

Highlights

14 traffickers arrested in 4 countries

A shipment from Brazil of highly endangered 12 Lear's Macaws and 17 Golden Lion Tamarins on a sailing boat stopped and 5 traffickers arrested in Togo

3 traffickers arrested with 6 elephant tusks weighing 33 kg in Gabon

4 traffickers arrested with 2 elephant tusks weighing more than 30 kg in Togo

An ape trafficker arrested and a baby chimp rescued in Côte d'Ivoire

A fugitive ivory trafficker captured in Congo

Summary

A shipment from Brazil of highly endangered 12 Lear's Macaws and 17 Golden Lion Tamarins on a sailing boat stopped and 5 traffickers were arrested in Togo.

Following an arrest and seizure by the Gendarmerie, the EAGLE Togo Team assisted in establishing the illegality of the shipment including fraudulent CITES permits from Guyana. The Team also helped with the care for the fragile animals and connected the two sides of the illegal shipment, in constant collaboration with Freeland that coordinated the Brazil side with the Brazilian authorities. The Ministry of the Environment and Forest Resources (MERF) and the Brazilian Ambassador to Togo were integral in saving the animals and in reaching a good outcome. Brazil sent a large governmental delegation to coordinate the investigation, treat the endangered animals and take them back to Brazil.

3 traffickers arrested with 6 elephant tusks weighing 33 kg in Gabon. 2 traffickers were arrested with the elephant tusks and after an interrogation, they denounced 3 other traffickers. One was arrested and 2 others are searched fugitives. They are a part of a larger criminal network.

4 traffickers arrested with 2 elephant tusks weighing more than 30 kg in Togo. Hundreds of small chips and pieces of ivory from several last deals were also seized. The tusks originated from Cameroon.

An ape trafficker arrested and a baby chimp rescued in Côte d'Ivoire. The trafficker, who is known for his activities trafficked the chimp from Liberia and talked of complicity of local wildlife officials. He came by motorcycle with the chimpanzee strapped to his back, and managed to cross safely several roadblocks with the chimp visible. The baby chimp exhibits a post-trauma behaviour pointing to the extreme abuse inflicted on him.

A fugitive ivory trafficker captured in Congo. He was wanted in connection to a past arrest operation. The team carried out multiple arrest attempts. Since the trafficker is very well

connected with law enforcement, the arrest failed each time as he mysteriously disappeared before being captured. This time, after a year of efforts, he was finally apprehended.

Cameroon

The Deputy Director participated at roundtable meeting organised by the Environmental Investigation Agency, that brought together customs, wildlife, Interpol and financial investigation authorities from Nigeria, Cameroon and Congo Brazzaville. He did a presentation on the fight against wildlife trafficking in Cameroon.

The Head of the Legal Department held a meeting with the Regional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife for the East Region to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.

The Team followed up the administrative procedures on the renewal of the MoU at the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife.

The Legal Team held meetings with several State Counsels to discuss ongoing cases in their respective jurisdictions.

Action Needed:

A letter to Minister of Forestry and Wildlife to request for the signing of the renewed MoU with LAGA.

The Republic of the Congo

A fugitive ivory trafficker captured. He was wanted in connection to a past arrest operation. The team carried out multiple arrest attempts. Since the trafficker is very well connected with law enforcement, the arrest failed each time as he mysteriously disappeared before being captured. This time, after a year of efforts, he was finally apprehended. He first escaped an operation that took place in January 2023 and a trafficker was arrested with 2 elephant tusks. The trafficker was sentenced in January to 4 years in prison. The fugitive who escaped during that operation shall now face the full force of the law.

The Legal Team held meetings with several wildlife and law enforcement officials to discuss the fight against wildlife crime and strengthen collaboration.

Action Needed:

A letter to Minister of Justice calling for strict application of the wildlife law, in the light of provisional liberty and unsatisfying penalties to wildlife traffickers.

Gabon

3 traffickers arrested with 6 elephant tusks weighing 33 kg. 2 traffickers were arrested with the elephant tusks and after an interrogation, they denounced 3 other traffickers. One was arrested and 2 others are searched fugitives. They are a part of a larger criminal network.

The elephant tusks were concealed in an old rice bag.

An ivory trafficker was sentenced to one and a half years in prison. She was arrested in November 2022 with 4 elephant tusks.

The Assistant Coordinator and the Head of the Legal Department held a working session at the General Directorate of Wildlife and Protected areas on the revision of posters of protected species.

The Legal Team held several meetings with wildlife and law enforcement officials to discuss issues related to wildlife law enforcement and strengthen collaboration.

Action Needed:

A letter to the Minister of Justice and Environment to request stricter implementation of the law providing for a maximum sentence of 10 years in jail for ivory trafficking.

Togo

A shipment from Brazil of highly endangered 12 Lear's Macaws and 17 Golden Lion Tamarins on a sailing boat stopped and 5 traffickers arrested.

