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DATE: 1 April 2018  
SERIAL: APM-01042018  
COUNTRIES: Global

## **ALERT ---- AIR (PASSENGER), MARITIME**

SUBJECT: **Unclaimed/Lost/Abandoned Baggage and Cargo a Common Indicator of Wildlife Trafficking Activity**

DATA: The presence of unclaimed, lost, or abandoned passenger baggage and cargo consignments can be a key indicator of wildlife trafficking activity on passenger aircraft and maritime cargo shipments.

### **Modus Operandi:**

Multiple patterns are evident in the links between wildlife trafficking and unclaimed, lost, and/or abandoned passenger baggage and maritime cargo consignments, according to open source and confidential reporting as well as Taskforce analysis of past seizures and enforcement actions.

1. **BAGGAGE TAGS:** Traffickers regularly remove or modify identification, tracking, and claim check tags from checked luggage which contain smuggled wildlife products, typically with the assistance of corrupt baggage handling or other airport personnel. This method helps traffickers obscure a bag's true ownership. One variant involves traffickers taking luggage tags belonging to unwitting innocent passengers and placing them onto bags containing contraband in order to obscure their own identity and falsely implicate the unsuspecting passenger if the contraband is discovered, an established drug trafficking tactic reportedly now in use by wildlife traffickers.
2. **'LOST' LUGGAGE:** Wildlife traffickers intentionally declare checked baggage lost, and then arrange to have the 'lost' bag collected by or delivered to a criminal accomplice.
3. **ABANDONED MARITIME SHIPPING CONTAINERS:** Wildlife traffickers appear to, when necessary, abandon sometimes even large multi-million dollar consignments of illegal wildlife products hidden in maritime shipping containers. This is typically either due to the traffickers fearing detection if they attempt to collect the container or the result of internal disputes among the criminal players involved in the illegal shipment,

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according to available information. Past incidents indicate that abandoned consignments of illegal wildlife products are often accompanied by missing, falsified, or fraudulent shipping documentation.



*PHOTO: Approximately 100kg of rhino horn seized in March 2017 at Hanoi's Noi Bai airport after arrival on a flight from Nairobi, Kenya. The illegal rhino horn was discovered in checked baggage with tags missing passenger and luggage weight information. (Photo credit: Viet Nam Customs, 16 Mar 2017)*



*PHOTO: Customs officials at Kaohsiung Harbor, Taiwan with seized shipment of 4,000 pangolins with a market value of just over \$1 million. The illegal wildlife was found in an abandoned shipping container, concealed in a shipment of sardines. (Photo credit: Kaohsiung Customs, 1 Feb 2018)*

**Geography:**

Linkages between wildlife trafficking activity and unclaimed, lost, or abandoned passenger baggage and cargo consignments have been documented worldwide, and should be considered a global issue. There is presumably higher prevalence of this activity along high risk wildlife trafficking routes between Africa and Asia.

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**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 unclaimed, lost, or abandoned passenger baggage and cargo consignments:

- Checked passenger baggage with identification, tracking, and/or claim check tags missing or modified.
- Checked passenger baggage tags showing missing or incorrect passenger, luggage weight, or baggage routing/destination information.
- Unclaimed or lost baggage that is collected by a suspicious third party or delivered to a suspicious third party address.
- Abandoned shipping containers in ports, especially if from a high risk country of origin and/or accompanied by suspicious or fraudulent documentation.

**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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all company or individual decisions and the consequences of those decisions made based on or informed by this information are the sole responsibility of the persons and organizations making such decisions.

**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](mailto:transport@unitedforwildlife.org)

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END