



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS MEDIA RELEASE

MAN FINED \$107,500 FOR “HELPING” HIMSELF TO DUTY-UNPAID CIGARETTES IN VESSEL ORDER SCAM

Goh Keng Siong, 46 years-old Singaporean, was charged in Court for conveying, dealing with and possession of duty-unpaid cigarettes. On 24 October 2008, he pleaded guilty to the charges and was sentenced to fines totaling \$107,523.46 or in default imprisonment of seven months and three weeks. Goh had inflated the orders of dutiable cigarettes made by the master of a vessel for use as sea stores onboard his vessel, and diverted the cigarettes for his own illegal sale in the Geylang area.

“Helping” Himself to Duty-unpaid Cigarettes

2 Goh was a delivery clerk with a local company. His duties included taking orders and delivering sea stores to ships berthed and anchored in Singapore. These sea stores included dutiable goods such as liquor, beer and cigarettes. On 1 July 2008, Goh received an order for sea stores from the master. He wrote down the master’s order and on his own accord, added 50 cartons of cigarettes in the same list. He then passed the list to his colleague to declare a Cargo Clearance Permit (CCP) as the latter is required for removal of dutiable cigarettes from the licensed warehouse to the vessel. On 4 July, Goh submitted the CCP to the warehouse and subsequently loaded a box (containing the 50 cartons of cigarettes) together with other items ordered by the master of the vessel onto his van. He drove the van to his flat where he removed the cigarette cartons from the box.

3 Having “helped” himself to the cigarettes, Goh then delivered the vessel’s order, together with the empty box to the port. The empty box in the van was discovered when he was checked. On further questioning by Singapore Customs, Goh admitted having removed the cigarettes from the box.

4 On the same day at about 7.45 pm, Singapore Customs officers searched Goh's flat. A total of 642 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were found (500 packets from the July 2008 order and the other 142 packets from a previous order). Investigations revealed that Goh had used the same modus operandi of inflating the vessel's orders and diverting the duty-unpaid cigarettes for his own use. Goh admitted that he intended to sell these ill-gotten cigarettes to buyers at Geylang area for a profit.

Stiff Penalties to Duty and GST Evasion

5 Goh was arrested and charged in court for offences under the Customs Act. He was sentenced to fines totaling \$107,423.46, or in default imprisonment of seven months and three weeks. Commenting on this case, Assistant Director-General of Customs (Intelligence & Investigation) Mr Lee Boon Chong said, "We take a serious view of any attempt of fraudulent evasion of duty and GST, and will not hesitate to prosecute offenders in court. Ship chandlers in their handling of sea stores involving dutiable goods are advised to be accurate and genuine in their dealings, or face legal consequences."

6 Singapore Customs warns that buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with contraband cigarettes are serious offences under the Customs and GST Acts. Stiff penalties are imposed for such offences. On conviction, offenders can be jailed as well as fined. The vehicles used in the commission of such offence are also liable to be forfeited. The public are strongly advised not to buy duty-unpaid cigarettes. For possessing a packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes, an offender may face a minimum fine of \$500 or prosecution in court. Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of Customs duty or GST should contact the Singapore Customs Hotline at 1800-2330000 or email to customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg.

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When Singapore Customs officers raided Goh's residence, 642 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were found.