

Police Question Thai Women Over Siem Reap Cocaine Haul

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Police yesterday questioned two Thai women who were caught at Siem Reap International Airport with a total of more than 11 kg of cocaine concealed in their luggage, an official said.

Lieutenant Colonel Non Sophany, anti-drug police chief for Siem Reap province, said that the women, arrested on Monday, were Yanvan Nopawaraphan, 20, and Chayphan Oraphun, 26.

The pair flew into the airport on a SilkAir flight from Singapore, where they had transited, having begun

their journey in Brazil, he said.

"The authorities [at the airport] suspected them. Why didn't they fly directly to Thailand?" Lt. Col. Sophany said, adding that during questioning, the suspects had confirmed that they were traveling to Thailand with their cargo.

Ms. Yanvan was carrying 6.4 kg of cocaine, wrapped in plastic and cloth inside her suitcase, while Ms. Chayphan's 5 kg of the drug was concealed within the lining of an ice bucket in her suitcase, according to Lt. Col. Sophany.

"The two suspects have confessed their guilt during questioning at the police station, and we

have prepared a case to send them to court for more questioning on Wednesday," he said. "We are searching for their accomplices to arrest them."

The market for cocaine in Cambodia is thought to be minimal and hauls such as Monday's in Siem Reap are likely to be destined for Thailand.

In August, a number of Thai women were arrested bringing crystal methamphetamine and cocaine—a total of nearly 30 kg—into Cambodian airports. In each case, Cambodian police said the women were working for drug traffickers transporting the nar-

cotics to Thailand.

U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) officials have said previously that Cambodia is in danger of becoming a key transit country for drug traffickers, in particular those feeding the growing Thai market for cocaine.

Gary Lewis, UNODC's representative for the East Asia and Pacific region, said in August that "Cocaine use in Thailand is still limited but has expanded considerably during the past few years.

"Most of the cocaine use in Thailand is used by the urban elite—most of whom consider meth use to be a drug for the lower classes."