

Thailand intercepts rhino horn smuggling route to Laos



BANGKOK — 10 February 2026, Thai wildlife authorities have arrested a Vietnamese man at Suvarnabhumi Airport and seized 11.75 kilograms of rhino horn, disrupting a transnational wildlife trafficking operation that used Thailand as a transit point en route to Laos.

Sadudee Phanphakdee, director of the Office of Wildlife and Plant Protection under the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, said the arrest followed joint operations with C.I.Q. agencies and the Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Suppression Division police to curb cross-border wildlife trafficking.

The suspect, a 36-year-old Vietnamese national, was detained while attempting to move the contraband through Thailand to a neighbouring country, officials said.

Komkrit Pinsai, head of the Suvarnabhumi Airport Wildlife Checkpoint, said the arrest took place at about 20:00 on 9 February after officers detected irregularities in X-ray images of a foam box checked into an aircraft hold.

A joint team from the wildlife checkpoint, customs, immigration (Division 2) and environmental crime police inspected the luggage and identified it as belonging to the suspect, who had travelled from Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, transiting Ethiopia and Thailand, and was bound for Vientiane, Laos, on Thai Airways flight TG574.

A search uncovered six pieces of rhino horn, bundled into three packages and weighing a total of 11.75 kilograms. Officers also found three pieces of animal hide weighing 12 kilograms used to conceal the horn, and an iPhone 14 Pro Max allegedly used in the offence.

Authorities said the suspect failed to produce any permits for the export, import or transit of wildlife products. He was charged under three laws: the Wildlife Preservation and Protection Act B.E. 2562 (2019) for unauthorised transit; the Customs Act B.E. 2560 (2017) for importing restricted goods; and the Animal Epidemics Act B.E. 2558 (2015).

The suspect and the seized items were handed over to investigators at Suvarnabhumi Airport police station for legal proceedings. All of the items were sent to the Wildlife Forensic Science Centre for species verification to support the case.