



THE TOBACCO INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

MEDIA RELEASE

*For Immediate Release
20 February 2014*

TISA COMMENDS SAPS ON BENONI ILLICIT CIGARETTE SEIZURE

Prompt and effective action by the Gauteng SAPS Flying Squad and Commercial Crimes Unit yesterday, led to the seizure of over R4 million worth of illicit cigarettes in Benoni. This seizure forms part of the concerted effort by the SAPS and other law enforcement authorities to rid South Africa of illicit cigarettes.

“We commend the SAPS Flying Squad and Commercial Crimes Unit on this sterling success”, said Francois van der Merwe, CEO of the Tobacco Institute of Southern Africa (TISA).

According to an eNCA news report, the SAPS officers found a truck from Zimbabwe, with thousands of cigarette cartons concealed in what appeared to be a load of timber. Independent research indicates that 38% of the 7.9 billion illicit cigarettes sold in South Africa in 2013 emanates from Zimbabwe. Great efforts have been made by law enforcement authorities to improve border controls between South Africa and Zimbabwe. Illicit traders however still find ways to smuggle cigarettes in concealed cargo or carrying it on foot across the border. Tighter border controls have also resulted in an increase in illicit local manufacturing.

With illicit cigarette trading averaging 31% in 2013, Government lost R 5billion in revenue. Referring to the National Budget to be tabled by the Finance Minister on 26 February 2014, Mr van der Merwe expressed the hope that specific provision will be made to facilitate efforts to more effectively control illicit local manufacturing as well as cross-border smuggling.

“TISA will continue to support government and law enforcement in their efforts to combat the illicit trade in tobacco products. We can achieve more by working together”, Van der Merwe concluded.

ENDS

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