



Australian Government
Australian Customs Service

customs media release

Hefty penalties for duty free tobacco scam - *Thursday, 21st September 2006*

Customs are again warning the travelling public that they must comply with Australia's duty free laws regardless of who they are, or their travel circumstances.

The warning comes after a 33-year-old Vietnam Airline's crew member was yesterday (Wednesday 20 September) ordered to pay almost \$10 000 in fines, costs, and duty repayments for diverting duty free goods to the domestic market.

Customs also used Proceeds of Crime legislation to seize profits of \$5925 that were gained by the crew member.

Ms Thi Lien Luu was arrested upon suspicions that she purchased duty free tobacco products at Australian duty free stores and sold them on the domestic market.

She attempted to leave Australia on Saturday 16 September 2006 when Customs officers at Melbourne Airport detected anomalies in the duty free items that were being carried by Ms Luu and five of her fellow crew members.

On closer inspection, Customs officers established that the majority of duty free cigarettes and all of the tobacco had been removed from its packaging and replaced with fruit and cardboard.

Of the 22 000 cigarettes and 10kg of tobacco that should have been exported, only 5000 cigarettes and no tobacco were carried by the crew.

Customs officers allowed the other crew members to depart Australia after it was established that they had been unaware that the goods had been substituted.

Ms Luu, who attended Melbourne Magistrates Court, was charged with dishonestly causing a loss to the Commonwealth.

Travellers are reminded that all goods purchased from duty free stores must be carried out of Australia. Not doing so can result in substantial fines and/or imprisonment.