

U.S. NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR
COMBATING
WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

2015 ANNUAL PROGRESS ASSESSMENT





SUMMARY

The escalation of wildlife trafficking in recent years poses an urgent threat to conservation and global security. African elephant populations have declined by about 20 percent in the last decade to just over 400,000, and one out of every twenty wild rhinos was killed by a poacher in the last year alone. Well-armed traffickers exploit porous borders and weak institutions, eroding governance and undermining livelihoods. To tackle this problem, President Obama created the Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking, bringing together 17 federal departments and agencies to create and implement a National Strategy to stop illegal activities that threaten the future survival of a multitude of species, including such

Cover: African Elephant. Photo courtesy Daphne Carlson-Bremer/USFWS. This page: White Rhinos. Photo courtesy Karl Stromayer/USFWS.

iconic wildlife as elephants, rhinos, tigers, and sea turtles.

Despite these alarming trends, 2015 was a turning point in the fight against wildlife trafficking. In September, President Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to enact nearly complete bans on ivory import and export, and to take significant and timely steps to halt the domestic commercial trade in ivory. When enacted, these steps will have a dramatic impact on two of the world's largest wildlife markets and may lead other countries to halt their domestic commercial ivory markets. Here at home, President Obama announced wide-ranging restrictions on the domestic trade in African elephant ivory.

Events like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) crush of one ton of ivory in New York City reinforced the

message that elephant tusks have no place in commerce. In China, USAID-supported public service announcements aimed at reducing the demand for illegal wildlife reached 23 million Chinese people daily. Early results of these and many other international and domestic demand reduction efforts appear heartening: studies show that the price of ivory in China has fallen by almost half in the past two years and elephant poaching is decreasing in some key habitats.

President Obama's National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking and the Task Force's Implementation Plan center on three objectives: strengthening enforcement, reducing demand, and expanding international cooperation. The Task Force agencies have realized substantial progress in all three areas, for example:

- Operation Crash, a rhino horn and ivory smuggling investigation led by USFWS and prosecuted by the Department of Justice (DOJ), led to charges in U.S. courts against more than 30 individuals or businesses, 20 convictions to date, prison terms as long as 70 months, and forfeitures and restitutions as high as \$4.5 million.
- U.S. agencies together trained more than 2,000 enforcement officials from rangers to judges, helping more than 40 countries better protect wildlife, from parrots to pangolins.
- The United States Embassy in Vietnam—in partnership with the governments of Vietnam and South Africa and with civil society—launched Operation Game Change, a campaign to reduce wildlife crime, especially purchases of rhino horn. Game Change reinforces a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program to reduce demand for wildlife and encourage law enforcement, contributing to a steady decline in wildlife crime since 2014.
- The collective efforts of Task Force members to raise international commitment to address this challenge helped lead to the first-ever United Nations General Assembly resolution on wildlife trafficking.
- USAID launched the Wildlife Crime Tech Challenge to generate new science and technology solutions for: detecting transit routes, strengthening forensic evidence, reducing consumer demand, and tackling corruption along the supply chain. From more than 300 applications, representing 52 countries, 16 winners were announced on January 20, 2016.

The Task Force and its agencies are committed to maintaining this momentum and recognize that significant work remains.

