



USAID WILDLIFE ASIA  
**COUNTER WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING**  
**DIGEST: SOUTHEAST ASIA AND CHINA**

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### **ABOUT USAID WILDLIFE ASIA**

The USAID Wildlife Asia Activity works to address wildlife trafficking as a transnational crime. The project aims to reduce consumer demand for wildlife parts and products, strengthen law enforcement, enhance legal and political commitment and support regional collaboration to reduce wildlife crime in Southeast Asia, particularly Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. USAID Wildlife Asia focuses on four species: elephant, rhinoceros, tiger and pangolin. For more information, please visit [www.usaidwildlifeasia.org](http://www.usaidwildlifeasia.org)

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The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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## BACKGROUND

The USAID Wildlife Asia Activity is a five-year, \$24.5 million, regional counter wildlife trafficking initiative addressing the trafficking of pangolins, rhinos, elephants and tigers in Southeast Asia and China. USAID Wildlife Asia regularly updates documentation of the current state of wildlife trafficking of these species through a compilation of secondary sources to report on and analyze trends and changes in patterns of trade. The Activity also provides an evidence base to support decision-making about priority interventions in policy, law enforcement and consumer-demand reduction. This Counter Wildlife Trafficking Digest: Southeast Asia and China, Issue II, covers the period January to December 2018 and is the second issue in the series. The report is based on a compilation of documentation, news articles and reports that are readily available and in the English language only. It is possible that data are missing as a result; therefore, USAID Wildlife Asia does not assume these figures provide a complete data set. The recommendations provided target not only USAID Wildlife Asia directly but also the broader counter wildlife trafficking community and include a focus on social behavior change, improved law enforcement, increased government commitment and political will and effective regional coordination.

## I INTRODUCTION

Counter wildlife trafficking efforts got off to an encouraging start in 2018 as the implementation of China's domestic ivory ban dropped raw ivory prices by more than half, a number of high-profile arrests were made and significant legal developments emerged, moving the international community one step closer to tackling syndicates and traffickers with harsher penalties, including fines and jail time.

The successful implementation of China's ban on domestic ivory trade closed 172 carving factories and all retail outlets by December 31, 2017. Raw ivory prices in the mainland fell by 65 percent. Described by WildAid Chief Executive Officer, Peter Knights, as "the greatest single step toward reducing elephant poaching," the ban has already led to an 80 percent decline in seizures of ivory entering the country (Forbes, 2018). Following China's global leadership on this issue, several other countries and territories have implemented or prepared to implement ivory trade bans in 2018, including Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China, the United Kingdom (UK) and the Netherlands. Possible bans are also being discussed in Singapore and the European Union (EU).

In 2018, USAID Wildlife Asia saw some hopeful changes in consumer demand, including a growing recognition that reducing demand is essential to countering transnational wildlife crime. As a result, countries—especially China, Thailand and Vietnam—are making concerted efforts to reduce that demand. Also growing is the recognition that demand-reduction interventions must be targeted at the right consumers—and, thus, driven by consumer research.

In early 2018, USAID Wildlife Asia completed two consumer studies with quantitative and qualitative components—one in China on elephant ivory, pangolin, rhino and tiger and another in Thailand on elephant ivory and tiger. The USAID Saving Species project, working in Vietnam, completed quantitative and qualitative consumer research on elephant, rhino and pangolin. All three research studies were widely disseminated locally and internationally and drew a lot of interest among donor agencies, governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. The data from these studies were used as evidence to plan consumer-targeted demand-reduction campaigns for 2019. Additionally, TRAFFIC conducted a consumer survey to evaluate the impact of the domestic ivory ban in China. Other NGOs launched consumer research on demand for specific species, for example, the Zoological Society of London consumer research on pangolin demand in Guangdong Province, China.

USAID Wildlife Asia also noted some worthy successes in law enforcement last year. One of the most significant arrests in Southeast Asia was that of Boonchai Bach on January 19, 2018. As other high-profile cases followed in subsequent months (see Section 6 for details), USAID Wildlife Asia reviewed them for trends. Many of these cases show the involvement of wealth and power (e.g., a billionaire from China, a construction magnate in Thailand and a former First Lady of Zimbabwe), the involvement of enforcement officials (e.g., customs officers in Vietnam, judges and prosecutors in South Africa and a prosecutor in Thailand) and what appears to be a disproportionate role of Vietnamese nationals in global trafficking networks (e.g., Boonchai Bach, Nguyen Mau Chien and others). Taken together, these cases clearly demonstrate that wildlife trafficking is a form of organized international crime and that the criminal networks involved in wildlife trafficking are also involved in other forms of trafficking—arms, drugs, people, diamonds, etc. For the criminal syndicates, wildlife is just another commodity from which vast illegal wealth can be gained.

Although the arrest of Thai construction tycoon, Premchai Karnasuta, for illegal hunting inside a wildlife sanctuary is very different in its level of importance or impact in addressing wildlife crime—in comparison to the arrest of Boonchai Bach, for example—the Premchai case achieved a very high

profile, with huge media and public interest that continued for many months after his arrest, especially on social media in Thailand. These arrests revealed a deep-seated and heartfelt interest in Thai society to protect the country's wildlife and ensure rule of law is equitably enforced among its population, including those who are rich or powerful.

USAID Wildlife Asia saw an increased political commitment to address trafficking in many Asian states in 2018. Several countries revised their penal codes to reinforce anti-trafficking measures. For instance, Vietnam's new penal code came into force on January 1, 2018. According to the new code, stricter criminal penalties are applied to those found guilty of illegally killing wildlife or trafficking illegal wildlife and wildlife products. The code raises the maximum penalty for wildlife-related violations to 15 years in prison or VND2 billion (\$85,900) in fines for involved individuals, and VND15 billion (\$644,500) in fines, suspension of operations from six months to three years or closure for involved legal entities.

This is good news, given the worrying statistics on seizures and wildlife regulation violations over the past five years. Environmental Investigation Agency's 2018 report suggested that Vietnam was a hub for a network of loosely structured wildlife trafficking syndicates and that these syndicates operate across Africa, Vietnam and neighboring Asian countries. With harsher sentencing in place, it is anticipated that syndicate operations will dwindle. As an example, on April 2, 2018, Cao Xuan Nai was arrested for trafficking 27 big-headed turtles and four Asian black bear paws. He was found guilty of violating regulations on protecting endangered, precious and rare animals and was sentenced to 10 years in prison (Voice of Vietnam, 2018). The arrest was made only three months after the revised 2015 penal code took effect—a strong example of the potential for judges to enforce harsher penalties.

### A Nudge to the Judges

Although 2018 saw some welcome changes to strengthen penal codes in many jurisdictions, current available information on penalties and sentencing show the inconsistencies in applying penalties. Two seizures at Hong Kong International Airport in 2018, after introduction of a stricter penal code in China (South China Morning Post, 2018a), show a discrepancy in levied fines that suggests some inequality in punishment.

Businessman from China caught with 5.8 kg rhino horn and 410 g of carved ivory on a flight from South Africa through Hong Kong SAR.

**Sentence: 4 months in jail**

Young gentleman from China caught with just over 3.1 kg of rhino horn on a flight from Mozambique through Hong Kong SAR.

**Sentence: 8 months in jail**

In addition, Thailand set out to close a legal loophole that prohibits law enforcement from confiscating cryptocurrencies of those involved in serious crimes. Currently, police cannot seize cryptocurrencies from suspected or convicted criminals because cryptocurrencies are not recognized as regular currency and assets. Hong Kong SAR also introduced harsher penalties for offenses under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, Cap 586, to a maximum fine of HK\$10 million (\$1.3 million) and imprisonment for 10 years—up from a maximum HK\$5 million (\$637,000) fine and two years in prison—as it continued its fight against elephant poaching and illegal ivory trafficking. Hong Kong SAR is known as one of the largest ivory markets in the world and a major transit hub for illegal wildlife (Times, 2018). The World Wildlife Fund–Hong Kong attributes

this notoriety to the territory's low fines and sentences for traffickers and zero prosecutions of criminal kingpins to date.

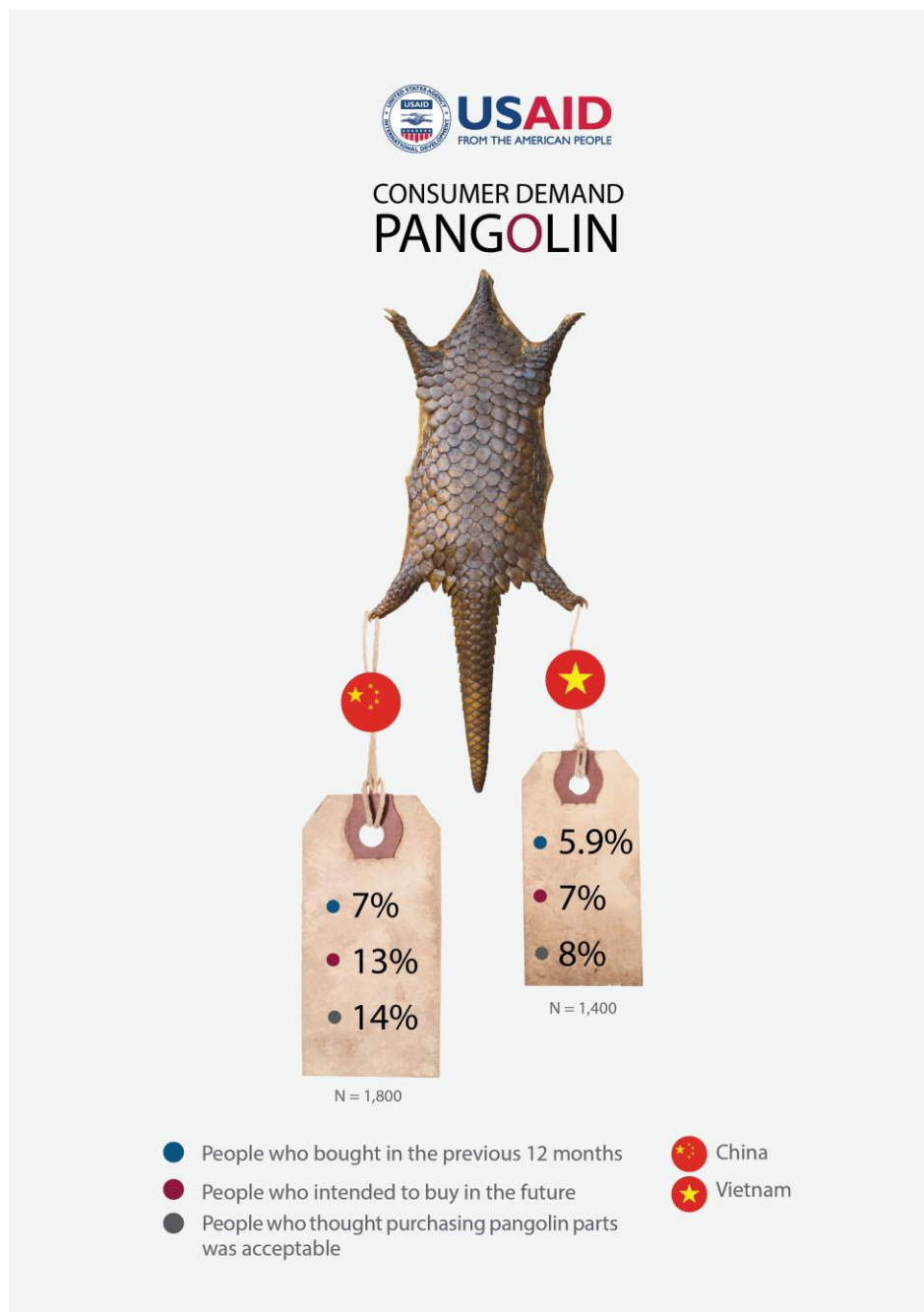


## 2 PANGOLINS

### 2.1 SITUATION UPDATE IN 2018

#### CONSUMER DEMAND

The USAID Wildlife Asia and USAID Saving Species consumer research studies in China and Vietnam revealed that a significant proportion of the population in each country in 2018 bought pangolin products in the previous 12 months and a larger proportion intended to buy such products in the future. A significant proportion of respondents continue to believe that buying or consuming pangolin was acceptable.





NATIONWIDE PUBLIC SURVEYS	SAMPLE SIZE	PEOPLE WHO BOUGHT IN THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS	PEOPLE WHO INTENDED TO BUY IN THE FUTURE	PEOPLE WHO THOUGHT PURCHASING PANGOLIN PARTS WAS ACCEPTABLE
China	1,800	7%	13%	14%
Vietnam	1,400	5.9%	7%	8%

Sources: USAID Wildlife Asia (2018a); USAID Saving Species (2018)

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

In late 2017, TRAFFIC published a comprehensive report providing information on pangolin seizures across 67 countries and territories on six continents (Heinrich, et al., 2017). Subsequent studies published in 2018 showed the increasing role of intermediaries from Asia in Africa in the pangolin trade. In some cases, the middlemen were workers from China stationed on the continent for major logging, oil exploration and agro-industry projects (Daily Maverick, 2018a; Eureka Alert, 2018; Guynup, 2018; Mambeya, et al., 2018).

New scientific advances in 2018 led to more effective prosecutions. Researchers in the UK have modified a tool used in criminal forensic investigations called a gelatin lifter that can pick up clues from pangolin scales and other illegally traded wildlife body parts. This is being used in Cameroon and Kenya by wildlife rangers and guards to gather evidence. The researchers say this new technology allows “wildlife conservation officials to collect this evidence more quickly in remote areas, which in turn helps to ensure [those officials’] safety” (Mongabay, 2018a).

On December 6, 2018, Malaysia torched nearly three tons of seized scales of endangered pangolins worth RM 37.4 million (\$9 million) that were confiscated back in 2017 (Star, 2018a). The Government of Malaysia did this in an effort to deter illegal wildlife trafficking from Africa. It is estimated that approximately 3,000 pangolins would have been killed to obtain the 2.8 tons (2,800 kg)<sup>1</sup> of scales.

## POLICY

In China, conservationists pushed for higher protection status for the endangered pangolin to stop the illegal trade of the species before it becomes extinct. About 180 NGOs and individuals signed a joint appeal for Chinese lawmakers to upgrade the legal protection of pangolins. An upgrade in protection status would result in pangolins being automatically removed from the traditional Chinese medicine pharmacopeia and could lead to a significant reduction in demand (Caicai, 2018).

