



# IN THE NEWS: ANALYSIS OF VIETNAMESE RHINO HORN CRIMINAL CASES

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

African rhino populations have declined rapidly since 2007, primarily due to global increase in poaching for their horn. Global illegal rhino horn trade, driven by organised crime networks, benefits the few whilst impoverishing communities local to source populations who bear the costs of poaching activities and enforcement responses, e.g. insecurity, ecosystem degradation.

News on poaching and smuggling of African rhino is flooding the media. However, not many mentions information on court-cases, sentences and fines that arrested criminals face. In this report, we looked at 50 cases reported on online news related to Vietnamese offenders and/or seizures of rhino horn in Vietnam, from 2012 – 4 first months of 2018.

In total, over **828kg** of rhino horn were seized. The value of rhino horn worth up to **9,736,789 USD** were reported by the media. Of **50 cases** were documented, only **4** were reported on sentences and fines. A majority remains unknown to the public.

In most cases, arrested criminals were operated **independently** (70%), seized rhino horn were transported as **whole** rather than cut-up into small pieces. The most common smuggling method by arrested criminals were to **wrap rhino horn in foil**, and/or hidden in toy boxes, statues, furniture and even milk boxes.

88% of rhino horn were being transported from Africa countries (Mozambique, Kenya and South Africa) to Vietnam, with **Ho Chi Minh city** as the main destination. In most cases, seizures happened at **airports**, however train stations, border checking points and ports were also reported by media.

The most common airlines used to transport rhino horn from Africa to Vietnam were **Ethiopian Airways** and **Kenya Airlines**, followed by **Emirates airline** and **Qatar airways**.

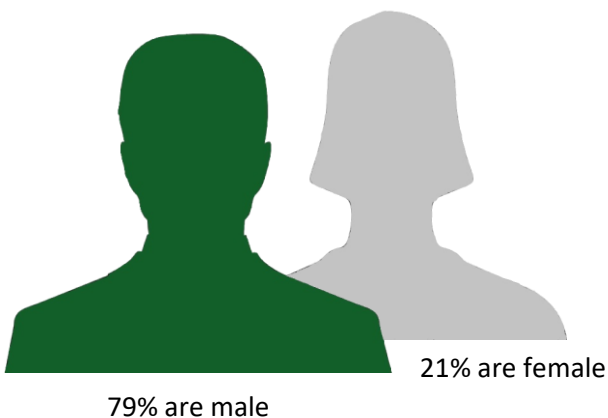
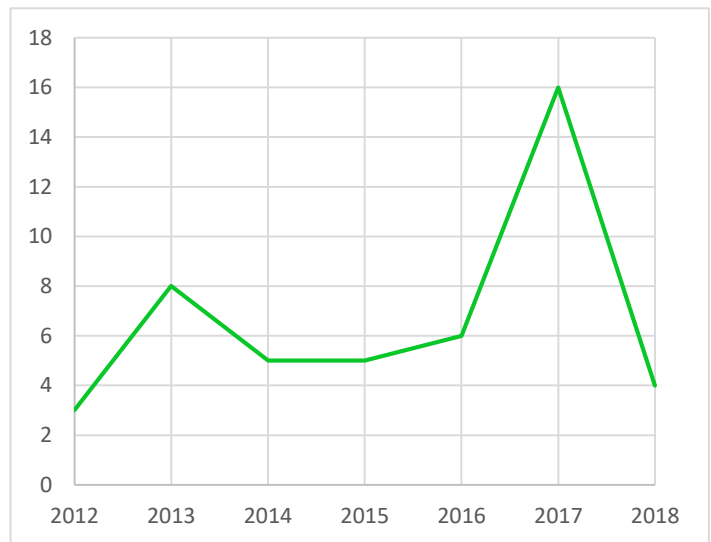
In this report, we also provide recommendation and call for urgent actions to be taken by key stakeholders.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

50 cases of rhino horn smuggling by Vietnamese criminals and rhino horn seizures in Vietnam were documented from 2012 – first fourth month of 2018. Here, we analysed data based on media reports in both English and Vietnamese to understand the scale of the trade, e.g. where rhino horn were transported to and from, the smuggler's nationalities and what the sentences for these criminals were.

