

Live turtles seized at airport

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Thai authorities have seized more than four tonnes of live turtles, bound for cooking pots in southern China, at an airport in the country's north, officials said yesterday.

Fisheries officials intercepted the 1,160 turtles, some of which were from an endangered species, at Chiang Rai airport near the Burmese border.

They had spotted one of the animals through a crack in the boxes they were stashed in.

The turtles were packed tightly together and more than 10 of them had died, head of fisheries at Chiang Rai airport Pongphumi Somdeang said.

"The cargo was bound for southern China and would have been transported from here overland to Chiang Saen via the Mekong river," he said.

"We have already filed charges against the consignee, Sukasem Company, for the trafficking and smuggling of endangered animals."

The maximum penalty would be four years in prison or a 40,000-baht (\$1,900) fine, he added. Officials were unable to value the live cargo.

The trafficking of endangered animals from and through Thailand to China is becoming a huge problem.

Last month authorities made three seizures over a two-week period of 1,536 pangolins bound for China. The protected animals were likely to have ended up on dinner plates or used as traditional medicine.

AFP

This story was found at:

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/08/06/1028157935360.html>