



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS 新加坡关税局 **KASTAM SINGAPURA** சிங்கப்பூர் சுங்கத்துறை

MEDIA RELEASE

9 April 2013

Vietnamese contraband cigarette peddlers nabbed in nine-hour operation in Kaki Bukit, Tampines and East Coast Park

A total of 18 Vietnamese were nabbed in a nine-hour operation led by Singapore Customs, with participating officers from the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA), on 1 April 2013.

At about 5.25am, the officers arrested Nguyen Thanh Tu, 25, and Truong Thanh Tung, 41, at Kaki Bukit Road 3. Ten cartons and 100 packets of contraband cigarettes were recovered from two haversacks and a plastic bag carried by the duo.

About 20 minutes later at Tampines Place, a third man, who had 27 cartons and 37 packets of contraband cigarettes with him, was arrested.

The officers then proceeded to raid the “nest” used by the Vietnamese peddling ring – a chalet at East Coast Parkway.

Fifteen Vietnamese – 10 male and five female – were caught by surprise in the pre-dawn raid.

Next, the officers moved on to Geylang to recover the stash of contraband cigarettes. Eagle-eyed Singapore Customs officers had earlier spotted one of the peddlers retrieving cigarettes from a manhole at Lorong 17 Geylang.

The manhole, which had a depth of half a body length, was secured with a thick metal chain and padlocks, which the officers had to cut open with tools. More than 1,020 packets of contraband cigarettes were recovered from the manhole.

Investigations revealed that these Vietnamese peddlers had been hired by their fellow Vietnamese to peddle contraband cigarettes in Kaki Bukit, Tampines and Geylang.

A total of 1,539 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth more than \$15,300 were seized in this operation. The duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) evaded exceeded \$12,600.

For their involvement in peddling contraband cigarettes, Tu and Tung were sentenced on 4 April 2013 to \$37,000 court fine each or in default three months’ jail.

Seven of the Vietnamese were also referred to the ICA for investigation into immigration-related offences.

Court proceedings are still ongoing for other Vietnamese involved in this peddling ring.

“Singapore Customs takes a serious view of foreigners who get involved in contraband activities,” said Mr Goh Hoon Lip, Deputy Head of Special Investigation Branch, Singapore Customs (新加坡关税局缉私处副处长吴坤立). “We will work closely with other enforcement agencies to clamp down on such illegal activities and bring the offenders to justice.”

Buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with duty-unpaid goods are serious offences under the Customs Act and the GST Act. Offenders will be severely dealt with. Repeat offenders can be fined up to 40 times the amount of duty and GST evaded and/or jailed for up to six years.

The minimum court fines for first-time and repeat offenders of tobacco-related offences are \$2,000 and \$4,000 respectively. Repeat offenders who are caught with more than two kilogrammes of tobacco products will also face mandatory imprisonment.

Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of customs duty or GST can contact the Singapore Customs hotline on 1800-2330000 or email customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg.

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ANNEX

Photos of contraband cigarettes hidden in the manhole



A manhole secured by a thick chain and padlocks was used to store contraband cigarettes.



Contraband cigarettes were stashed inside the secured manhole at Lorong 17 Geylang.



The manhole was half a body deep.

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