

FOLLOWING THE MONEY TRAIL OF THE ILLICIT WILDLIFE TRADE

Convergence of maritime trade chain efforts
and financial crime investigations

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21 June 2022
3:00 PM HK / SGT

Photo Credits: Smuggled Tiger Cub © WWF / James Morgan

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**WWF Asia Pacific
Counter-Illegal Wildlife Trafficking Hub**



approximately

815 million

TEU moving across the world annually

Maritime trade is highly vulnerable to trafficking of illegal goods. Freight containers are constantly targeted for the shipment of drugs, weapons, counterfeit goods, wildlife, which are smuggled alongside legal commodities.

less than 2 % of containers are physically examined by law enforcement officials.



Seaborne containers are the dominant mode of **trafficking** in ivory, pangolin and timber.

The **anonymity of containers** made it easier in many ways for **organised crime** to pursue the movement of prohibited goods across borders.

There is a significant abuse of legitimate international shipping services by criminal groups illegally smuggling wildlife through maritime trade.

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Convergence between wildlife smuggling and other transnational crimes



Systems of transporting commodities and laundering criminal profits are common across multiple criminal markets. Criminal markets converge in banking, shipping, legal services, money-laundering and border crossing methods.



Organized criminal groups already have well-established logistical networks that can move animal products just as easily, as other contraband.



Facilitators can assist to activate shell companies, make logistical arrangements via front companies, open offshore bank accounts to make the money untraceable.

Reference: USAID report, March 2020 . Strengthening Rule of Law Approaches to Address Organized Crime 8 Criminal Market Convergence



Guidelines for the prevention and suppression of the smuggling of wildlife on ships engaged in international maritime traffic

The Guidelines were adopted by the IMO on 13th of May, 2022

The IMO sent a clear signal to the industry - As we are dealing with organized crime, action against the smuggling of wildlife is ultimately **a joint responsibility**, requiring an **integrated, systemic and balanced approach** involving all parties in the maritime supply chain.

The adoption of the Guidelines will incite to **catalyze global cooperation** in the maritime sector to fight the illegal wildlife trade.

The Guidelines urge the Member States to treat **wildlife trafficking** involving organized criminal groups as **a serious crime** and implement anti-money laundering measures, establish national-level inter-agency wildlife crime task forces, prevent and counter corruption, and reduce the demand for threatened wildlife.