## 2. KEY FINDINGS

**34%** recorded news reported rhino horn seizures in 2017



**79%** of reported criminal are **male**

828.59 kg of seized rhino horn were reported on the media

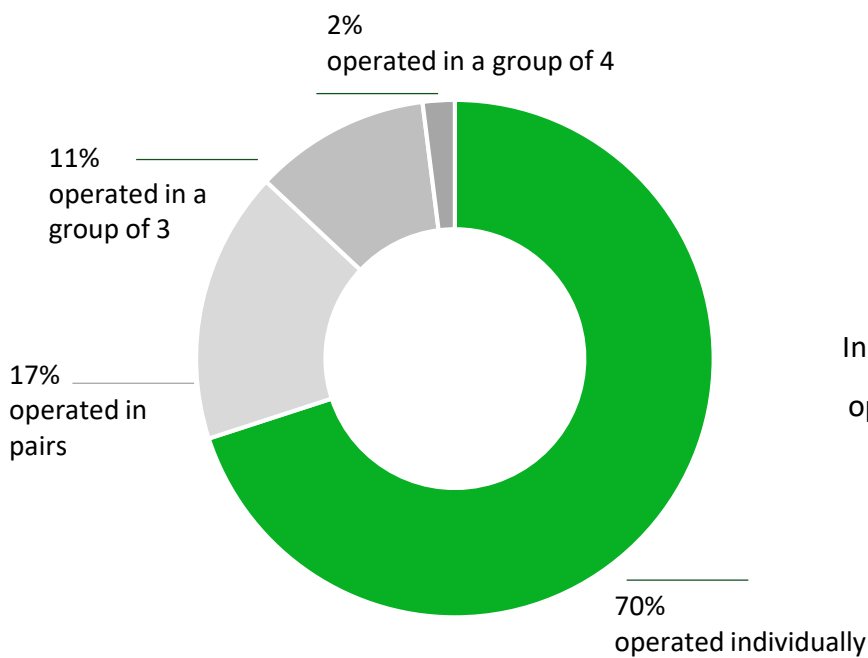
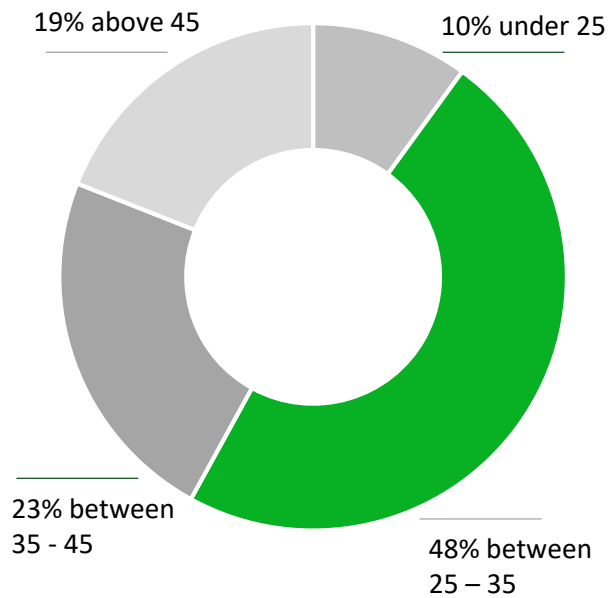
9,736,789

is the amount of rhino horn worth in USD reported by the media

4 Among all 50 cases documented, only 4 cases were reported with sentences

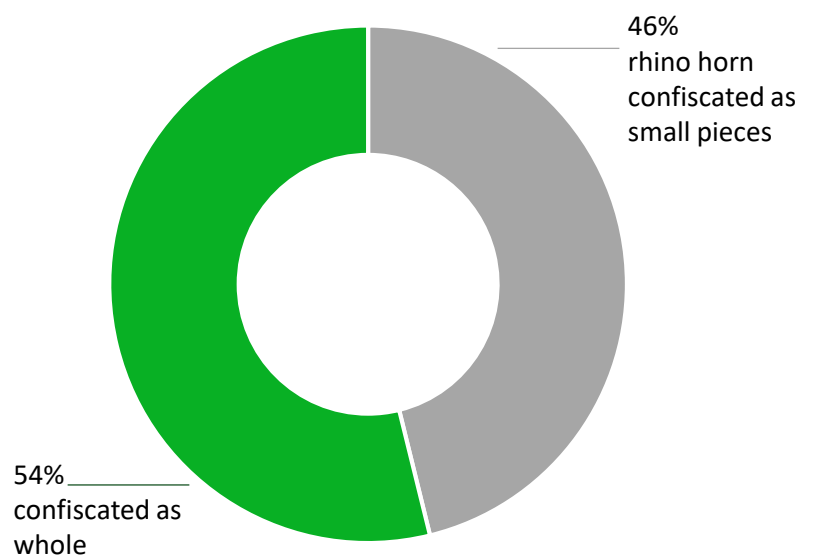
112 months is the total amount of sentences for 4 independent criminals illegal transported and traded a total of 56 rhino horns