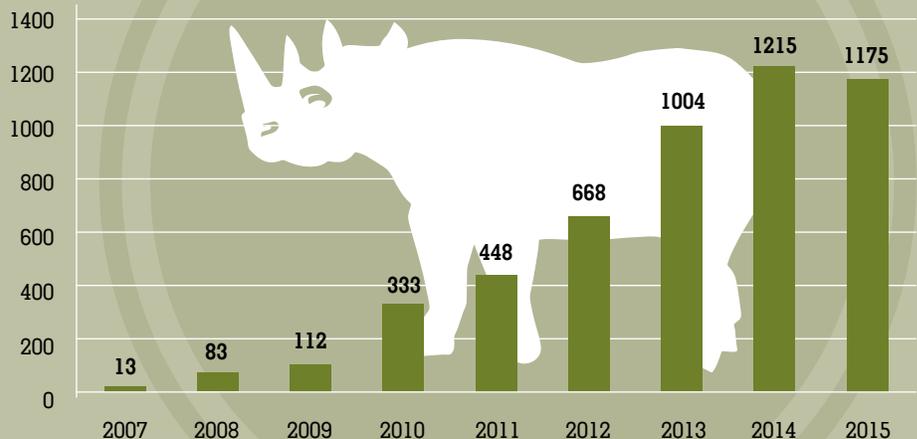
AFRICAN ELEPHANTS POACHED AT UNSUSTAINABLE RATE



Graph represents Proportion of Illegally Killed Elephants (PIKE)—a CITES metric used to estimate the percentage of elephant carcasses that were the result of illegal killing. Percentages above 50% are deemed likely to be unsustainable, leading to population decline.

Source: CITES Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE)

RHINOS POACHED IN SOUTH AFRICA



Source: South Africa Department of Environmental Affairs

INTRODUCTION



By [Executive Order 13648](#) released on July 1, 2013, President Obama directed the United States Government to better organize its efforts to combat wildlife trafficking. The Executive Order created the Task Force, co-chaired by the Secretaries of State and the Interior and the Attorney General and comprising 17 federal departments and agencies in all. The Task Force agencies meet regularly to strategically implement the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking (National Strategy) issued by President Obama in February 2014. Additionally, the co-chair agencies communicate at least weekly, convene working groups as necessary, and engage higher level officials on Task Force matters at least quarterly. Resources appropriated for combating wildlife trafficking have increased in recent years, and the Task Force continues to work closely with Congress on addressing this global challenge in a transparent and accountable manner.

The [National Strategy](#) set forth three strategic priorities: (1) strengthening domestic and global law enforcement; (2) reducing the demand for illegally traded wildlife; and (3) expanding cooperation and commitment. Furthermore, the National Strategy recognized that wildlife trafficking encompasses the illegal trafficking in fisheries products and is facilitated and exacerbated by the illegal trade in plants and trees.

The Task Force agencies immediately set about the task of executing the National Strategy, in addition to their considerable initiatives already underway. In doing so, the Task Force agencies have benefited greatly from the advice and assistance provided by the [Advisory Council on Wildlife Trafficking](#) established under the Executive Order, which reflects the expertise of a diverse group of experts on wildlife trafficking and related issues. To guide and direct those efforts, the Task Force released the [Implementation Plan](#) on February 11, 2015, which incorporates recommendations from the Advisory Council. In light of the scale and complexity of the problem, and the number of federal agencies and departments contributing to the effort, the Implementation Plan describes a multi-faceted approach and recognizes that success in this endeavor will require a significant and sustained commitment over a long period. Plan elements range from discrete tasks to be undertaken immediately, to large-scale, systemic initiatives with a longer horizon.

The Implementation Plan calls for the Task Force to meet regularly to assess its progress toward the Implementation Plan's objectives and for the Task Force to issue annually a public progress assessment. That assessment follows and describes some representative efforts of the Task Force agencies during 2015 to achieve the three strategic priorities (strengthening enforcement, reducing demand, and improving international cooperation).

Pangolin. Photo courtesy USTR.





**“THE ENTIRE WORLD HAS A STAKE IN PROTECTING THE
WORLD’S ICONIC ANIMALS, AND THE UNITED STATES IS
STRONGLY COMMITTED TO MEETING ITS OBLIGATION
TO HELP PRESERVE THE EARTH’S NATURAL BEAUTY FOR
FUTURE GENERATIONS.”**

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA



STRENGTHENING DOMESTIC AND GLOBAL ENFORCEMENT

DOMESTIC ENFORCEMENT

Wildlife trafficking is a serious crime with devastating consequences. Stanching it calls for a firm commitment to effective law enforcement, both in the United States and abroad. The enforcement so critical to fighting wildlife trafficking depends on a robust legal framework, as well as the investigative, prosecutorial, and judicial capacity to respond to poaching and wildlife trafficking. Vigorous enforcement encompasses disrupting wildlife trafficking networks, apprehending and prosecuting traffickers, seizing and forfeiting the proceeds of the crimes, and applying penalties that deter and prevent others from committing such crimes.