## 2.2 PANGOLIN SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS

Two cases in late 2017 were not included in CWT Digest, Issue I. They are included here for completeness, followed by the data of 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that all references to tons in the CWT Digest refer to metric tons.

## SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2017

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
December 11	Japan	Tokyo's Metropolitan Police Department forwarded two cases involving the online sales of endangered Sunda pangolins to the prosecutor's office. The online outlet was a flea market app called Mercari Inc., and the pangolins were being auctioned. Sales of pangolins are prohibited in Japan (Asahi Shimbun, 2017).
December 14	Hong Kong SAR	Hong Kong Customs seized a batch of suspected smuggled goods including "816 cameras and accessories, 3,373 used smartphones, 469 used tablet computers, 11,520 integrated circuits, 203 electronic parts and 313 [kg] of suspected pangolin scales" with an estimated market value of about HK\$10 million (\$1.3 million) in Tai Po on December 12 (Government of Hong Kong SAR, 2017).

## SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2018

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
January 25	Ivory Coast	More than half a ton each of pangolin scales and ivory were seized and six people arrested, including a Vietnamese national said to be the head of the criminal syndicate smuggling the wildlife (Mongabay, 2018b).
February 3	Taiwan	More than 13 tons, or about 4,000 descaled and disemboweled pangolins, which were smuggled into Taiwan from Malaysia, were discovered in a cargo container at Kaohsiung's Pier 66, by the Kaohsiung Customs Administration Office (Chen-Hung & Chung, 2018).
February 16	Thailand	Ban Suan police who rushed to the scene of a road accident in Muang District of Sukhothai found that the driver of a pickup truck that plunged into a roadside ditch was nowhere to be seen, but left behind 24 pangolins, one pangolin carcass and five kilograms of pangolin scales (Thai PBS, 2018a).
April 13	Cameroon	At least 1,000 kg of pangolin scales and several hundred elephant tusks were found on April 6. Hidden in cocoa containers, the scales and tusks were destined for China from Douala International Airport (Kindzeka, 2018a; 2018b).
April 19	Benin	More than 500 kg of pangolin scales were confiscated at the Cotonou airport in Benin on March 19. Three people suspected of trying to smuggle 23 bags of scales were arrested on their way to Vietnam (Cannon, 2018).
April 27	Vietnam	Customs officials in a port in Ho Chi Minh City seized nearly 3.8 tons of pangolin scales from Congo, in the biggest haul of animal parts ever smuggled to the southern metropolis. The pangolin scales were stored in two containers, declared as logs imported from Congo and arrived in Cat Lai Port (Maritime Executive, 2018; Tuoi Tre News, 2018).
May 3	Vietnam	In the second seizure within a week, another 3.3 tons of pangolin scales were found to be hidden in bags and covered by cashew nut bags in a container declared to contain dried cashew nuts. The container was in transit to Cambodia from Nigeria. (Reuters, 2018a; Vietmaz, 2018).
May 8	Nigeria	Acting on a tip, Nigerian Customs operatives raided an apartment in the southwest city of Ikeja in February. Inside, they found some 4,400 pounds (1,995.8 kg) of pangolin scales and 218 ivory tusks—and arrested a suspect, Ko Sin Ying, a Chinese national who lived there (Guynup, 2018; TVC, 2018).
May 18	Hong Kong SAR	Hong Kong Customs seized from a container about 630 kg of suspected pangolin scales and 2,660 kg of suspected smuggled mercury with an estimated market value of

## SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2018

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
		about \$1.4 million at the Tsing Yi Customs Cargo Examination Compound (7 <sup>th</sup> Space, 2018).
May 30	China	A total of 19 smuggled live Sunda pangolins were found by police in central China's Hunan Province. The Sunda pangolins were found on a coach heading to Hunan from Guangxi on May 17 (Xinhuanet, 2018a).
June 6	Thailand	Thai authorities rescued 40 live pangolins that were smuggled across the Mekong River by boat, destined to Chiang Rai's Wiang Kaen District to be sold to restaurants and medicine shops. The pangolins weighed approximately 200 kg and were said to worth at least THB615,000 (\$19,650) (Thai PBS, 2018b).
June 26	Vietnam	Twenty-six turtles, four soft-shell turtles and seven pangolins were found in a passenger bus registered in Nghe An. Police said they were tracking the bus for just over two weeks before stopping it for checks as it traveled throughout the province (Vietnamnet, 2018c).
July 2	Malaysia	A 57-year-old former soldier was arrested by the Border Security Agency (Aksem) for trying to smuggle 65 live pangolins worth RM75,000 (\$18,400) out of Malaysia. "The suspect has no criminal record, but we believe he had made numerous such trips to smuggle the pangolins to Thailand," Commander Asst. Supt. Mohd Khairi Abdullah said (Star, 2018b).
July 9	China	Police in southwest China's Yunnan Province seized a box carrying pangolin skin and scales, barking-deer horns, porcupine spines, Himalayan blue sheep horns, elephant skin and wild animal gall bladders weighing a combined total of more than 9 kgs (Xinhuanet, 2018b).
July 20	Hong Kong SAR	Seven tons of pangolin scales were seized from a cargo shipment in Hong Kong SAR that originated in Nigeria and was bound for mainland China. The 7,100 kg haul—the second largest seizure of its kind over the last ten years, according to Customs and Excise Department—had an estimated market value of HK\$3.55 million (\$450,000). Officers opened the 40-foot container for inspection at the Tsing Yi Customs Cargo Examination Compound. Although the manifest claimed the shipment contained more than 880 bags of plastic raw materials, a total of 284 bags carrying pangolin scales were found in the container. No arrests were made. The biggest recent similar haul was of 7.2 tons of pangolin scales, also found in a container from Nigeria, in May last year (Lo, 2018a).
July 30	Philippines	Authorities at the Sta. Lourdes checkpoint in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, confiscated several kilos of pangolin meat, scales and tortoises. Officials also seized firearms and explosives from the truck driver (GMA News Online, 2018).
August 18	Nigeria	Seventeen sacks of pangolin scales were seized from an apartment occupied by a Chinese national in Satellite Town, Lagos, Nigeria (Guynup, 2018).
August 22	Cameroon	Six men were arrested for smuggling more than 700 kg of endangered pangolins and pangolin scales from the Central African Republic to Vietnam (Voice of America, 2018).
September 5	China	At least a dozen online stores on Pinduoduo, the third-largest Chinese e-commerce platform, sold scales from globally endangered pangolins. Sales of raw pangolin scales have been banned by China's State Forestry Administration since 2007, except at designated hospitals and approved pharmaceutical companies. Legally sold processed scales must display a special label issued by the government (South China Morning Post, 2018b).

## SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2018

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
October 1	Vietnam	A ton of ivory and pangolin scales were seized by authorities at Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi. The ivory and scales were hidden in cargo boxes sent from Nigeria (Vietnam News, 2018).
October 5	Vietnam	Vietnamese authorities seized more than eight tons of pangolin scales and ivory “in one of the Southeast Asian country’s largest wildlife trafficking cases for years.” Police found more than two tons of ivory and six tons of pangolin scales hidden in a plastic waste container at Tien Sa port in the central Vietnamese city of Danang. The container, owned by Vietnam’s Thien Truong Su Co., originated in Nigeria (Reuters, 2018a).
October 26	Vietnam	Police in Nghe An Province in central Vietnam arrested a man for allegedly smuggling in rare turtles and pangolins from Lao PDR. The alleged perpetrator was caught with 24 turtles and five pangolins, one of which was dead. The man was held for questioning for breaching regulations on the protection of precious and rare wild animals, a crime punishable by up to seven years in jail (VN Express, 2018).
November 8	China	Police in central China’s Hunan Province detained 129 suspects involved in pangolin trafficking and confiscated 216 pangolins, 66 kg of pangolin scales, 20 Tibetan antelope horns and a batch of other wildlife products, as well as more than CNY18 million (\$2.6 million). In early 2017, a man was found illegally selling pangolins to a restaurant in Hunan. An investigation into the case was launched. Following the clue, a large pangolin trafficking ring involving more than 200 suspects was identified. According to police, the pangolins were trafficked into southwest China’s Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region from overseas, and then sold to suspects in Guangzhou, from where they were distributed to other parts of China. The arrests were conducted in Hunan, Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangxi Hainan provinces and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Police continued to look for another 32 suspects nationwide (Global Times, 2018).
November 28	Zambia	The Kalulushi Magistrate’s Court sentenced a 53-year-old Chinese national to five years imprisonment with hard labor for possession of 588 elephant pangolin scales. The elephant pangolin scales are protected by the Zambian government (ZNBC, 2018).
December 26	China	Local forest police in Southwest China’s Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region caught 24 suspects, including one from Vietnam, and seized several animal products, including 11 tiger skins, elephant skins and 81.49 kg of pangolin scales in four cases since July. The seized products have a market value of CNY29.72 million (\$4.3 million) (ECNS, 2018a).





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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# PANGOLIN SEIZURES



26 tons scales

38,000 pangolins killed

13 tons dead, descaled

13 people arrested

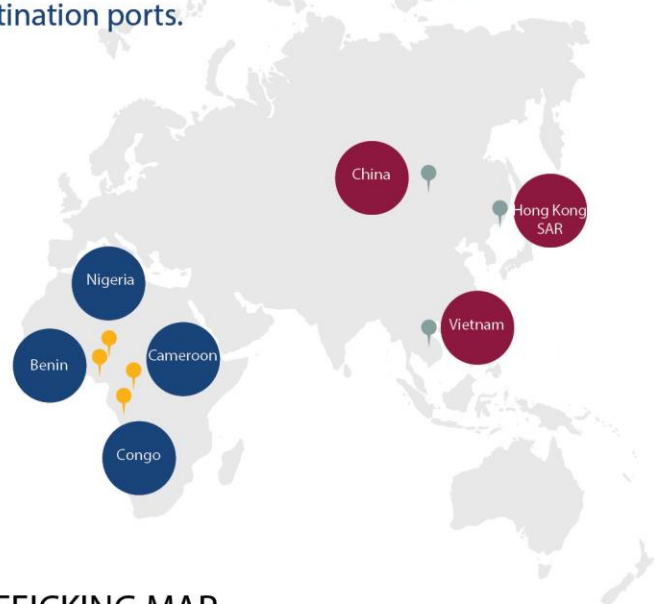
378

live animals

- Main export countries: Benin, Cameroon, Congo, Nigeria
- Main destinations: China, Vietnam

**Nigeria** – The export country of more than 70% of all seized pangolin scales.

**Hong Kong SAR and Vietnam** – The biggest destination ports.



TRAFFICKING MAP

2018

- January 25 Ivory Coast Over 0.5 ton each of pangolin scales and ivory seized; 6 people arrested.
- February 3 Taiwan Seized over 13 tons, or about 4,000, descaled and disemboweled pangolins.
- February 16 Thailand Seized 24 live pangolins, one carcass, and 5 kg of scales.
- April 13 Cameroon 1 ton of pangolin scales and hundreds of elephant tusks.
- April 19 Benin Seized over 500 kg of pangolin scales.
- April 27 Vietnam Seized nearly 3.8 tons of pangolin scales from Congo.
- May 3 Vietnam Seized 3.3 tons of pangolin scales.
- May 8 Nigeria Seized 1,995 kg of pangolin scales, and 218 ivory tusks.
- May 18 Hong Kong SAR Seized about 630 kg of pangolin scales.
- May 30 China Seized 19 smuggled live Sunda pangolins.
- June 6 Thailand Seized 40 live pangolins, approximately 200 kg.
- June 26 Vietnam Seized 7 pangolins, 26 turtles, and 4 soft-shell turtles.
- July 2 Malaysia Seized 65 live pangolins.
- July 9 China Seized over 9 kg of pangolin skin and scales, and elephant skin.
- July 20 Hong Kong SAR Seized 7 tons of pangolin scales.
- July 30 Philippines Seized several kilograms of pangolin meat, scales, and tortoises.
- August 18 Nigeria Seized 17 sacks of pangolin scales.
- August 22 Cameroon Seized over 700 kg of pangolins and pangolin scales.
- October 1 Vietnam Seized nearly 1 ton of ivory and pangolin scales.
- October 5 Vietnam Seized over 2 tons of ivory and 6 tons of pangolin scales.
- October 26 Vietnam Seized 4 pangolins and 24 turtles.
- November 8 China Seized 216 pangolins, and 66 kg of pangolin scales.
- November 28 Zambia 5-year jail term to Chinese national possessing 588 pangolin scales.
- December 26 China Caught 24 suspects and seized 11 tiger skins, elephant skins, and 81.49 kg of pangolin scales.

## 2.3 SUMMARY

Last year, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) banned international trade in all species of pangolin; unfortunately, there is still little sign of a slowdown in rampant poaching and trafficking. In 2017, the first USAID Wildlife Asia Counter Wildlife Trafficking Digest<sup>2</sup> presented details regarding the 32 tons of pangolin scale seizures that occurred throughout the year. In 2018, total reported seizures amounted to around 26 tons of pangolin scales, as well as 13 tons of descaled and disemboweled dead pangolins and 378 live pangolins. The total value of these seizures is estimated at \$38 million.

In 2017, Cameroon, Ghana and Ivory Coast were the biggest ports of export from which seizures were made, while in 2018, these were Cameroon, Congo and Nigeria. Nigeria alone was the export country of more than 70 percent of all seized pangolin scales. Interestingly, Malaysia was implicated as a transit country for many of the shipments in 2017, but in 2018 it was only directly implicated in one seizure of 13 tons of descaled and disemboweled pangolins in Taiwan. The change in ports shows an adaptability by trafficking networks, possibly changing as a result of the seizures or as a result of arrests in the region, requiring a reshuffling of the syndicate main players and key actors.

On the export side, authorities seized:

- 16,500 kg of scales after they were shipped out of Nigeria, and a further 2,000 kg of scales in Nigeria before being shipped out.
- 3,800 kg of scales after export from the Congo.
- 1,700 kg in Cameroon before export.
- 500 kg after export from Benin.

On the import side, authorities seized:

- 14,500 kg of scales in/on their way to Vietnam.
- 8,000 kg on their way to China.

While seizures continued to be significant in 2018, the number of arrests and prosecutions continued to be limited, apart from those in China. Only 13 arrests outside of China were reported in 2018, and only one recorded sentence was passed in 2018. Within China, a total of 153 suspects were detained in a year-long investigation of a pangolin smuggling ring. At the time of the publication of this digest, it is not yet clear how many of these people were formally charged, or if any of them have been sentenced.

