



**SINGAPORE CUSTOMS** 新加坡关税局 **KASTAM SINGAPURA** சிங்கப்பூர் சுங்கத்துறை

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

6 December 2013

### **Singapore Customs seizes second-largest haul of contraband cigarettes this year**

For many people the year-end holidays have started, but Singapore Customs officers continue to maintain vigilance to detect smuggling activities.

Customs officers mounted two operations on 27 November 2013 and 3 December 2013, which resulted in the seizure of a total of 17,638 cartons and eight packets of contraband cigarettes worth more than S\$1.6 million.

The total duty and Goods and Services Tax (GST) evaded exceeded S\$1.3 million.

Five men were arrested in these operations, which disrupted the distribution network of two syndicates.

On 27 November 2013, Customs officers laid an ambush outside a warehouse at Soon Lee Street. They saw a Singapore-registered car being driven into the warehouse. The officers raided the warehouse and arrested the driver, a 54-year-old Singaporean man, as he was retrieving cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes from various compartments of the car. The officers retrieved 245 cartons of contraband cigarettes from the car. These cigarettes and the car were seized.

Based on information gathered, another operation was mounted six days later, on 3 December 2013 along Soon Lee Street.

Customs officers kept a close watch on a man who was using a forklift to transfer fibre tanks from a Malaysian-registered lorry into a warehouse. Another three men were also seen entering the unit. The officers moved in swiftly and arrested the four men – a Malaysian and three Vietnamese – as they were retrieving cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden in the fibre tanks and packing them into bags. Subsequently, Customs officers raided another warehouse along Soon Lee Street, where more duty-unpaid cigarettes were found.

A total of 17,393 cartons and eight packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were seized in this operation.

This is Singapore Customs' second-largest haul of contraband cigarettes this year, and the largest inland. On 23 January 2013, Customs officers seized 18,000 cartons of contraband cigarettes in an operation at the Jurong Port.

Court proceedings against the five men arrested in the two recent operations are ongoing.

“These seizures of contraband cigarettes underscore Singapore Customs’ strong determination to do whatever it takes to bring smugglers to justice,” said Mr Yeo Sew Meng, Assistant Director-General (Intelligence and Investigation), Singapore Customs (新加坡关税局助理局长(情报与调查)扬秀明).

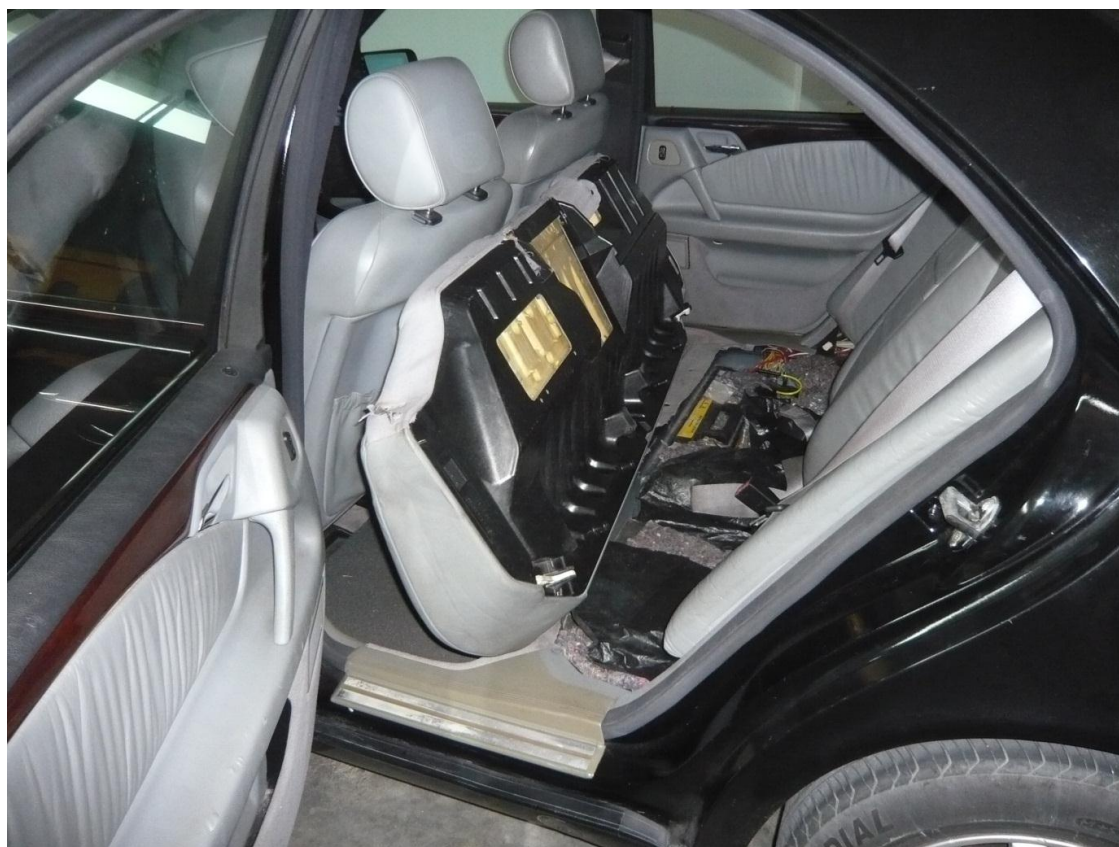
“Syndicates will always try to come up with new and clever ways of hiding and smuggling cigarettes into Singapore. We will stay ahead of the game, and strike at the right time to disrupt their illegal activities,” said Mr Yeo.

