

Media Releases 2011

Suspect arrested over illicit trade in rhino horn

Pretoria 9 July 2011 - A Thai national, alleged to be a leading figure in the illicit trade in rhino horn internationally, was arrested at his house in Edenvale Johannesburg this morning by the Hawks following an extensive investigation by the South African Revenue Service.

The arrest is in connection with alleged violations of various sections of the Customs and Excise Act, specifically section 80 (1) which deals with the improper use of permits in respect of goods and other sections of the Act.

The suspect allegedly obtained rhino hunting permits under false pretences in terms of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Such permits issued under CITES are specifically for trophy hunting and not for the illicit trade in rhino horn.

It is alleged that once the animals were killed on supposed trophy hunting trips in South Africa, the rhino horns were sent abroad by the suspect who paid on average about R65 000.00 per kg for the rhino horn.

The arrest follows an extensive investigation by SARS officials into the activities of the suspect and a trading (import / export) company based in Laos and comes soon after the successful prosecution of another Thai national Punpitak Chunchom for the illegal possession of lion claws and teeth last week. Both Chunchom and the man arrested today are employed by the export company.

The suspect arrested today entered South Africa on Monday 13 June this year when SARS Customs officials searched him and found various documents, invoices, an order for 50 sets of rhino horn, a computer and a cell phone that were detained for further investigation.

For more information please call Anton Fisher on 0820703674.