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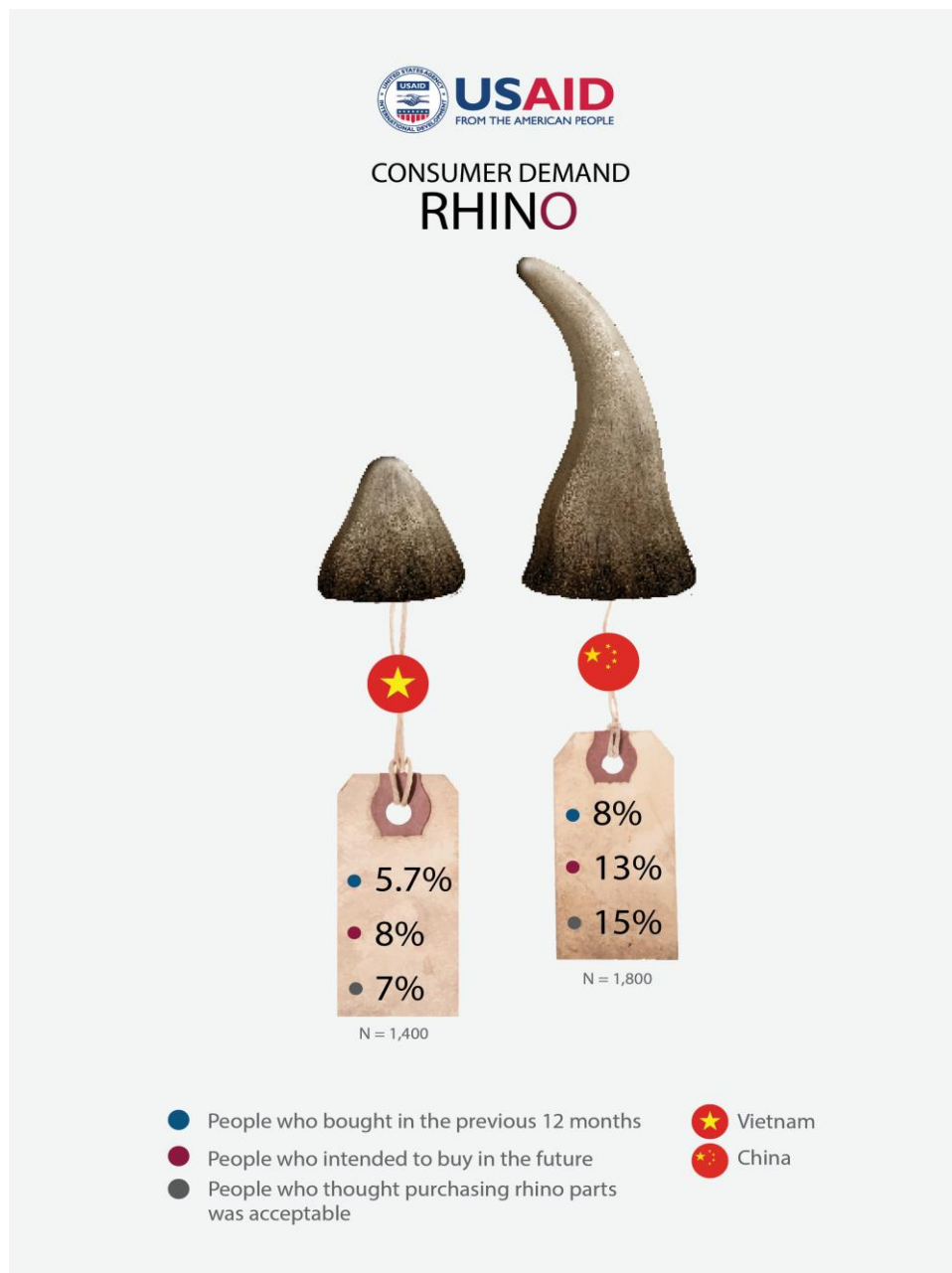
<sup>2</sup> The USAID Wildlife Asia Counter Wildlife Trafficking Digest, Issue I (2017) is available at: <https://www.usaidwildlifeasia.org/resources/reports/usaidwildlifeasia-cwtdigest-2march2018.pdf/view>

### 3 RHINOS

#### 3.1 SITUATION UPDATE IN 2018

##### CONSUMER DEMAND

In 2018, high-profile auction houses halted the sale of rhino horn products. British auction house Bonhams was heavily criticized by conservation groups for planning the sale of a collection of rhino horn carvings. The 21-lot collection entitled “Exceptional Chinese Rhinoceros Horn Carvings from the Angela Chua Collection” was scheduled for bidding on November 27 in Hong Kong SAR and was expected to fetch up to £3 million (\$3.9 million). On November 21, however, Bonhams announced it would stop dealing in such artifacts. Two days later, Sotheby’s also announced it was ending the sale of rhino horn. The Asian branch of Sotheby’s said it had cancelled an upcoming Hong Kong SAR sale of three lots of rhino horn following an outcry from wildlife conservation organizations (Daily Mail, 2018; Telegraph, 2018a).





Research conducted by USAID Wildlife Asia in China and USAID Saving Species in Vietnam showed that a significant proportion of the population surveyed in 2018 bought rhino products in the previous 12 months and a larger proportion intended to buy them in the future. Acceptability of buying or owning rhino products was still quite high.

NATIONWIDE PUBLIC SURVEYS	SAMPLE SIZE	PEOPLE WHO BOUGHT IN THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS	PEOPLE WHO INTENDED TO BUY IN THE FUTURE	PEOPLE WHO THOUGHT PURCHASING RHINO PARTS WAS ACCEPTABLE
China	1,800	8%	13%	15%
Vietnam	1,400	5.7%	8%	7%

Sources: USAID Wildlife Asia (2018a); USAID Saving Species (2018)

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

In each of the last five years, poachers killed more than 1,000 rhinos in South Africa. Entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson and conservationist Dame Jane Morris Goodall, DBE, PhD, or Dr. Jane Goodall, “joined a list of famous names who signed an open letter to South Africa’s government calling for an end to rhino poaching” (Leithead, 2018a). Investigations in 2018 pointed to a corrupt court syndicate in South Africa that kept rhino killers beyond the reach of the law. A whistle-blower told the BBC he was the middleman between rhino-horn smugglers and a court syndicate in South Africa’s KwaZulu-Natal province (Leithead, 2018b). The middleman informant is now in hiding. His most high-profile allegation involves suspected rhino-horn kingpin Dumisani Gwala, who was arrested with rhino horn but pleaded not guilty to charges of dealing in protected wildlife parts. More than three years after being arrested and bailed, and following more than 20 court appearances, Mr. Gwala’s trial had not begun by the end of 2018. “If elements of South Africa’s justice system prove to be corrupt, [that corruption] not only threatens rhinos and allows poachers to act with impunity, but [also] compromises the police and the justice system in other cases as well” (Leithead, 2018a, 2018b).

## POLICY

In 1993, under a law called the Pelly Amendment, U.S. President Bill Clinton threatened China with sanctions for undermining the CITES treaty. China responded with a ban on rhino horn and tiger bone, and poaching declined significantly. On October 29, 2018, the Chinese government announced that it would allow the use of rhino horns and tiger bones in medicine, reversing the 25-year ban. The declaration from Beijing raised concern among the global conservation community, as the Chinese government announced that it would foster a controlled legal market in these goods. The State Council, China’s cabinet, said that it would legalize the use of rhino horns and tiger bones for “medical research or in healing,” but only by certified hospitals and doctors, and only from rhinos and tigers raised in captivity, excluding zoo animals.

The move was unexpected, given that less than a year prior to the announcement, China took a major step in the fight against wildlife trafficking by banning the domestic sale of elephant ivory, a step deemed a huge success by the same conservation community.

After protests from conservation groups in international media, on November 12, China postponed the lifting of the ban. This announcement suggested only a delay in the preparation of regulations to implement the October decision and did not reverse it. However, on December 13, National Forestry and Grassland Administration spokesperson Huang Caiyi said the following “three strict bans” will

continue to be enforced: a strict ban on the importing and exporting of rhinos, tigers and their byproducts; a strict ban on the sales, purchasing, transporting, carrying and mailing of rhinos, tigers and their byproducts; and a strict ban on the use of rhino horns and tiger bones in medicine (China Dialogue, 2018; Conservation, 2018; Economist, 2018; New York Times 2018a, 2018b; New York Times Magazine, 2018; South China Morning Post 2018c, 2018d; Xinhuanet, 2018c).

### 3.2 RHINO HORN SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS

#### SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2018

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
February 26	Singapore	Police arrested a 29-year-old man from Vietnam for attempting to smuggle eight pieces of cut rhino horns and a bag of alleged horn shavings through Singapore's Changi Airport. The man was <i>en route</i> from Dubai to Lao People's Democratic Republic (Channel News Asia, 2018a).
March 8	Hong Kong SAR	Authorities arrested a 21-year-old man who arrived from Mozambique with HK\$1.4 million (\$178,350) worth of rhino horns in his luggage (Lo, 2018).
March 20	Vietnam	The People's Court of Ha Dong District in Hanoi on March 20 handed down a jail sentence of 13 months to a man from Vietnam for smuggling 36 kg of rhino horn, according to the online news platform Education for Nature Vietnam (Vietnam Plus, 2018a).
April 7	Netherlands	A Dutch court sentenced a Chinese man to a year in jail for smuggling five rhino horns and four other horn objects worth about €500,000 (\$613,000) in his luggage. The man was caught by customs officials at Schiphol Airport in December as he traveled through Amsterdam on his way from South Africa to the Chinese city of Shanghai. (The original arrest and seizure were reported in USAID CWT Digest Issue I) (Guardian, 2018a).
May 10	China	Customs staff in Tengchong City intercepted an abnormal parcel and found a ring-shaped product made of rhino horn. The product weighed 757 g. The case is under further investigation (Xinhuanet, 2018d).
June 4	Vietnam	Vietnamese Customs officials at Noi Bai International Airport on June 1 reported that they found rhino horns and wild animal fangs in the luggage of a woman from Vietnam who had been on a flight from Bangkok to Hanoi on May 30 (Vietnamnet, 2018d).
June 6	Hong Kong SAR	A traveler from South Africa was arrested at Hong Kong International Airport with 5.9 kg of suspected rhino horn and 410 g of suspected ivory that together had an estimated street value of HK\$1.2 million (\$153,000). The 40-year-old man was intercepted when he arrived in the city from Johannesburg. "During customs clearance, the batch of suspected rhino horn and suspected worked ivory were found concealed inside three food-packing boxes in his check-in suitcase," the Customs and Excise Department said. "The man was then arrested" (South China Morning Post, 2018f).
June 18	Hong Kong SAR	Authorities arrested a 21-year-old man at Hong Kong airport for trying to smuggle 3.1 kg, or HK\$620,000 (\$79,000) worth of rhino horn pieces, into the city in his checked luggage. The man, who officials said was from Africa, had arrived from Beira, Mozambique; via Johannesburg, South Africa; and Doha, Qatar (South China Morning Post, 2018g).
July 17	Vietnam	Customs officers at Tan Son Nhat International Airport in Ho Chi Minh City arrested a Vietnamese national who flew from Angola, illegally transporting 12 rhino horns weighing over 7 kg total (Vietnamnet, 2018e).

## SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2018

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
August 20	Malaysia	Authorities seized 50 pieces of rhino horn worth nearly \$12 million at a postal aviation center in the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in what was believed to be Southeast Asia's largest single seizure of rhino horns. The horns were packed in boxes that also contained nine whole rhino carcasses, and all were bound for Hanoi, Vietnam. The rhino horn seizure took place when officials of the export branch of Pos Aviation suspected something amiss with a consignment at the cargo terminal building in the airport's Free Commercial Zone. They alerted the Royal Malaysian Customs, who in turn called on the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia (Perhilitan). The agent who managed the consignment is under investigation, said Perhilitan Director General Dato' Abdul Kadir Abu Hashim, who added that initial investigations showed false information was used in the shipping document. Neither the source of the horns and the carcasses, nor the length of time they were in storage, is known. The case once again highlights illegal trade links between Malaysia and Vietnam (Channel News Asia, 2018b).
September 19	South Africa	Six members of a suspected rhino horn trafficking syndicate, that allegedly ran its own intelligence operation with at least two police officers in its ranks, were arrested in Mpumalanga. It is alleged that the syndicate operated with almost military precision around Kruger National Park, as well as in private and state-owned reserves in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng (EWN, 2018).
October 8	Mozambique	A Chinese citizen was detained at Maputo International Airport with nine rhino horns hidden in his luggage. The man was headed to Vietnam (Club of Mozambique, 2018a).
October 13	Vietnam	Vietnam seized nearly 34 kg of rhino horns at Hanoi's Noi Bai International Airport just days after the seizure of 10 tons of illegal wildlife products. The horns were shipped by a sender in South Africa on a Qatar Airways flight to an individual in Hanoi, who refused to pick up the package (Khmer Times, 2018).
October 24	Hong Kong SAR	A carpenter from the China mainland was jailed for eight months for smuggling more than 3.1 kg of rhino horn into Hong Kong, the lengthiest prison term since the city introduced tougher penalties to combat wildlife trafficking earlier in the year. (See report above of arrest and seizure on June 18.) Deputy District Judge Li Chi-ho stressed that a harsher punishment was needed to reflect the change in law when he jailed the man, 21, whose smuggled goods had an estimated market value of between \$105,740 and \$217,700 (South China Morning Post, 2018a).
October 31	Namibia	The Namibian High Court in Windhoek granted permission to four Chinese nationals to appeal their prison sentences. The four were sentenced to prison for 14 years each in October 2016 for illegal dealing in rhino horns (Journal du Cameroun, 2018).
November 13	South Africa	A rhino poaching suspect at Kruger National Park began serving a 33-year sentence. The man, arrested in 2015, was sentenced at the park's Skukuza Regional Court. He was convicted on 12 counts, including four counts of attempted murder, trespassing in a national park, and the possession of an illegal firearm (ECR, 2018).
November 20	Thailand	A public prosecutor and two people from Thailand were sentenced to four years in prison after they were caught attempting to smuggle more than a dozen rhino horns worth \$1.4 million through Bangkok's main airport last year. The smugglers were caught with bulging bags of the contraband at Suvarnabhumi Airport, accompanied by the senior justice official who tried to sneak them through customs undetected (Nation, 2018e).
November 20	Nepal	An Indian national was sentenced to seven years in prison for poaching a rhino in Chitwan National Park. Judge Rajendra Adhikari handed down the verdict against the 40-year-old man, a resident of West Champaran District of the Indian state of

## SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2018

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
		Bihar. The court also imposed a Rs 500,000 (\$4,730) fine on an accomplice for aiding and abetting in the crime (Kathmandu Post, 2018).
December 1	South Africa	Four rhino poachers were convicted and sentenced to a combined 23 years in jail in the Zeerust Regional Court in the North West. Police together with the Madikwe Game Reserve arrested the men in the park in June 2017. Police said further investigation also led to the arrest of one Itali Lodge tracker and the local village chief, who was responsible for organizing and accommodating poachers at the village (News 24, 2018).
December 10	Turkey	Turkish security forces seized 34 kg of rhino horns found through an anti-smuggling operation at the Atatürk Airport. The horns were found in luggage belonging to a Vietnamese passenger traveling from Mozambique to Ho Chi Minh Airport in Vietnam (Club of Mozambique, 2018b).
December 27	Zimbabwe	Seven Chinese nationals were arrested following a search at their rented house in Aerodrome suburb. Rhino pieces were allegedly hidden in plastic bags and boxes. The pieces weighed 20.98 kg, and a veterinary surgeon confirmed that they were genuine rhino horns. The total value of the pieces was \$938,700 (Nehanda Radio, 2018).



