

Laws against illicit drugs not harsh enough - Anti Drugs Unit

By David Mtei

TANZANIA'S laws against illicit drugs are not stringent enough and unless it is reviewed and toughened, the proliferation of drugs into the country will only worsen, warn officials of the Anti Drugs Unit.

Commenting recently in Dar es Salaam, Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police (SACP) with the Anti Drugs Unit, Godfrey Nzowa said short of sterner punishments against the illicit trade, matters are bound to take the turn for the worst.

"This drug business is an international network comprising of some well off people who can afford any fine once the drugs are seized," he said.

He also revealed that investigations have led them to believe that the traffickers attend 'discipline training sessions' that instills them with police interrogation defence mechanisms.

"We believe that on average they attend at least three months

of training aimed at building them with the discipline, confidence and patience of the work," he said.

— "They use their money to train the traffickers to keep their secrets," the Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police went on to say noting that this fact continues to frustrate police efforts to track the ring leaders.

"They never give any detail concerning their networks or owners... after the trainings, they enter into an agreement not to reveal anything in the event that they are arrested," SACP Nzowa added.

He said at least 35 people have been arrested between January and July this year but none of them has revealed the owners of the cargo.

Other factors frustrating police efforts according to him include, 'vastness of the country and a lot of formal as well as informal entry points to the country.

"Also, almost all arrests and seizures made have been the direct result of leaked information from the public," he

admitted.

According to section 12 (d) of the Drugs and Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Drugs Act, 1995:

"Any person who produces, possesses, transports, imports into the United Republic sells, purchases, uses or does any act or omits to do anything in respect of poppy straw, coca plants, coca leaves, prepared opium, opium poppy, cannabis, manufactured drug or any preparation containing any manufactured drug, psychotropic substance, narcotic drug commits an offence and upon conviction is liable to a fine of one Im/= or three times the market value of the prohibited drug, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twenty years or to both the fine and imprisonment."

As per the opinion of the Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police (SACP) with the Anti Drugs Unit, this law and related regulations are not strict enough to deter the illicit trade and short of redress, the country will increasingly move from been a drug transit port to a destination.