

Rwandan authorities have recently uncovered a large-scale smuggling operation, with goods worth over Rwf. 460 million seized in a joint operation by Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA), the Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB), and the Rwanda National Police.

The goods, smuggled into the country through illegal channels, included alcohol, vehicle parts, cosmetics, and counterfeit products. Among the most surprising finds was a bottle of Hennessy XO valued at Rwf. 14 million, alongside other alcohol bottles priced over 200,000 Francs each.

The authorities are concerned that such smuggling undermines the country's economy by evading taxes and disrupting fair business practices.

Jean Paulin Uwitonze, Deputy Commissioner of the RRA's Taxpayer Services, expressed concern over the rise in smuggling. "The smugglers aim for excessive profits, but their actions harm the economy and evade taxes, which affects everyone," he explained. He also pointed out that, especially during the holiday season, some traders attempt to bring in luxury items like alcohol and secondhand clothes to meet high demand.

RRA's anti-smuggling team recently intercepted a truck transporting vehicle parts, cosmetics, shoes, and soaps, worth over 240 million Rwandan Francs. The goods, including car parts like filters and brake discs, were found to have evaded over 77 million Francs in taxes.



smuggled goods intercepted by RRA

Dr. Thierry B. Murangira, RIB spokesperson, shared further details about the case. The truck driver, Mark Kagabo, and the owner of the goods, Maurice Bizimana, were arrested and are currently being held at Rusororo police station. RIB warned that those engaged in smuggling could face severe consequences, including the loss of their business.

Rwanda National Police also highlighted the broader impact of smuggling, stressing that it not only harms the economy but creates safety risks. "Smuggling hurts honest traders who follow the rules, and they deserve protection," said Police spokesperson ACP Boniface Rutikanga. He also pointed out that the police are cracking down on products like fake skin creams and substandard alcohol that

endanger public health.

Rwanda's authorities are determined to combat this illegal activity. They are urged the public to report smuggling activities. "Smuggling is detrimental to everyone," added Dr. Murangira. "We need to work together to protect the economy and ensure fair trade."

The authorities have also made it clear that anyone caught smuggling faces severe penalties. Under the East African Community (EAC) Customs Management Act, those caught hiding goods to avoid customs taxes face up to five years in prison and fines up to 50% of the value of the smuggled goods.