

Media Releases 2009

Seizure of illicit goods

Pretoria, 15 January 2009 -- A joint operation today between Customs officers from the South African Revenue Service (SARS) and investigators from the Department of Environmental Affairs (the "Green Scorpions") in Gauteng uncovered various illicit goods and smuggling networks.

The following items were confiscated—

- At O.R. Tambo International Airport searches of cargo goods by Customs sniffer dogs uncovered 2 crates of dried abalone destined for Hong Kong. The abalone – 560kg with an estimated street value of R1.8 million – was concealed in black bags
- In China City in Bruma investigations led to the discovery of 12 dried shark fins in a butchery shop
- In Crown Mines south of Johannesburg investigators raided a premises and found 7 DVD burners and counterfeit DVDs with an estimated street value of more than R2 million
- At the same premises investigators also found 5 boxes of counterfeit Viagra. It is suspected that the tablets were smuggled into South Africa from China. The efficacy of the counterfeit Viagra has not been determined at this stage and samples will be sent to the Department of Health for analysis.

Today's operations were in response to a directive from the World Customs Organisation for member states to intensify their focus on smuggling of endangered species.

The abalone found at the airport indicates a scant regard for the moratorium on abalone fishing which government imposed some months ago.

No suspects were arrested at this stage. Investigations between various law enforcement agencies will continue.

ENDS.