

Media Releases 2007

Abalone confiscated at border

Pretoria, 22 January 2007 -- An important intervention in the illicit trade of abalone (perlemoen) was made by SARS Customs officials at the weekend when a truck with about 600 kilograms of abalone was stopped and detained at the South African-Namibia border.

The abalone was declared to SARS Customs as pilchards, dried fruit and vegetables.

The consignment consisted of dried and frozen abalone and at this stage, the street value is estimated at between R900 000 and R1.2 million.

SARS Customs officials have been monitoring illicit trade routes and the operations of transport and export companies in order to determine how abalone is smuggled from South Africa via road transportation.

It is a common occurrence that false declarations are made to SARS Customs and that abalone is disguised with other products when packed into trucks or containers.

In this weekend's instance, the abalone was stored in 69 boxes hidden under sardines and the consignment declared as dried fruit and vegetables.

The truck transporting the abalone was stopped and searched at a border post between South Africa and Namibia. The names and details of the export company and the transport company involved in this venture are known to SARS Customs. Investigations are continuing.

The abalone, the driver of the vehicle and an assistant were detained by SARS Customs Officials and arrested by members of the South African Police Service whose assistance was called in at the border post.

The latest confiscation follows a very successful operation in October last year when the efforts of various law enforcement agencies led to the confiscation of containers of abalone worth R11 million in Cape Town.

ENDS.

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