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DATE: 15 December 2017  
COUNTRIES: Cambodia, Global

## BULLETIN ---- MARITIME

SUBJECT: **Port of Sihanoukville, Cambodia Highly Vulnerable to  
Wildlife Trafficking in Transit**

DATA: The port at Sihanoukville, Cambodia (UN/LOCODE: KHKOS) is highly vulnerable to illicit wildlife trafficking activity, in particular related to the illegal transit of elephant ivory, pangolin, timber, and rhino horn. Multiple major cases of wildlife trafficking involving Sihanoukville have been documented in recent years, with available information indicating that this activity is ongoing and may be increasing.

**Modus Operandi:**

According to available information, criminal networks are able to consistently traffic large quantities of illegal ivory, pangolin, rhino horn, and other wildlife products via the Port at Sihanoukville, Cambodia.

The following current critical trends, related to illicit wildlife trafficking, involving the Port at Sihanoukville are evident in open source, NGO, and law enforcement reporting as well as through analysis of past seizures and enforcement actions contained in the Transport Taskforce Information Sharing System:

- AN ATTRACTIVE REGIONAL TRANSIT HUB: Sihanoukville port has been regularly and seemingly is increasingly used as a convenient transit location for illicit wildlife products. This includes both as an intermediary point for maritime shipments with final declared destinations in Viet Nam, Thailand, China, or elsewhere in Asia, or as a final maritime destination with onwards transit by road to neighboring countries or China. Wildlife traffickers appear to view Sihanoukville as an increasingly attractive transit point as enforcement has become stricter and more effective at Southeast Asia's other major ports. Sihanoukville, and Cambodia more generally, are not considered major final destinations for illegal wildlife products.

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- VIETNAMESE TRAFFICKERS ESPECIALLY IMPLICATED: A significant (but not quantified) proportion of wildlife trafficking activity through Sihanoukville port appears to be coordinated by Viet Nam-based trafficking and organized crime syndicates, according to allegations of Cambodian officials, and other available information. Companies registered in Viet Nam or to Vietnamese nationals have been implicated in multiple past seizures of illegal wildlife products in Sihanoukville. Additionally, various Vietnamese organized crime networks have an established presence in Cambodia and often are able to operate with near impunity due to lack of enforcement and low governance capacity in the country, indicating a favorable environment for Vietnamese trafficking networks to operate.
- COMMODITY DECLARATION PATTERNS: TIMBER & DRY FOODSTUFFS: Wildlife trafficking activity via Sihanoukville appears to be most associated with shipments of timber (with the timber concealing other illegal wildlife products such as ivory), as well as dry foodstuffs such as beans and corn, according to analysis of the data in the Taskforce Information Sharing System. The use of timber may be related to the large timber industry in Cambodia involving both legal and illegal trade.



*PHOTO: Cambodian officials with some of the nearly one ton of ivory seized at Sihanoukville Port, Cambodia in December 2017. A total of 280 full and partial elephant tusks were discovered in hollowed out logs in an abandoned container owned by a company from Mozambique, which had originally shipped in December 2016 from Ivory Coast. The shipment matches the modus operandi of previous seized shipments of ivory at the port. (Photo credit: AP/Suon Vin)*

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**Geography:**

Sihanoukville Port (formally, the Autonomous Port of Sihanoukville / Port Autonome de Sihanoukville – PAS) is a state-run deep-water port located at coordinates 10°38.73’N 103°29.82’E in the Bay of Kompong Som at the Gulf of Thailand in south-western Cambodia.



Based on available evidence, Sihanoukville port is a key transit hub for illegal wildlife products in shipments originating from Southern, Eastern, and West Africa, as well as from elsewhere in Asia, with illegal wildlife shipments mostly continuing onwards by sea or over land to final destinations elsewhere in either Southeast Asia or China. More generally, Cambodia has emerged as a key transit hub for wildlife traffickers operating within Asia and between Africa and Asia, likely due to a combination of the country’s geographic location next or near to much of the world’s major consumer markets for ivory, rhino horn, pangolin, and other illegal wildlife products, lack of enforcement and lack of good governance capacity, and high levels of corruption.

Illicit wildlife trafficking shipments transiting Sihanoukville have been documented in connection with the following specific countries of origin and destination, according to available information, although other routings are likely undetected.

- Documented Countries of Origin: Ivory Coast; Kenya, Malaysia, Mozambique
- Documented Destination Countries: China, Malaysia, Viet Nam

**Red Flags:**

Although traffickers regularly modify their tactics and routings to avoid detection, the following – especially in combination with one another – may indicate a higher risk of wildlife trafficking activity related to shipments originating in, transiting through, or with a declared destination of Sihanoukville Port, Cambodia:

- Declared shippers or recipients that have been implicated in previous wildlife trafficking activity.
- Shipments declared as timber or dry foodstuffs such as beans or corn.
- Shipments with country of origin in Africa (West, East, or Southern), or Malaysia.
- Shipments with declared onward destinations in China, Malaysia, Viet Nam, Lao PDR, or Thailand.
- Shipments with an illogical or unclear business purpose.

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**ACTIONS:** This bulletin is assessed as most relevant to the general categories of action checked below.  
\*\*All decisions/actions informed by this bulletin 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 other sources. 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.

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**CONTACT:** For more information about the *United for Wildlife Transport Taskforce*, please visit:  
[www.unitedforwildlife.org/what-is-the-transport-taskforce](http://www.unitedforwildlife.org/what-is-the-transport-taskforce)

For more information about the *Buckingham Palace Declaration* on illegal wildlife trade, please visit:  
[www.unitedforwildlife.org/the-buckingham-palace-declaration](http://www.unitedforwildlife.org/the-buckingham-palace-declaration)

To learn how your company can address wildlife trafficking and join the Transport Taskforce, please contact us at [info@unitedforwildlife.org](mailto:info@unitedforwildlife.org).

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