

Idiom by Lon Yan

知法犯法

zhi1 fa3 fan4 fa3

Toronto takes illegal parking seriously. So, in a four-day enforcement blitz (閃電式行動) this month, 1,467 tickets were issued and 298 vehicles were towed.

But the vehicle of police chief Mark Saunders was spotted parked illegally next to a fire hydrant at a busy intersection last week, and a TV news cameraman took a picture.

A police spokesman said, "The chief of police's driver goes to great lengths to park appropriately." Obviously the driver did not go far enough and this was a clear case of "知法犯法" (*zhi1 fa3 fan4 fa3*).

"知" (*zhi1*) is "to know," "to be aware of," "法" (*fa3*) "the law," "犯" (*fan4*) "to violate" and "法" (*fa3*), again, "the law."

"知法犯法" (*zhi1 fa3 fan4 fa3*), literally, is "know law break law," "to know the law

and break it." It means "to knowingly violate the law," "to deliberately break the law," "consciously go against the rules."

We usually use this idiom to describe law enforcement officers when they break the law, especially the specific area of law that is his or her duty to uphold, like a policeman robbing a bank, an ICAC officer taking a bribe, or a customs officer smuggling goods.

The idiom can also be applied to non-law enforcement situations when a person violates the very rules he or she is supposed to enforce, like a student prefect breaking school rules.

When people "知法犯法" (*zhi1 fa3 fan4 fa3*), the consequence is "罪加一等" (*zui4 jia1 yi4 deng3*) – "doubly guilty."

Terms containing the character "法" (*fa3*) include:

法官 (*fa3 guan1*) – a judge

法庭 (*fa3 ting2*) – a law court

守法 (*shou3 fa3*) – law-abiding

無法 (*wu2 fa3*) – unable; incapable