African elephant. Photo courtesy Joe Milmoie/USFWS.

Working for Robust Domestic Laws.

Task Force agencies have taken significant strides to continue and enhance their domestic enforcement efforts. A component of effective enforcement is ensuring that Task Force agencies have all appropriate tools and enforcement authorities, both statutory and administrative, at their disposal. To promote that goal, the Task Force established a Legislative Issues Subgroup to evaluate our existing statutory authorities and identify ways the U.S. regime to combat wildlife trafficking can be strengthened by Congressional action. In furtherance of these efforts, Task Force agencies (including DOJ, the Department of State, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), USFWS; USAID; the U.S. Department of Commerce; and the National Ocean

and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA)) have met with our partners in Congress and provided input to several bills that have been introduced or are being considered in Congress.

USFWS has also proposed administrative action to strengthen enforcement against trafficking. On July 25, 2015, USFWS proposed to revise the Endangered Species Act (ESA) special rule for the African elephant to effect a near total ban on the domestic commercial trade of African elephant ivory. The proposed revisions to these regulations would prohibit most interstate commerce (sales across state lines) in African elephant ivory and further restrict commercial exports of elephant ivory. The proposed rule includes limited exceptions for antiques,

as defined under the ESA, and certain pre-existing manufactured items such as musical instruments that contain less than 200 grams of ivory. After reviewing over one million public comments it has received, USFWS anticipates publishing a final rule in the first half of 2016.

Aggressively Prosecuting Traffickers.

There is no clearer indication of robust domestic enforcement than the investigation, prosecution, and conviction of those who poach or otherwise illegally take protected or managed species and illegally trade in these species or their parts. While the illegal trade in elephant ivory and rhino horn is an obvious enforcement priority, it is no less important to pursue traffickers in other protected terrestrial and marine animals, and protected species of trees and other plants, the destruction of which exacerbates the wildlife crisis. A signal enforcement initiative is Operation Crash, an ongoing nationwide, multi-agency effort to detect, deter, and prosecute those engaged in the illegal killing and trafficking of endangered rhinoceros and their horns as well as elephants and

ivory. Led by USFWS and prosecuted by DOJ, this enforcement initiative has led to charges against more than 30 individuals or businesses; over 20 convictions to date; prison terms as high as 70 months; and forfeitures and restitution as high as \$4.5 million.

On November 12, 2015, as a part of Operation Crash, United States federal court convicted a Canadian national and partner in a Chinese art and antiques business. The defendant was sentenced to two years in prison for his role in an on-line scheme to traffic in and smuggle from the United States to China 16 libation cups carved from rhinoceros horn and valued at more than \$1 million. The defendant pleaded guilty to smuggling the rhino horn products without the required declarations and permits. The defendant was also ordered to serve two years of supervised release and to forfeit \$1 million and 304 pieces of carved ivory.

USFWS, NOAA, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP))

special agents and officers continue to investigate cases involving totoaba (*Totoaba macdonaldi*) smuggling and are working with the U.S. DOJ to continue prosecuting these cases. Federal law enforcement in southern California are conducting a multi-year investigation that has so far seized over 500 totoaba swim bladders smuggled into the United States. To date, eleven defendants have



A sample of the elephant ivory and rhino horn libation cups seized from a convicted antiques dealer. Photo courtesy USFWS.

