

Malaysia Seizes Ivory, Pangolin Scales From Africa

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By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Malaysian authorities said Wednesday that they seized 23 pieces of elephant tusks and 301 kilograms (664 pounds) of pangolin scales believed to have been smuggled from Africa in a haul worth nearly \$1 million.

Customs senior official Mohamad Pudzi Man said officials raided the Kuala Lumpur airport cargo warehouse Sunday and found the ivory in two boxes marked as "food stuff." He said the ivory, worth 275,000 ringgit (\$64,139), was flown in on an Etihad Airways flight from Lagos and transited in Abu Dhabi before arriving in Kuala Lumpur.

He said that later Sunday, officials confiscated six sacks of pangolin scales worth 3.86 million ringgit (\$900,291) shortly after it arrived on an Ethiopian Airlines flight from Congo. The sacks were marked as "fish maw" and the airway bills used in both cases had fake final destinations, he said.

Mohamad Pudzi said no one was arrested and the case was under investigation for smuggling of prohibited goods.

The seizure marked the latest in a series of contraband wildlife products that have been confiscated by Malaysian authorities in recent months, including more than a ton of pangolin scales in just two months.

The wildlife trade monitoring group TRAFFIC has expressed concern that Malaysia appears to be a transit point for the illegal trade of pangolins and ivory, with traffickers routinely moving their contraband through Malaysia.

Eight species of pangolin, or scaly anteaters, live in Asia and Africa and are targeted for their scales and meat. More than 1 million have been poached in the past decade, threatening the creature with extinction, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

In Vietnam and some parts of China, pangolin meat is considered a delicacy, while its scales of keratin, the protein also found in fingernails and rhino horn, are widely used in traditional Chinese medicine. The demand is causing rampant poaching that is decimating the pangolin population.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2017/08/02/world/asia/ap-as-malaysia-illegal-wildlife-trade.html>