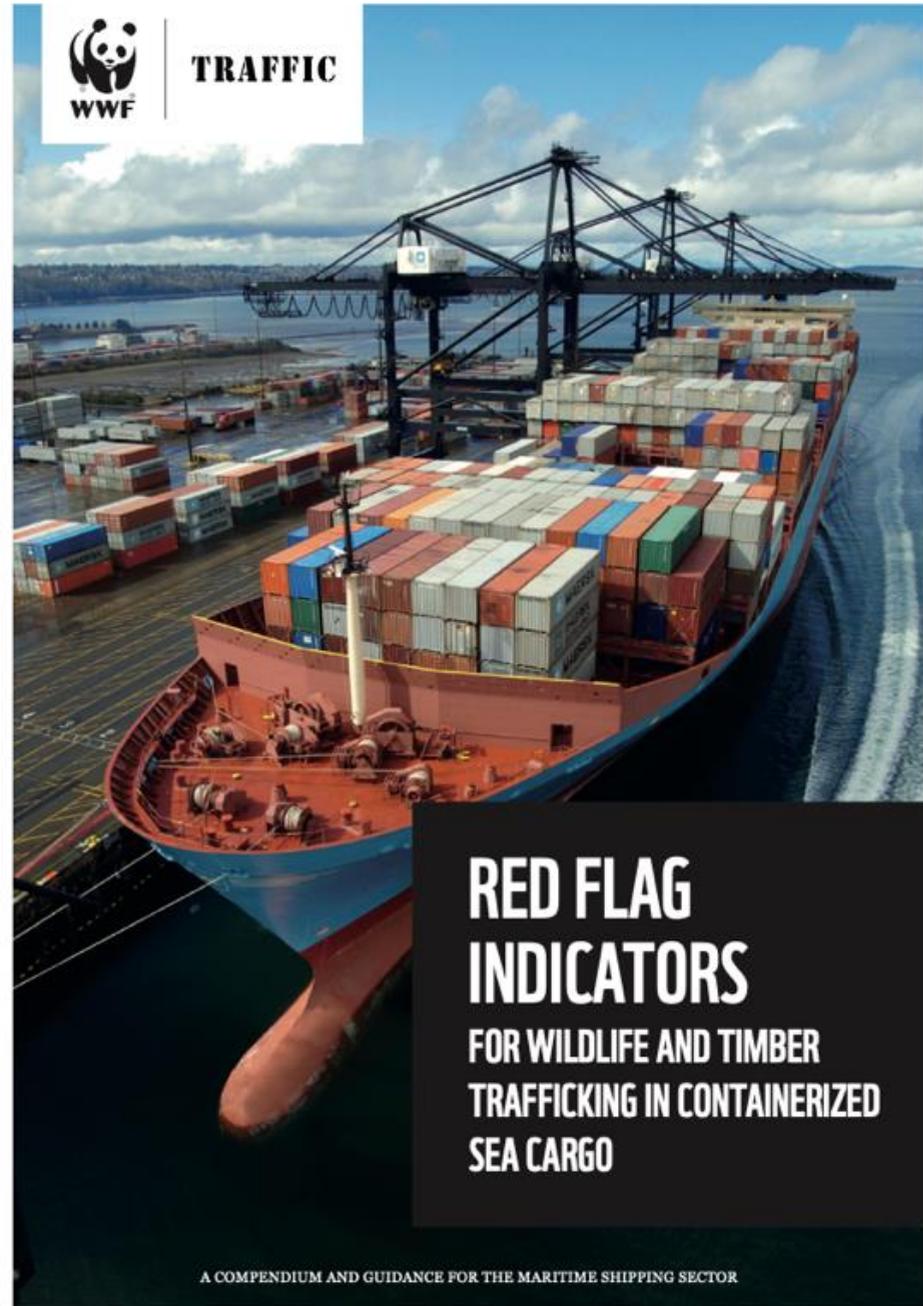


Methods used by traffickers to conceal illegal wildlife on a ship

1. **Misdeclared** as another legal product:
 - ✓ **Hidden** among other commodities
 - ✓ **Mixed** with **look-alike species**
 - ✓ **Hidden in secret built-in compartments** inside the container
2. **Forging and/or alteration** of permits and other documents
3. **Insertion of contraband** into containers at a container depot



Red flag indicators for wildlife and timber trafficking in containerized sea cargo



Typical Commodities Used for Concealment:

- Recycled plastic
- Timber and wood products
- Nuts
- Metal scraps
- Cocoa
- Coffee
- Tea leaves
- Beans
- Shells
- Salt
- Frozen meat
- Dried fish
- Fish maw
- Skin

Other Common Wildlife Products:

- Elephant Ivory
- Rhino horns
- Pangolin scales /meat
- Timber
- Shark fins
- Sea cucumbers
- Seahorses
- Seashells
- Donkey skins
- Bones and Claws of big cats
- Giant clams
- Dried plants (e.g. Aloe vera, American ginseng)

**Contraband hidden among legitimate commodities or mixed with look-alike species*

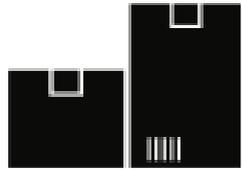
RED FLAG INDICATORS

RED FLAG INDICATORS FOR WILDLIFE AND TIMBER TRAFFICKING IN CONTAINERIZED SEA CARGO 8

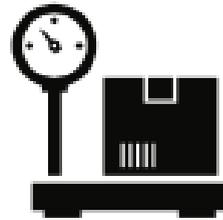


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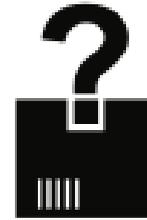
RED FLAG INDICATORS



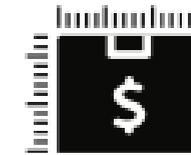
Shipment of commodities incongruous with origin and or destination country



Weight and appearance discrepancy



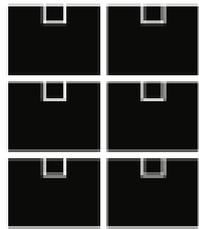
Dubious or vague descriptions



Value of cargo does not tally with description or size



Questionable paperwork



Consignment split across multiple shipments



Shipping route is abnormal for the product and destination



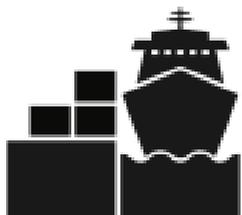
Change of shipping route once the ship has left port



Switch Bill of Lading



Request for use of Letter of Indemnity (LoI) without just cause



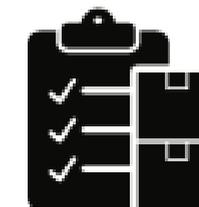
Use of Free Trade Zones and Free Ports



Failure to disclose true shipper or consignee information



First-time shippers and shipper's reluctance to offer information about their business and the end-use of a product



Last minute request for shipment clearance



Cash-payments

Any questions? Please do reach out.

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