



THE TOBACCO INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

8 March 2012

Major illegal cigarette busts in February

Law enforcement authorities made significant headway in their fight against illegal cigarettes during February, confiscating and seizing millions of illicit cigarettes through routine interventions in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

In Durban, authorities seized 18-million illegal cigarettes from containers at the Harbour on 15 February 2012. The brands seized included Chunghwa, Lugan and Shuangxi. In Eastern Gauteng, members of the South African Police Service (SAPS) confiscated close to 150,000 illegal cigarettes from two resellers in the Bakerton area on 14 February 2012. The illegal “Dullahs” and “Remington Gold” cigarettes are said to carry a street value of around R115 000.

Further North, SAPS and SARS officials seized close on 200,000 illegal cigarettes through multiple interventions on 16 February 2012. Brands seized included “Shasha”, “Remington Gold”, “Sharp”, “Director”, and “Absolute”.

“We commend the work being done by SAPS and SARS in addressing the illegal trade in cigarettes,” says Francois van der Merwe, CEO of the Tobacco Institute of Southern Africa (TISA). “During 2011, around 1,2 billion illegal cigarettes were seized through over 7000 interventions by law enforcement officials. In addition, approximately 800 key players in the illicit industry were arrested on charges relating to the smuggling and trade of illegal cigarettes during the same period. This decisive action should send a strong warning signal to other illicit traders that no-one is above the law.”

- In a separate incident in Namibia on Tuesday 6 March 2012, Customs Officials in Walvis Bay seized a container with over 1-million smuggled cigarettes. The container was destined for Botswana and was already loaded

on a truck when officials intervened, finding the illegal “Governor” and “Director” cigarettes concealed in boxes of washing powder. TISA would like to commend the Namibian authorities for acting swiftly against illicit traders who are not only undermining Namibian laws but the agreements and laws of the entire SADC region. The illegal trade in cigarettes has become a regional issue, with manufacturers and traders expanding their routes to get illicit product into the market. This seizure sends a strong message that there are regional efforts being put into the fight against illicit trade.

NOTE TO EDITORS

Penalties:

The penalties if a retailer, or reseller, is caught with illicit products and prosecuted under the Customs and Excise Act (evasion of taxes) are: A fine of R20 000 or three times the value of the goods, depending on which one is the greatest; or up to 5 years in prison. A person prosecuted can therefore pay a fine and go to jail.

How to Spot Illegal Cigarettes:

- 1) Paying less than R 15.00 for a pack of 20s (suspect price)
- 2) There is no excise stamp on the pack
- 3) The tar and nicotine readings are higher than 12 mg Tar and 1.2 mg respectively
- 4) There are no health warnings on the pack

For Media Enquiries directed at the tobacco industry, please contact:

The Tobacco Institute of Southern Africa

Chairman and CEO

Francois van der Merwe

Mobile: 082 891 6252

Tel: (021) 421-0011 (office hours Mon-Fri)