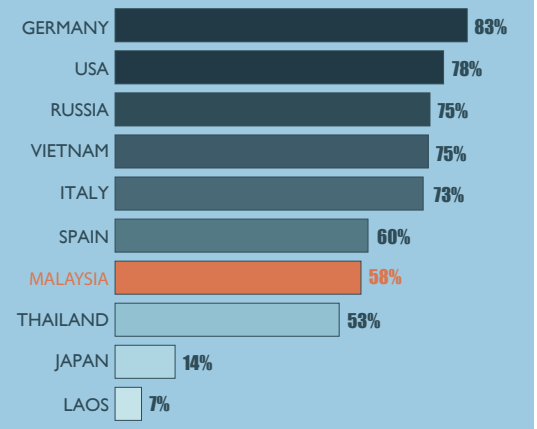
ROUTES
Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species

Malaysia

Wildlife Trafficking Profile

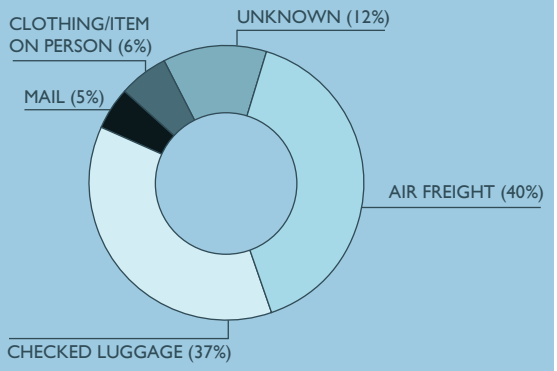
2015-2019

Country Enforcement Index



The Country Enforcement Index (CEI) is a proportion of the number of trafficking instances seized in a country divided by the total number of trafficking instances that touched the jurisdiction, whether the instance was stopped there or simply transited through. A trafficking instance is defined as a singular incident of wildlife trafficking in or through a country, whether or not it was stopped there. The CEI contains an inherent bias based on a country's position in the supply chain (i.e. origin, transit, or destination). For example, because a shipment is either stopped at its destination or not stopped at all, destination countries have higher enforcement indices than origin or transit countries (which may miss shipments later seized in the destination country). For this reason, in the CEI above, Malaysia is compared with countries that are similar in location and/or trafficking profile. Trafficking profile is determined based on both the country's primary role in the supply chain and overall volume of trafficking instances. Additional information on the CEI is included on the back of this page.

Wildlife Transport Methods



Common Obfuscation Methods

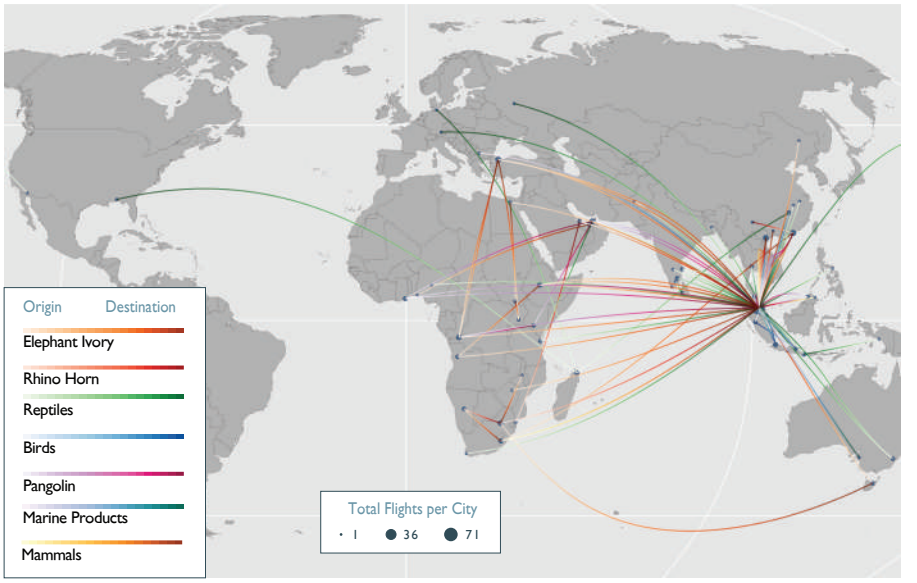
FOODSTUFFS

Foodstuffs were used to obfuscate ivory, pangolin, rhino horn, and marine species in Malaysian trafficking instance. These shipmentsh primarily originated in Africa. Specific materials included cereal, meat packets, dry herbs, coffee beans, and pet food.

