



Valsts ieņēmumu dienests

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## **INFORMATION FOR THE MASS MEDIA**

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### **Refugees from Somalia tried to smuggle approximately 600 kg of psychotropic substances**

The SRS Customs Police Department and officials of the National Customs Board of the Republic of Latvia have revealed several large-sized batches of smuggled psychotropic substances from Kenya. They were organised by citizens of Somalia who were granted the status of refugees in Austria and Slovenia.

Batches were found in the cargo transported to Latvia by an air flight from Turkey. The cargo contained 21 cardboard boxes with dried henna leaves with the total weight of 432 kg.

A sample of the substance seized within the framework of criminal proceedings was sent for chemical examination. A conclusion of the customs laboratory expert confirmed that the seized substance was a product of vegetable origin with psychotropic effect *catha edulis* or "khat".

On the same day, the employees of the SRS National Customs Board transferred one more batch from Kenya, which contained dried henna leaves with the net weight of 44 kg according to the documents, for customs control at the Riga Airport. During a control, it was established that the substance of vegetable origin contained in the batch looked visually the same as in the 432 kg batch.

Substance samples were sent for examination within the framework of criminal proceedings.

With regard to both suspicious batches, the Customs Police Department initiated criminal proceedings regarding the possible transportation of psychotropic substances across the border of the Republic of Latvia on a large scale.

Just three days later, SRS employees seized one more batch (106 kg) from Kenya at another customs warehouse at the airport. Accompanying documents specified that it contained household goods; however, following the inspection, a substance of vegetable origin visually similar to the aforementioned substance was discovered.

On the very same day, based on suspicions regarding the illegal transportation of psychotropic substances across the State border of the Republic of Latvia, three persons were detained in Riga: two of them were arrested and a security measure non-related to deprivation of liberty was applied to the third person.

The total amount of the seized psychotropic substance is 582 kg and its value on the illegal market may exceed EUR 500 thousand.

The information has been prepared by:

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