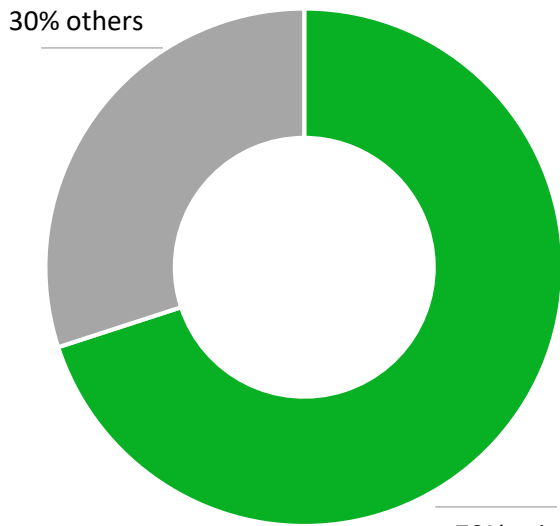
**48%** of reported criminals aged between 25 – 35. The average age of offenders is 35 years old.



In total, **70%** of criminals operated **independently** when arrested.

**54%** of rhino horn seized were **whole**.

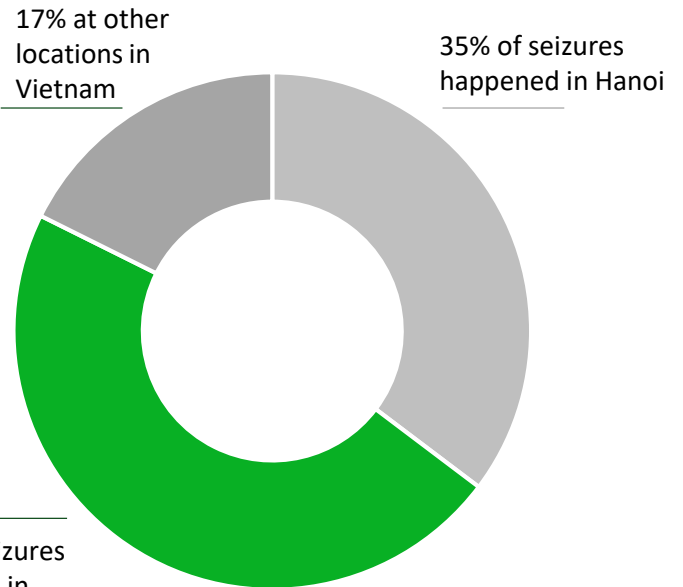




70% seizures location were in Vietnam

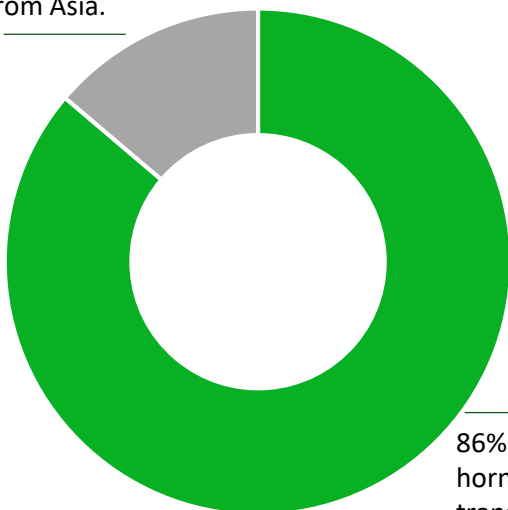
**70%** of seizure locations were in **Vietnam**. Other areas such as **South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya** and **Thailand** also have high percentage of seizures reported by the media.

**47%** of seizures happened at **Tan Son Nhat airport** (in Ho Chi Minh city), followed by **Noi Bai Airport** in Hanoi. Other locations such as **Da Nang port, Nghe An** and **Quang Ninh** contributed to **17%** of seizures.



