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DATE: 01 September 2017

SERIAL: A-MA-01092017

COUNTRIES: Global

ALERT ---- MARITIME & AIR

SUBJECT: **'Repeat Offenders:' Individual Wildlife Traffickers Making Multiple Attempts to Smuggle Illegal Wildlife Products**

DATA: Wildlife traffickers – individuals and companies – often make repeated attempts to smuggle illegal wildlife products, even when some of these attempts are unsuccessful and lead to arrest or seizures.

Modus Operandi:

According to open source and confidential reporting, individual wildlife traffickers regularly make multiple attempts over time to illegally ship wildlife products. Such 'repeat offenders' have been documented to use:

- Passenger air, for example by a single individual making multiple trips to smuggle illegal wildlife products on their person or in checked or carry-on luggage;
- Air cargo, for example by a single company or individual appearing on shipping documentation associated with multiple illegal wildlife shipments; and
- Maritime shipping, for example by a single company appearing on shipping documentation associated with multiple illegal wildlife shipments.

Available anecdotal evidence indicates that repeat offenders are likely to be 'mules' connected to larger criminal smuggling syndicates, although in many other cases they are the primary smugglers themselves. [NB: See 15 May 2017 Transport Taskforce Alert on "Ants & Mules: Multiple Smuggling Attempts along the Same Flight Routing within a Short Period of Time" for further details on the use of 'mules' by traffickers.]

While 'repeat offenders' at times seek to vary the exact routes for each individual smuggling attempt, available information indicates that in many cases they are aiming for the same ultimate destination location(s), and/or starting from the same port(s) of origin. This pattern can be presumably explained as a logistical or business necessity relating to the traffickers' network of associates, or lack thereof, along particular supply chains.

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Anecdotally, many wildlife traffickers do not appear to be deterred by prior unsuccessful smuggling attempts, even those leading to their arrest for wildlife trafficking or the seizure of illegal wildlife products. This is likely to be due to the perceived low risk of detection and even lower risk of receiving a substantial fine or judicial sentence.



Fifty-four Ploughshare Tortoises and twenty-one Radiated Tortoises, both critically endangered species native only to Madagascar, seized by Thailand customs authorities at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok in March 2013. The tortoises were smuggled in checked baggage along the following routing: Antananarivo, Madagascar (TNR) – Nairobi, Kenya (NBO) – Bangkok, Thailand (BKK). One of the two people arrested in connection with the seizure had been arrested earlier in the year for another wildlife trafficking offense. Photo Credit: TRAFFIC

Geography:

Repeat offenders appear to operate globally, with cases on every continent, but with presumably likely higher concentrations along major wildlife trafficking smuggling routes and at associated transport hubs

Red Flags:

The probability of detecting repeat offenders attempting to ship illegal wildlife products may be increased by cross-referencing shipping documentation information – for example shipper, receiver, or consignee information – with publicly available information on individuals or companies previously implicated in wildlife trafficking arrests or seizures.

In addition, active law enforcement investigations of wildlife trafficking cases may be aided by examination of previous shipping or passenger records, in particular in order to identify potential patterns of past smuggling activity related to an arrested suspect or seized shipment.

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ACTIONS: This alert is assessed as most relevant to the general categories of action checked below.
All decisions and actions informed by this alert are the sole responsibility of the receiving organization

- Conduct reasonable checks on shipments fitting a similar profile
- Execute / enhance internal controls or procedures relevant to this information
- Report / share information to customs / law enforcement
- Information has potential security implications for company employees

SOURCE: This advisory is based on UfW Transport Taskforce analysis of recent enforcement actions as well as open source and confidential reporting from partners. We have *high* confidence in the reliability and validity of this information, with the following caveat: the data upon which this analysis is based is exclusively anecdotal and is therefore inherently limited to available information and likely incomplete.

PRIORITIES: This alert is related to the following Transport Taskforce information sharing priorities (checked):

- Wildlife trafficker networks, behavior, intentions, and operational tactics and strategy
- Indicators of suspicious or higher risk activity ('red flags') related to wildlife trafficking
- Data potentially reportable to or shareable with law enforcement
- Security/physical risks and vulnerabilities to transport company operations, facilities, or staff
- Unintentional facilitation of illegal wildlife demand or retail trade

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CONTACT: For questions or additional data/analysis relevant to this alert, or to report suspicious shipments or indicators of wildlife trafficking activity, please contact the UfW Transport Taskforce:
transport@unitedforwildlife.org

END