

**CRIME**

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*Copy rewriter*

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## **Coffee beans, plants and print cartridges: Here's how smugglers conceal rhino horns**

*Smugglers are getting more creative in the way they conceal contraband – such as rhino horn – out of South Africa.*



Picture - Sars.

The South African Revenue Service (Sars) Customs unit working with the South African Police Service (Saps) successfully foiled an attempt to smuggle rhino horns out of the country this week.

Officials received information about suspicious luggage en route to Abu Dhabi.

The Customs team responded by dispatching officers to the baggage area where the luggage was scanned, revealing images,” said Sars in a statement.



Photo supplied:

When officials searched the bag, they found two items wrapped in plastic which were then taken rescanned and searched.

“Upon inspection, seventeen (17) pieces of rhino horn, weighing 25kg were found. Saps took the passenger to the International Police Station. The goods were handed to the Saps for further investigations.”

## How smugglers are concealing rhino horn

Sars says there have been increased attempts to smuggle rhino horns through the OR Tambo International Airport.

“During the period July 2020 to April 2022, there were seven rhino horn detections totalling 137 pieces and weighing 482kg, detected through profiling and information-sharing networks,” said Sars.

- April 2022: 12 pieces of rhino horn, weighing 30.7kg
- December 2021: six pieces, weighing 4kg declared as ‘Personal Effects’.
- December 2021: five pieces, weighing 10kg declared as ‘Scanners’.
- July 2021: 32 pieces, weighing 160kg declared as ‘Live Plants’.
- February 2021: 18 pieces, weighing 63kg declared as ‘HP Cartridges Developers’.
- December 2020: 17 pieces weighing 72.4kg concealed in a geyser.
- September 2020: six pieces, weighing 4.9kg declared as ‘Coffee Beans’.
- July 2020: 41 pieces, weighing 137kg declared as ‘Fine Arts’.

Sars Commissioner [Edward Kieswetter](#) commended law enforcement agencies on successfully dealing with pervasive efforts by criminal elements to smuggle the rhino horns.

“It is clear the criminals have become more brazen in smuggling, especially the rhino horn. The exemplary efforts by Customs officers working with their counterparts in the South African Police Service to stem these heinous crimes deserve the commendation of all South Africans,” Kieswetter said.

“Our message must be unambiguous to these criminal syndicates, that we will spare no effort in confronting and dealing with them. Our future generation deserves to see the national heritage of our wild animals.”

“As a country, we do not only need to protect these endangered species but ensure that those bent on this way of life, are prosecuted, convicted and sentenced to prison for a long time. This is deliberate and systemic sabotage of our economy,” he concluded.



Photo

supplied: Sars

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