47% of seizures happened in HCMC

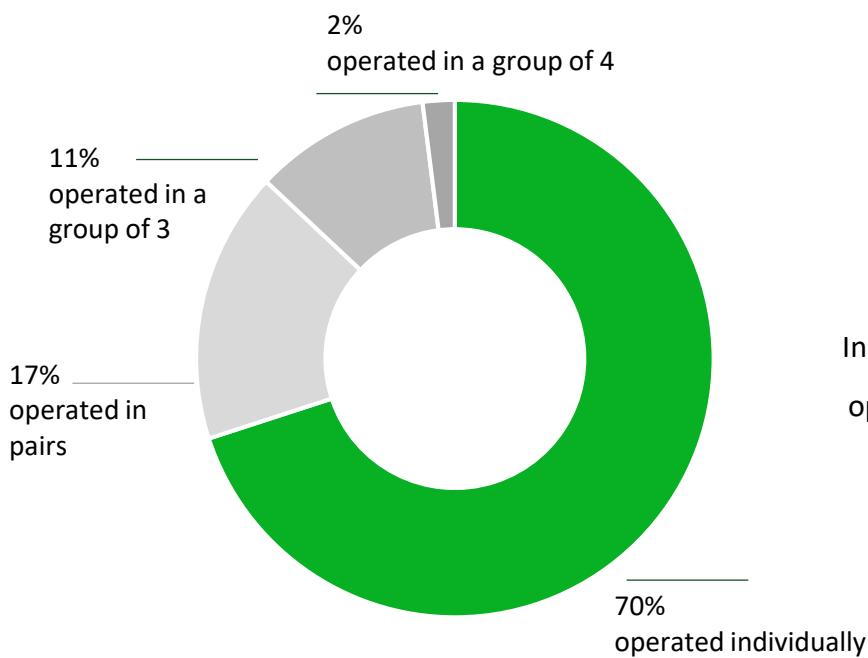
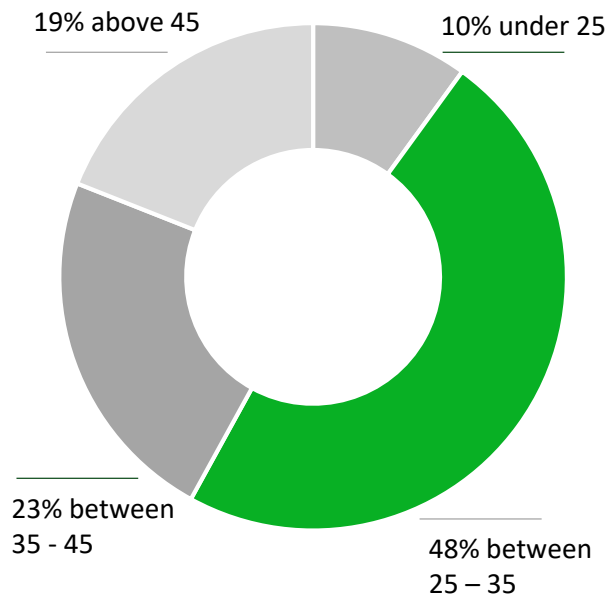
14% of seized rhino horn were transported from Asia.



86% of seized horn were transported from Africa.

