

Vietnam customs make massive seizure of rhino horns, elephant tusks

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A cache of 41 kilos of smuggled rhino horns are seen at the O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg after they were confiscated from two Vietnamese passengers leaving the country on a flight from Mozambique to Hanoi, on October 31, 2014

Vietnamese customs have seized elephant tusks and rhino horns worth millions of dollars on the black market from a flight arriving from

France, officials said Friday.

The haul weighed around 65 kilogrammes (143 pounds) and included 18 pieces of elephant tusk and three [rhino horns](#), which are believed to have come from Africa, a customs official told AFP.

"The shipment was seized Thursday at Noi Bai international airport (in Hanoi) on a Vietnam Airlines flight arriving from France," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Rhino [horn](#)—which is illegal but highly sought after—is now estimated to command more than \$50,000 per kilogramme of horn in Vietnam.

The powdered horn, made of the substance similar to human fingernails, is popularly believed to have medicinal properties, although there is no scientific proof for the claim.

Internationally, the rhino horn trade was banned by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1977.

The global ivory trade has been banned since 1989 but there has been a dramatic surge in [illegal trafficking](#) since 2005.

In Vietnam and China, [elephant tusks](#) and other body parts are prized for decoration, as talismans, and for use in traditional medicine.

Some shops in the communist country still sell products made from ivory illegally despite a 1992 ban which outlawed the trade.

Environmental groups have long accused Vietnam of being one of the world's worst countries for trade in endangered species, and there have been a number of campaigns to warn Vietnamese not to use products

from [endangered animals](#).

But they have had little impact so far and demand for rhino horn remains high with people mistakenly believing it can cure anything from cancer to hangovers.

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