TOILETRIES

Toiletries were another obfuscation method used in trafficking instances along Malaysian air routes. These included attempts to conceal shipments of turtles in diapers and sanitary pads arriving from Africa, as well as a the misdeclaring of a shipment of pangolins as a shipment of mascara exported to Hong Kong from Malaysia.

Known Malaysian Air Trafficking Routes



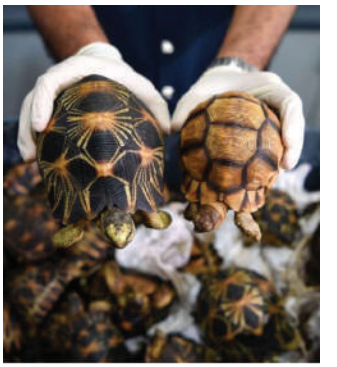
Country Trends: Tons of Turtles and Tortoises

Known trafficking instances along Malaysian air routes were primarily shipments of reptile (42% of total instances) and ivory products (22%).[1] In 2019, reports of marine species and bird trafficking instances increased.[2] The top origin countries for reptile trafficking instances, which usually involved live animals,[3] included India, Madagascar, and China. Reptile shipments were primarily turtles, including black pond turtles, red-eared sliders, and Chinese pond turtles, as well as Indian star tortoises, radiated tortoises, and ploughshare tortoises.[4] These trafficking instances frequently used checked luggage, although a significant number of live animals have also been smuggled through air freight and on the passenger's body.[5] The total numbers reflect the scale of the trade—almost 16,000 turtles and tortoises were smuggled in known Malaysian air trafficking instances over the five years.[6]

Recommendation: Prioritize inspection of air freight and checked luggage on flight routes originating from the high-risk countries identified above and develop a tip-off protocol for airports and airlines to report suspected live animal shipments in Malaysia.

Case Study: Live Through UAE

On May 14, 2017, customs officials acted on a tip-off and seized five ploughshare tortoises and 325 radiated tortoises from an air freight shipment arriving in Kuala Lumpur Airport from Madagascar.[7] The shipment was labeled as stones and allegedly transported by two airlines, switching carriers in Abu Dhabi.[8] While the documentation listed a false business address in Malaysia, it was unclear whether the wildlife is intended for re-export or domestic markets.[9] Madagascar—along with India, China, and Indonesia—is a common origin country for Malaysian air trafficking instances of live turtles and tortoises.[10]



Source: The Straits Times[11]

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C4ADS Air Seizure Database

The C4ADS Air Seizure Database is compiled through extensive, multilingual open source research conducted by C4ADS analysts on a monthly basis, and supplemented wherever possible with additional information obtained through C4ADS' partner network. The publicly available resources C4ADS used for this assessment included, but were not limited to, customs press releases, local news reports, CITES annual reports, Robin des Bois's On the Trail Bulletins, TRAFFIC Bulletins, academic and statistical reports (e.g. CITES ETIS reports, etc.), and social media.

Data contained within the C4ADS Air Seizure Database is constantly being revised and updated to reflect the most current and accurate information available. As a result, changes are occasionally made to previous seizure data that may impact the analysis. The data used for this assessment was accessed in January 2020.

Data Gaps & Biases

The reliability of the data compiled within the C4ADS Air Seizure Database, and as a result C4ADS' associated analysis, is dependent on a variety of factors. Some airports and countries more proactively report on wildlife seizures, leading to an overrepresentation of those locations in the C4ADS Database. Further, some countries simply have better enforcement, while still others have effective customs and enforcement agencies but do not prioritize the identification of illegal wildlife. Data also varies due to differences in government seizure reporting protocols and to varying media and public interest. For instance, seizures of animals and animal products from charismatic species (like elephants) and species facing well-documented and intriguing challenges (like the totoaba) are more likely to receive media attention, and are therefore more likely to be captured in the C4ADS Air Seizure Database.