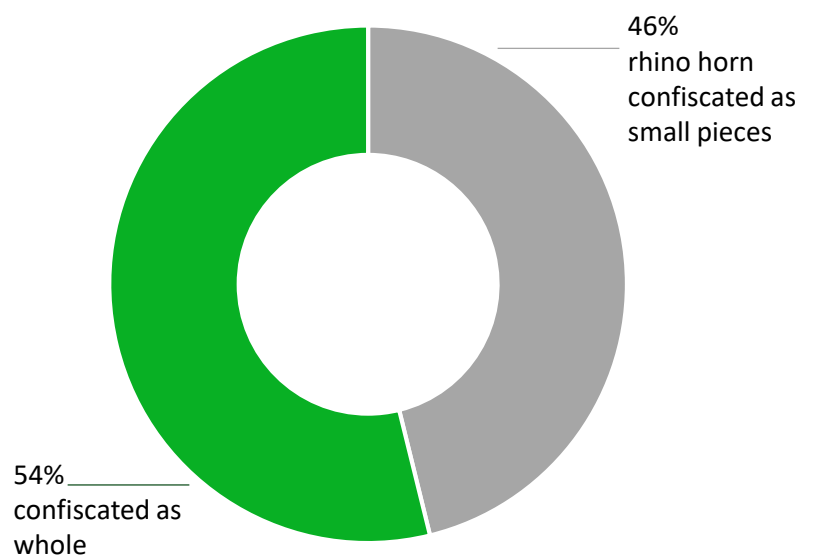
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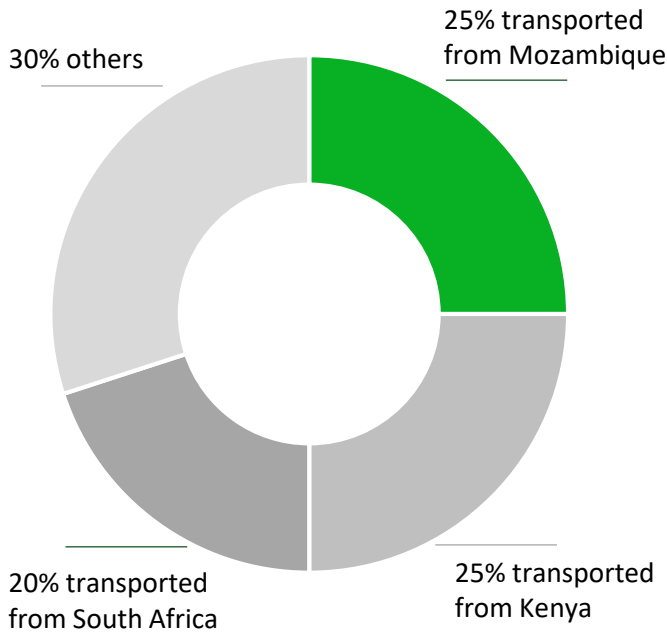
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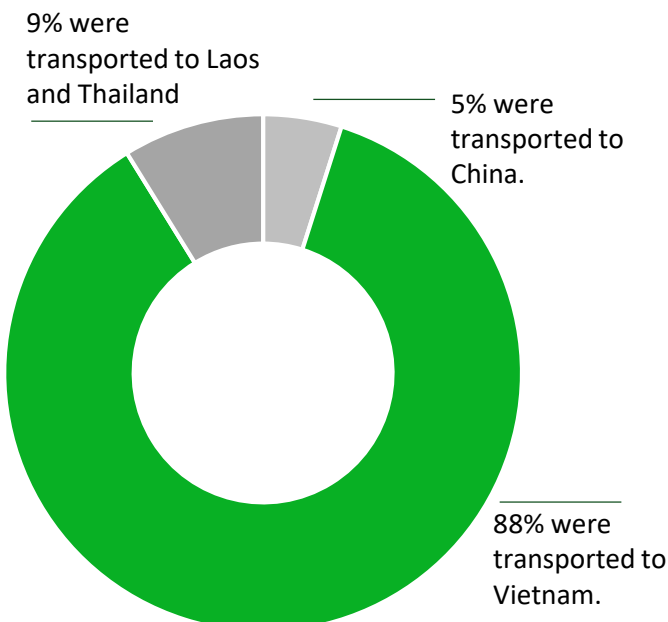
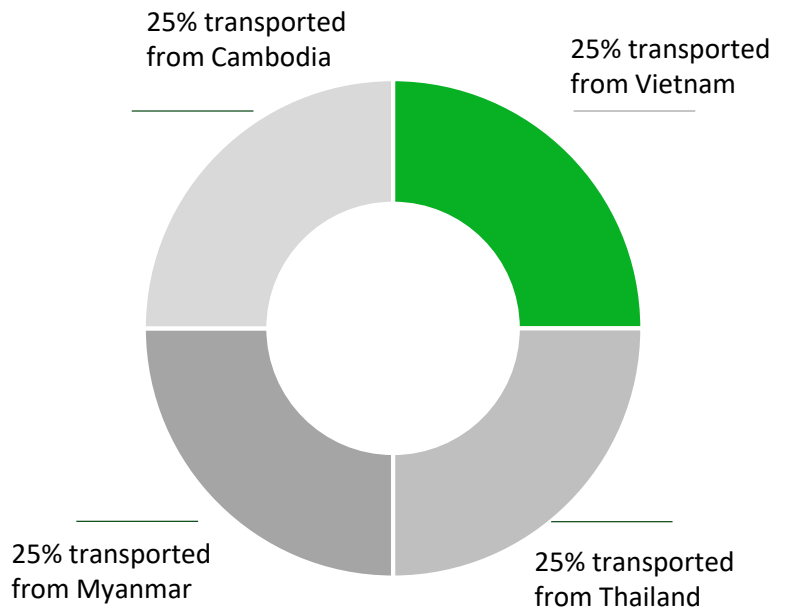
**54%** of rhino horn seized were **whole**.





Among seized rhino horns that were transported from Africa, **25%** were transported from **Mozambique** and **Kenya**. **20%** were from **South Africa**. Other African countries, such as **Ethiopia**, **Angola**, **Uganda** and **Congo** were also reported by the media.

