

Hong Kong Customs uncovers first case using aircraft engine to conceal drugs in detecting largest seaborne cocaine trafficking case since 2012 (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs seized about 217 kilograms of suspected cocaine with an estimated market value of about \$246 million from a seaborne container at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound on May 20. This is the first drug trafficking case making use of an aircraft engine uncovered by Customs. The amount of cocaine seized in the case is a record high for a seaborne case since 2012.

Through risk assessment and data analysis, Customs officers selected a 20-foot container declared to contain an aircraft engine arriving from Ecuador for customs inspection. Customs then conducted an initial check on the engine stored in the container with the assistance from Government Flying Service Aircraft engineers and suspected that dangerous drugs were concealed inside the engine.

After some of the engine parts had been dismantled, Customs officers found multiple suspicious metal components in the middle of the engine and subsequently seized the batch of suspected cocaine that weighed about 217kg, which was wrapped with soundproof materials and placed in eight metal components.

An investigation is ongoing.

Customs said that the multifarious modus operandi adopted by drug trafficking syndicates would not hinder the department from detecting cases. Customs will continue to make use of intelligence analysis, risk assessment and international co-operation to combat drug trafficking activities.

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.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

