

J. R. M. P.
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40kg of heroin left at Kai Tak

By PETER TOPPING

Hongkong's biggest ever seizure of high grade heroin — 40 kilos worth an estimated \$300 million — was found at the airport yesterday in two unclaimed suitcases.

The drugs were discovered when Customs and Excise men opened the suitcases, which arrived on a Thai International flight on Saturday.

No arrests have been made. At a Kai Tak press briefing last night the 68 packets of neatly-wrapped heroin were on show while Superintendent

Vincent Poon of Customs and Excise outlined the discovery.

Supt Poon explained that number four grade heroin has no market in Hongkong, but is the drug "in its highest state of purity" and used almost exclusively in the US and Europe.

Customs and Excise men say the consignment was en route to another destination, but would not confirm suspicions that the drugs haul was bound for America.

The drugs were found in blue cloth bags underneath clothing including jeans, T-

shirts and pyjamas inside the two black suitcases.

As well as the sealed and taped square packets of heroin of a standard half-kilo weight, a tin containing two kilos of strychnine hydrochloride was discovered, normally used to "cut" the heroin to increase its weight before being sold on the streets.

One Customs officer commented that far more strychnine would be needed to cut such a quantity of heroin, adding that in its present pure state, the heroin would be le-

that if taken.

It is not known if the consignment was to be treated in a Hongkong heroin factory or simply sent on untouched.

The heroin appears to be have been packed openly in the suitcases.

Between 60 and 70 pieces of luggage are left unclaimed every 24 hours at Kai Tak. After three days Customs men open them.

Supt Poon said there was no unusual police or customs activity at the airport on Saturday which might have fright-

ened off the drugs courier.

Customs men remain tight-lipped on the nature of the inquiries going on in Hongkong, but sources say the identity of the suitcase owner would have been quickly established from airline records, and the Immigration Department asked to check whether or not the person was still in the territory.

As investigations get underway in Hongkong and Thailand, some sources commented last night that the courier may have panicked, transited through Kai Tak and fled back to Bangkok.