OPERATION CRASH





Approximately 241 dried totoaba swim bladders were discovered inside of one subject's house. Photo courtesy Homeland Security Investigations.

been charged. One subject was caught smuggling 27 totoaba swim bladders under the backseat floor mats of his vehicle. Another 214 totoaba swim bladders were discovered during a search his home, a likely "drop house" used solely for the purpose of drying out swim bladders in order to smuggle them. In a civil forfeiture action, the subject forfeited \$138,000, the value of his Calexico, California home, was indicted for his criminal involvement in the smuggling operation. The total restitution ordered to be paid to the government of Mexico from two defendants in the investigation is currently set at \$620,500. Totoaba is an endangered and legally-protected fish found only in the Gulf of



Vaquita. Photo courtesy NOAA.

California whose large swim bladder is highly prized as a delicacy and for its purported health benefits. Gill net fishing for totoaba often results in entanglement and drowning of a critically endangered porpoise species, the vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*).

A cooperative USFWS, NOAA, and Environment Canada investigation of the illegal importation and trafficking of narwhal tusks secured Federal felony indictments against three U.S. residents and their Canadian supplier. Charges included conspiracy, money laundering, and smuggling. Two of the U.S. defendants negotiated plea agreements. The third elected to stand trial in Maine and was convicted of conspiracy, smuggling violations for buying and illegally importing narwhal tusks into the United States, and money-laundering violations associated with the illegal importations. He was sentenced to 33-months in prison for the unlawful trafficking of narwhal tusks and was ordered to forfeit \$85,089, six narwhal tusks, one narwhal skull, and to pay a \$7,500 fine. The market value of the illegally imported tusks was valued between \$120,000 and \$200,000.



A narwhal tusk seized by the USFWS. The spiraled tusks can grow as long as 10 feet. Photo courtesy USFWS.



Amur leopard. Photo courtesy Art G., some rights reserved under creative commons license.

In 2015, DOJ, with investigative assistance from ICE and USFWS, concluded a major criminal prosecution that highlighted the intersection of efforts to conserve wildlife and combat illegal logging. In October 2015, Lumber Liquidators (a U.S. hardwood flooring company) pleaded guilty to violations of customs laws and a Lacey Act count for trading in illegally-sourced wood, and agreed to pay a combined total of \$13 million in fines, community service payments, and forfeited proceeds. The Lacey Act is America's oldest wildlife protection law and was amended in 2008 to require that plant-based products, including paper and furniture, be legally sourced in their country of origin. The wood in question (made into wood flooring in China) was sourced in Burma, as well as areas of Far East Russia that are habitat for the last remaining Siberian tigers and Amur leopards. Lumber Liquidators also agreed to five years of probation and mandatory implementation of a government-approved environmental compliance plan to help guide Lumber Liquidators and other companies in complying with the Lacey Act by purchasing only legally-harvested wood.



With assistance from the U.S. Forest Service International Programs, forensic DNA analysis was performed by Double Helix Technologies, Inc. using techniques specifically developed and modified for use in the case. This technique was able to match a sample of processed Maple, seized from the mill, to a stump located at a theft site within the National Forest. Photo courtesy USDA-FS.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Forest Service (FS) has also spearheaded multiple investigations involving trafficking in timber and plant species, including a large-scale theft operation involving Big Leaf Maple wood, which is used to make musical instruments, from areas of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in southwest Washington. A mill owner and three cutters were indicted by a federal grand jury for violations of the Lacey Act, among other offenses. One defendant has been sentenced to 14 months in prison and the other defendants are scheduled for trial in 2016. USDA-FS also led a multi-agency ginseng poaching operation in the Wayne National Forest in southeast Ohio resulting in the arrest of two individuals and ongoing investigation of others.