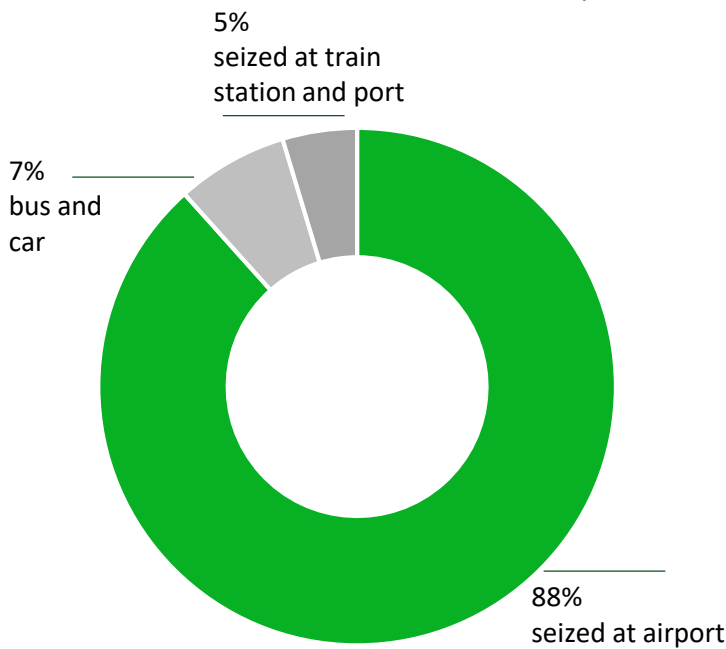
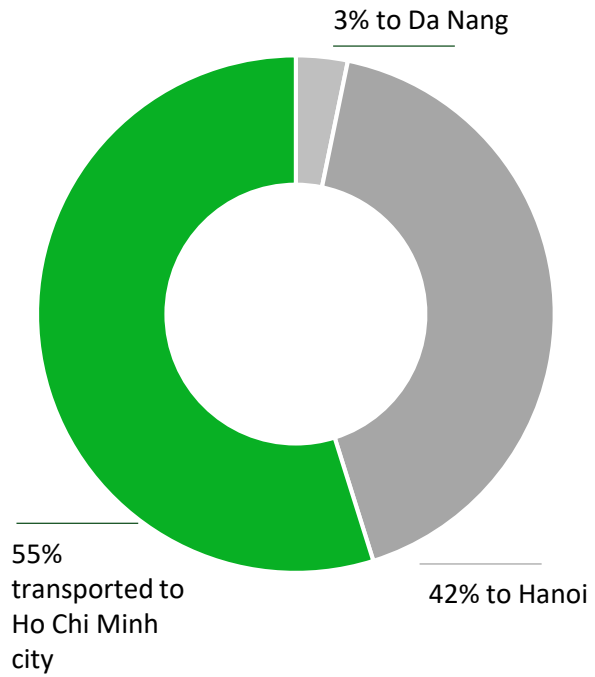
Among seized rhino horns that were transported from Asia, **25%** were transported from **Vietnam**. Other locations such as **Thailand**, **Myanmar** and **Cambodia** were also reported by the media.



**88%** of seized rhino horn were transported to **Vietnam**.

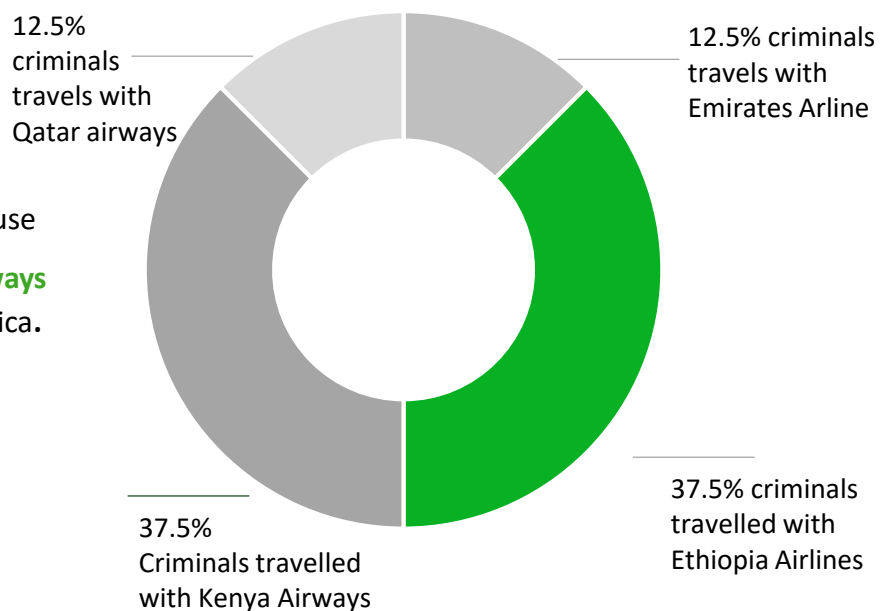


Among those that were destined to Vietnam, **55%** of seized rhino horn were being transported to **Ho Chi Minh city**.



