



Press release

When logistics roars – DHL helps eight rescued big cats begin a life they've long deserved

- Eight big cats whose long-term needs could no longer be met in Honduras have safely arrived at accredited U.S. sanctuaries
- DHL Global Forwarding and DHL Express led Honduras' first international big cat rescue with round-the-clock veterinary support
- The mission continues DHL's long-standing effort to help wildlife organizations give abused animals a second chance

Bonn, February 25: Eight big cats rescued from years of unsafe, non-species-appropriate captivity in Honduras are beginning new lives in the United States after a complex international rescue coordinated by DHL Global Forwarding and supported by DHL Express. The animals – five tigers and three lions – had been living in conditions that, despite the care provided, could not meet their long-term species-specific needs. Now, following months of recovery and preparation, they have been transported from San Pedro Sula to accredited sanctuaries where they will receive lifelong, specialized care.

“Helping these animals reach safe, species-appropriate homes shows how logistics can do far more than move goods – it can help improve lives,” said Celia Chinchilla, Country Operations Manager, DHL Global Forwarding Honduras.

Around the world, wildlife experts continue to encounter big cats kept in conditions that fall painfully short of their needs – confined in makeshift zoos, private backyards, or improvised attractions with no room to roam or express natural behaviors. When these animals are rescued, they cannot simply be returned to the wild. They need places where they can heal. For Guru, Sultan, Amir, Deborah, Aira, Cyrus, Zephora and Juancito, this mission represents a new beginning – one shaped by months of medical treatment, gentle rehabilitation, and patient behavioral care.

Veterinarians watched over every detail of their preparation. Each animal received medical evaluations, tailored sedation plans, and stress-reduction care. As the journey began, the vets stayed beside them, monitoring their breathing, temperature, and comfort from the moment their crates closed until they reached sanctuary grounds.

Expertise in wildlife transport

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DHL's teams are no strangers to rescue missions like this. Over the years, the company has supported wildlife organizations in transporting lions, tigers, and other vulnerable species away from neglect or conflict zones, helping them reach sanctuaries that can offer them a dignified future. That experience proved vital in Honduras, where this operation required an unusually high level of coordination and care.

Together with Little French Key, the Institute for Forest Conservation, Protected Areas and Wildlife (ICF), the Regional International Organization for Agricultural Health (OIRSA), Honduras Customs, and the airport authorities in San Pedro Sula, DHL created a transport plan designed entirely around the animals' well-being. An isolated section of the airport was secured to give the big cats a quiet, calm environment during loading. Specially certified crates were prepared to reduce noise and stimuli. DHL Express provided a dedicated freighter aircraft for a direct flight to Miami, chosen specifically to reduce stress and shorten travel time. On board, four veterinarians never left the animals' side.

Every choice in the operation reflected a single priority: making the journey as peaceful and safe as possible for eight animals that had already endured enough discomfort in their lives.

A new beginning at accredited sanctuaries

When the aircraft touched down in Miami, a new chapter began. The big cats were transferred to two Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS)-accredited facilities: Carolina Tiger Rescue and Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge. Both sanctuaries are known for offering expansive natural habitats, thoughtful enrichment programs, and lifelong, attentive veterinary care.

There, the animals will finally have the chance to stretch, explore, rest in shaded quiet, feel grass beneath their paws, and rediscover behaviors that captivity had denied them. For the first time in years, they can build lives shaped not by survival but by comfort, curiosity, and care.

"These big cats now have what they always deserved — safety, space, and dignity," Chinchilla said.

"We're honored to play a part in that."

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