

Hong Kong Customs detects sea smuggling case with market value of about \$6 million (with photos)

— Hong Kong Customs on December 27 last year detected a suspected case of using an ocean-going vessel to smuggle goods to Vietnam at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound. A batch of suspected smuggled goods, including fish maws, suspected scheduled shark fins, pharmaceutical products and skincare products with a total estimated market value of about \$6 million, was seized.

Through risk assessment, Customs discovered that criminals may use ocean-going vessels to smuggle goods to Southeast Asian countries. Then, Customs formulated strategic plans to select and inspect containers from high-risk regions, and identified four containers that were prepared to be shipped to Vietnam by an ocean-going vessel for inspection on that day. Upon examination, a large number of wooden boxes were found inside the containers and the batch of suspected smuggled goods was seized therein.

After a follow-up investigation, Customs arrested a 52-year-old female director of the consignor company suspected to be involved with the case that night.

An investigation is ongoing. The arrested person has been released on bail pending further investigation and the likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Being a government department specifically responsible for tackling smuggling, Customs has all along been combating various smuggling activities proactively at the forefront. Customs will keep up its enforcement action and continue to fiercely combat sea smuggling activities through proactive risk management and intelligence-based enforcement strategies, along with mounting targeted anti-smuggling operations at suitable times to land a solid blow against relevant activities.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years. In addition, under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person who exports pharmaceutical products and medicines without a valid export licence commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for two years.

Under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, any person who possesses any poison included in Part 1 of the Poisons List other than in accordance with provisions commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for two years.

Under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting an endangered species without a licence is liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