In total, **88%** of reported seizures happened at **airport**.

In total, **75%** of criminals use **Ethiopia Airlines** and **Kenya Airways** to smuggle rhino horn out of Africa.



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Results from our media survey from 2012 – 2018 suggest that despite conservation efforts, Vietnam is still a major transit hub and consumer country. Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City remain high on the list as the two main destinations for rhino horn smuggling. Countries such as Laos and Cambodia might be emerging as transit hubs for the illegal trafficking of rhino horn and other wildlife products.

We recommend:

- Enforcing authorities and checking-spots at several border points between Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos;
- Collaboration with Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and Chinese embassies in South Africa, Kenya and Mozambique embassies to raise awareness on wildlife crimes;
- Collaboration with South Africa, Kenya and Mozambique embassies in Vietnam to raise awareness on illegal trafficking of rhino horn;
- Collaboration with travel agencies to raise awareness with tourist groups in Africa on illegal activities related to wildlife trade and consumption;
- Collaboration with Kenya Airways, Ethiopia Airlines, Emirates airline and Qatar Airways to tackle the illegal trade of rhino horn;
- Stricter penalties and transparency of court-cases.

## Wildlife trafficker gets 13 months in prison

*The People's Court of Ha Dong district in Hanoi on March 20 handed down a jail sentence of 13 months on Nguyen Mau Chien for smuggling 36kg of rhino horn.*

Chien was suspected to be the mastermind of a ring trafficking rhino horns, elephant tusks and products of wild animals from Africa to Vietnam.

Bui Thi Ha, Director of Policy and Legislative Campaigns at ENV, acknowledged Vietnam's breakthrough efforts in the fight against wildlife trafficking when Chien was brought to trial. However, she said, the 13-month imprisonment is not strict enough to reflect the seriousness of the case.

The centre has expected a higher prison term to be issued for the defendant which will be a deterrent to wildlife traffickers, she said.

The 2017 Penal Code, which came into force since January 1, 2018, increases maximum jail sentences for wildlife crime from seven years to 15 years.

The ENV on January 22 revealed that 16 international and social organisations in wildlife protection in Vietnam signed a letter calling on Vietnamese law enforcement agencies to strictly handle Chien.

Earlier at Chien's trial on November 27, 2017, the judging council asked for supplementary investigation to clarify the origin of some seized exhibits and conflicts in defendants' statements. Chien, who was arrested in April, 2017, was allegedly the head of a wild animal trafficking ring from Africa to Vietnam. In 2007, he was arrested and punished in Tanzania for illegally transporting wild animals.

In the last five years, his ring is believed to have expanded its operations in Africa, focusing on rhino horn, elephant tusks and pangolin scales trading.

In September 2017, in a visit to Vietnam, a delegation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)'s Secretariat and Vietnamese authorities reviewed the ratio of arresting and prosecuting of wildlife crimes. CITES recommended that Vietnam strengthen efforts in trying and apply stricter punishments for the crimes.-VNA

Source: <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/environment/197592/wildlife-trafficker-gets-13-months-in-prison.html>



Hanoi, January 18, 2018

Respectfully to:

- The Chief Justice of Ha Dong district court
- The Chief Procurator of the Ha Dong District Procurary
- The Chief Justice of the Supreme People's Court
- The Chief Justice of the Hanoi Court
- The Chief Procurator of the Hanoi Procuracy
- The Minister and the Chief of the Government Office

**Re: Urging the imposition of a strict sentence against Nguyen Mau Chien and his accomplices at the upcoming first-instance trial at Ha Dong District Court**

Dear Sir/Madam,

The arrest of Nguyen Mau Chien – the alleged leader of a wildlife trafficking network – and his accomplices Nguyen Van Tung, Nguyen Mau Thuan and Le Thi Hong, the prosecution against these subjects for violations of Article 155.1 of Penal Code 2009, and the opening of the first-instance trial at Ha Dong District Court on November 27, 2017 was a huge success that proves the determination of Vietnamese authorities to take action against transnational wildlife trafficking networks. The case file was later returned for further investigation, specifically into the origin of the confiscated wildlife and inconsistency in the subjects' testimonies. The tentative date of the second round of the trial is January 26, 2018.

We, representatives of 16 international organizations and non-governmental organizations working on wildlife conservation in Vietnam, hereby congratulate the efforts of the Vietnamese law enforcement agencies in successfully taking action to dismantle the wildlife trafficking network headed by Nguyen Mau Chien. We expect that the efforts of law enforcement agencies will result in a strong punishment on Nguyen Mau Chien and his accomplices in the upcoming trial. A severe sentence for Chien would also align with the wildlife crime zero tolerance policies of the Communist Party and the State, reinforce Vietnam's commitment to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and serve to underline the widely held view that wildlife trafficking is a serious crime.