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# RHINO SEIZURES

\$24 million

240 kg of horns



over 240 rhinos killed  
5 people arrested

- 📍 **Main export countries:** Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa
- 📍 **Transit countries:** Malaysia, Qatar, Turkey, United Arab Emirates
- 📍 **Main destinations:** China (Yunnan), Hong Kong SAR, Vietnam



2018

- February 26 Singapore 8 pieces of cut horns seized.
- March 8 Hong Kong SAR Seized about \$178, 350 worth of rhino horns.
- March 20 Vietnam Jail sentence of 13 months for Nguyen Mau Chien for smuggling 36 kg of rhino horn.
- April 7 Netherlands One-year sentence for smuggling 5 rhino horns.
- May 10 China Seized a 757 g ringshaped rhino horn product.
- June 4 Vietnam seized rhino horns and wild animal fangs.
- June 6 Hong Kong SAR Intercepted 5.9 kg of suspected rhino horn and 410 g of suspected ivory.
- June 18 Hong Kong SAR seized 3.1 kg of suspected rhino horn.
- July 17 Vietnam Arrested Vietnamese national with 12 rhino horns weighing over 7 kg.
- August 20 Malaysia Seized 50 pieces of rhino horn.
- September 19 South Africa Arrested 6 members of a rhino horn trafficking syndicate.
- October 8 Mozambique Chinese national detained with 9 rhino horns.
- October 13 Vietnam Seized nearly 34 kg of rhino horns.
- October 24 Hong Kong SAR Chinese national jailed for 8 months for smuggling over 3.1 kg of rhino horn.
- October 31 Namibia 4 Chinese nationals granted permission to appeal their 14-year prison sentences.
- November 13 South Africa Rhino poacher begins serving a 33-year sentence.
- November 20 Thailand Public prosecutor and 2 Thais sentenced for 4 years for smuggling over 12 rhino horns.
- November 20 Nepal Indian national received 7-year jail sentence for rhino poaching.
- December 1 South Africa 4 rhino poachers obtained a combined 23 years in jail.
- December 10 Turkey Seized 34 kg of rhino horns.
- December 27 Zimbabwe 7 Chinese nationals arrested with 20.98 kg of rhino horns.

Malaysia – The single biggest seizure at 50 pieces. Vietnam and Hong Kong SAR – The frequency of seizures was the highest.



TRAFFICKING MAP



### 3.3 SUMMARY

In total, authorities seized around 200 kg of rhino horns and nine horns of unspecified weight in 2018, possibly representing over 240 rhinos, and with an estimated street value of \$24 million. The single biggest seizure was made in Malaysia, totaling 50 pieces of horn, and the frequency of seizures was highest in Hong Kong SAR (with eight seizures throughout 2018), followed by Vietnam (with three seizures). Four seizures were made in attempts to smuggle horns directly from South Africa and another four cases involved smuggled horns intercepted coming from Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Both Dubai and Doha were used as transit points for at least one intercepted shipment. It is worth noting seizures still accounted for less than 15 percent of the rhinos killed in 2017 (implying that horns from 85 percent of the slaughtered rhinos were either successfully traded or illicitly stockpiled somewhere along the supply chain. Again, while this is speculation, it warrants further review with more data points).

Only 19 recorded arrests for trafficking in rhino parts were made this year, and one of the suspects was released on bail. Among these, almost 50 percent are Chinese nationals caught in Africa (seven in Zimbabwe, one in Mozambique, one undisclosed location); six others, or 30 percent, were from South Africa and four (20 percent) from Vietnam.

Twelve people were sentenced due to their involvement in trafficking, and the sentencing was radically different. For example, the shortest was one Chinese national for 13 months in the Netherlands and the longest was one Indian national sentenced to seven years in Nepal.

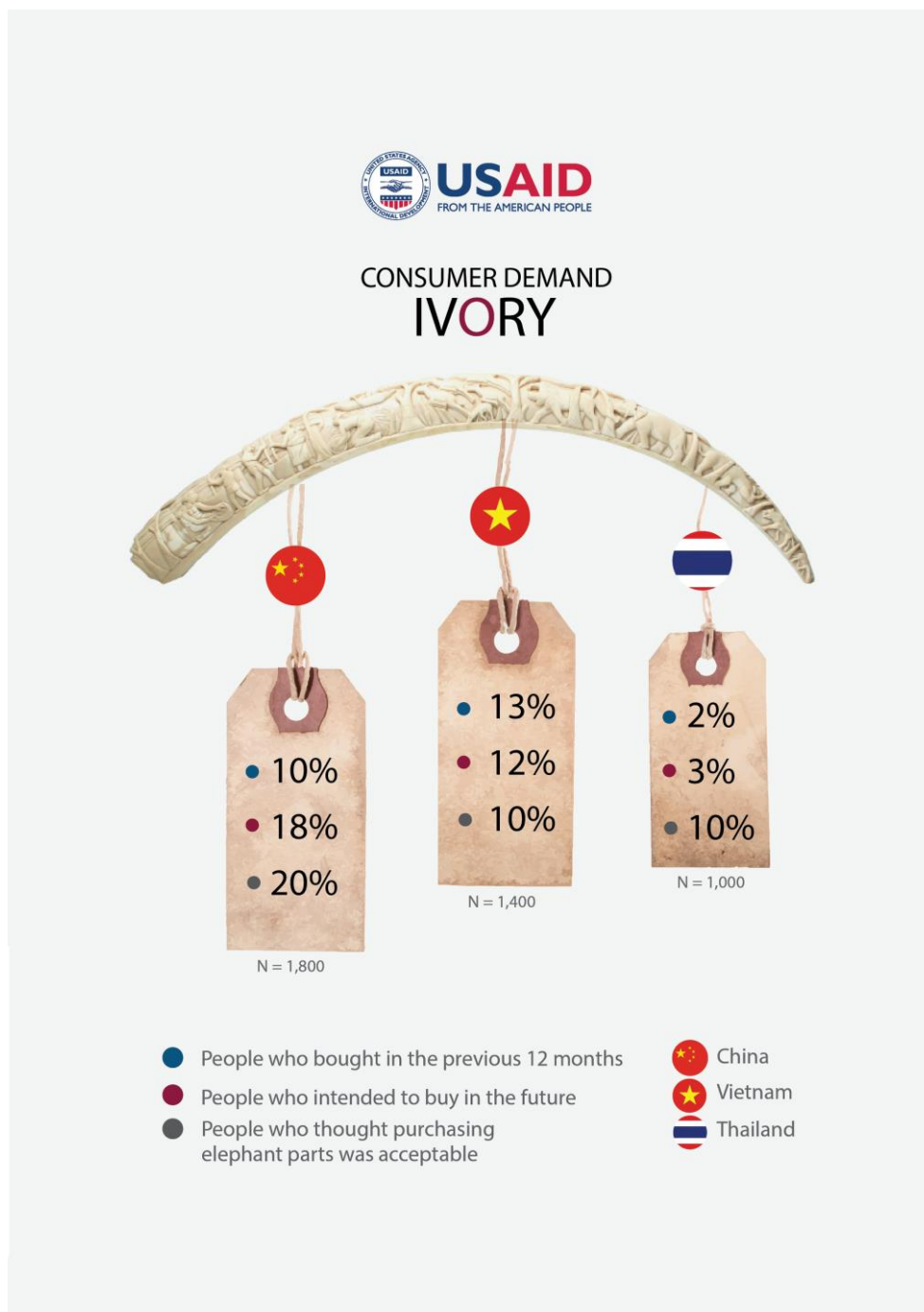
Tracking the trends in arrests is reliant on publicly available information and can be difficult to track; however, the number of documented arrests of Chinese citizens in Africa indicates that trade is controlled through organized criminal networks that stem beyond individuals engaging in the trade. This is clearly shown in the details of some of the criminal activity outlined in Section 6.

## 4 ELEPHANTS

### 4.1 SITUATION UPDATE IN 2018

#### CONSUMER DEMAND

Research conducted by USAID Wildlife Asia in China and Thailand and USAID Saving Species in Vietnam showed that in China and Vietnam, a significant proportion of the population bought ivory in the previous 12 months, and in China, an even larger proportion intended to buy ivory products in the future. Acceptability of buying or owning elephant ivory was also much higher in China compared to Thailand and Vietnam.





NATIONWIDE PUBLIC SURVEYS	SAMPLE SIZE	PEOPLE WHO BOUGHT IN THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS	PEOPLE WHO INTENDED TO BUY IN THE FUTURE	PEOPLE WHO THOUGHT PURCHASING IVORY WAS ACCEPTABLE
China	1,800	10% (bought in previous 12 months)	18%	20%
Thailand	1,000	2% (bought in previous 3 years)	3%	10%
Vietnam	1,400	13% (bought in previous 12 months)	12%	10%

Sources: USAID Wildlife Asia (2018a); USAID Wildlife Asia (2018b); USAID Saving Species (2018)

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

*Use of Wildlife Forensics in Determining Poaching Locations and Age of Animals.* Dr. Sam Wasser pioneered the scientific method of extracting DNA from ivory tusks in 1998. A study published in 2015, Wasser’s DNA tests on large seizures of ivory that found shipments tended to come from a few poaching hotspots, namely Tanzania and Zambia. This revelation persuaded a United Nations agency to deny requests from those countries to sell their ivory stockpiles. A new DNA analysis study published in 2018 confirmed and built on Wasser’s previous results and revealed that 50 percent of the Savanna elephant tusks seized from the years 2006 to 2014 in 29 countries originated in Tanzania (All Africa, 2018).

Among other things, an analysis of DNA samples can pinpoint where the elephant was poached and reveal potential linkages with other seizures overseas—but for fast enforcement action, it is important that seized ivory get sampled quickly. In May 2018, the Singapore Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) worked with experts in the United States to track down the source of approximately 3,500 kg of illegal ivory worth about \$2.5 million seized in Singapore en route to Vietnam, from Nigeria. AVA collaborated with Dr. Wasser, together with his team from the University of Washington and the United States Homeland Security Investigations, to conduct DNA analysis of samples from the seizure (Straits Times, 2018). Dr. Wasser noted that the ivory his team sampled was seized only a month and a half before sampling. “That’s the shortest time we’ve ever had between when the seizure was made and us getting to sample it,” he said. In other cases, countries do not release seized ivory for sampling for up to two years, he added (Straits Times, 2018).

In September 2018, an international team led by Wasser at the University of Washington reported that DNA test results of large ivory seizures made by law enforcement linked multiple ivory shipments, over a three-year period when this trafficking reached its peak, to the same network of dealers operating out of a handful of African ports (South China Morning Post, 2018i; Wasser, et al., 2018).

A study published in 2016 looking at 230 elephant tusks from 15 seizures of shipping containers illegally transported out of Africa revealed that 90 percent of the ivory entering the illegal trade came from elephants killed fewer than three years earlier. The dating also shed light on global patterns of the ivory trade: researchers found that ivory from East Africa tended to enter the trade faster than ivory from the region of Cameroon, Congo and Gabon where forest elephants live (Cerling et al., 2016; Nuwer, 2016). In 2018, the same team who conducted the study in 2016 extended its work to the retail side to determine the specifics of ivory age: when law enforcement seized pieces from a shop, how much of it was recent and how much was old. Samples from a \$4.5 million illegal ivory seizure in

New York are currently being analyzed to determine where and when the elephants were killed. A scientist from Columbia University will use radioactive carbon dating to determine when the elephants died. Another researcher from the University of Washington will determine, using a DNA database compiled by analyzing elephant dung from all over Africa, where they were killed (Straits Times, 2018).

*Ivory Markets Open for Business.* While fears that some of the Chinese ivory trade will be displaced to Vietnam seem to be well founded, there is also growing concern that ivory trade may increase in other Southeast Asian countries as well. A recent Flora and Fauna International Report (Nguyen, T. et al, 2018) reveals that the volume of ivory seen openly displayed for sale in surveys in Cambodia increased elevenfold from 2015 to 2018. Ninety percent of this ivory was seen in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh. Thirty percent of all shops selling ivory—and the majority of all the large shops selling ivory—were Chinese owned, and 78 percent said their customers were also Chinese. From 2013–2017, a total of 6,310 kg of ivory was seized entering or leaving Cambodia—50 percent from air transport, 40 percent from shipping and 10 percent from land transport. Of those arrested, 80 percent were Vietnamese nationals and 20 percent Chinese nationals. While Cambodia is a signatory of CITES, its domestic legislation does not yet provide protection for African elephants, making it difficult to prosecute ivory traders once the ivory is already inside the country.

