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Bear Paws and Other Contraband Animal Parts Found in Far East

By The Moscow Times

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The Amur brown bear, whose paws are in demand in China. **JZ85**

Border guards in Russia's Far East have discovered a large cache of bear paws, mammoth tusks, furs, other exotic animal parts and plants set for smuggling to China.

The illegal goods were found at a warehouse in the town of Blagovechshensk in the Amur region, Interfax reported Tuesday, citing the local branch of the Border Guard Service, which is part of the Federal Security Service.

The contraband also included bear bile, tree-toads, sea cucumbers, antlers of red deer, as well as some 3,000 pelts of beaver-rats, weasels and raccoon dogs, and some 40 kilograms of stones, presumably greenstones.

This is the fourth such contraband discovery by border guards in the Far East in the last two years. Similar lots were found in May this year, in July last year and in February 2012,

Komsomolskaya Pravda daily reported in September.

In China, which has a common border of 1,200 kilometers with the Amur region, bear paws are a gourmet item and are also used in folk medicine to make drugs, Komsomolskaya Pravda said. A kilogram of bear paws on the black market can cost up to $1,000, the paper said.

But smuggling of animal parts by Chinese laws carries a punishment from five years in prison to the death penalty, Komsomolskaya Pravda reported in June.

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