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FIRST-EVER CASE OF USING EXCAVATOR ARMS TO SMUGGLE 36,780 PACKETS OF DUTY-UNPAID CIGARETTES UNCOVERED, IMPORTER ARRESTED

In a joint operation by Singapore Customs (SC) and Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA), the first-ever smuggling attempt using excavator arms was foiled. A total of 36,780 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes worth about \$350,000 were seized. A 41-year old Chinese man suspected to be the importer of the four excavator arms in a container was arrested. The duty and GST of the smuggled cigarettes amounted to \$298,240.

2 On 28 July 2008, SC and ICA officers mounted a surveillance check on a 40-footer container at Defu Lane, suspected to contain duty-unpaid cigarettes. On the following day, SC officers detained the importer of the container and brought him back to Defu Lane to open the container for inspection. Inside the container were four arm parts of excavator machines. A close inspection of the excavator arms revealed duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden within. The man was arrested immediately. A total of 36,780 packets of assorted brands duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized from all the four excavator arms. The importer was charged in Court on 30 July 2008. The case has been adjourned for Pre-Trial Conference on 11 August 2008.

3 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.

4 As Singapore's first line of defence against terrorist threats, ICA has a duty to ensure the security and safety of Singapore. ICA has tightened security checks on passengers and vehicles at the checkpoints to prevent attempts to smuggle undesirable persons, drugs, weapons, explosives and other contraband into Singapore. 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. ICA would like to advise the public against smuggling unlawful goods into Singapore.

5 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.

**ISSUED BY: SINGAPORE CUSTOMS (新加坡关税局) (KASTAM SINGAPURA)
IMMIGRATION & CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY (移民与关卡局)**

DATE: 5 AUGUST 2008



The cigarettes were hidden within the existing hollow of the excavator arms. The syndicate had to cut open part of the excavator arm to stuff in duty-unpaid cigarettes. Thereafter, the cut-out part was screwed back onto the excavator arm again and repainted to avoid detection.



Duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden within excavator arms when the cut-out metal part was removed.



Container at Defu Lane seized by SC and ICA officers in a joint operation revealed the excavator arms hiding illegal cigarettes.



The extent of concealment can be seen in the picture above. No matter the concealment methods used by the importer, he succumbed to the joint SC-ICA enforcement efforts.



A total of 36,780 packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized in the joint operation.