

Media Releases 2011

SARS and SAPS detain 2900 illegally imported vehicles in Durban

Pretoria, 10 January 2011 - The South African Revenue Service (SARS) Customs and Enforcement teams assisted by the South African Police Service (SAPS) yesterday concluded yet another week-long clampdown on the illegitimate second-hand vehicle industry in Durban.

The operation, which started on 31 January and ended on 9 February 2011, entailed the inspection of seven premises around the Durban area and resulted in the detention of 2906 vehicles worth approximately R40, 8 million. An additional four non-compliant warehouses were also identified and inspected.

The operation forms part of an ongoing enforcement programme to stem the illegal importation of second-hand cars into South Africa, purportedly with a view to export the vehicles to neighbouring countries. SARS has stated in the past that this practice results in the vehicles remaining and being sold in South Africa.

The practice is regarded illegal as it unfairly competes with the local motor industry, poses a risk to South Africans due to the lack of control over standards and assurances, and deprives the fiscus of millions of rands in unpaid taxes and duties.

In addition, South African buyers of such vehicles stand to lose them if they are seized by SARS.

SARS informed the public in October 2010, after a similar crackdown on nine warehouses in Durban, that these search and seizure operations will continue as part of the initiative to improve compliance levels in the industry.

During the past week's raids, a spot check on one of the previous culprits revealed that a number of vehicles were removed unlawfully. A criminal investigation in this regard has commenced. All the remaining vehicles in the warehouse were detained and the warehouse sealed. A second criminal charge relating to contraventions of the Customs Act was also lodged with the SAPS Commercial Branch in Durban.

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