



OFFICE OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR AND CEO

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PMIA Aviation Security exposes coordinated gold smuggling syndicate at Port Moresby International Airport

The National Airports Corporation (NAC) Aviation Security and airport stakeholders recently disrupted a sophisticated gold smuggling operation at Port Moresby International Airport, exposing an organized syndicate and potential insider involvement.

On Friday, 12 June 2026, NAC Aviation Security Officers conducted a random security search and intercepted passenger Mr. Kui Chen, a Chinese national, bound for Hong Kong on Air Niugini Flight PX 08 from Port Moresby.

Two packets of fine gold particles were discovered concealed in his underwear, with a third packet later found hidden in his shoe during PNG Customs examination.

This detection triggered a wider investigation that identified nine additional suspects traveling with Mr. Chen. Three passengers were removed from the aircraft, and subsequent searches uncovered eight more packets of gold concealed on their bodies.

As a result of the discovery, all passengers were instructed to disembark for airport security to conduct a full sterile search. During this process, Air Niugini Aviation Security personnel discovered in the aircraft, more packets of gold, hidden under seats, inside seat pockets, inside pillows, and paper bags.

Six more suspects were identified and escorted to the search area along with their detected gold packets.

While PNG Customs conducted interviews and investigations, Aviation Security Personnel, carried out a comprehensive re-screening of the security and customs processes before flight PX 08 was allowed to depart for Hong Kong after a one-hour delay.

All suspects and seized gold were referred to police for detention and further investigation.

This incident is not isolated. Over recent months, NAC, airlines and airport stakeholders have intercepted multiple attempts to smuggle undeclared gold through the Port Moresby International Airport. The methods range from concealing nuggets in luggage to finely ground particles concealed in custom-made sports bra, to gold concealed inside medicine capsules.

Photos and captions below

1. Two packets containing gold particles found in Kui Chen's underwear



2. Suspect Kui Chen – Chinese National



3. Gold packet concealed in Chen's shoe



4. More gold packets found after through search of aircraft



5. More paper bags found during aircraft search



6. Some gold were excreted out in the toilet bowl: lubricant and condom used to insert in the behind



Gold smuggling syndicates are increasingly exploring and exploiting areas where there may be vulnerabilities and they are also using creative concealment methods that demand heightened vigilance.

NAC's layered security approach, combining passenger profiling, random searches and close collaboration with PNG Customs, Air Niugini Aviation Security and Police has proven effective in exposing these operations. Officers have consistently refused bribery attempts, demonstrating professionalism and integrity in protecting national interests.

The repeated detections highlight the importance of continued investment in airport surveillance, screening technology, intelligence sharing, and inter-agency cooperation.

NAC is working with PNG Customs, Air Niugini and police to strengthen procedures, deploy additional officers at screening points, and raise awareness of emerging smuggling techniques.

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About NAC

The National Airports Corporation (NAC) manages and operates Papua New Guinea's 22 national airports, ensuring safe, reliable, and sustainable airport services. NAC is committed to accountability, governance, and delivering value to staff, stakeholders, and the traveling public.

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