

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS PRESS STATEMENT

3 CONTAINERS OF COUNTERFEIT CIGARETTES SEIZED

On 28 and 29 October 2003, acting on information received, Singapore Customs seized 3 containers of counterfeit cigarettes from the PSA Tanjong Pagar Free Trade Zone. A total of 92,000 cartons of cigarettes with a street value of about \$6.5 million were seized. The customs duty and GST of the cigarettes are \$4,692,000 and \$259,808 respectively.

Customs received information that 3 containers suspected to contain counterfeit cigarettes would be arriving on 28 and 29 Oct 2003. The containers were from Vietnam and would be transshipping in Singapore to Hamburg, Germany.

Customs Special Investigations Branch (SIB) conducted a joint operation with Police CID (IPR) on 28 Oct 2003 to intercept the first container. At about 4.30 pm, Customs and Police officers went into Tanjong Pagar FTZ and together with representatives from both PSA and the shipping agent, made a check on the first container. The officers found a total of 20,000 cartons of counterfeit cigarettes sealed in foil and packed together with boxes of chili, garlic and cinnamon powders. The cigarettes were of the brand Regal. All the contents in the container and the container were seized.

The other 2 containers declared in the shipping manifests as 2,400 boxes of tea leaves arrived on a different vessel on the following day. Customs SIB officers moved into the Tanjong Pagar FTZ on 29 Oct 2003 to intercept the containers. The officers found the first two rows to contain boxes of loose tea leaves. From the third row onwards, officers found a total of 72,000 packets of Regal cigarettes ingeniously packed in foil and concealed inside the tea boxes. The contents and the container were seized.

Preliminary investigations showed that the three containers were meant for Hamburg with origin from Vietnam. The local property rights holder for Regal cigarettes, M/s Imperial Tobacco was consulted and had ascertained that the cigarettes are counterfeit. Further investigations are currently ongoing by both Singapore Customs and Police.

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30 Oct 2003