

# Customs in the media

## Smuggling syndicate dismantled

A joint investigation by Customs, the Australian Federal Police and the Indonesian National Police has dismantled possibly the largest pseudoephedrine smuggling syndicate to target Australia.

The syndicate allegedly imported more than 380kg of pseudoephedrine in at least six importations.

It is estimated the imports could have been made into more than 250kg of methamphetamine. In its purest form, the methamphetamine which may have been produced has an approximate street value of \$71 million.

The latest development in the operation was the detention by the Indonesian National Police of two Indonesians, one of whom is a resident of Australia.

The initial breakthrough in the investigation came when Customs uncovered \$22 million worth of pseudoephedrine tablets inside a shipping container at Port Botany in Sydney after the vessel had arrived from Jakarta.

Customs and the AFP formed a joint investigation which monitored the delivery of the container. Consequently four people were charged and about two million pseudoephedrine tablets were seized.

The AFP passed intelligence to the INP about the possibility of a syndicate smuggling pseudoephedrine in Indonesia. The information included details about two Indonesian men suspected of being principal members of the syndicate.

The Indonesians monitored the activities of the two men and detained them in relation to allegations concerning the exportation of pseudoephedrine in Indonesia.

Customs National Manager Investigations Richard Janeczko said: "International cooperation with Indonesia and partnerships within Australian law-enforcement



Customs officers with some of the 2m tablets containing pseudoephedrine.

agencies are critical in making Australia and the region a safer and better place in which to live".

One of the four persons charged in Sydney appeared in court and was granted bail. All four people charged in Sydney are expected to next appear in Sydney Central Local Court.



Some of the eggs wrapped in pantyhose.

## Improved facilities at Willie Creek

Improvements to a facility for processing illegal foreign fishers at Willie Creek near Broome was announced by Justice and Customs Minister Senator Chris Ellison. The upgrade cost \$1 million. It is the first of several that will enable Customs to accommodate foreign fishers while they undergo preliminary interviews and health checks. Other Customs processing facilities at Gove and Weipa are due for completion by the end of 2006.

## Budgie smuggler penalised

A 56-year-old man from Sydney's outer western suburbs received a \$25,000 penalty in Sydney's Downing Centre District Court for attempting to smuggle Australian native bird eggs to Thailand.

A company director of Box Hill pleaded guilty to contravening the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*.

He was stopped by Customs officers at Sydney International Airport as he was about to board a flight to Bangkok. Two rose-breasted galah eggs and two gang gang cockatoo eggs, wrapped in pantyhose, were found in his underwear.

The birds were believed to have been destined for the illegal black market in Asia.

Galahs and gang gangs are listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The maximum penalty for illegally exporting CITES-listed specimens is 10 year's imprisonment and/or a fine of \$110,000.

Customs Regional Director NSW Gail Batman said Australia's diverse wildlife was highly prized by collectors overseas.

"It is a cruel and despicable trade made worse by the influence of those involved in the illegal black market," she said.

"The law provides substantial penalties to deter people from becoming involved in this criminal activity."

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