

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS  
BY DEPUTY S.S.P.A. POWER OF ST. BRELADE  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 29th MAY 2012**

**Question**

Can the Minister confirm whether a shift in deployment by Customs officers has been authorized to focus on the smuggling of tobacco and alcohol and, if so, whether this deployment has had a residual effect on drug detection and seizure?

Can he advise whether this change of officer deployment has occurred because of a request by the Treasury for greater emphasis on revenue recovery at the Harbours and Airport?

**Answer**

- a) There has not been a shift in deployment by the Customs and Immigration Service to concentrate on tobacco and alcohol smuggling. The prevention of drugs remains a priority and I know that the Head of the Service will continue to ensure that this aspect of its work is given the closest attention. However the Service does have other important responsibilities at the borders - including the prevention of illegal immigration, the control of prohibited and restricted goods such as firearms and endangered species, and, as the Deputy alludes to, the prevention of duty evasion on goods liable to Impôts and GST.

Unfortunately the Service has seen a marked increase in the amount of people coming into Jersey who are clearly and openly in excess of their duty free allowance. Blatant attempts to exceed the allowance cannot and should not be simply ignored for the following very good reasons:

- 1) it is against the law and the Service is charged with upholding the Customs laws;
- 2) it will represent a loss of revenue for the States and while an extra 200 cigarettes here and there is not significant it will mount up if everybody is abusing the allowance; and
- 3) there must be a responsibility to local retailers (and their customers who are paying the local duty) not to turn a blind eye to this type of duty evasion which is, in effect, unfair competition.

Clearly, if Officers are engaged in managing these duty evasions they cannot at the same time be catching drugs smugglers but this does not mean that there has been a change of emphasis in Service priorities. It is not possible to quantify the effect in relation to drugs seizures. It follows from the above that there has been no Ministerial decision to shift deployment. I view this as a normal operational matter

within the remit of the Service. I was informed of the increased incidents in relation to exceeding the duty free allowance some time ago. The problem is partly caused by Duty Free outlets who aggressively promote their products including packs of 400 or even 1,000 cigarettes, which are in excess of the duty free limits. The Customs and Immigration Service has written to all the relevant outlets reminding them of the duty free allowances into the Island and asking them to notify their customers of them. Some outlets have clearly taken the message on board as part of their responsibilities to their customers, but others appear not to be so diligent.

- b) The Treasury has not requested the Service to place greater emphasis on revenue recovery at the border controls.