

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected illicit cigarettes worth over \\$43 million in two days \(with photos\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (June 2) and today (June 3) detected two illicit cigarette cases and seized a total of about 15.9 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$43.3 million and a duty potential of about \$30.3 million in Yuen Long and the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound respectively. Customs has so far this year seized about 85 million suspected illicit cigarettes, a figure that already exceeds the annual seizure amounts for each of the last six years.

Customs officers yesterday conducted an anti-illicit cigarette operation in Yuen Long and seized about 8 million suspected illicit cigarettes from a metal shed. A goods vehicle suspected to be involved in the case was detained. Customs is now tracing the source of the illicit cigarettes.

Moreover, through intelligence analysis, Customs officers today selected for inspection a seaborne transshipment container arriving from Vietnam heading for the Philippines via Hong Kong at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound. The container was declared to be containing tissue. Upon inspection, Customs officers found about 7.9 million suspected illicit cigarettes in the container.

Investigations of the two cases are ongoing.

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multi-pronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling to combat illicit cigarette activities.

Customs made an annual seizure of 52.1 million suspected illicit cigarettes in 2014, followed by 71.9 million, 63 million, 60.7 million, 53.4 million and 55 million respectively in the next five years.

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).