Nguyen Mau Chien was allegedly the leader of a major criminal network that traffics wildlife from Africa to Vietnam. He was arrested and administratively sanctioned in Africa in 2007 due to illegal transportation of wildlife products. In 2015-2016, he was

suspected to be the owner of several tons of ivory and rhino horn confiscated in Vietnam's main ports (Hai Phong, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City). Nguyen Mau Chien was also known as the owner of a tiger farm in Thanh Hoa, currently housing 11 tigers, one of which caused serious injuries to a 13-year-old boy back in May 2017. On April 27, 2017, Chien's accomplices, Nguyen Van Tung and Nguyen Mau Thuan, were caught red-handed while transporting 15 pieces of rhino horn (weighing at 34 kilograms) from Ho Chi Minh City to Hanoi under Chien's direction. On May 1, 2017, Chien turned himself in. Police raided Chien's house and seized 23 pieces of rhino horn, two dead tiger cubs, 25 animal claws, 201 animal teeth, and an assortment of ivory products (390 chopsticks, 20 bracelets, 45 combs, 39 statues, 4 necklaces, and 120 key chains). The arrest of Nguyen Mau Chien and his accomplices is a milestone in the battle against wildlife traffickers in Vietnam, as this is the first time a suspected leader of a wildlife trafficking network is apprehended and prosecuted.

In October 2016, the Conference of the Parties to the CITES Convention (COP17) decided that the CITES Secretariat would conduct a mission to Vietnam to review arrests, seizures, prosecutions, convictions, and penalties of rhino horn crimes in Vietnam. After the mission in November 2017, the CITES Secretariat recommended that Vietnam needed to increase the efforts to dismantle syndicates and arrest criminals, especially kingpins, expedited prosecutions and convictions, and established effective deterrence from imposition of severe punishments on wildlife offenders.

Under this circumstance, we believe that it is appropriate and necessary to impose a strict punishment on Nguyen Mau Chien and his accomplices. The verdict will not only serve the admonitory purposes of the law, but also reflect the determination of Vietnam in taking down wildlife trafficking networks. The conviction of Nguyen Mau Chien will meet the expectation of the Vietnamese in conserving national biodiversity, and motivate international community in the collective efforts to protect endangered wildlife.

Once again, we would like to congratulate Vietnamese law enforcement agencies on their success to crack down wildlife trafficking networks. We hope that an appropriate sentence will be executed in the case of Nguyen Mau Chien at the upcoming trial at Ha Dong District Court, and we will continue supporting Vietnam's efforts in combatting wildlife crimes across the country.

Sincerely,

## CRIMINAL NAMES AND YEAR OF ARREST

Doan Minh	2012	Truong Ba Nghia	2017
Nguyen Van Chien	2012	Nguyen Thi Thu Trang	2017
Nguyen Van Tuan	2012	Pham Thi Thang Huay	2017
Pham Quang Loc	2013	Thai Xuan Tuan	2017
Ha Chan Chinh	2013	Dong Thi Tra	2017
Hoang Van Dong	2013	Nguyen Mau Chien	2017
Nguyen Mau Chien	2013	Nguyen Duc Nam	2017
Nguyen Trung Dung	2013	Ho Van Viet	2017
Pham Minh Chau	2013	Cao Xuan Vinh	2017
Nguyen Thi Nguyet	2013	Phung Anh Quan	2017
Le Manh Cuong	2013	Nguyen Thi Thao	2017
Nguyen Thi Ngoc Tu	2014	Nguyen Anh Son	2017
Vuong Minh Thu	2014	Nguyen Vinh Hai	2018
Duong Thi Thuy Hien	2014	Nguyen Van Tinh	2018
Bui Thi Xien	2014	Bach Van Lim	2018
Hoang Van Chung	2014	Nguyen Mau Chien	2018
Le Thanh Trung	2015	Nguyen Ngoc Thanh	2018
Doan Duy Dinh	2015		
Vu Anh Tuan	2015		
"Pham Van Luat	2015		
Vu Thanh Hung	2015		
Nguyen Duc Nguyen	2016		
Tran Van Lap	2016		
Vu Xuan Hoan	2016		
Tran Thi Tu	2017		
Pham Thi Nhung	2017		
Nguyen Ngoc Nam	2017		



WILDACT

ACT together we can save the WILD

IF YOU HAVE ANY  
QUESTIONS OR WOULD  
LIKE MORE INFORMATION,  
PLEASE CONTACT:

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