



PRESS RELEASE

THREE ARRESTED AND 18,590 PACKETS DUTY-UNPAID CIGARETTES SEIZED IN SINGAPORE CUSTOMS STING OPERATION

On 28 November 2006, officers of Singapore Customs, in an operation code-named "Firefight", arrested 3 men (a Singaporean and two Indian nationals) and seized a total of 371,800 sticks (18,590 packets) of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth about \$167,500. The duty and GST payable totaled \$139,240.

2 Arising from intelligence gathered from earlier investigations, officers from Singapore Customs, Special Investigations Branch, staked out at the Geylang vicinity for vehicles suspected to be supplying contraband cigarettes to peddlers.

3 On 28 November 2006, at about 1.10 pm, a Singapore registered taxi arrived at an apartment unit at Geylang Lorong 4. A man alighted from the taxi and was seen bringing the boxes into the unit. Officers of Singapore Customs moved in. Immediately, the male Singaporean and another 2 male Indian nationals inside the unit tried to flee from the site, but were detained after a brief struggle. Customs officers conducted a search at the unit and found a total of 2,990 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes in the boxes and 110 packets in its false ceiling. The 3 men were arrested and the taxi driver was requested to assist in the Customs' investigation.

4 Investigations revealed that the taxi was flagged down by the male Singaporean suspect at Toa Payoh. He had loaded several boxes into the taxi and instructed the driver to fetch him to Geylang Lorong 4. Upon questioning, the man led the officers to a bonded truck at a heavy vehicle car park in Toa Payoh. The officers seized another 15,490 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes from the bonded truck.

5 The taxi driver was released after assisting in the investigations while the male Singaporean was charged in Court on 29 November 2006 for customs offences. The 2 male Indian nationals were found to be immigration offenders and were therefore handed over to the Police for follow-up action.

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 Act. Stiff penalties are imposed for such offences. On conviction by the court, offenders can be jailed as well as fined. The public are also advised against buying duty-unpaid cigarettes. For a packet of duty-unpaid cigarettes, the offence may be compounded for a minimum of \$200 or prosecuted in court.

7 Members of the public with information on smuggling activities or evasion of Customs duty or GST should contact the Singapore Customs Intelligence Hotline at 1800-2330000 or email to customs_intelligence@customs.gov.sg

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