

S.Africa arrests two Vietnamese with record 41kg of rhino horns

November 1 2014



A cache of 41kg of smuggled rhino horns is seen at O.R. Tambo Airport in Johannesburg after it was confiscated from two Vietnamese passengers on a flight to Hanoi from Mozambique

Two Vietnamese men were arrested at Johannesburg airport with a record haul of 18 rhino horns, weighing 41 kilos (90 pounds), during a stopover on a flight from Mozambique to Vietnam, South African police

said Saturday.

"This is the largest haul of [rhino horns](#) seized in one operation in South Africa," said a joint statement from police and customs officials.

The flight had started in Maputo, Mozambique, and was heading to Hanoi.

Police said it was believed the horns, which were still intact, were removed from South African rhinos.

The two Vietnamese, aged 25 and 26, were in police custody after being stopped late Friday. They were due to appear in court on Monday.

"They will possibly be charged with transporting, possession and dealing in endangered species," said lieutenant general Solomon Makgale, a [police](#) spokesman.

The Qatar Airways flight had been due to make a one-hour stop at OR Tambo airport but a "very credible" tip-off led authorities to ask passengers to leave the plane so they could investigate, Makgale said.

Demand for rhinoceros horn—which is made from keratin, the same material in hair and nails—has skyrocketed in recent years, largely driven by demand from Asia, where the powdered horn is valued for its supposed medicinal properties.

South Africa is home to around 20,000 rhinos, some 80 percent of the worldwide population.

The country is in the midst of a growing rhino poaching crisis, and has seen more than 730 rhinos killed this year.



Vietnamese pop diva Hong Nhung, fights back tears as she stands near the carcass of a decomposing white rhino on the banks of a river in the Kruger National Park on September 12, 2014



A campaign poster on a building in downtown Hanoi on August 28, 2014 warns people not to buy rhino horn

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