



IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY AND SINGAPORE CUSTOMS

JOINT NEWS RELEASE

23 August 2017

More than 3,700 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes seized by ICA and Singapore Customs

On 17 August 2017 at about 6pm, Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) officers conducted checks on a 40-footer container at a warehouse in Chai Chee Lane. The container was presented for clearance at the Tanjong Pagar Scanning Station and was sealed for checks at the premises of the freight forwarder. During the checks, the officers noticed that there were 35 boxes wrapped with corrugated paper among a consignment declared as “display stand and keychain card holder”.

When the ICA officers unwrapped the boxes, the items turned out to be wooden doors. Suspecting that contraband items may be concealed in the wooden doors, the officers pried open the side panel and found duty-unpaid cigarettes. Singapore Customs was alerted, and 1,894 cartons and 660 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes concealed in the wooden doors were uncovered.

Based on the leads gathered from the case, Singapore Customs identified another suspicious consignment of wooden doors and mounted a follow-up operation on 21 August 2017 night. Singapore Customs officers kept a close watch as two vans were driven into a building in Playfair Road. They saw the consignment of wooden doors being unloaded from the vans and conveyed to a unit on the fifth level of the building.

The Singapore Customs officers then moved into the unit to conduct a search, and they found 1,890 cartons and 700 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes concealed in the wooden doors. Two male Chinese nationals, aged 28 and 34, were arrested for being involved with duty-unpaid cigarettes. A follow-up search of the two men's flat in Sims Avenue also uncovered another three packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes.

A total of 3,784 cartons and 1,363 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized over the two days, with the total duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) evaded amounting to about \$304,210 and \$22,540 respectively. Investigations are ongoing.

Buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, possessing or dealing with duty-unpaid goods are serious offences under the Customs Act and the GST Act. Offenders can be fined up to 40 times the amount of duty and GST evaded and/or jailed for up to six years. Vehicles used in the commission of such offences are also liable to be forfeited.

Our borders are our first line of defence in safeguarding Singapore's security. The security checks are critical to our nation's security. The ICA will continue to conduct security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contraband. The same methods of concealment used by contraband smugglers may be used by terrorists to smuggle arms and explosives to carry out attacks in Singapore.

###

ANNEX



Duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden in wooden doors were detected on 17 August by ICA officers. (Photos: ICA)



Singapore Customs conducted a follow-up operation at a building in Playfair Road on 21 August and uncovered another 1,890 cartons and 700 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes concealed in wooden doors. (Photos: Singapore Customs)



A total of 3,784 cartons and 1,363 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized in both operations. (Photos: Singapore Customs)

###