

# Cargo ship smuggles cigarettes into Kaohsiung on pretext of repairs

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Photo of seized cigarettes / Credit: Taiwan Kaohsiung District Prosecutors Office

Taiwanese prosecutors have charged nine persons who allegedly tried to smuggle 2,000 boxes of duty unpaid cigarettes through Kaohsiung port.

In an announcement released on 8 March, it was disclosed that around 6 pm local time on 31 December 2023, a Togo-flagged cargo ship, Shun Feng, had entered the Taiwanese port from Hong Kong, on the pretext of seeking maintenance and repair at a nearby shipyard.

To avoid detection, the ship captain, a Chinese national surnamed Yu, created a secret compartment on the vessel. Around 970,000 packets of contraband

cigarettes were placed in the compartment which was then sealed with steel plates.

Yu told port officials that Shun Feng had malfunctioned and would need to be repaired for about a week. Subsequently, Shun Feng docked at a shipyard in Qijin district.

After about a week, Yu pried open the secret compartment and took out the cigarettes.

However, the Taiwan Coast Guard had been tipped off that a Chinese national would be directing a cargo ship to carry illicit cigarettes into Kaohsiung. Suspicious of the movements of Shun Feng, coast guard personnel searched the ship.

Prosecutors said that Coast Guard officers entered the crew's quarters and pulled out a large black plastic bag that was found to contain nearly 973,850 packets of contraband cigarettes, with a market value of TW\$70 million (US\$2.23 million).

The ship captain and seven crew members were detained. Investigations uncovered the involvement of a Taiwanese national, surnamed Chien.

Prosecutor Sung Wen-hung said, "Six Chinese nationals, two Myanmar nationals and one local person have been charged with going against the Tobacco and Alcohol Administration Act."

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