On August 28, the BBC reported that an elephant survey in Botswana (a country that to date had largely escaped the illegal killing of elephants) discovered the carcasses of 87 elephants killed in the previous few months—shortly after the government decided to take back military weapons from wildlife rangers. According to Elephants Without Borders (EWB), the scores of elephant carcasses were discovered over several weeks during an aerial survey that started mid-July. EWB claimed, “Most of the dead animals were large bulls, which would have had heavy tusks. The wild pachyderms were shot with heavy-caliber rifles at watering spots near a popular wildlife sanctuary in the Okavango Delta, and the carcasses' skulls were chopped open to remove their tusks. In some cases, the trunks were also removed.” EWB further suggested that elephants in Angola and Zambia, north of Botswana, “have been poached to the verge of local extinction, and poachers have now turned to Botswana” (Telegraph, 2018b).

*A New Threat.* Finally, 2018 is a year in which there has been growing concern about poaching not only of African elephants but also of Asian elephants—and not for their ivory, but for their skin. This new trend seems to be taking hold in Myanmar. In Asia, the biggest challenge to elephant survival has historically been habitat loss. Part of the reason poaching is not as big in Asia is that tusks are not as common among Asian elephants. Only 25 to 30 percent of male Asian elephants have tusks (percentages vary by region), and no female elephants have them. That means ivory poachers generally spare breeding females and calves. The skin trade, however, makes all elephants valuable to poachers. Females and even calves are targeted. This trend does not bode well for long-lived animals that reproduce slowly (Handwerk, 2018).

From 2010 to 2014 there were 59 reported cases of elephant poaching in Myanmar—22 of these in the Ayeyarwady Region. However, in only 8 months between October 2017 and May 2018, monitoring in just four townships in the Ayeyarwady Region identified 15 cases of elephant poaching for skin (information informally provided from Myanmar NGO Friends of Wildlife).

## POLICY

While reviewing policy for USAID Wildlife Asia’s geographic focus, it is important to note that the wildlife trade is a global phenomenon, and oftentimes the policies of neighboring or regional countries can directly affect the trafficking of animal parts and products. As a result, this section provides

highlights from key countries within the project's geographic focus and beyond for a more comprehensive review of current trends to date.

*China.* In 2018, China's ban on domestic trade in ivory was enforced, effectively deeming all trade in ivory and ivory products illegal. Results of a post-ban survey released by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and TRAFFIC on September 27, 2018, revealed that China's elephant ivory trade ban has had significantly positive effects since coming into force, but further action to influence key segments of society is still required. Consumer research conducted in collaboration with GlobeScan, an independent consultancy, showed that respondents' claims of past ivory purchase have declined substantially and future intention to buy ivory products dropped by almost half to 26 percent when compared to 2017 pre-ban statistics. The survey found that all pre-ban legal ivory shops visited by TRAFFIC in 2018 stopped selling ivory, and the illegal ivory trade in most surveyed cities and online platforms decreased. It also noted that the average number of new ivory advertisements in websites and social media platforms decreased by 26.6 percent and 10.6 percent, respectively, from pre-ban to post-ban (TRAFFIC and WWF, 2018).

TRAFFIC visited 157 markets in 23 cities and found 2,812 ivory products in 345 outlets in 2018. Compared to 2017, the number of stores with ivory decreased overall by 30 percent. TRAFFIC also reported that the incidence of ivory purchase by travelers stands out compared to purchases by other buyers (TRAFFIC and WWF, 2018).

It is also worth mentioning that since 2017, there has been a rise in China's ivory auction market, which remains the only legitimate post-ban commercial outlet for ivory sales (McCurry, 2017; Phys, 2018a).

This current exemption allowing antique ivory to be sold at auction revealed potential loopholes for laundering illegal ivory. TRAFFIC visits to 17 pre-auction exhibitions in Beijing, Nanjing, Shanghai and Suzhou in 2018 showed lack of compliance with the requirement to obtain administrative approvals from relevant authorities for ivory sales. Seven of the exhibitions were in apparent violation of the laws and regulations related to elephant ivory auctions, resulting in 219 lots of elephant ivory items being withdrawn by law enforcement officers (with an estimated value between \$974,282 and \$1,082,536) (TRAFFIC and WWF, 2018).

*Thailand.* Thailand has enacted strong regulations to control the ivory trade over the past two years. Since the Ivory Act was introduced in 2015, 42 percent of all traders (91 in total) filed voluntarily to revoke their licenses by mid-2017. Thailand has also seen a 58 percent decrease in sales of registered ivory items compared to mid-2016. No new purchases of ivory inventory have been reported by licensed ivory sellers in Bangkok in the past two years (Forbes, 2018).

*Japan.* In late 2017 TRAFFIC released a report that suggested Japan's current efforts to prevent illegal ivory exports are inadvertently allowing undocumented ivory to be sold online. The report recommends placing an immediate ban on Japan's thriving online trade in ivory and cracking down on shops in tourist areas that sell ivory to mainly Chinese buyers, including dealers who shuttle between the two countries (TRAFFIC, 2018a). In September, a new TRAFFIC report identified Yahoo Japan as the single biggest online platform for elephant ivory sales in Japan; it recorded 4,414 ivory items plus 35 whole tusks for sale over a four-week period in June and July 2018 (Japan Times, 2018; National Geographic, 2018).

Additionally, the Government of Japan informed CITES Parties that, on June 1, 2018, the amended Law for the Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora came into effect. This law

regulates domestic transactions of the species listed in CITES Appendix I, including ivory. The Government of Japan pointed out that enforcement of this law and other related initiatives will further tighten Japan's regulations on ivory transactions within its own borders (CITES, 2018).

*Hong Kong SAR.* A legal process that started in Hong Kong SAR in 2017 culminated on January 31, 2018, when 49 Hong Kong SAR law makers voted to end all ivory trade by 2021 and passed the Endangered Species of Animals and Plants (Amendment) Bill 2017, also called the Hong Kong Ivory Ban Bill. Only four legislators voted against the ban. The bill, which will be implemented gradually until December 31, 2021, includes hefty penalties for offenders and would also require the disposal of ivory stocks, among other provisions (Bridges, 2018). However, some have suggested that the shutdown of mainland China's domestic ivory market in 2017 may be shifting more of the trade across the border to Hong Kong, where a citywide ban is to come into effect in three years, according to a study. The mismatch in timing of the two bans may be inadvertently widening the window for illegal trading and smuggling and fueling the poaching of elephants in Africa (Eco Business, 2018; South China Morning Post, 2018h).

*Singapore.* On November 27, Singapore launched a month-long consultation process in which the public was invited to share their views on a proposed ban on the sale of elephant ivory and ivory products in Singapore (Channel News Asia, 2018c; Ministry of Communications and Information, Singapore, 2018).

*Taiwan.* Taiwan officially announced the ban on its domestic ivory trade starting on January 1, 2020 (WildAid, 2018).

*United Kingdom.* An Ivory Bill to ban ivory sales in the UK was introduced in Parliament on May 23, 2018 and became the Ivory Act 2018 on December 17. It is expected to come into force in late 2019. The Bill concerns dealing in elephant ivory (including buying, selling and hiring), which will become an offense punishable by a prison sentence of up to five years and/or an unlimited fine, or a civil penalty of up to £250,000 (\$326,900) (Antiques Trade Gazette, 2018; UK Government, 2018a, 2018b).

It was also noted that British trophy hunters brought home two tons of elephant tusks from Africa over the past decade, nearly 400 "trophies" from the world's most endangered animals. A motion calling for an urgent ban on trophy imports has now won the support of Members of Parliament from the Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Scottish National, Plaid Cymru, Green and Democratic Unionist parties (Ecologist, 2018).

*Other European Countries and Australia.* In September, Australia announced that a bipartisan agreement to ban the ivory trade in Australia would be considered by Federal Environment Minister Melissa Price in the lead up to the international wildlife conference in London in October. A landmark parliamentary report secured support from both Liberal and Labour Members of Parliament to ban the sale of ivory products. The report found that Australia's ivory laws were falling behind those in China, Britain and the United States (ABC Australia, 2018; Sydney Morning Herald, 2018; Xinhuanet, 2018e).

On December 17, the Netherlands said it will ban all raw ivory sales from next year, as it unveiled the results of a major operation to combat trafficking in endangered animals and plants. Currently Dutch law permits the sale of raw ivory such as elephant tusks with an EU certificate, provided the ivory entered the country between 1947 and 1990. "From March 1, 2019... the sale of raw ivory from and in the Netherlands will no longer be possible," Dutch Agriculture and Nature Affairs Minister Carola Schouten said (Phys, 2018b; Pieters, 2018).

However, there are still many countries in Europe where unregulated ivory markets are a problem. Europe is the largest domestic market for ivory products in the world, and research has demonstrated that illegally poached ivory often makes its way into the legal market (Independent, 2018; McGrath, 2018). Researchers from environmental group Avaaz bought 100 ivory items and had them radiocarbon dated at Oxford University (Discover Wildlife, 2018). Three-quarters were modern ivory, being sold illegally as fake antiques. Ivory from an elephant killed by poachers as recently as 2010 was among the items passed off as antique. Avaaz and the Elephant Action League identified the Netherlands in particular as significantly involved in the illegal ivory trade. Politicians and campaigners expressed concern that based on a new report released in October, the EU appears to be holding back on further restrictions on the continent's ivory trade, despite enormous global pressure.

## 4.2 IVORY SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS

Two ivory seizures in December 2017 were not included in the CWT Digest, Issue I, and have therefore been included here for completeness, followed by the data for 2018.

### SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2017

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
December 8	China/Vietnam	165 elephant tusks, worth over CNY 29 million (\$4.4 million), were illegally transported to Pingxiang City on the night of November 13 and were captured by customs officers the next day, a Nanning official said on December 8. Three suspects were detained (Vietnamnet, 2017).
December 13	Zimbabwe	An illegal shipment of 200 kg of ivory destined for Malaysia was seized at Zimbabwe's main airport, an official said. Security agents from Zimbabwe's Parks and Wildlife Management Authority intercepted the shipment, spokesman Tinashe Farawo said. The ivory was stashed in four boxes at Robert Mugabe International Airport (Reuters, 2017).

### SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2018

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
January 9	Hong Kong SAR	A Hong Kong court found an ivory trader guilty of illegal ivory possession and imposed a relatively light penalty of an HK\$8,000 (\$1,022) fine, less than two weeks after China implemented a total ban on ivory sales (Business Times, 2018).
January 13	Thailand	Customs officials confiscated elephant ivory worth THB15 million (\$469,200) believed to have been smuggled into Thailand by wildlife traders from Nigeria. The gang hid the ivory in three parcels declared as "general goods," but officials decided to inspect the packages, which turned to be valuable elephant carcasses (Bangkok Post, 2018d).
January 29	Ivory Coast	Ivory Coast officials announced the seizure of over half a ton each of elephant tusks and pangolin scales. The ivory and pangolin scales were being shipped to Vietnam and other Asian countries, officials said. Six people, including a Vietnamese national alleged to be the leader of the criminal syndicate, were also arrested (Mongabay, 2018b).
February 8	Japan	Police in Japan arrested the director of a government-accredited ivory retail outlet on suspicion of attempting to smuggle ivory to China in contravention of national and international regulations. According to media reports, the 47-year-old suspect was detained following the arrest of a Chinese sailor attempting to board a vessel in Tokyo Port who was found to be in possession of 605 ivory name seals (TRAFFIC, 2018b).

## SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2018

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
February 26	Namibia	A businessman from China was charged with illegally dealing in elephant tusks and possessing other wildlife products and will go on trial in November with two Namibian nationals co-accused in the Windhoek Regional Court. The state has charged the accused with dealing in controlled wildlife products, based on an allegation that they dealt in four elephant tusks with a combined weight of 54 kg in Windhoek on June 11, 2014 (Menges, 2018).
February 28	Republic of Congo	A court in the Republic of Congo convicted three men of killing elephants for their tusks. They were handed five-year prison sentences and fined \$10,000 each. The three men were part of a six-member poaching gang that managed to escape an ambush set up by park authorities, but not before leaving behind some 70 kg of ivory as well as an AK-47 rifle, according to the Wildlife Conservation Society (Mongabay, 2018c).
March 8	Singapore	The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority and the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority said in a joint statement that around 1,787 pieces of ivory tusks in 61 bags, totaling about 3,500 kg, worth about \$2.5 million were seized by the authorities on March 5 from a Vietnam-bound shipment. The shipment originated from Apapa, Nigeria, and was declared to contain groundnuts (Huiwen, 2018).
March 13	Malaysia	Four heavily armed poachers who targeted wild elephants in Malaysia were caught, officials said, the second such arrest in less than two years. Wildlife officials said the gang, caught near the town of Gerik in the northern Malaysian state of Perak, was found with deer antlers and suspected tiger bones (Phys, 2018c).
March 27	China	Customs authorities in Kunming, in southwest China's Yunnan Province, seized around 200 g of ivory products from a Chinese traveler returning from Myanmar (Global Times, 2018).
May 7	Gabon and Cameroon	In the Megame Gorilla Sanctuary in Cameroon and Minkebe National Park in Gabon, officials seized 106 tusks from at least 53 elephants. This was the second mega seizure carried out near Djoum in under five months. In December 2017, rangers seized 216 elephant tusks. Djoum is notorious as hub for poaching operations and ivory tusks trafficking undertaken in southeast Cameroon (WWF, 2018).
May 15	China	Several hundred mammoth and elephant ivory products being smuggled into a south China port were seized by port officials in the Chinese province of Guangdong. During an inspection, 740 ivory products weighing a total of 28 kg were discovered by Huangpu Customs officers. Two suspects were arrested (Butcher, 2018).
May 22	USA	U.S. Customs and Border Protection seized carved ivory worth an estimated \$25,000 after a couple attempted to smuggle the materials through Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. A husband and wife flying in from the Philippines on May 11 carried in their luggage 34 pieces of elephant ivory, two carved hippopotamus tusks and two carved warthog tusks. The couple was fined \$500 for violating CITES (Seattle Times, 2018).
May 30	China	Beijing Customs seized a total of 277 items in 13 seizures, including antelope horn, wolf tooth, leopard skin and other parts of endangered species, including 158 ivory products that weighed 17 kg (ECNS, 2018b).
June 6	Hong Kong SAR	A traveler from South Africa was arrested at Hong Kong International Airport with 5.9 kg of suspected rhino horn and 410 g of suspected ivory that together had an estimated street value of HK\$1.2 million (\$153,000) (South China Morning Post, 2018f).
June 30	Global	Operation Thunderstorm included seizure of 1.3 tons of ivory (see Section 6 on high-profile cases) (Brennan, 2018; INTERPOL, 2018).
July 3	United Arab Emirates	As part of a major crackdown by Dubai Customs and Dubai police, 1,849 pieces of ivory were intercepted at Dubai International Airport in a seizure, a police official said (Shouk, 2018).



## SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2018

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
July 4	Hong Kong SAR	More than HK\$2.7 million (\$344,000) worth of ivory was seized by Hong Kong Customs officers near the city's boundary with mainland China, in a joint operation with their counterparts north of the border. Eight people aged between 22 and 60 years were arrested, including the alleged mastermind of the scheme. The raid followed an investigation by mainland authorities into a suspected ivory-smuggling syndicate, a spokesman for Hong Kong's Customs and Excise Department said. Mainland officers first acted on their probe on June 25 by seizing 47 kg of suspected ivory and arresting six people. Under Hong Kong's Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, anyone found guilty of importing or exporting an endangered species without a license is liable to a fine of HK\$10 million (\$1.27 million) and imprisonment for 10 years (Custom Today, 2018).
August 28	Angola	Authorities in Angola announced the arrest of five Vietnamese nationals in connection with a massive seizure of wildlife products, including 27 rhino horn pieces, almost 800 kg of worked and raw elephant ivory and almost 900 kg of pangolin scales. The discovery was made after x-ray baggage scanning led authorities to open the luggage of two suspects who were attempting to board a flight to Vietnam. Inside the suitcases they found 20 kg of rhino horn. Two other suspects were detained at the scene. The authorities had been on the lookout for the four men following the earlier arrest of a Vietnamese national, who was found to be in possession of 20 kg of rhino horn. Further investigation led officers to rented premises in the São Paulo area of Angola's capital city, where inside they found two ivory processing workshops, along with 535 kg raw and 263 kg worked ivory, 895 kg pangolin scales and 10 kg of medicinal plant products (TRAFFIC, 2018c).
September 25	Thailand	The National Parks Department's special wildlife crime-suppression taskforce, Yiew Dong, inspected a house in Nonthaburi before seizing seven elephant tusks weighing about 46 kg in total for DNA checks. The taskforce, in a joint operation with natural resources and environmental crime-suppression police, suspected that some of the tusks found in the house may not have been derived from domesticated elephants, considering their appearance (Nation, 2018f).
October 5	Vietnam	Vietnamese authorities seized more than eight tons of pangolin scales and ivory in one of the Southeast Asian country's largest wildlife trafficking cases for years, the government said. Police found more than two tons of ivory and six tons of pangolin scales hidden in a plastic waste container at Tien Sa port in the central Vietnamese city of Danang, the government said in a statement. The container, owned by Vietnam's Thien Truong Su Co., originated in Nigeria, according to the statement. The raid came days after authorities at Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi said they seized nearly a ton of ivory and pangolin scales hidden in cargo boxes, also sent from Nigeria (Reuters, 2018a).
October 12	Myanmar	Myanmar authorities destroyed hundreds of seized elephant tusks, pangolin scales and other animal parts, worth a total of \$1.3 million on the black market, as part of a crackdown on illegal wildlife trafficking. Authorities set fire to pyres stacked with 277 pieces of elephant ivory, 1,544 antelope horns, 180 tiger bones and other confiscated items weighing more than 1.4 tons at a government compound in the capital, Naypyitaw (Reuters, 2018b).
October 24	USA	In a New York courtroom, two kingpins of Kenya's illegal wildlife trade pleaded guilty to crimes that carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Baktash and Ibrahim Akasha were connected to seizures of over 30 tons of illegal ivory in Mombasa. The guilty pleas of the Akasha brothers, however, were not related to their roles in wildlife trafficking. Instead, they were in court on charges of conspiring to traffic massive quantities of heroin and methamphetamine into the U.S., as well as bribing officials and possessing heavy weaponry. The case of the Akashas illustrates the overlap between the ivory trade and criminal groups involved in illegal drugs and weapons (Washington Post, 2018).
November 13	Kenya	Kenyan police arrested three suspects holding 21 pieces of elephant tusks weighing 57 kg during a security operation in Rumuruti in northern Kenya (Xinhuanet, 2018f).



## SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2018

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
November 19	China	Shenzen Customs arrested a gang of 17 suspected ivory smugglers for possession of 10 elephant tusks. The ivory seized was said to be of African origin and weighed about 323.7 kg in total. The suspects were attempting to smuggle the illegal animal parts from Hong Kong into the Chinese mainland (That's, 2018).
December 6	Kenya	Kenyan police said they seized 11 pieces of elephant tusks weighing 50 kg in a forest in the coastal county of Kilifi. Kaloleni divisional police commander, Kennedy Osando, said a contingent of security officers ambushed two men who were selling the ivory tusks in the forest (Africa, 2018).
December 10	Zimbabwe	Eleven people, including nine employees at a Chinese factory, appeared at the Harare Magistrates' Courts facing allegations of contravening sections of the Parks and Wildlife Management Act and of fraud after they were allegedly found selling polished ivory, with fake parks reference numbers (Newsday, 2018).
December 17	Cambodia	A joint U.S. and Cambodia investigation seized over 1,000 pieces of ivory. Working together, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife investigation provided information to the Cambodian Customs and Excise Department that ultimately led to the search of a sealed container. The 1,026 pieces of ivory were transported from Malaca, Mozambique, to the Cambodian capital in July. The unidentified owner failed to collect the shipment (Phnom Penh Post, 2018).
December 27	Vietnam	The Hanoi People's Procuracy prosecuted a man for attempting to traffic 3.1 kg of ivory items to Thailand via Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi at the end of 2016. According to the indictment, on December 31, 2017, while completing procedures for passengers boarding a flight from Hanoi to Bangkok, customs officers at the airport suspected and checked the luggage of an individual from Nhu Thanh District of Thanh Hoa Province. The suspected ivory items had a total weight of 3.1 kg. The Supreme People's Procuracy (headed by the Prosecutor General) said that sufficient evidence proved the individual knew the suitcase contained ivory but still tried to bring it to Thailand. Therefore, the individual was prosecuted for "trafficking prohibited items" as regulated in Article 155 of the 1999 Penal Code (Vietnamnet, 2018f).



# ELEPHANT IVORY SEIZURES

\$11 million



24 seizures

11 tons

230

elephants killed

**NEW MARKET CAMBODIA**

The volume of ivory seen openly displayed for sale increased by 11 times from 2015 to 2018.

**NEW CONCERN MYANMAR**

Poaching of Asian elephants, for skin, not for ivory. Consequently, females and calves are targeted.

- Main export countries: Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Mozambique
- Transit countries: Singapore, Thailand
- Main destinations: Cambodia, Vietnam

Singapore – the largest single seizure at 3,500 kg.



TRAFFICKING MAP

## 2018

- January 9 Hong Kong SAR Hong Kong ivory trader found guilty of illegal ivory possession.
- January 13 Thailand Confiscated elephant ivory.
- January 29 Ivory Coast Seized over 0.5 ton each of elephant tusks and pangolin scales.
- February 8 Japan Arrested the director of a government-accredited ivory retail outlet attempting to smuggle ivory.
- February 26 Namibia A Chinese and 2 Namibian nationals charged with possessing 4 elephant tusks and other wildlife products.
- February 28 Republic of Congo 3 men received 5-year prison sentence and fined \$10,000 each for killing elephants for their tusks.
- March 8 Singapore Seized 1,787 pieces of ivory tusks (around 3.5 tons).
- March 13 Malaysia 4 elephant poachers caught.
- March 27 China Seized around 200 g of ivory products.
- May 7 Gabon & Cameroon Seized 106 tusks.
- May 15 China Seized 740 ivory products (28 kg); 2 suspects arrested.
- May 22 USA Seized 34 pieces of elephant ivory and other animal tusks.
- May 30 China Seized 158 ivory products and other wildlife products totalling 227 items.
- June 6 Hong Kong SAR Traveler arrested with 5.9 kg of rhino horn and 410 g of ivory.
- June 30 Global Operation Thunderstorm included seizure of 1.3 tons of ivory.
- July 3 United Arab Emirates Intercepted 1,849 pieces of ivory.
- July 4 Hong Kong SAR Customs seized over \$344,000 worth of ivory; 8 people arrested.
- August 28 Angola Seizure of 27 rhino horn pieces, almost 800 kg of elephant ivory, and almost 900 kg of pangolin scales.
- September 25 Thailand Yieow Dong Task Force seized 7 elephant tusks (about 46 kg).
- October 5 Vietnam Seized over 2 tons of ivory and 6 tons of pangolin scales.
- October 12 Myanmar Authorities set fire to 277 elephant ivory items, 1,544 antelope horns, and 180 tiger bones weighing over 1.4 tons.
- October 24 USA Court handed life sentence to 2 Kenyan kingpins.
- November 13 Kenya Seized 21 pieces of elephant tusks (57 kg).
- November 19 China Arrested 17 suspects for possession of 10 elephant tusks (323.7 kg).
- December 6 Kenya Seized 11 pieces of elephant tusks (50 kg).
- December 10 Zimbabwe 11 people appeared at court due to allegedly selling polished ivory.
- December 17 Cambodia Joint U.S. and Cambodia investigation seized over 1,000 pieces of ivory.
- December 27 Vietnam Seized 3.1 kg of ivory items.

### 4.3 SUMMARY

In 2018, around 11,000 kg of ivory with an approximate value of \$11 million was reported as seized around the world in the 24 seizures listed above. In total, 65 percent of this ivory was shipped from Nigeria, and was on its way to Vietnam, but was intercepted in Singapore and Thailand—with the largest single seizure, a seizure of 3,500 kg, happening in Singapore. A further 25 percent was from Mozambique and was intercepted in Cambodia, and around 5 percent was intercepted in Ivory Coast before it was exported to Vietnam.

A total of 58 arrests were reported in association with these seizures (35 Chinese, 12 Vietnamese, 4 Kenyans, 2 Namibians, 2 Japanese, 1 South African and 2 of unspecified nationality, but possibly Zimbabweans). In Hong Kong SAR and China, one gang of 17 smugglers and another of 8 smugglers were arrested (including the ringleader). Eleven people (including 9 Chinese factory workers) were arrested in Zimbabwe. In the Ivory Coast, six Vietnamese nationals were arrested, including the ringleader, and in Angola, five Vietnamese nationals were arrested. Four Kenyans were arrested in Kenya, while in Namibia one Chinese and two Namibian nationals were arrested. In Japan, one sailor and one director of a government-licensed domestic ivory retail outlet were arrested attempting to smuggle ivory name seals to Japan. In Vietnam, one Vietnamese man was prosecuted. One South African was arrested in Hong Kong.

In terms of sentencing, in 2018, only six sentences were reported. One Hong Kong trader was fined \$1,000 for ivory possession, and two Americans were fined \$500 each for attempting to bring ivory and other protected species into the country. In the Republic of Congo, three ivory poachers were arrested and sentenced to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine each.

Several points are worth noting from the above information:

- The overall volume of seizures seemed to be decreasing slightly—from over 13,000 kg in 2017 to about 11,000 kg in 2018. (In 2016, the volume was even higher.) If the chances of detection and interception are constant, or increasing, then this can be taken as an indication that the total volume of ivory trafficking is also declining.
- In 2017, the role of Malaysia as a transit hub was very clear, with over 8,600 kg of seized ivory passing through Malaysia before being seized in Hong Kong SAR and Vietnam and another 1,000 kg being seized in Malaysia. In 2018, however, Malaysia was not implicated as a significant transit country. Vietnam was a major destination in 2018, and Vietnamese nationals were involved in the procurement of ivory in Africa.
- Seizures in Hong Kong SAR and mainland China have mainly been of smaller ivory pieces, carvings and name seals, etc. With the complete implementation of the trade ban, it seems that large shipments of raw ivory are no longer going to China. It may be that more of them were going to Vietnam for carving there before sale to Chinese tourists in Vietnam or smuggling across the border in smaller quantities.
- Seizure information reported publicly for 2017 was less clear about the ports of origin of the seizures. In 2018 it was very clear that the vast majority of ivory was coming out of Nigeria, with more from Mozambique and Ivory Coast.

Overall, 2018 looked like a better year for African elephants. The Chinese ivory trade ban is working, and several other countries are following suit. Ivory trade volumes appeared to be decreasing. Poaching in East Africa is declining (e.g., poaching in Kenya was down from 390 elephants killed in 2013 to 80 in 2017 and 40 in 2018, according to the Kenya Wildlife Service), as efforts in Eastern Africa have helped reduce poaching to pre-2008 levels.



In 2018, Kenya lost 396 elephants from all causes, compared to 727 that died last year, the wildlife agency reported on December 27. Charles Musyoki, Acting Director General of Kenya Wildlife Service, said in a statement that wildlife deaths result from many natural causes such as disease, drought, drowning, territorial fights and old age as well as human-wildlife conflicts, accidents and poaching. He said that the national elephant population has remained healthy with a current estimate of 35,000 elephants (Xinhuanet, 2018g).

Unfortunately, illegal killing of Central Africa's forest elephants remains high. This is compounded by the dramatic losses experienced in the region over the past decade when elephant populations declined by 66 percent in parts of Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Gabon. This year, new killing fields were uncovered in Botswana, and ivory markets are growing rapidly in Cambodia, targeting Chinese tourists and businessmen. A new market for Asian elephant skin products also is emerging.

## Elephant Conservation Roll of Honor



The world of elephant conservation lost two champions in 2018. Conservationist Dame Daphne Sheldrick — famous for rearing orphaned baby elephants, died of cancer, aged 83 (BBC, 2018). Esmond Bradley Martin, a well-known American ivory trade investigator, who pioneered efforts to combat elephant and rhino poaching, was stabbed to death in his home in Nairobi, prompting an outpouring of shock across the conservation world. Bradley Martin began documenting the illegal trade in wildlife in the 1970s. He was a pioneer in letting the world know about the tragedy of illegal wildlife trafficking (Guardian, 2018b; Leithead, 2018c).

