

Combating wildlife contraband intensified

Staff Reporter

NAMIBIA'S air, sea and land ports in have been identified as key hubs for the export of illegal wildlife products and training is crucial for officials to identify contraband when people and cargo move through checkpoints.

In this regard customs officials and police officers from Windhoek and Walvis Bay received training in species identification during the use of baggage and container scanners to detect smuggled wildlife contraband.

The Namibian government is committed to combating wildlife trade in the transport sector and agreed to partner in the training of 40 Department of Customs and Excise officials and Namibian Police officers based at Hosea Kutako International airport and the Walvis Bay harbour.

The "Combating Wildlife Trafficking in Namibia" project is funded by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs in the United States. The project is managed by the Namibia Nature Foundation.

It is through this commitment that Namibia is in partnership with the United Nations' Office of Drugs and Crimes Container Programme Control (UNODC CPC), in an effort to implement better controls and sophisticated approaches to improving detection of illicit goods in containers moving through the port Walvis Bay.



Topics covered during the course included an overview of legal and illegal wildlife trade, an introduction to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), modes of transport and concealment of wildlife specimens, detection of wildlife specimens in baggage, cargo and container scanners, and identification of traffickers.

Experts on hand included Karen Nott of the Namibia Nature Foundation, who gave much needed insight into the timber trade and CITES permit system, Francois Theart, of Snakes of Namibia, and Bonnie Galloway, of Namibia Nature Foundation, who provided

an introduction to the identification of commonly smuggled protected reptile species as well as protected succulent plants.

Hands on experience was given in Windhoek as live reptiles, plants, confiscated ivory and rhino horn, ivory bangles and ostrich eggs were sent through baggage and cargo scanners in order for course participants to gain a better understanding of how to look for organic products using different views and image analyses on these scanners.

Participants were then tasked to conceal various wildlife contraband using different masking materials to attempt to prevent detection through the scanner.

In Walvis Bay, a truck full of packaged charcoal was used to conceal suitcases containing ivory, rhino horn and pangolin scales and sent through the container scanner. A four-wheel drive vehicle was also scanned with this luggage and participants were tasked with identifying the contraband from the different views that the scanner produced.

"This workshop was very much needed. When we received the invitation, we did not know what the workshop was about. When I attended the training, I realised that this training on wildlife smuggling is what we really needed," said Ms Pamela Smith, Chief Customs and Excise Officer.

"It was an honour to be part of this workshop. We need more of these types of workshops. We need to share information. I hope that from now on that the co-operation between customs officials and police officers will increase," said Deputy Commissioner Barry de Klerk, head of the Protected Resources Division of Nampol.

Source: traffic.org (https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Ftraffic.org%2F&h=AT0BtAx-Jgm_eNlwzwwuSW6IC_DZXliJqEkTD5gq4YTqr4lo0Ju3B_0WoPxHISJuNOPQ1FIWxbT1vE0tC7k1FCNvK5Vv5iaEEu1bTShoz950Tng6U_ShkDykfOwMjOxizlJhX9VqbB1Z2k843KtHyGtKfQg_IH35ry4oMX99RjHDPkUEoXe_jXIFDZ_sG6rVzJ_Banh59bJG6TjNYL3vgLJI4X5Swx2YvZonUaSkRssliKLUpo2V5Pj4V5fupWbsRFdEYJSpnNB2KyMuTdro2GP_XlJToTqWiXDTjPvz3C5j0OC1e_sXESnmVMgc5KNrd6ahriJ2sYztICmij7NiOm357dhHKAxuHv1kp_DvdHo12pXaK1YT3E3Px4m3m0YovYDzEqjHsBGwBZi6fA6kH_dn3StfENLCHFPHGiu3KMH1iayhygw0vfrhH26te84693F62nszO68sw8ys6n6Gkytnd1xa5z_sTFWjer0P6nQwBIVJG1kE_MzNb73mTfQgJYkUE8AzFVD7zMFH8lFfz43ImAJCdD1QiHRYFrh6BFNvHEXdkIHVKEyBvRd1a_cqDXtphHsh_yUm7Lo1vkgJgogjuBA4dWG8yWK5nObv9ascvumgEeNnXqTFVPOfi0Ug).



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