

Vietnam seizes over 2.7 tons of smuggled elephant tusks

Sunday, 09 July 2017 16:29

Police in the north-central Vietnamese province of Thanh Hoa on Saturday detected more than 2.7 metric tons of contraband elephant tusks in a truck bound for Hanoi, which is the locality's biggest interception so far.



Police and market management officers in the north-central province of Thanh Hoa are seen inspecting the ivory tusks seized on July 8, 2017 in this photo provided by officers.

The truck with a Hanoi license plate was traveling on a section of National Highway 1A in Quang Phong Commune, Quang Xuong District on early Saturday when it was pulled over by traffic police officers for showing suspicious signs.

According to Nguyen Van Sang, from the provincial Market Management Department, the

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inspection, made by his team in coordination with local economic and traffic police officers, exposed 2,748kg of alleged elephant tusks.

Nguyen Truong Son, 36, the truck driver, who hails from the Central Highlands province of Dak Lak, failed to present official papers to prove the legitimate origin of the items. He confessed he had been hired to transport the smuggled goods from Dong Nai Province, neighboring Ho Chi Minh City, to Hanoi.

Samples of these items were sent to the Tropical Biological Institute under the Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology for testing the same morning and the institute later confirmed that the samples were ivory tusks.

Son claimed he had had no knowledge of the contraband, which was stashed among fruits, Sang added.

This is the province's biggest seizure of ivory tusks to date.

The tusks and truck were later handed over to the provincial police department for further investigation.

The trade of tusks is banned under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora as well as Vietnamese law, as African ivory is listed in the IUCN Red List.

Many similar tusk smuggling cases have occurred in recent years in Vietnam, which has banned trade in ivory since 1992 to prevent the hunting of the country's dwindling population of elephants, which poachers value highly for their tusks.

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Source: Tuoi Tre News