Strategically Committing Law Enforcement Resources and Enhancing Domestic Capacity. The Implementation Plan identified placing additional law enforcement personnel directly in regions that are rich in both wildlife and wildlife crime as an important enforcement enhancement and means to facilitate bringing trafficking prosecutions in the United States. Accordingly, in 2015, USFWS placed special agent attachés in Gaborone, Botswana; Lima, Peru;

and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. (Since 2014, a USFWS special agent attaché has worked in Bangkok, Thailand, and, in early 2016, a fifth USFWS special agent attaché will be posted in Beijing, China.) Attachés provide ongoing support to regional efforts to combat wildlife trafficking by coordinating investigations, providing training, strengthening relationships with host country law enforcement, and building capacity in range countries. Also in Tanzania, USDA, with USAID funding, detailed a Wildlife Anti-Trafficking Coordinator to the United

States Embassy in Dar es Salaam to coordinate and implement U.S. policy and law enforcement approaches to countering wildlife trafficking.

Domestic enforcement capacity is further aided by bringing U.S. enforcement personnel to the expertise of knowledgeable partners, such as INTERPOL. In this connection, USDA established in 2015 a full-time detail position at INTERPOL to combat wildlife trafficking. USFWS and NOAA also continue to work with INTERPOL partners, including by detailing part-time personnel at the United States National Central Bureau (INTERPOL Washington) to lend U.S. expertise on wildlife matters and to act as a conduit for information relating to criminal wildlife investigations.

To increase domestic prosecutorial capacity, DOJ devoted two of the six issues of the U.S. Attorneys' Bulletin published in 2015 to a wide range of issues involving wildlife trafficking and related crime. The articles in these issues reflected the contributions of multiple Task Force agencies and provide critical guidance and encouragement for investigators and prosecutors on increasing their participation in the fight against wildlife trafficking.

COUNTRIES WHERE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SPECIAL AGENT ATTACHÉS ARE STATIONED





Hawksbill turtle. Photo public domain

Improving Coordination and Information-Sharing.

Task Force agencies with border enforcement or import safety authority have worked to better facilitate information-sharing and collaboration to identify and target illegal wildlife misidentified as legitimate cargo or surreptitiously added to such legal import shipments by, among other things, joining the Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center (CTAC) administered by CBP. This program establishes a cohesive mechanism for communications among the 11 participating federal agencies and leverages the agencies' collective resources to prevent, preempt, deter, analyze, and identify violations of importation laws. USDA, USFWS, and NOAA-National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) are contributing to CTAC's existing expertise and broadening CTAC's scope to include counter wildlife trafficking. USFWS and NMFS are participating in the CBP's National Targeting Center—Cargo, which enhances capacities to target and screen cargo entering the United States.

Additionally, USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) recently upgraded its web-based information management tool for handling Lacey Act declarations. This upgrade will strengthen APHIS's capacity to receive, store, and retrieve import declaration data filed electronically through CBP's automated system, thus improving APHIS's analytical capability and strengthening compliance with the Lacey Act declaration requirement. In 2015, USDA issued multiple messages to its criminal and regulatory enforcement programs nationwide to prioritize wildlife trafficking, animal welfare issues, and illegal harvest of, and trade in timber and other plants and provided extensive training to its investigators and enforcement specialists to support this increased effort.

Further to the Task Force's objective of enhancing coordination and information-sharing between intelligence agencies and law enforcement, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, with dedicated support from the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, has created the Combating Wildlife Trafficking Community of Interest (CWT COI). The CWT COI will encourage, facilitate, and integrate information cooperation across the Intelligence Community and with U.S. government policy agencies, law enforcement, NGOs, international partners, and the private sector. This collaborative effort will leverage existing data and analytic capabilities and will be presented within a common operating picture that will support decision-makers and law enforcement in countering wildlife trafficking.

GLOBAL ENFORCEMENT

Wildlife trafficking is a transnational crime, with case-after-case exhibiting activities and transactions in multiple nations, including range, transit, and consumer states. The perception that wildlife trafficking is a low-risk, high-

reward crime has attracted well-armed, organized criminal groups to this illicit activity. Further, the persistence of porous borders, corrupt officials, weak institutions, and ungoverned spaces provides fertile ground for poachers and traffickers to thrive. We have seen wildlife trafficking become increasingly complex and lethal—to humans and animals—in recent years, with the profits generated from the illegal wildlife trade estimated in the billions of dollars. These factors threaten American security interests by strengthening criminal elements, subverting the rule of law, undermining economic development, and fostering instability in countries receiving U.S. foreign assistance. Task Force agencies have responded by ramping up their efforts to tackle this global threat through solutions and actions that reach far beyond our borders.

