

Thailand seizes large elephant tusks worth over \$450,000

January 12 2018, by Kaweerit Kaewjinda



Thai customs officials display seized ivory during a press conference in Bangkok, Thailand, Friday, Jan. 12, 2018. Thai authorities seized 148 kilograms full elephant tusk and 31 tusk fragments originating from Nigeria destined for China worth over 15 million baht (\$469,800). (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

Thai authorities have seized 148 kilograms (326 pounds) of African elephant ivory, including three large tusks, worth around 15 million baht (\$469,800) from a Bangkok airport.

The haul from Nigeria consisted of the [tusks](#) and 31 tusk fragments that were seized Jan. 5 after the cargo was flagged by officials. The tusks were destined for China where there is a large demand for [ivory](#), police Gen. Chalermkiat Srivorakan said Friday.

The size of the tusks shows they were taken from large African elephants, which remain scarce in the wild, and the tusks' discolored state indicates they had been kept in storage for a long time, said Somkiat Soontornpittakkool, an official from the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation.

"From what I can tell, these ivory tusks were taken from very big elephants, and [elephants](#) of that size are now hard to find even in Africa," Somkiat said. "And judging from how the tusks look, they appear to have been taken a while ago. They weren't hunted recently. They were taken and stored for a while before smugglers sent them out."

A Customs Department statement said that the seized ivory will be impounded as police widen investigations to identify suspects involved in the smuggling.



Forensic officers inspect ivory seized at the customs office after a press conference in Bangkok, Thailand, Friday, Jan. 12, 2018. Thai authorities seized 148 kilograms full elephant tusk and 31 tusk fragments originating from Nigeria destined for China†worth over 15 million baht (\$469,800). (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

Thailand had been considered to have the largest unregulated ivory market in the world and had been threatened with sanctions under the trade of protected wildlife species, but it introduced new laws and amendments in 2014 and 2015 to regulate domestic ivory markets and criminalize the sale of African elephant ivory.

Thailand is still considered a major transit hub and destination for smuggled tusks, but the biggest demand comes from China.

Last year, Thai officials seized 510 smuggled elephant tusk fragments in

four separate cases, the Customs Department said. Rhinoceros horns, pangolin scales, turtles, and other exotic wildlife are also repeatedly smuggled through Thailand.

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