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Press Release

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COOPERATION LEADS TO TANZANIAN ARRESTS IN VIETNAM’S BIGGEST IVORY SEIZURE CASE

Six Tanzanian customs department officials have been arrested in connection to the seizure of over 6000 kilograms of ivory in Vietnam earlier this year.

On 5 March this year Vietnamese customs authorities in Hai Phong port confiscated 6,232 kilograms of elephant tusks hidden in 114 boxes of plastic waste inside a container which had been transported from Tanzania via Malaysia.

Vietnamese officials believe that the African elephant tusks, estimated to be worth $US10.5m (15 billion VND), were on route to China when they were intercepted in Hai Phong.

The officials, from the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), were arrested on suspicion of accepting bribes from smugglers and are believed to have approved the export documents for the illegal shipment of tusks that were seized in Vietnam.

Since the case was uncovered in March, Education for Nature-Vietnam (ENV) has sought to encourage law enforcement agencies in both Vietnam and Tanzania to cooperate and share information that would assist in the investigation.

“We believe that the efforts of the government agencies in cooperating on this case have been instrumental in yielding this result. The action taken by the Tanzanian government in making these arrests sends a strong message to wildlife smugglers,” said Ms Nguyen Thi Van Anh, Wildlife Trade Program Manager.

“ENV recognizes the excellent efforts of law enforcement agencies in Vietnam, in particular Hai Phong Customs.”

“This case clearly demonstrates how the sharing of information across borders can result in criminals being arrested, and, hopefully, others being deterred from illegally trading wildlife,” said Ms Van Anh.

The Tanzanian Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Ms Shamsa Mwangunga, has said that the arrested officials are being detained in custody and questioned with the aim of identifying the criminals responsible for the shipment.

International trade in ivory was banned in 1989 under the UN Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species. In Vietnam the ivory trade was banned in 1992, but shops are still permitted to sell ivory dating from before the ban.
About Education for Nature - Vietnam

Education for Nature-Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam’s first non-governmental organization focused on conservation of nature and the environment. Our mission is to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about environmental issues of local, national and global significance, ranging from protection of wildlife and natural ecosystems to climate change. We employ creative and innovative strategies to influence attitudes and behavior, not only highlighting the need to protect Vietnam’s rich natural heritage and the living world around us, but also encouraging greater public participation in achieving this important and challenging task.

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