Following an arrest and seizure by the Gendarmerie, the EAGLE Togo Team assisted in establishing the illegality of the shipment including fraudulent CITES permits from Guyana. The Team also helped with the care for the fragile animals and connected the two sides of the illegal shipment, in constant collaboration with Freeland that coordinated the Brazil side with the Brazilian authorities. The Ministry of the Environment and Forest Resources (MERF) and the Brazilian Ambassador to Togo were integral in saving the animals and in reaching a good outcome. Brazil sent a large governmental delegation to coordinate the investigation, treat the endangered animals and take them back to Brazil.

The main trafficker of Israeli/Belarus/Russian/Kazakhstan nationalities collaborated with corrupt Gendarmes to secure his safe passage out of the cell and out of the country. He exhibited a pattern of a hardened criminal carrying multiple identification documents with altered names and details.

4 traffickers arrested with 2 elephant tusks weighing more than 30 kg. Hundreds of small chips and pieces of ivory from several last deals were seized. The tusks originated from Cameroon. The contraband was concealed inside a grains bag and hidden in cab which they took to the place of

transaction. They positioned themselves all over the place to keep guard and watch out for law enforcement as they attempted to sell the ivory.

The Interim Coordinator held a meeting with the Brazilian Ambassador to Togo and the Brazilian government delegation to plan, organize and facilitate meetings between the Brazilian delegation with Togolese authorities in connection with the seizure of the shipment of wildlife species from Brazil.

He met and discussed with the Maritime Prefect to establish collaboration between the EAGLE-Togo and all the services involved in maritime control in the fight against wildlife trafficking.

He also held a series of meetings with the Director of OCRTIDB, the Director of Forest Resources, the Head of the Forest Police Section and the Commander of the Maritime Brigade, to follow up the Brazil illegal shipment case. It was also aimed at strengthening and or establishing collaboration with the authorities.

Finally, he held two other meetings, one with the second Deputy State Prosecutor of the Lomé High Court and the other with the judge in charge of the second investigating office of the same court. The aim of the meetings was to follow up on the case of the arrest of traffickers in connection with the Brazil illegal shipment.

Action Needed:

Facilitate an audience with the new Minister of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Territorial Development to discuss the registration of EAGLE Togo.

Senegal

The Team followed up the administrative procedures on the Memorandum of Understandings with the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development and the Directorate General of Customs.

The Coordinator and the Assistant Coordinator travelled to the Republic of Guinea to install the new team of EAGLE Guinea members after their training in Senegal.

Recruitment was organised in Conakry. A legal adviser and an investigator were selected to undergo training in Senegal

The coordinator held several meetings with partners and government authorities.

The Team participated at a training for 49 gendarmerie officers from several countries including Senegal, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. They presented modules on combating wildlife crime including the wildlife law, techniques in identifying and concealing wildlife contraband and CITES.

Action Needed

A letter to facilitate a meeting with the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development to discuss the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding.

Côte d'Ivoire

An ape trafficker arrested and a baby chimp rescued. The trafficker, who is known for his activities trafficked the chimp from Liberia and talked of complicity of local wildlife officials. He came by motorcycle with the chimpanzee strapped to his back, and managed to cross safely several roadblocks with the chimp visible. The baby chimp exhibits a post-trauma behaviour pointing to the extreme abuse inflicted on him. He is receiving lifetime care by the Akatia chimpanzee sanctuary.

The Coordinator held meetings with officials of the UCT to discuss long term investigations and strengthen collaboration.

Action Needed

A letter to facilitate a meeting with the Minister of Waters and Forests and EAGLE Côte d'Ivoire Coordinator.

Guinea

The Coordinator and the Assistant Coordinator arrived in Conakry to install the new team of EAGLE Guinea members after their training in Senegal.

They met with judicial and diplomatic authorities accredited to Guinea, to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.

The Team followed up the administrative procedures on the Memorandum of Understandings with the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, the Directorate General of the National Police and the Directorate General of Customs.

Recruitment was organised and a legal adviser and an investigator selected to undergo training in Senegal.

Action Needed:

Facilitate a meeting with the Minister of the Environment and Sustainable Development for the signing of the MoU.

Box

Illegal Shipment of primates and parrots from Brazil

When 5 international traffickers were arrested with a shipment from Brazil that had 12 Lear's Macaws and 17 Golden Lion Tamarins on a sailing boat, they had a CITES permit (false permit) supposedly issued by the CITES Management Authority of Guyana, an exporting country according to them. The importer on the permit was a Beninese company.

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EAGLE-Togo helped MERF to contact the CITES Management Authorities of Guyana and Benin. The CITES Management Authority of Guyana stated that it had not issued any permits for such species. The Benin CITES Management Authority said the same, even adding that the importer on the permit was a fictitious company, and did not exist in their farm registration directory.

Lear's Macaw – Only about 1,200 are left in the wild, and mere 120 nesting pairs. It lives only on a small locality in north-east Brazil. It has been considered extinct in the wild before this locality was discovered in 1978.

Golden Lion Tamarin – About a mere 3,200 left in the wild. In the 1990s they were barely hanging on to a thread of survival with only 150 remaining. Their numbers increased thanks to tireless conservation efforts of breeding and reintroduction.

Two of the photos published here under the Togo section show the Tamarins in poor state after seizure and one after treatment by flown in Brazilian vets with assistance from the local team.