Buying, selling, conveying, delivering, storing, keeping, having in possession or dealing with duty-unpaid goods are serious offences under the Customs Act and the GST Act. Offenders will be severely dealt with. They can be fined up to 40 times the amount of duty and GST evaded and/or jailed for up to six years.

The minimum court fine for first-time and repeat offenders of tobacco-related offences are \$2,000 and \$4,000 respectively. Repeat offenders who are caught with more than two kilogrammes of tobacco products will also face mandatory imprisonment. Vehicles used in the commission of such offences are also liable to be forfeited.

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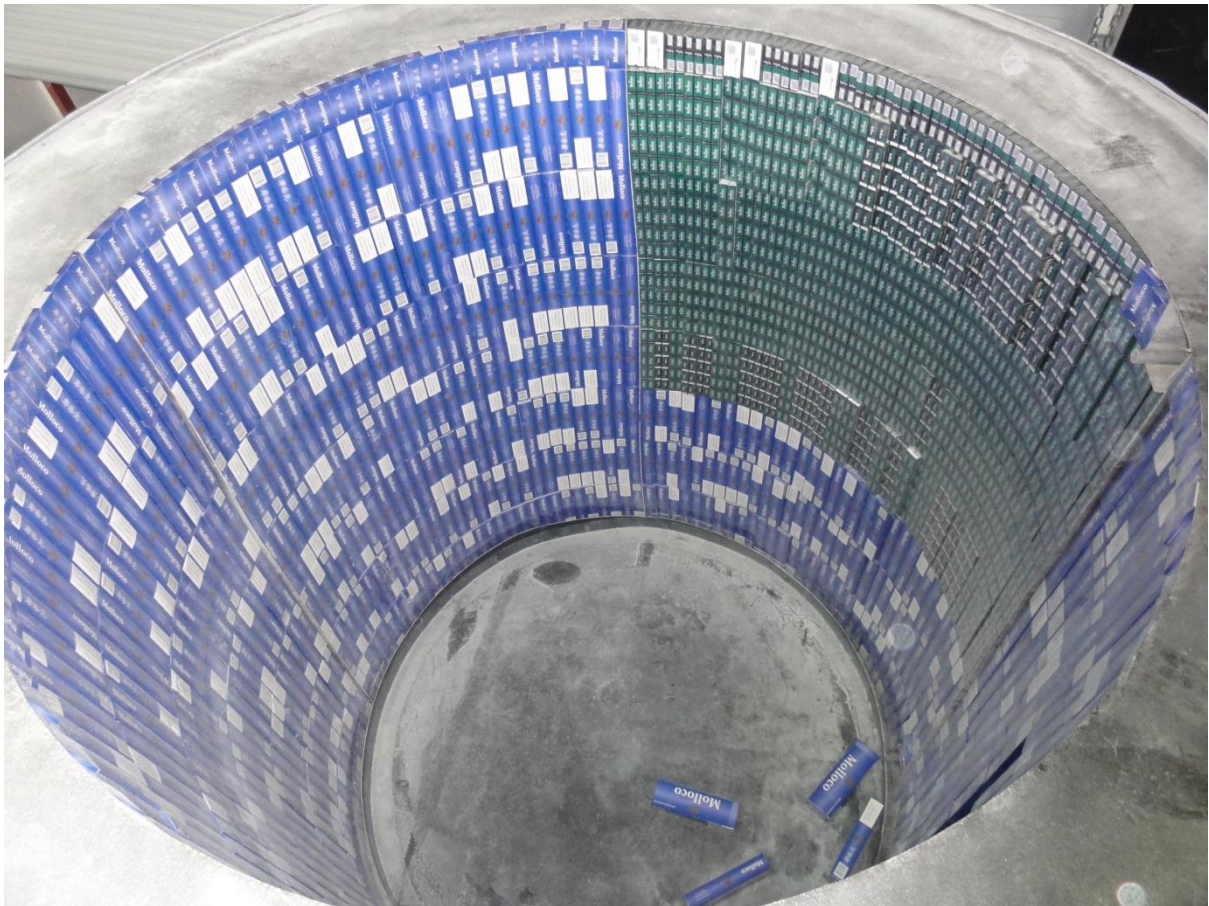
## **ANNEX**



Duty-unpaid cigarettes were found hidden in compartments of the Singapore-registered car on 27 November 2013.



A total of 245 cartons of duty-unpaid cigarettes were recovered from the car.



Duty-unpaid cigarettes hidden in the specially constructed fibre tanks.



The four men who were retrieving contraband cigarettes from the four fibre tanks and packing them into bags on 3 December 2013 were arrested by Singapore Customs officers. A total of 17,393 cartons and eight packets of duty-unpaid cigarettes were retrieved and seized in this operation.

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