

Basic Detail Report



00030578

Title

Capsule packet from the KAYUEN

Date

1998 - 1999

Medium

Gelatin, foil, plastic

Dimensions

Overall: 83 x 57 mm

Name

Medicine

History

In 1999, people smugglers tried to transport 69 illegal immigrants from China to Australia on KAYUEN, a Panama-registered coastal freighter. KAYUEN left Fuzhou in southeast China's Fujian Province in late March 1999 and docked in Hong Kong on 1 April for supplies. It departed Hong Kong on 3 April and sailed across the north of Papua New Guinea and down the east coast of Australia. On 17 May 1999 it was intercepted by HMAS FREMANTLE off Jervis Bay, on the south coast of NSW, following a three-week joint surveillance operation by the Australian Customs Service, Australian Federal Police, NSW Police, Coastwatch, the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force. After a dramatic chase from Jervis Bay to Port Kembla, KAYUEN was detained by Federal Police and Customs and escorted to the Garden Island naval base in Sydney. KAYUEN's passengers were part of a new wave of illegal boat people making the long journey to Australia from China, Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan since the 1990s. In contrast to Indochinese boat people in the 1970s and 1980s, who organised their voyages collectively and shared costs among passengers, the new wave of Chinese boat people bought passages from Fujian-based gangs known as 'snakeheads'. In Australia they are referred to as people smugglers. Since the late 1980s, sophisticated people-smuggling operations have been run out of Fujian Province, a gateway to the West for increasing numbers of Chinese seeking a new life or work opportunities. KAYUEN's passengers paid around \$40,000 each to secure a passage in appalling conditions - hidden in false compartments under sand ballast in the vessel's cargo hold. Some would have paid upfront while others borrowed money from the smugglers, on the agreement that the fee would be repaid by their families at high interest rates. The arrival of KAYUEN attracted significant media attention because it exposed the vulnerability of Australia's entire coastline - not just the more traditional northern and western shores. It also followed closely on two other high-profile landings of illegal Chinese boat people at Holloways Beach, north of Cairns in Queensland, and Scotts

Head, on the NSW north coast. As with these previous groups, the illegal immigrants on KAYUEN were taken into custody and deported. Police later charged an Australian man for his role in the illegal immigration of non-citizens to Australia and he was sentenced to 12 years in prison.