## 5 TIGERS

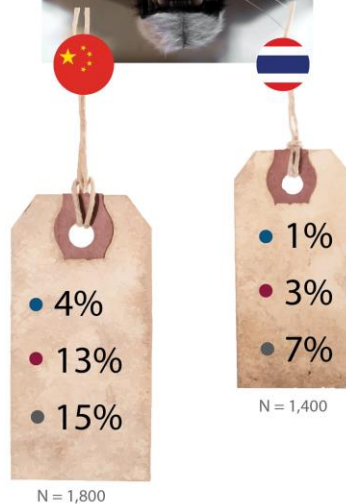
### 5.1 SITUATION UPDATE IN 2018

#### CONSUMER DEMAND

Research conducted by USAID Wildlife Asia in China and Thailand showed a smaller proportion of the population from both countries bought tiger products in the previous 12 months. However, compared to those who bought in the previous year, a much larger proportion of the population in both countries intended to buy tiger products in the future, and an even larger proportion claimed that buying and owning tiger products was acceptable.



### CONSUMER DEMAND TIGER



- People who bought in the previous 12 months
  - People who intended to buy in the future
  - People who thought purchasing tiger parts was acceptable
- China  
● Thailand

NATIONWIDE PUBLIC SURVEYS	SAMPLE SIZE	PEOPLE WHO BOUGHT IN THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS	PEOPLE WHO INTENDED TO BUY IN THE FUTURE	PEOPLE WHO THOUGHT PURCHASING TIGER PARTS WAS ACCEPTABLE
China	1,800	4% (bought in previous 12 months)	13%	15%
Thailand	1,000	1% (bought in the previous 3 years)	3%	7%

Source: USAID Wildlife Asia (2018a); USAID Wildlife Asia (2018b)

## POLICY

In 2018, much of the focus on tiger trade was centered on the role of legally registered captive breeding facilities in supplying the illegal trade. In 2016, the Lao PDR government told CITES that it intended to shut down tiger farms. However, by the end of 2018 no action had been taken, and the farms were flourishing, with another major operation opened since the pledge was made (Parry, 2018).

In the last five years, according to the CITES trade database, South Africa exported more than 200 live, captive-bred tigers, mostly to Asia and the Middle East. These figures excluded dozens of tiger trophies, bones, claws and skulls exported over the same period.

At the same time, the ban on tiger trade in China caused importers to increasingly use South African lion parts to make traditional tiger-based medicines. One way this has been combatted is through the airline industry. Singapore Airlines, once the largest carrier of South African lion bones, announced it stopped carrying this cargo as of August 2018 (Steyn, 2018).

## 5.2 TIGER SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS

### SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2018

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
February 6	Indonesia	Officials of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry arrested a 32-year-old man for selling body parts of protected Sumatran tigers and sun bears on Facebook. Officials seized several pieces of evidence, including a tiger skin rug, tiger claw necklace, four tiger claws, two tiger skin wallets, two tiger paws with claws removed, two tiger skin waist straps, a tiger skin sling bag, five sun bear fangs, three sun bear claws with ornamental rings and a sun bear claw necklace. Investigations are continuing to determine the origin of the animals and identify potential accomplices (Sinaga, 2018).
June 6	Vietnam	Vietnamese police discovered the corpses of five tiger cubs upon inspecting the trunk of a car in the central province of Nghe An. The cubs' dried bodies were planned to be sold to wine brewers for \$3,080 (Hai, 2018).
June 6	Malaysia	The Department of Wildlife and National Parks' ( <i>Perhilitan</i> ) successful "Ops Taring VI" raids between May 28 and June 6 resulted in several arrests. Those arrested were all part of a key online illegal wildlife trade syndicate operating widely through social media networks. In addition, it was reported that police hindered a syndicate that had acted as middlemen and traded protected wildlife animals to foreign countries for medical purposes. Internal Security and Public Order Department director, Datuk Seri Zulkifli Abdullah, said police and Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia confiscated body parts of tigers and other protected animals at a total street value of RMI million (\$245,850) in two raids (Sun Daily, 2018a; 2018b).



## SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2018

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
July 19	Czech Republic	<p>Czech Republic authorities raided premises in Prague and other locations, revealing a tiger slaughterhouse that was part of an international criminal trade ring. Dubbed Operation Trophy, the raids were the culmination of two-and-a-half years of work and employed more than 200 enforcement officers from customs, police and the Czech Environmental Inspectorate. In the illegal slaughterhouse, they found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A freshly killed tiger, shot through the eye to leave its skin undamaged</li> <li>• A boiler for preparation of tiger glue</li> <li>• Many tiger claws, bones and skins</li> <li>• Dozens of dead animals, often in a state of decay</li> </ul> <p>The illegal trade network was understood to stretch from a legal tiger breeder (who had more than 40 tigers and 88 lions with CITES documentation) and a middleman to an illegal taxidermist and a Vietnamese businessman. Three suspects were taken into custody. Pavla Řihová, of the Czech Environmental Inspectorate, said, “We have been warning for several years that illegal trade in tiger products is a really serious problem in Europe, not only in Asia.” The Inspectorate knew there was more going on and has also been concerned about live tigers going to a facility in Vietnam, where the husband of the named owner has twice before been convicted of illegal tiger trade (EIA, 2018a; 2018b).</p>
August 1	USA	<p>A resident of Woodside, New York, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge, Amos L. Mazzant, III, in Sherman, Texas, to nine months in prison to be followed by one year of supervised release for illegally trafficking parts from endangered African lions and tigers (Department of Justice, 2018).</p>
October 20	Kenya	<p>A Vietnamese national was arrested at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi for illegal possession of lion and warthog products. The luggage was detected by Kenya Wildlife Service sniffer dogs, which are part of the canine unit stationed at the airport, specifically to detect contraband wildlife products (Standard, 2018).</p>
November 19	Czech Republic	<p>Five years of work carried out by the Czech police, customs authorities and the Environmental Inspectorate uncovered an organized ring of Czech and Vietnamese criminals illegally killing and processing protected big cats at a tiger farm for the traditional medicine market. A member of a well-known Czech circus family, a Vietnamese trader who placed the orders for tigers and a Czech hunting enthusiast were all charged with offenses related to the illegal killing and trade of protected species (Guardian, 2018c).</p>
November 29	S. Africa	<p>Six Vietnamese nationals were arrested in South Africa with several lion bones, lion meat and tools that police believe were used to process the bones. It was unclear the planned use of the bones but cooking tiger bone glue is a common traditional practice in Vietnam (Daily Maverick, 2018b; Vietnam News, 2018).</p>
December 26	China	<p>Local forest police in China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region caught 24 suspects, including one from Vietnam, and seized many animal products, including 11 tiger skins, elephant skins and 81.49 kg of pangolin scales in four cases since July (ECNS, 2018a).</p>



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# TIGER SEIZURES



over  
**35**  
people arrested

**11**  
skins

**5**  
dead cubs,  
assorted parts

📍 Main export country: Czech Republic  
📍 Main destination: Vietnam

Tiger seizures have been much lower than seizures of pangolin, ivory, and rhino horn. Lion bone is used as a substitute for tiger bone in preparing tiger bone glue.



TRAFFICKING MAP

## 2018

- February 6  
Indonesia  
A man arrested for selling body parts of protected Sumatran tigers and sun bears on Facebook.
- June 6  
Vietnam  
Police found the corpses of 5 tiger cubs in trunk of a car. Dried bodies sold to wine brewers.
- June 6  
Malaysia  
Confiscated body parts of tigers and other protected animals at a total street value of \$245,670.
- July 19  
Czech Republic  
Authorities raided premises in Prague and other locations, revealing a tiger slaughterhouse.
- August 1  
USA  
A resident of Woodside, New York, was handed a 9-month prison sentence and one year of supervised release for illegally trafficking African lions and tiger parts.
- October 20  
Kenya  
Vietnamese national arrested at the airport for illegal possession of lion and warthog products.
- November 19  
Czech Republic  
Czech and Vietnamese nationals illegally killing and processing protected big cats at a tiger farm for the traditional medicine market.
- November 29  
South Africa  
6 Vietnamese nationals were arrested in South Africa with lion bones, lion meat and tools.
- December 26  
China  
Police caught 24 suspects and seized 11 tiger skins, elephant skins and 81.49 kg of pangolin scales in four cases.

### 5.3 SUMMARY

As occurred in 2017, the number of tiger seizures in 2018 was much lower than the number of seizures of pangolin, ivory and rhino horn. The global media attention given to tiger trade is similarly much lower than for those other flagship species. Seizures in 2018 included an unknown number of tigers and tiger parts in the Czech Republic; 11 tiger skins in China; five tiger cub corpses in Vietnam; and a tiger skin rug, tiger claw necklace, four tiger claws, two tiger skin wallets, two tiger paws with claws removed, two tiger skin waist straps and a tiger skin sling bag in Indonesia.

As reported in CWT Digest, Issue I, tigers in captivity far outnumber wild tigers. The focus of concern is still very much about ensuring that legally registered tiger facilities are not illegally supplying the trade. The raid on a Czech tiger breeding facility, after five years of investigation, highlighted the scale of the problem and the trade links between Eastern Europe and Vietnam.

In total, more than 35 arrests were made (24 Chinese nationals, 7 Vietnamese nationals, 3 Czech nationals, 1 Indonesian, as well as an unspecified number of arrests in Malaysia, described as “several”). In the cases of the Vietnamese nationals, all were arrested for lion bone rather than tiger bone, but they were using lion bone as a substitute for tiger bone in preparing tiger bone glue.

The only prison sentence reported in 2018 was for one American who was sentenced to nine months in prison in the United States.

## 6 HIGH-PROFILE CASES

As referenced in the Introduction, many strides were made in 2018 to combat wildlife traffickers and their syndicates. Below are some highlighted cases.

### BOONCHAI BACH

On January 19, 2018, Thai police arrested a Vietnamese national who they say ran an international network that trafficked massive quantities of elephant ivory, rhino horn and wildlife, threatening the existence of already endangered species in Asia and Africa for years. Boonchai Bach, 40, was arrested in Nakhon Phanom, a northeastern Thailand province that borders Lao PDR, in connection to the illegal trafficking of 14 African rhino horns to Thailand in December 2017 (Glenny, 2018; Laping, 2018; Macan-Marker, 2018; Nuwer, 2018; Wipatayotin, 2018a).

### NGUYEN MAU CHIEN

The Education for Nature Vietnam on January 22, 2018, announced that 16 international and social organizations engaged in wildlife protection in Vietnam signed a letter calling on Vietnamese law enforcement agencies to “strictly handle” Nguyen Mau Chien, the suspected mastermind of a transnational rhino horn trafficking ring (Vietnamnet, 2018b).

### ZHAO WEI

In January 2018, the United States Treasury Department declared the Zhao Wei network, operating through a casino in Lao PDR, to be a transnational criminal organization. The Treasury Department imposed sanctions on four individuals and three companies across Lao PDR, Thailand and Hong Kong SAR, freezing U.S. assets and prohibiting Americans from dealing with the organization. U.S. officials describe Zhao Wei, a billionaire from northeastern China, as the leader of a group that engages in “an array of horrendous illicit activities, including human trafficking and child prostitution, drug trafficking and wildlife trafficking” (Khao Sod English 2018; Penna 2018).

### PREMCHAI KARNASUTA

In February 2018, construction tycoon, Premchai Karnasuta, President of Italian-Thai Development, was arrested for allegedly hunting wildlife in the World Heritage Thungyai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary in Kanchanaburi Province. Officials found skinned carcasses of protected wild animals, including a 1.48-metre-long black leopard, a Kalij pheasant and a barking deer, as well as three long-barreled guns and ammunition. A senior park official indicated that members of Premchai’s hunting party tried to negotiate with the arresting wildlife officials to drop the case against them in exchange for “whatever you want, we will arrange it for you.” After a subsequent three-hour search of his home, police from the Natural Resources and Environmental Crime-Suppression Division found five rifles and a pair of elephant tusks. DNA collected from the confiscated tusks revealed that they came from African elephants.<sup>3</sup> In May, Premchai, his wife and an associate pleaded not guilty to possession of two pairs of African elephant tusks. The trial began in November, and in total 32 witnesses provided testimony for the prosecution. By late December all witness testimony for both prosecution and defense had been heard. The court is expected to deliver its verdict in March 2019 (Bangkok Post 2018a, 2018b;

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<sup>3</sup> Thai law prohibits the import, trade and possession of African ivory.

Chongcharoen, 2018; Nation 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d; Traitrakulpanich, 2018; Wipatayotin, 2018b).

### **GRACE MUGABE**

In March 2018, Zimbabwe police launched an investigation into Grace Mugabe, the former First Lady of Zimbabwe, over allegations that she headed a poaching and smuggling syndicate that illegally exported tons of elephant tusks, gold and diamonds from the country. Emmerson Mnangagwa, the president of Zimbabwe, sanctioned an urgent investigation into Grace Mugabe's activities after very strong evidence was uncovered by Adrian Steirn, an Australian photojournalist (Thornycroft, 2018).

### **XIE JING PING AND XIE YING PO**

In June 2018, Vietnamese police in the central province of Khanh Hoa handed over two Chinese criminals to the Chinese authorities. These criminals had been wanted by INTERPOL since 2007. According to INTERPOL, the two have been charged with a series of violations involving gangland killings, illegal gambling, wildlife smuggling and property damage (Phouc, 2018).

### **PHAM MINH HOANG AND TRAN TRONG CUONG**

On August 29, 2018, Hanoi's People's Court sentenced former customs officer, Pham Minh Hoang, and accomplice, Tran Trong Cuong, to 16 years in prison for embezzlement after they were caught stealing ivory and rhino horn from a customs warehouse and replacing the goods with fakes. A third man, Hoang Van Dien, was sentenced to two years for trading prohibited goods. In July, the Hanoi Customs Department discovered that ivory was missing from the warehouse. Further investigation by Hanoi police revealed that Hoang had been stealing ivory and rhino horn, while his friend, Cuong, replaced it with replicas made from plastic and wood. The illegal goods were then passed to Dien, who sold them onwards for a commission. The group stole a total of nearly 240 kg of ivory and 6.1 kg of rhino horn pieces between April and May 2017. Pieces of ivory, as well as ivory bracelets, statues and an 80 cm elephant tusk, were recovered from Dien's house. The case raised questions about the security of seizures and the need for a robust ivory and rhino horn stock management system in Vietnam to prevent future thefts (Kitade & Nishiro, 2018).

### **POLICE MAJOR WORAPAS BOONSRI**

On November 20, 2018, Samut Prakan Provincial Court sentenced former Saraburi public prosecutor Police Major, Worapas Boonsri, and two civilian women to four years' imprisonment due to their attempt to smuggle 21 rhino horns worth THB49.4 million (\$1,579,690) into the country through Suvarnabhumi Airport on March 10, 2017 (the original interception and seizure were reported in CWT Digest, Issue I). The smugglers were caught with bulging bags of the contraband at Suvarnabhumi Airport, accompanied by Worapas Boonsri, who tried to sneak them undetected through customs (Nation, 2018e).

