



the sandf

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OPERATIONAL SUCCESSES ON SOUTH AFRICAN BORDERS

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is mandated to ensure the territorial integrity of South Africa's borders by means of Operation CORONA. This border includes land, sea and air borders. Currently 15 Companies are deployed along the country's borders with Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. The bulk of the deployed troops is from the SA Army and is made up of Regular as well as Reserve Force members. The total land border amounts to 4 471 kilometre with a 2 798 kilometre sea border and the total air border being 7 760 Kilometre. These distances poses a huge challenge on current force levels and also a lack of resources and platforms to properly patrol them continues to make the country attractive to illegal immigrants and contraband smugglers.

Standing between them and other border jumpers, such as vehicle hijackers is a thinly stretched camouflage line, the SANDF. There 15 companies deployed conduct 24/7 operations on foot and in 4X4 vehicles, as well as a Specialized Infantry forces consisting of horses, motorcycles and a variety of special trained dogs. In some instances the SA Air Force support operations in the form of either A109 light or Oryx medium helicopters as well as SA Navy specific operations along the South African coast. These maritime borders also extent to the Prince Edward and Marion Island Group.

Although the camouflage line is thin it managed to, among others, confiscate dagga valued conservatively at over R31 million between January 1 and December 12, 2016, as well as other contraband, mostly cigarettes, liquor, clothing and footwear worth close to R46 million in the same period. This is testimony to the soldiers' effort and sweat equity and the SANDF's commitment to the country.

Other notable seizures were 3 177 head of livestock, mostly cattle and sheep; 60 weapons, mostly hunting rifles and handguns which included an AK-47. Then there were also R155 million worth of vehicles, mostly high-end SUVs captured before it could cross the border out of the country illegally.

Among the thousands of people stopped by soldiers during regular patrols, 15 467 were found to be "undocumented persons". They were all handed over to South African Police Service Police and the Department of Home Affairs officials for "further processing".

The SANDF has done well with the resources at their disposal this year and the Festive Season poses more challenges in terms of movement across the borders. The Christmas/New Year period is one where soldiers have in past years encountered larger numbers of smugglers carrying cigarettes, liquor and clothing destined for the informal markets of Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces respectively.

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The majority of clothing and footwear were confiscated from people entering South Africa from Mozambique while the South Africa/Zimbabwe border is the main entry point for illegal cigarettes. Both these countries are also the departure point for almost all the undocumented people seeking entry to South Africa.

The Free State/Lesotho as well as the Eastern Cape/Lesotho borders were where the majority of livestock rustlers were apprehended and these borders are also the chosen entry point of dagga smugglers.

But taking everything into consideration, the SANDF will maintain its high level of professionalism to ensure the integrity of our country's borders.

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