

Customs Administration of the Czech Republic
General Directorate of Customs
The Public Relations Department of the General Directorate of Customs
Budějovická 7
Prague 4
Prague, 18 July 2018

Joint Press Release of the Customs Administration of the Czech Republic and the Czech Environmental Inspectorate (CEI)

While conducting the TROPHY Operation (TROFI) Customs Officers and Officials of the CEI have uncovered illegal Trade in Tigers

The Customs Administration of the Czech Republic and the Czech Environmental Inspectorate (CEI) have achieved a considerable success in combatting environmental crime. The Customs Administration has focused on this type of illegal activity due to the increasing number of seized CITES specimens.

Customs officials have been gathering evidence against a group of Czech and Vietnamese nationals organising illegal trade in products made from the animals protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, namely from the species of tiger (*Panthera tigris*), for more than a year. These persons living in the Czech Republic traded in dead or living tigers, the latter were killed and processed into Chinese medicines. Vietnamese community in the Czech Republic is the second largest in Europe according to the CEI, which might be the reason for higher volume of trade in these commodities.

175 customs officials, 6 inspectors from the CEI and employees of the State Veterinary Administration participated in the raids that took place on 16 July. They carried out seven home searches, three searches of non-residential premises, including two stands at the SAPA market in Prague, in Central and South Bohemian Regions, seizing a body of a killed tiger, 4 skins, tiger claws and further tiger products (bouillon cubes and tiger wine), equipment used in the production of traditional Asian medicines made from tiger parts and cash amounting to CZK 1 838 100. Three suspects were then handed over to the Police.

According to the police Director of Liberec Region, Vladislav Husák, the police has not come across such a case in this region yet. ***“Police officers from Česká Lípa deserve special praise for their work too. After being contacted by their colleagues from the General Directorate of Customs and informed about the facts, they cooperated very closely. Four dozen of our police officers took part in the operation, during which nine home searches and searches of non-residential premises were carried out at the beginning of this week,”*** said Mr. Husák.

The organised criminal group produced traditional Asian medicines that are very popular with the Vietnamese community and thus easily sold not only in the Czech Republic but also in

further EU and Asian countries. The demand for these products is very high due to the belief in their exceptional healing power, according to deep-rooted Asian tradition. The price of one kilogram of tiger bones amounts to approximately USD 2,000, of tiger skin to approx. USD 20 thousand and tiger wine to USD 100 per litre at the black market, according to the CEI.

Customs officers and the inspectors from the CEI carried out also in the past in the Czech Republic checks focused on illegal exports and imports of CITES specimens that are highly demanded on the market. The checks were carried out mainly at the international Prague Airport in Ruzyně from where the protected species were exported mainly to various locations in Asia that demanded these products the most. Already in 2013 customs officers seized consignments with complete tiger skeletons, tiger claws, tiger teeth and rhino horns including rhino skin. When performing similar checks in 2016 and 2017 traditional Chinese medicines were seized, namely tiger products and the so-called tiger bouillon cubes.

The CEI has proposed a genetic analysis of the products that might contain tiger DNA. A research project was launched this January being funded by the Czech Ministry of the Interior. The project will continue for the following four years. Based on this project a much higher success rate of analysis can be expected after the research is completed.

Significant Joint Operations of the Customs Administration and the CEI

<https://www.celnisprava.cz/cz/tiskove-zpravy/2010/Stranky/informace-z-tiskove-konference.aspx>

<https://www.celnisprava.cz/cz/tiskove-zpravy/2013/Stranky/celnici-spolecne-s-pcr-a-cizp-zajistili-24-nosorozcich-rohu-za-sto-milionu-korun.aspx>

<https://www.celnisprava.cz/cz/celni-urad-praha-ruzyne/tiskove-zpravy/2014/Stranky/ruzynsti-celnici-zabranili-nelegalnimu-obchodu-s-rohy-nosorozce.aspx>

<https://www.celnisprava.cz/cz/celni-urad-praha-ruzyne/tiskove-zpravy/2015/Stranky/ruzynsti-celnici-zabranili-v-lonskem-roce-vyvozu-92-kilogramu-slonich-klu.aspx>

<https://www.celnisprava.cz/cz/celni-urad-praha-ruzyne/tiskove-zpravy/2013/Stranky/ruzynsti-celnici-odhalili-nelegalni-vyvoz-koster-tygru.aspx>

<https://www.celnisprava.cz/cz/tiskove-zpravy/2016/Stranky/spolecna-tiskova-zprava-celni-spravy-cr-a-ceske-inspekce-zivotniho-prostredi.aspx>

<https://www.celnisprava.cz/cz/celni-urad-praha-ruzyne/tiskove-zpravy/2016/Stranky/akce-tygri-oko-odhalila-44-zachytu-poruseni-cites.aspx>

Mrs. Martina Kaňková
Spokesperson and Head of the
Public Relations Department
General Directorate of Customs
E-mail: m.kankova@cs.mfcr.cz
mobil: + 420 724 431 127
tel.: + 420 261 331 931