

PRESS STATEMENT

7th February 2013

The Customs Department with the assistance of the Vanuatu Police Force have conducted searches on board the vessel "PHOCEA", since its arrival in Vanuatu, on the basis of reports of breaches and allegations including the transportation of fire arms and other unlawful substances to be unloaded within our country. These allegations were considered as serious threats to our national security.

We wish to confirm that during the search of the vessel by Customs in the company of members of the Vanuatu Police Force, no contraband or prohibited goods were detected.

The investigations did, however, reveal infringements relating to Border Security protocols and these have been dealt with in the appropriate manner by the relevant authorities.

The Vanuatu Police Force, through its investigative enquiries by its Trans National Crime Unit (TCU) has not received any confirmation from its international sources, including Interpol, of any outstanding issues on the part of the Phocea and Mr. Pascal Saken – Vanuatu Honorary Consul to the Republic of Vietnam.

The current continued pursuit of the Phocea case in the media is misleading the public in a manner that is both prejudicial to the Phocea and its principals and the Government and is diverting attention from the more serious priority issues that the Vanuatu Government needs to focus its attention on.

It is believed and suspected that the continuation of attention towards the Phocea case is being fuelled from a perspective that is being guided and initiated by private and foreign interests with an ulterior motive which may be prejudicial to the national security interests of the Republic of Vanuatu.

The Vanuatu Police Force is committed to devote necessary resources to fully investigate the allegations behind the media reports to confirm the identity of those behind these defamatory allegations and, should the evidence uncovered