

Illegal internet and data operators surge in Zim

By [Dumisani Ndlela](#)

27 Oct 2008

Zimbabwe's internet service providers have denounced "illegal" internet and data operators, calling on members of the public to report them to the police for prosecution.

The move highlights the growing discomfort that has crept into the sector over the proliferation of unlicensed companies selling internet and data services to the public at hugely discounted prices, prejudicing the registered players whose businesses have been affected by the escalating economic crisis.

In a public notice issued by the Zimbabwe Internet Access Providers Association (ZIAPA) on Thursday, October 23, 2008, the licensed operators said they held the exclusive right to sell internet and data services that use VSAT technologies in the country.

VSAT technology is a telecommunication system based on wireless satellite technology.

"It has been brought to the attention of the Zimbabwe Internet Access Providers Association that there are a number of individuals and companies, both local and foreign, who have set up operations in Zimbabwe to sell internet/data services using VSAT technologies without a license issued by POTRAZ (the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority)."

"In terms of the Telecommunications Act, it is an offense to install and operate a telecommunications infrastructure to provide telecommunications service without a relevant licence issued by the regulator, POTRAZ," the ZIAPA notice said.

It said only its members - Telone, Africom, Telecontract, Ecoweb, Powertel, Comm-it and Broadland - were licensed to sell internet and data telecommunications networks using VSAT to provide internet access in Zimbabwe as they were fully compliant with the Interception of Communications Act.

The act was promulgated recently to legalise the spying of private telephone calls and email messages using the licensed service providers.

The act was a response to government's increasing phobia for unregulated communication among its citizens and compels licensed telecommunication and internet service providers to install spying devices on their networks.

ABOUT DUMISANI NDLELA

Dumisani Ndlela is a Zimbabwean journalist specialising in business and financial reporting, with experience reporting on commodities, stock and financial markets, advertising,

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