C4ADS analysts worked to minimize inconsistencies by researching every seizure to obtain as much information as possible, thereby filling in most gaps left by inadequate seizure reports published by a government agency or news outlet. Of course, some seizures still lack important information. In fact, some seizures lacked so much information that they could not be included in the C4ADS Air Seizure Database. At a minimum, C4ADS analysts needed the date of the seizure (at least the year), the location of the seizure (at least the country), and some indication as to the contents of the seizure to include it.

One of seizure data's biggest failings is inherent to its very nature—seizures can only capture trafficking strategies that have been ineffective. Along the same lines, seizures may reflect enforcement efforts operating as they should, and so high seizure numbers can be indicative of particularly effective enforcement activity rather than an indication of a problem, as they are often interpreted. To that point, another significant downside to seizure data is its frequent inability to determine the cause of trafficking patterns. For instance, high seizure numbers in an airport can be due either to effective enforcement or high volumes of trafficking activity—sometimes both. Without being able to count the true number of trafficking instances that move through that airport undetected, it is impossible to know which factor plays the greater role, and therefore how to respond—should enforcement strategies be revised and improved, or can the country's anti-wildlife trafficking strategy shift to begin to address wildlife trafficking before it reaches the airport, since enforcement within the airport is already functioning as needed?

Although there are no perfect solutions to these problems, comprehensive data collection can serve to alleviate a few. Detailed route information, for example, can help to reveal whether illegal wildlife shipments are successfully moving through an airport to be seized elsewhere (suggesting poor enforcement or limiting legal frameworks), or if they are primarily seized prior to arrival at an airport (no implication for enforcement effectiveness), or within an airport (suggesting good enforcement). As a result, C4ADS strove to base the analysis on detailed seizure data, supplemented with additional information wherever possible. In this assessment, C4ADS provides seizure analysis with the acknowledgement that seizure data are an imperfect measure of an immeasurable crime, but with the understanding that even with its shortcomings, seizure data provide a rare window into otherwise clandestine trafficking operations.

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About

This assessment is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of C4ADS and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, the United States Government, or individual ROUTES partners.

For more information, visit the ROUTES Dashboard: http://www.routesdashboard.org/.

The mention of any individual, company, organization, or other entity in this assessment does not imply the violation of any law or international agreement, and should not be construed as such.

Country Enforcement Index

The Country Enforcement Index is intended as a comparison of enforcement effectiveness for countries with similar supply chain roles (e.g. origin, transit, and destination countries). A high enforcement index suggests effective screening and interdiction operations. However, the metric contains an inherent bias regarding a country's role in the supply chain. For example, destination countries are the last stop for a wildlife shipment--if the shipment is not seized here, then it is not known to have successfully entered the country. Due to this bias, the CEI is not intended for comparisons of countries that primarily serve different functions in the illicit wildlife trafficking supply chain (e.g. an origin country to a destination country).

Sources

1 C4ADS Air Seizure Database.

2 C4ADS Air Seizure Database.

3 C4ADS Air Seizure Database.

4 C4ADS Air Seizure Database.

5 C4ADS Air Seizure Database.

6 C4ADS Air Seizure Database.

7 Dasgupta, Shreya. "More than 300 smuggled tortoises seized in Malaysia." Mongabay, 17 May 2017. https://news.mongabay.com/2017/05/more-than-300-smuggled-tortoises-seized-in-malaysia/.

8 Dasgupta, Shreya. "More than 300 smuggled tortoises seized in Malaysia." Mongabay, 17 May 2017. https://news.mongabay.com/2017/05/more-than-300-smuggled-tortoises-seized-in-malaysia/.

9 Dasgupta, Shreya. "More than 300 smuggled tortoises seized in Malaysia." Mongabay, 17 May 2017. https://news.mongabay.com/2017/05/more-than-300-smuggled-tortoises-seized-in-malaysia/.

10 C4ADS Air Seizure Database.

11 "Malaysia seizes smuggled tortoises worth nearly S$400,000." The Straits Times, 15 May 2017. https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysia-seizes-smuggled-tortoises-worth-s388107.