Building the Capacity of Our International Partners.

Foreign countries are regularly involved in, or affected by, the illegal wildlife trade. Many need support to strengthen their legislative frameworks; improve anti-poaching and other on-the-ground enforcement; enhance their investigative, prosecutorial, and judicial capabilities; and ultimately, achieve robust prosecutions and impose serious punishment for wildlife traffickers. In 2015, multiple Task Force agencies pursued vigorous international capacity building programs, across a wide range of recipients, to help our partners combat wildlife trafficking. Representative capacity building projects conducted by Task Force agencies include:

- The Department of State funded more than 50 capacity building training sessions in 2015, reaching over 1,000 law enforcement and wildlife officials and benefitting more than 30 countries globally through partnerships with other Task Force agencies; International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) members including

the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), INTERPOL, and World Customs Organization (WCO); as well as conservation NGOs. Training on the subject of wildlife trafficking was provided in a variety of fora, across continents, to strengthen cross-border law enforcement cooperation, improve judicial and prosecutorial assistance, and enhance investigations across a broad array of topics and disciplines.

- USAID's capacity building work in 2015 was notably diverse. USAID supports 60 programs on combating wildlife trafficking (including 30 new programs in the last two years) that range from providing technical equipment, physical structures, and training to efforts directed at improving national legal frameworks and enforcement, generally. These activities include on-the-ground programs in 25 countries. For example, in Central Africa, USAID trained more than 400 park rangers in anti-poaching techniques and more than 100 law enforcement officers and judiciary officials on relevant laws and deterrent sentencing for wildlife crime. In Vietnam, a USAID wildlife crime workshop trained 55 participants from relevant enforcement agencies and supported the National Assembly's Institute for Legislative Studies review of Vietnam's penal code, especially as it relates to wildlife crime. And in the Philippines, USAID supported training for police personnel on enforcing environmental laws and worked with the Philippines Bureau of Fisheries to train fisheries law enforcement team members to respond to illegal fishing.
- In 2015, USFWS awarded more than \$50 million (in grants, cooperative agreements, and matching funds) to 141 wildlife trafficking-related projects through its International Affairs Office.

The projects included regional efforts and support to governments and organizations in 48 partner countries to address needs in the field.

- USFWS and the Department of State trained 180 law enforcement

- DOJ is participating in a program with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to analyze existing laws and determine whether improvements are needed to effectively combat wildlife trafficking (and other natural resource-related crimes) in several southeast Asian



USAID-supported ranger training at Niassa Reserve, Mozambique, an area hard-hit by elephant poaching. Photo courtesy Alastair Nelson, Wildlife Conservation Society

and judicial personnel from member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other nations at the International Law Enforcement Academies (ILEA) in Africa and Southeast Asia. Training by U.S. government subject matter experts focused especially on combating organized criminal networks engaged in wildlife trafficking.

- More than 130 Laotian prosecutors and police participated in a series of anti-wildlife trafficking training sessions funded by the Department of State, and implemented by UNODC. Shortly thereafter, in late March 2015, Laotian authorities conducted a raid and closed four restaurants selling illegal wildlife products, demonstrating increasing capacity to target the illegal wildlife trade.

countries. To date, DOJ has worked with the ADB multi-country team to assess the laws of Vietnam and Burma addressing illegal wildlife trafficking. The project is planned to additionally assess legal authorities in the Philippines and potentially other Southeast Asian countries to provide recommendations for strengthening these authorities.