### **CHUMLONG LEMTHONGTHAI**

In September 2018, police were alerted after the release from a South African prison of Chumlong Lemthongthai, one of Asia's most notorious wildlife traffickers. Chumlong walked out of Kgosi Mamparu II Pretoria Central Prison on September 12. Known as the "Rhino Kingpin," Chumlong was originally sentenced to 40 years after confessing to being involved in the killing of at least 70 rhinos to sell in Asia. After appeal, his sentence was reduced and he served only six years. Police Major General Panya Pinsook, Commander of the Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Division in Thailand,

said there is no special order for surveillance of Chumlong, but his movements will be closely monitored due to his record of wildlife crime (Bangkok Post, 2018c).



## 7 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 DISCUSSION

Approximately \$38 million of pangolin scales, \$11 million of ivory and \$24 million of rhino horn were reported seized in 2018—representing the deaths of approximately 38,000 pangolins, 500 elephants and 230 rhinos. In the case of elephants and rhinos, based on the reported numbers of animals killed between 2007 and 2014 (Miliken, 2014), it appears the overall seizures account for only 10–20 percent of those killed. Seizures reported in 2017 accounted for a similar proportion of the animals killed (Mather, 2018). It can be assumed that a similar situation holds true for 2018 as well. Without a full account of the statistics, this is only a hypothesis, but leads to questions regarding the 80–90 percent of unaccounted animal parts and products. Could it be related to stockpiling, awaiting bans to be lifted? To what degree have these animal parts and products been successfully trafficked, indicating gaps in law enforcement capacity and effective coordination/communication and institutional strengthening? These variables require further review.

#### OVERALL SEIZURES IN 2018

SPECIES	AMOUNT SEIZED	VALUE OF GOODS (\$)	MAIN EXPORT COUNTRIES	MAIN TRANSIT COUNTRIES	MAIN IMPORT DESTINATIONS
<b>Pangolins</b>	26 tons scales; 13 tons dead animals, descaled; 378 live animals	38 million	Nigeria, Congo, Cameroon, Benin	Not applicable	Vietnam, China
<b>Rhinos</b>	200 kg of horns; + 9 horns weight unspecified	24 million	South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, Angola	Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Turkey	Hong Kong, China, Vietnam
<b>Elephants</b>	11,000 kg ivory	11 million	Nigeria, Mozambique, Ivory Coast	Singapore, Thailand	Vietnam, Cambodia
<b>Tigers</b>	11 skins, 5 dead cubs, assorted parts, unknown amount in Czech seizure	Not able to calculate based on published information	Czech Republic	Not available	Vietnam

Overall, there is room for some cautious optimism for elephants—at least in East Africa—but the situation in Central Africa, and now in Botswana, is still of great concern. China’s ivory trade ban is having a definite impact, but it is important to follow the trends; ivory trade is now increasing in the countries neighboring China. Further, a new threat to Asian elephants, in the form of elephant skin trade, is also emerging in the region. For rhinos and pangolins there seems to be no real improvement in 2018 over 2017. The volume of pangolin seizures in 2018 was similar to that in 2017. In South Africa,

corruption within the justice system is preventing meaningful prosecutions of key players in the rhino horn trade (Leithead, 2018a, 2018b).

Although most large seizures historically have been through shipping, there is some evidence that criminals are increasingly attempting to smuggle smaller quantities by air. A 2018 report produced by the Center for Advanced Defense Studies as part of the USAID Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species (ROUTES) Partnership, looked at airport seizures of illegal wildlife and wildlife products from 2009 to 2017 (ROUTES Partnership, 2018). It found trafficking instances in at least 136 countries and that wildlife seizures in air transport increased 40 percent in 2017, indicating that criminals were “highly dependent” on commercial air transport systems to traffic endangered animal products. The data indicated that wildlife traffickers moving ivory, rhino horn, reptiles, birds, pangolins, marine products and mammals by air tended to rely on large hub airports all over the world. Rhino horn seizures at airports increased 193 percent in 2017; China was the most common destination for all seized wildlife products over the nine-year period. The report also found a growing trend in the use of tailor-made vests worn to traffic ivory into Hong Kong airport (the most common ivory trafficking route being from Zimbabwe, through Dubai, to Hong Kong). It also said that while checked luggage remains the most common transport method for rhino horn, an increasing amount is being smuggled in carry-on bags and in small pieces taped to the bodies of traffickers.

A total of 278 arrests were reported in association with the seizures detailed in this report. Of these, 221 were Chinese nationals (with 202 arrests on China’s mainland) and 23 were Vietnamese nationals. In total, Chinese nationals accounted for more than three-quarters of all those arrested. Of the 75 reported arrests outside mainland China, almost one-third were Vietnamese and one-third were Chinese nationals. Only two of the 75 were women.

#### ARRESTS AND SENTENCINGS IN 2018

Country of Citizenship	# ARRESTED	# SENTENCED AND DETAILS
China	221	1 for 5 years hard labor, 1 for 13 months and 1 for nine months; 1 fined \$1,000
Vietnam	23	2 for 16 years each, 1 for 3 years and 1 for 12 months
South Africa	6	1 for 33 years and 4 for combined total of 23 years
Kenya	4	Sentencing details are not known.
Republic of Congo	3	3 for 5 years each; \$10,000 fines for each
Thailand	3	3 for 4 years each
Czech Republic	3	Sentencing details are not known.
Namibia	2	Sentencing details are not known.
Japan	2	Sentencing details are not known.
India	1	1 for 7 years

Country of Citizenship	# ARRESTED	# SENTENCED AND DETAILS
USA	1	1 prison sentence for 9 months; 2 fines of \$500
Malaysia	1 (+ other unspecified)	Sentencing details are not known.
Philippines	1	Sentencing details are not known.
Indonesia	1	Sentencing details are not known.
Unspecified Nationality	6	Sentencing details are not known.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>278</b>	20 prison sentences (totaling 132 years and 7 months) and \$32,000 in fines; Average sentence = 6 years and 7.5 months

The overall mean length of all sentences imposed was 6 years and 7.5 months, but there are clear differences by species: 9.5 years for ivory smugglers, 6.5 years for rhino smugglers, 5 years for pangolin smugglers and 9 months for tiger smugglers.

It is possible that judges were already taking advantage of the new opportunities for stricter sentencing in wildlife trafficking cases, which is a good sign. However, a quick look at these arrests and sentencings prompts serious concerns. In 2018, 221 people were arrested for wildlife trafficking crimes in China; only four were sentenced or fined (at the time of the Digest’s publication). Overall, through the year, a total of about 133 years of prison time was handed out for \$72 million of wildlife products confiscated. When this is compared to the likely \$720 million of trafficked wildlife that escaped detection in this period, we calculate less than one year of prison for every \$5.5 million of wildlife trafficked. It is still very much a low-risk, high-reward crime for the traffickers.

In addition, 2018 saw the implementation of Operation Thunderstorm, an international operation against the illegal trade in wildlife and timber that resulted in hundreds of seizures worldwide, as well as suspects arrested. Targeting the people and networks behind global wildlife crime, the operation involved police, customs, border, environment, wildlife and forestry agencies from 92 countries and resulted in seizures of illegal goods worth millions of dollars. Operation Thunderstorm was coordinated by INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization in conjunction with the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime, which also includes the CITES Secretariat, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Bank. The month-long (May 1–31) operation resulted in almost 2,000 seizures and identified about 1,400 suspects, triggering arrests and investigations in countries around the world. Further arrests and prosecutions are foreseen as ongoing investigations unfold. The operation saw eight tons of pangolin scales seized worldwide, including almost four tons by Vietnamese maritime authorities on board a ship arriving to Vietnam from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Investigative crime intelligence was gathered ahead of the operation to help target specific hotspots for action, including land and airport border points and wildlife parks. Cars, trucks, boats and cargo transporters suspected of moving illicit products were also targeted with searches carried out by officers, often with specialist sniffer dogs and x-ray scanners (INTERPOL, 2018).

Several other developments give hope for more effective efforts to counter wildlife trafficking (CWT) in 2019. In August 2018, officials in Hong Kong SAR agreed to use the Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance for bigger penalties and more investigatory powers (South China Morning Post, 2018g). On October 10, the day before the landmark Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference, which was held in London from October 11–12, UK International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, announced a new joint initiative with the Foreign Office to target wildlife traffickers and criminal gangs. This UK funded project will launch investigations, seize assets and train law enforcement in east and southern African countries and will be the largest known project of its kind to crack down on financial crimes associated with the illegal wildlife trade (UK Government, 2018c). Secretary Mordaunt initiated this support at an event with the Duke of Cambridge, who also launched a financial task force to disrupt international money flows linked to the illegal wildlife trade as part of a British-led diplomatic effort to end the global poaching crisis. This Wildlife Financial Taskforce initially comprised representatives from 30 global banks and financial organizations, such as Standard Chartered, HSBC, Royal Bank of Scotland and Citigroup, as well as from regulatory bodies and other agencies, including TRAFFIC and the Royal United Services Institute. Members pledged to train staff to identify and share intelligence on suspicious transactions linked to the illegal trade in elephant ivory, rhino horn and other endangered species and jointly declared that they “will not knowingly facilitate or tolerate financial flows that are derived from [illegal wildlife trade] and associated corruption” (Telegraph, 2018c).

At the same London Conference, former U.S. Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, announced that the U.S. had committed a further \$90 million to CWT efforts and that the Department of the Interior had added five U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service attachés to its ranks of experienced criminal investigators already working with nations throughout the globe to combat wildlife trafficking. The new attachés are to be deployed to U.S. embassies in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa and South America (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2018).

Pinsak Suraswadi, Deputy Director General of Thailand’s Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, announced at the international meeting that Thailand has joined Southern African and South Asian countries to combat wildlife trafficking under an initiative called “South-to-South Community.” He said, “Under this plan, countries will share information, innovative technology and other resources to promote sustainable development in terms of natural resources and the environment. This is a goal that cannot be achieved alone” (Bangkok Post, 2018e).

In December 2018, the supreme courts of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam issued a joint statement recognizing their commitment to collaboration in the fight against crime and the settlement of trans-border civil cases. The joint statement was issued at the fifth conference of border-province courts, which took place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, December 14–15. The three countries’ highest courts were unanimous in agreeing that, given more complicated and unpredictable global developments such as terrorism and territorial disputes, cooperation among the three supreme courts and courts in the border localities is key in maintaining regional security and stability (Vietnam Plus, 2018b).

Finally, there was increasing public recognition for the heroes of CWT efforts. Nine institutions and individuals from across Asia were recognized in an annual award ceremony in Bangkok by the United Nations, USAID, INTERPOL and the Freeland Foundation, for outstanding work in preventing transboundary environmental crime. Wildlife trafficking was in the spotlight as winners from China, India, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam accepted awards for disrupting international criminal networks that have laid waste to wildlife across multiple continents (UN Environment, 2018).

## 7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONSUMER DEMAND

- There are still significant population segments that intend to buy pangolin, rhino, elephant or tiger products in the future. Therefore, implement demand-reduction interventions targeting actual and potential consumers of illegal wildlife parts and products in China, Vietnam, Thailand and other countries where there are large consumer markets.
- Engage with major players in the Chinese outbound tourism market (e.g., airlines and the hotel industry) to implement social behavior change campaign activities on legal implications of purchasing wildlife products in neighboring countries, such as Thailand and Hong Kong SAR, where Chinese travelers purchase ivory.
- Support efforts in China to ensure a higher level of legal protection for pangolins and their removal from the traditional Chinese medicine pharmacopeia.

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Support increased enforcement efforts along China's land borders with Lao PDR and Vietnam to ensure the impact of China's ivory trade ban is not undermined by smuggling from neighboring countries.
- Support increased enforcement (including through better risk profiling) of travelers departing from China to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam who are taking ivory back to China to ensure the impact of the ivory trade ban is not undermined by smuggling from neighboring countries.
- Continue to build Asia-Africa law enforcement linkages, with a specific focus on Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Namibia and Nigeria.
- Enhance interagency and international cooperation through formal and informal networking mechanisms (e.g., Special Investigation Group).
- Enhance law enforcement's ability to address online wildlife trade by establishing new and strengthening existing cybercrimes units with responsibilities to investigate and disrupt national and transnational trafficking groups, which use social media and online platforms to facilitate unlawful wildlife trade.

### POLICY

- Support legal reforms that clearly and specifically address the issue that domestic legislation does not make it illegal to sell ivory from African elephants in Cambodia. Encourage judges to make use of higher penalties—particularly in Vietnam, which is both a transit and destination country.
- Institutionalize prosecution through appointment or deputation of prosecutors assigned to CWT cases.
- Continue to monitor progress of National Ivory Action Plans and work with partners to provide policy and implementation support to close gaps in national-level species protection and tighten regulations to curb illegal domestic trade in ivory, including stockpile management.
- Encourage parliamentary oversight to monitor implementation of legislation (including subsidiary legislation) and appropriations to CWT agencies.

- Work closely with USAID and U.S. government entities to engage judicial bodies in developing innovative policies and enhancing internal capacity in handling wildlife cases. For example, by introducing innovative rules of procedures or sentencing guidelines and adoption of CWT-specific curricula embedded within judicial institutes.

#### REGIONAL COLLABORATION

- Increase collaboration between USAID Wildlife Asia and relevant programs in the region, such as USAID Saving Species Vietnam and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)–USAID Partnership for Regional Optimization within the Security and Socio-Cultural Communities (PROSPECT), to further enhance efforts to address the role of Vietnam in ivory, rhino horn, pangolin and tiger trade.
- Enhance interagency cooperation through targeted activities, particularly involving prosecutors or judges, with USAID interventions, taken in conjunction with other U.S. government agencies, such as the Department of Justice and the Department of State, including the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.
- In league with USAID/ASEAN, improve cross-pillar working arrangements within ASEAN by facilitating dialogues to synchronize CWT approaches and policies. A particular focus should be on increasing cohesiveness of regional and national actions of the ASEAN Working Group on CITES and Wildlife Enforcement and ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Organized Crimes Working Group in Illicit Wildlife and Timber Trafficking.



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