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Bad news for poachers: Vietnam slaps rhino horn trader with longest ever jail term

China and Vietnam remain lucrative markets for trading rhino horns, elephant tusks, pangolins and tiger parts.

by [Agence France-Presse](#)
08-12-2021
in [News](#)

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A [rhino horn](#) trader has been sentenced to 14 years in jail, the longest ever prison term a Vietnamese court has handed down for the crime, a local conservation group said on Wednesday.

Vietnam is both a consumption hub and popular transit point for the multi-billion-dollar trade in animal parts.

Authorities have long vowed to stem the flow of illegal wildlife crisis-crossing its borders, but experts have warned the black market persists thanks to weak law enforcement.

Earlier this week, Do Minh Toan, 36, received 14 years in jail for trading and trafficking rhino horns from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) into Vietnam.

PARTS WORTH MILLIONS SEIZED

It came after a 2019 discovery by customs officials at Hanoi's Noi Bai international airport of 55 pieces of rhino horn – weighing around 125 kilograms (275 pounds) – in a carefully disguised shipment.

The pieces were encased in plaster and police used rods to break the casts apart.

According to non-governmental organisation Education for Nature Vietnam (ENV), the punishment is the toughest to date in the country for crimes relating to rhino horns and the wildlife trade.

“Amid the negative opinions about Vietnam's handling of wildlife crimes, this heavy penalty showed that Vietnam's competent authorities have begun to mete out serious punishment to deter people from wildlife crimes,”

ENV vice director Bui Thi Ha

The organisation said Vietnam had recorded 317 crimes relating to rhino horns since 2017. A total of 24 people have been arrested and charged, with the average jail term for those found guilty more than five years.

Vietnam and China remain lucrative markets for elephant tusks, pangolins, tiger parts, and rhino horns.



This White rhino's horns were removed in Balule Private Game Preserve to discourage the killing of rhinos by poachers. Photo: Terry White. Flickr

THE MISCONCEPTION

Some believe that rhino horn helps cure diseases and hangovers when ground into powder.

Only about 29,000 rhinos survive in the wild, down from half a million at the beginning of the 20th century, according to conservationists.

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