

Customs foil donkey genitals smuggling, intercepts 40ft container



Officials of the Nigeria Customs Service

Operatives of the Nigeria Customs Service have intercepted a 40-foot container loaded with donkey genitals along the Kaduna–Abuja Expressway, the Service said on Thursday.

The interception, suspected to be destined for illegal export, was uncovered on Friday, June 5, 2025, at about 9 pm following a coordinated surveillance operation by officers of the Special Wildlife Office and Customs Intelligence Unit.

The Comptroller-General of Customs, Adewale Adeniyi, disclosed this at a press briefing in Abuja on Thursday. The CG, who was represented by the National Public Relations Officer of the Service, Abdullahi Maiwada, described the seizure as part of the service’s intensified efforts to clamp down on illegal wildlife trade in Nigeria.

He said the interception highlights the growing involvement of transnational criminal networks in the exploitation of endangered species for illicit profits.

“This seizure is not an isolated incident,” Maiwada said at the NCS Government Warehouse in Karu, where the confiscated consignment was formally handed over to the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency for further action.

He stated, “In line with our efforts, I am pleased to inform you that on Friday, 5th June 2025, at approximately 2100 hours, operatives of the Nigeria Customs Service acting on credible intelligence intercepted a 1x40ft container loaded with donkey genitals along the Kaduna–Abuja Expressway.

“The interception was carried out under coordinated surveillance by officers of the SWO and CIU, further confirming the persistence of illegal wildlife trafficking networks in exploiting Nigeria’s corridors.

“After proper documentation and compliance with procedure, the seized items will be officially handed over today, Thursday, 10th July 2025, to the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency at the NCS Government Warehouse in Karu, Abuja, in line with our commitment to inter-agency collaboration and statutory mandates.”

The customs spokesperson added that the service has intensified operations through its Special Wildlife Office, which was created to combat the illegal trade in endangered species and to enforce Nigeria’s commitments under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

“This seizure is not an isolated incident. Over the past 12 months, the Special Wildlife Office has uncovered and disrupted multiple illicit wildlife trafficking operations across the country.

“Noteworthy among these include the recovery of six African Grey Parrots and the arrest of one suspect on 10 December 2024 at Kano, the interception of two live pangolins, five Mona monkeys, two Tantalus monkeys, one baby baboon, and an African Grey Parrot at Lagos Airport in May 2025. In another separate operation, there was an arrest of one suspect in the Ikom area of Cross River State linked to seizures of 213 parrot heads, six eagle heads, 128 hornbill heads, and other exotic species.

“On 13 January 2025, the Service handed over rescued tortoises to the National Park Service in Oyo State. Several seizures involving taxidermy specimens, such as life-sized lions, zebra hides, gorilla parts, and pangolin scales, have been recorded in various ports and logistics routes nationwide. One such case involved 119.4kg of pangolin scales found in a container concealed in sacks around the Calabar area of Cross River State. In another development, 120 African Grey Parrots were rescued, and one suspect was arrested in the Fufore area of Adamawa State.

“These figures underscore the scale, sophistication, and profitability of the illegal wildlife trade,” Maiwada said, adding that many of the operations are linked to wider criminal syndicates also involved in money laundering, arms smuggling, and illicit currency flows.

Maiwada said the NCS considers this an issue of national importance, not only from an ecological standpoint but also because wildlife trafficking is increasingly linked with other forms of organised crimes, including money laundering, arms smuggling, and illicit currency flows.

He said, “The Service, under the leadership of the Comptroller-General of Customs, Adewale Adeniyi, and his management team, is investing in capacity building, digital surveillance, species identification, and cross-border enforcement frameworks to combat this menace.

“Our wildlife office’s investments, including digital forensics and phone analysis of suspects, have strengthened our evidence base, with several prosecutions currently underway. In closing, I wish to assure Nigerians and the international community that the Nigeria Customs Service is resolute in enforcing the provisions of the Nigeria Customs Service Act 2023, CITES, and other national environmental laws.

“We urge the public, especially those in border communities and logistics hubs, to report suspicious movements of wildlife products. The fight against wildlife crime requires sustained collaboration, vigilance, and an unyielding commitment to justice. On behalf of the Comptroller-General and the management of the Nigeria Customs Service, I commend the gallant officers of the SWO and CIU, as well as the Customs Police Unit, and all our strategic partners for their contributions. The Service will continue to provide updates on future developments and prosecutions as they unfold.”