

Vietnam airport staff member charged with smuggling electronics

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Hanoi - An employee at Ho Chi Minh City's international airport and his partner have been charged with smuggling millions of dollars of consumer electronics and cash into Vietnam over eight years, an official said Tuesday.

Nguyen Duc Vu, 35, a staff member at the Tan Son Nhat Airport Operations Control Centre, and Nguyen Minh Hoang, 47, are accused of receiving smuggled goods and cash from Vietnam Airlines staff, airline spokesman Le Hoang Dung said. The two men were arrested June 16 after Australian police detained and questioned the crew of an outbound Vietnam Airlines flight in Sydney.

Police said Vu and Hoang admitted receiving and distributing mobile phones and laptops smuggled from Australia on Vietnam Airlines flights as well as about 1 million Australian dollars (863,000 US dollars) in cash, the newspaper Lao Dong reported Tuesday.

The newspaper said police believe Vu and Hoang were working for two Vietnam Airlines staff based in Australia.

From August 2002 onward, the smuggling ring reportedly brought in items two to three times per week after bribing customs officials.

Australian courts sentenced two Vietnam Airlines pilots on charges of smuggling in 2007 and 2008.