

Cambodia seizes shipment of ivory hidden in hollow logs

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Cambodian authorities display pieces of smuggled ivory

Cambodia has seized nearly a tonne of ivory hidden in hollowed-out logs and discovered inside an abandoned shipping container, an official said Wednesday.

The country has become a key regional transit point for the illicit wildlife trade.

Nearly 280 pieces of ivory—full and partial elephant tusks—were found in the [container](#) at the southwestern port of Sihanoukville after sitting there for a year.

The shipment, owned by a company based in Mozambique, left Ivory Coast and arrived in Cambodia in December 2016, an official said.

"When the containers arrived at the port we found strange objects in the scanners," said Lim Bun Heng, deputy prosecutor for Preah Sihanouk province.

"We requested the company owner to open the containers but no one showed up," he said, adding that eventually authorities seized the shipment.

An inspection uncovered the ivory, some of it hidden in logs.

Cambodia's elephant population is small but demand for ivory in China and Vietnam—and in the smaller domestic market—has made it a hub in recent years for the banned trade in wildlife parts.

Corruptible officials and weak law enforcement are an attractive mix for wildlife smugglers, more so as neighbouring Thailand tries to improve its reputation as the regional centre for the trade in endangered species.

Ivory is prized for its beauty while demand for traditional medicine has led to the smuggling of rhino horn and pangolin scales.

Chinese demand has driven a decade-long rise in elephant poaching, especially in Africa. China has pledged to phase out ivory sales by the

end of the year.

In December last year Cambodian authorities found 1.5 tonnes of mostly ivory and pangolin parts in containers on the outskirts of the capital Phnom Penh, also originating from Mozambique.

Local media reported earlier this year that the government had decided to keep [ivory](#) stockpiles instead of destroying them, sparking criticism from conservation groups.

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