

財經事務及庫務局
(庫務科)
香港下亞厘畢道
中區政府合署



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8 July 2011

Clerk to Panel on Security
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn: Mr Ian Chow)

Dear Mr Chow,

**Legislative Council Panel on Security
Follow-up on the Special Meeting on 8 April 2011**

In respect of the views raised by the Security Panel at the special meeting held on 8 April 2011 on the subject of strengthening manpower of the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) to combat illicit cigarette activities, the Administration's reply is set out below.

C&ED set up an "Anti-Illicit-Cigarette Investigation Division" in 2003 with a permanent establishment of 35 officers dedicated to combating illicit cigarette smuggling and distribution activities. Apart from the dedicated permanent establishment, there are about 100 investigators in C&ED responsible for patrolling in various districts in Hong Kong and conducting general investigation work, including combating illicit cigarette peddling and narcotics interdiction. After the increase of tobacco duty rates in 2009, C&ED redeployed some of these officers to form a special task team in March that year to combat illicit cigarette peddling activities by telephone orders. In addition, C&ED officers on duty at the boundary control points are always responsible for interdicting the smuggling of illicit cigarettes into the territory.

Since the increase of tobacco duty rates in February this year, C&ED has stepped up its efforts in cracking down illicit cigarette activities by temporary redeployment of 60 officers from the Special Task Force to assist in patrolling and combating illicit cigarette peddling at street-level and regional black spots, resulting in remarkable reduction of those activities.

C&ED will continue to monitor the situation of illicit cigarette activities and endeavour to combat all kinds of illicit cigarette activities following the increase in tobacco duty rates. C&ED will from time to time review its manpower requirement and make flexible deployment to support enforcement against illicit cigarette activities when necessary.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shirley Kwan', written in a cursive style.

(Ms Shirley Kwan)
for Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury

c.c. C of C&E (Attn: Mr C K Chow)