in the first half of this year. Cocaine was the major type of drug seized.

Regarding the cargo channel, a total of 326 dangerous drug cases were detected in the first half of this year. Dangerous drugs weighing about 1.15 tonnes with an estimated market value of about \$590 million were seized, representing 97 per cent and 28 per cent increases respectively when compared to the figures for the same period of last year. Among these seizures, the amount of methamphetamine was the largest at 576kg.

Among the cases detected from the cargo channel, a significant increase has been observed in the general cargo channel. Customs detected a total of 51 drug trafficking cases through the general air cargo channel and seized about 859kg of different kinds of dangerous drugs with an estimated market value of about \$460 million in the first half of this year. The seizure amount and the market value have increased 2.2-fold and 1.1-fold as compared to the figures for the same period of last year. There were 158 cases in the express parcel channel, showing a slight increase by 3 per cent when compared to the number for the same period of last year. As for cases effected from the postal channel, a decrease of 43 per cent to 117 cases was recorded.

Among the cases detected at the airport, 40 persons aged between 16 and 65, including masterminds of drug trafficking syndicates, were arrested.

Customs emphasised that the department has all along striven to intercept the inflow of drugs to Hong Kong by adopting a risk management and intelligence-led approach according to the trends in the drug market and

smuggling channels. The enforcement figures reflect the remarkable effectiveness of the targeted anti-drug trafficking strategy. The department reiterates that it will continue to make necessary adjustments in deployment in accordance with changes in the drug trafficking trends.

Customs reminds members of the public not to release their personal data or address to others for receiving mail or goods to avoid having their information used in illegal activities. The public also should not receive mail and goods for others. Moreover, cannabidiol products may contain a dangerous drug, i.e. tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), an addictive compound in cannabis. Customs will take resolute action to tackle any product containing THC. Importers and traders are also responsible for ensuring that the products they supply do not contain THC or other dangerous drugs.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

