



Siam Legal International Details Thailand Cash Declaration Rules After Airport Seizure

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Siam Legal International, a law firm with more than 22 years of experience advising Thai and foreign clients, is examining the rules that govern carrying cash into and out of Thailand following the seizure of more than THB 56 million in undeclared US dollar banknotes at Suvarnabhumi Airport. Customs officers found the cash concealed in the luggage of two foreign passengers arriving from Jakarta on September 30, 2026, and the Customs Department announced the arrests on October 4.

The case comes as the Customs Department increases controls on Thai currency, foreign currency, and negotiable instruments moving across the border, following a policy directive from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. According to the Customs Department, the two passengers are accused of breaching Ministry of Finance foreign exchange control regulations along with provisions of the Currency Act and the Customs Act. Officials have also confirmed that monitoring and inspection of high-risk passengers at the airport has been stepped up.

Although the sum involved in the Suvarnabhumi case is unusually large, the rules behind it apply to every traveler. Carrying cash into or out of Thailand is not illegal in itself, and the legal obligation that matters is

declaration. Any person who brings foreign currency into Thailand or takes it out, with a combined value of more than USD 20,000 or its equivalent, must declare the amount to a customs officer.

The threshold applies to the total value of all foreign currencies carried, not to each currency separately. A traveler holding USD 12,000 together with EUR 10,000 is therefore above the limit, even though neither amount would reach it alone. Failing to declare an amount above the threshold, or making a false declaration to a customs officer, is a criminal offense under Thai law.

Thai baht is governed by separate rules. There is no limit on the amount of Thai currency a traveler may bring into the country. On departure, however, travelers may generally carry no more than THB 50,000 to most destinations, with a higher allowance for travel to countries that share a border with Thailand. Amounts above those limits must be declared to customs or exchanged into another currency before leaving.

Rex Baay, Senior Immigration Consultant and Operations Manager at Siam Legal International, said the rules most often catch out ordinary travelers rather than those deliberately moving large sums.

"Most people who run into problems at customs are not hiding anything, they simply did not realize that the declaration rule applies to the combined value of everything in their bags," said Rex Baay, Senior Immigration Consultant and Operations Manager at Siam Legal International. "A family relocating to Thailand with savings in more than one currency can pass the USD 20,000 mark without noticing, and a declaration made at the airport is a far stronger record of where that money came from than an explanation given after a search."

The rules are particularly relevant for long-stay residents, retirees, and families relocating to Thailand, who are more likely than short-term visitors to travel with significant funds. Foreign buyers of condominium units under the foreign ownership quota face an additional consideration, since the purchase money must be shown to have come into Thailand from abroad. That evidence is normally produced through bank transfers rather than physical cash.

Arrival preparation has been a recurring focus for the firm, and Siam Legal's first-time arrival guide covered the digital arrival card, passport validity, and overstay rules that foreign nationals face at the immigration desk. Currency declaration is a separate step handled by customs after immigration clearance, and it is one that many travelers do not consider until they are already in the arrivals hall.

The Customs Department has advised that further information on currency rules is available from its offices nationwide and through its hotline, 1164.

Siam Legal International is a Thailand-based law firm with more than 22 years of experience advising individuals, families, and corporations on immigration, corporate and commercial law, property transactions, and dispute resolution, with offices in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Pattaya. The firm advises clients on compliance and long-term planning as they navigate Thailand's evolving legal landscape.

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For more information about Siam Legal International, contact the company here: Siam Legal International
Rex Baay +662 254 8900 info@siam-legal.com 18th Floor, Unit 1806 Two Pacific Place, 142 Sukhumvit Rd, Khlong Toei, Bangkok 10110, Thailand

Siam Legal International

American-managed Thailand law firm with 22+ years' experience. Experts in corporate setup, BOI, FBL, family & divorce, property, litigation, immigration, notary, wills, contracts & due diligence across Bangkok, Phuket, Pattaya & more.

Website: <https://www.siam-legal.com/>

Email: info@siam-legal.com

Phone: +662 254 8900

