

Sars intercepts 17 rhino horn at OR Tambo

The South African Revenue Service (Sars) Customs unit, working with the South African Police Service (SAPS), successfully foiled an attempt to smuggle rhino horn out of the country. Sars said the operation came after it received information about the suspicious luggage en route to Abu Dhabi.



Source: www.pixabay.com

In a statement, Sars said: “The Customs team responded by dispatching officers to the baggage area where the luggage was scanned, revealing images. Two items of luggage wrapped in plastic were taken to the Customs search area where the luggage was rescanned and searched.”

Upon inspection, 17 pieces of rhino horn, weighing 25kg were found. The SAPS took the passenger to the International Police Station. The goods were handed to the SAPS for further investigations.

The revenue collector said it had seen increased attempts to smuggle rhino horn through the OR Tambo International Airport.

During the period July 2020 to April 2022, there were seven rhino horn detections totalling 137 pieces and weighing 482kg detected through profiling and information sharing networks.



Rhino poaching returns after pandemic-induced lull

Tanisha Heiberg 2 Aug 2021



Other detections were:

- April 2022: 12 pieces of rhino horn, weighing 30.7kg
- December 2021: six pieces of rhino horn, weighing 4kg declared as 'personal effects'.
- December 2021: five pieces of rhino horn, weighing 10kg declared as 'scanners'.
- July 2021: 32 pieces of rhino horn, weighing 160kg declared as 'live plants'.
- February 2021: 18 pieces of rhino horn, weighing 63kg declared as 'HP cartridge developers'.
- December 2020: 17 pieces of rhino horn weighing 72.4kg concealed in a geyser.
- September 2020: six pieces, weighing 4.9kg declared as 'coffee beans'.
- July 2020: 41 pieces, weighing 137kg declared as 'fine arts'.

'Criminals have become more brazen'

Sars Commissioner Edward Kieswetter expressed appreciation for the focused attention by all the law enforcement agencies to deal with pervasive efforts by criminal elements to smuggle rhino horn.

"It is clear that the criminals have become more brazen in smuggling especially the rhino horn. The exemplary efforts by Customs officers working with their counterparts in the South African Police Service to stem these heinous crimes deserves commendation of all South Africans.

"Our message must be unambiguous to these criminal syndicates, that we will spare no effort in confronting and dealing with them. Our future generation deserves to see the national heritage of our wild animals," he said.

He added that the country needed to not only protect endangered species, but also ensure that "those bent on this way of life, are prosecuted, convicted and sentenced to prison for a long time. This is a deliberate and systemic sabotage of our economy".

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