

Hong Kong Customs summarises effectiveness of enforcement operation “Thunderbolt” against illegal export of suspected controlled medicines (with photo)

â€‹Hong Kong Customs mounted an enforcement operation "Thunderbolt" in late May to combat illegal export of suspected controlled medicines. The operation smashed two syndicates that were attempting to illegally export controlled medicines. Four women were arrested.

Through risk assessment, Customs officers in late May selected and inspected an outbound air parcel destined for Italy from Hong Kong at Hong Kong International Airport. Twenty-two tablets of suspected controlled medicines were found inside the parcel.

After in-depth investigation, Hong Kong Customs successfully targeted two medicine smuggling syndicates, which were active in Mui Wo and San Po Kong respectively.

Customs officers on June 3 arrested a 43-year-old woman suspected to be in connection with the case and seized about 6 000 tablets of suspected controlled medicines in the outbound air parcels mailed by her at Mui Wo Post Office. The officers raided a residential unit in Mui Wo on the same day. About 600 000 tablets of suspected controlled medicines were found in the unit and a 54-year-old woman suspected to be connected to the case was arrested. The two arrested persons have been released on bail pending further investigation.

Later, Customs officers on June 15 arrested a 45-year-old woman suspected to be in connection with the case and seized about 10 000 tablets of suspected controlled medicines in the outbound air parcels mailed by her at Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office. The officers raided an industrial unit, suspected to be a storage centre, in San Po Kong on the same day. About 800 000 tablets of suspected controlled medicines were found in the unit and a 38-year-old woman suspected to be connected to the case was arrested. The two arrested persons are detained for investigation.

Customs believes that the operation smashed two syndicates that were attempting to illegally export controlled medicines. The department will continue to maintain stringent law enforcement and close contact with relevant government departments and the logistics industry to combat illegal export of controlled medicines.

Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person who exports pharmaceutical products and medicines without a valid export licence commits

an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for two years.

Under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, any person who possesses any poison included in Part 1 of the Poisons List other than in accordance with provisions commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violation of the above-mentioned ordinances 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).

