

Sars seizes illicit cigarettes worth R6m

The South African Revenue Service (Sars) has seized illicit cigarettes from a number of Cape Town traders valued at R6 million.



Source: Dario Lo Presti – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

The Sars Customs National Rapid Response Team, together with the South African Police Service (Saps), seized the consignment on Thursday.

In a statement, the revenue collector said the raid saw 443 master cases, each containing 50 cartons of various brands of cigarettes, seized in the intelligence-driven operation.

Sars said the operation was part of its heightened focus on illicit trade in cigarettes and tobacco products to protect the local industry and broader economy.

The revenue service said the involvement of other enforcement agencies reflects government's approach in which various departments co-operate for a more effective use of resources, greater impact and visibility.

Sars Commissioner Edward Kieswetter said the import of illicit cigarettes and other goods such as clothing and textiles, counterfeit medicines or remedies, as well as second hand motor vehicles, amongst others, destroys local industry and contributes to the shedding of jobs.



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“These activities also rob the country of much needed revenue that enables government to deliver basic services to the poor and vulnerable, such as old age pensions, and offer relief to struggling businesses and their employees following the recent riots,” he said in a statement.

Kieswetter said there were also health risks for consumers, as illegally imported cigarettes do not comply with South African health regulations and pose a serious health risk to smokers.

“There is also a strong connection between these activities and international crime syndicates involved in human trafficking, gun-running, drug-smuggling and terrorism.

“Sars has a mandate to facilitate legitimate trade and will not tolerate illicit trade that harms our economy and our people, which is aligned with our strategic objective to make it hard and costly for those who do not comply with our tax and customs and excise legislation,” the Commissioner said.

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