

Incoming driver convicted and jailed for importing duty-not-paid cigarettes (with photo)

A 49-year-old incoming male driver was sentenced to four months' imprisonment and fined \$1,000 at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts today (May 15) for importing duty-not-paid cigarettes and failing to declare them to Customs officers, in contravention of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (DCO).

Based on risk assessment and intelligence analysis, Customs officers and police officers of the Airport Police District mounted a joint anti-illicit cigarette operation on January 17 at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port and intercepted an inbound private car which was declared to be empty. Upon inspection, Customs officers seized about 30 000 duty-not-paid cigarettes from the hollow spaces of the doors, under the seats, in the centre console and the rear compartment. The driver was subsequently arrested and the private car was also seized. The estimated market value of the duty-not-paid cigarettes seized in the case was about \$150,000 and the duty potential was about \$99,000.

Customs welcomes the sentence. The custodial sentence has imposed a considerable deterrent effect and reflects the seriousness of the offences. Customs reminds members of the public that under the DCO, tobacco products are dutiable goods to which the DCO applies. Any person who imports, deals with, possesses, sells or buys illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Customs will continue to combat cross-boundary smuggling activities with firm enforcement action.

Members of the public may report any suspected illicit cigarette activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 182 8080 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

