

No more storage space for seized fake Cup goods

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THE EVER-RISING demand for counterfeit goods has led to an explosion of a vast fake industry during the World Cup. Law enforcement officers, who confiscate these fakes whenever they spot them, have been left with a huge storage headache.

A Joburg warehouse used to store counterfeit goods seized by customs officials said it was running out of space to accommodate a wave of fakes brought into the country.

The sheer variety of counterfeit items stored in the facility is almost as breathtaking as their likeness to the genuine article.

Yesterday, two container loads of counterfeit Bafana Bafana replica jerseys, worth R13 million and seized last month, were thrown into an acid bath for destruction.

Customs officials said they had seized more than 700 000 Bafana jerseys last month alone.

"In the run-up to the World Cup, and during the past month especially, we have seen an escalation of counterfeit goods coming into the country in batches like never before," said Nhlamhla Zuma, commander of the customs border control unit at OR Tambo International Airport. "However, the numbers have declined since Bafana

were knocked out of the tournament. But counterfeiting is a growing worldwide trend, and is used to support terrorism in many ways."

Zuma said seizures over the past month were the biggest ever recorded by customs officials, and were testimony to his department's efforts.

"In most cases the people behind this contraband are faceless. Information given on the clearances accompanying the goods is always false and it is difficult to trace whose cargo it was."

Debbie Pretorius is customer relations manager at Global Storage Solutions, where the counterfeit Bafana jerseys were stored before disposal. She said there were so many fakes around that their warehouses were full.

"We work with anti-counterfeit teams, who conduct raids with police and customs officials. Brands and rights holders are losing millions of rands in revenue because of this," she said.

Paul Ramara - a partner at the law firm Spoor & Fischer, which specialises in intellectual property and represents Adidas - said many cases against organised criminals were still pending in court.

"Obviously, with South Africa hosting the World Cup, counterfeiters saw this as an opportunity to bring the goods into the country," he said.



This fong kong - fake products sold cheaply on the streets - is worth more than R110 million and due to be destroyed. Employees of law firm Spoor & Fischer, which represents Adidas, load counterfeit shirts into one of two containers to be delivered for destruction.

PICTURE: CARA VIERECKI