

## **SINGAPORE CUSTOMS PRESS STATEMENT**

<p><b>Singapore Customs seized 940 cartons of contraband cigarettes, arrested two men</b></p>
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On 12 August 2003, Customs Special Investigation Branch officers arrested two male Singaporean Chinese, (aged 32 and 49) and seized 940 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes. The customs duty and GST of the cigarettes are \$47,940 and \$2654.56 respectively.

Acting on intelligence gathered, officers kept watch on a flat at Block 55 Marine Terrace. At about 1 pm, officers moved into the flat and declared office. The flat was searched in the presence of the 32-year-old Chinese man. A total of 840 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes were found in a room. The man admitted ownership of the cigarettes. The officers then waited for the accomplice who arrived about 10 minutes later. Upon questioning, the man admitted that he had come to assist in the packing of the cigarettes for distribution to their buyers. Another 100 cartons were found in the accomplice's car. Both men were arrested and the cigarettes and the car seized.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the men were planning to sell the cigarettes to blue-collar workers at construction sites and factories around the island at \$4.00 a packet - less than half the normal market price in Singapore. The offenders will be charged in court. If found guilty, they may be fined up to 20 times the amount of tax evaded.

Mr Long Foo Liew, Head of Special Investigations Branch, said this was the biggest seizure of cigarettes coming in via the land checkpoints this year. He said the duo had been operating from the four-room flat for about a week. The swift enforcement action has successfully cut off this week-old illegal distribution and retail channel.

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