

Hong Kong seizes 1.5 tonnes of smuggled elephant ivory

10 September 2010



A pile of seized elephant tusks in Hong Kong in 2006. Hong Kong customs officers said Friday they have seized over one and a half tonnes of smuggled elephant ivory worth 10.9 million Hong Kong dollars (1.3 million US) shipped from Tanzania.

Hong Kong customs officers have seized over one and a half tonnes of smuggled elephant ivory worth 10.9 million Hong Kong dollars (1.3 million US) shipped from Tanzania, they said Friday.

The 384 ivory tusks -- weighing 1.55 tonnes -- were found Thursday inside two containers labelled as "dried anchovies" at the Tsing Yi container terminal, the Ports and Maritime Command said in a statement.

Two men, aged 46 and 48, have been arrested as part of a continuing investigation, the statement said..

The international trade in elephant ivory, with rare exceptions, has been outlawed since 1989 after elephant populations in Africa dropped from the millions in the mid-20th century to some 600,000 by the end of the 1980s.

Anyone found guilty of importing unmanifested cargo into Hong Kong faces a fine up to two million dollars (260,000 US) and imprisonment for seven

years.

In addition, those guilty of importing, exporting or possessing an [endangered species](#) for commercial purposes face a fine of up to five million dollars (640,000 US) and two years in jail, the statement said.

Kenya seized two tonnes of raw elephant ivory bound for Asian markets in August, saying it represented the country's largest recovery of [elephant ivory](#) in the recent past.

At least 4,000 [elephants](#) are killed each year across Africa to supply the illegal ivory trade, according to the conservation group WWF.

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