



THE TOBACCO INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

TISA MEDIA RELEASE

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Millions of illegal cigarettes seized in Cape Town

Close on 9 million illegal cigarettes were seized in a joint operation between SARS and SAPS in Cape Town on 2 July.

Officials seized 640,200 illegal Pacific and Chicago cigarettes at a house in Bellville. Four foreign nationals were arrested, one of whom was found in possession of a large sum of money, amounting to over R130,000 as well as six cell phones. Additionally, a vehicle worth approximately R100,000 was also seized.

Further investigations at the Bellville scene led authorities to a warehouse in Milnerton where over 8.26 million illegal Pacific and Chicago cigarettes were seized. Further to this, officials also discovered illegal abalone and crayfish tails worth over R100,000 at the residence of one of the arrested foreign nationals.

The number of illegal cigarettes seized amount to a loss in excise duties to the Government of more than R 4.86 million.

The illegal cigarette trade has dramatically increased in the Western Cape since 2010. Research conducted by independent agencies suggests that 28% of all cigarettes sold in the province are illegal. Brands such as Chicago and Pacific together make up approximately 90% of the illicit problem in the Western Cape, and, according to media reports, these are frequently seized by authorities during raids. A large majority of illegal cigarettes make their way into the country via Zimbabwe, while a growing number are also manufactured locally.

According to Francois van der Merwe, Chairman of the Tobacco Institute of Southern Africa (TISA), the trade in illegal cigarettes is a major contributor to the broader illicit economy in the Western Cape. "Illegal cigarettes, together with other commonly smuggled and counterfeit goods such as abalone, crayfish, clothing and apparel, are collectively costing the economy

billions of Rands each year in lost revenue and taxes. This is money that could be channelled to much needed services and infrastructure.”

“Law enforcement officials are to be commended on their quick response as well as for their ongoing efforts to curb the illegal cigarette trade in the Western Cape. We believe that a co-ordinated approach involving law enforcement officials both provincially and nationally together with officials from SACU and SADC is necessary to tackle a growing illegal cigarette problem. TISA remains committed to working with all the relevant parties in efforts to eradicate the illegal trade in tobacco products,” concludes Van der Merwe.

Ends

Notes for the Editor:

The four accused have been charged at the Bellville Police Station in Cape Town. Any queries relating to the charges as well as the case should be forwarded to SAPS at this station.

For Media enquiries related to the Tobacco Industry, please contact:

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