- In early 2015, ICE in conjunction with USFWS and the NGO Freeland, conducted two advanced wildlife trafficking investigation training sessions in Cha-am, Thailand, for 38 law enforcement officials from multiple Thai agencies. The training, funded by the Department of State, focused on advanced investigation techniques and included practical exercises on conducting a controlled delivery from a commercial environment. Additionally, with



funding from DOD U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), USAID, and the Department of State, CBP is establishing an Ivory and Narcotics Detection Canine Program with the Tanzania Police Force to counter illegal wildlife and narcotics trafficking at the Dar es Salaam ports.

- With funding from the Department of State and assistance from USAID, DOJ is implementing a series of regional capacity building workshops on wildlife trafficking for judges and prosecutors in Africa. The first of the series was conducted in Livingstone, Zambia, in October 2015 for 32 judges and prosecutors from six southern African nations (Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique,

Namibia, and Zambia). The training, assisted by subject matter experts from UNODC and anti-trafficking NGOs, included sessions on evidentiary and prosecutorial issues unique to wildlife trafficking cases, as well as sessions on money laundering, asset tracing, and corruption issues. Additional sessions are planned for 2016 and will extend to certain central and west African states.

- Multiple Task Force agencies have provided vital training and assistance in Bangladesh. By partnering with a local NGO, USAID trained dozens of officials from the Bangladesh Forest Department to more effectively patrol and monitor the Sundarbans, the wetland stronghold for Bengal tigers. The U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) provided training on human rights and patrolling to the Forest Department and Bangladesh Coast Guard, improving their ability to detect and respond to wildlife trafficking. Additionally, DOJ and other trainers from USFWS and USAID conducted the first in a series of planned workshops to strengthen

both the roles of and the cooperation among the police, prosecutors, judges, forest officers, and customs officials involved in combating wildlife crime.

- DOJ prosecutors, with financial support from the Department of State and USAID, have also conducted training sessions on investigating and prosecuting illegal logging cases in Indonesia, Brazil, Peru, Honduras, and Russia. The training agenda varied for each session, but wildlife trafficking is included as an important component of the training whenever possible.
- Capacity building conducted by DOD also focuses on Africa and is anticipated to deliver both direct and indirect benefits to counter-wildlife-trafficking efforts. Using DOD components to train partner nations' enforcement agencies, AFRICOM provided training in various skills such as small unit tactics, countering public corruption, basic criminal investigations, and border patrol to counter illicit trafficking. For example, in March 2015, DOD personnel

 Above left to right: Sumatran tiger. Photo courtesy Nichollas Harrison, creative commons license CC BY-SA 3.0. Hammerhead shark. Photo courtesy Barry Peters, creative commons license CC BY 2.0. Opposite right: Tito Biriandwa, a ranger at Kahuzi-Biega National Park, uses a mobile device to record wildlife and wildlife threats he observes on patrol. Data will be analyzed using SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) software to help park management direct patrols effort where it is most needed. Photo courtesy Natalie Bailey/USAID.



sharing, and cooperation. NOAA and Ecuador are conducting a pilot project to equip and train approximately 30 Ecuadorian officials in genetic techniques used to identify shark products in trade and ensure CITES compliance. Finally, NOAA, USAID, and the Government of Indonesia conducted two workshops on [combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated \(IUU\) fishing](#) in Jakarta in July 2015. Representatives from multiple Indonesian agencies heard from subject matter experts from several Task Force agencies (including NOAA, DOJ, and USCG), INTERPOL, UNODC, and other entities.

Supporting Community-Based Wildlife Conservation. Task Force agencies undertook multiple activities to support local communities in combating wildlife trafficking. Their vital contributions included sharing long-term knowledge about local areas, community members serving on patrols protecting wildlife, and community participation in information-sharing networks about

conducted anti-poaching training in weapons-handling procedures, combat marksmanship, patrolling, offensive tactics, land navigation, and mounted operations for more than 40 Tanzanian rangers in the Matambwe sector of the Selous Game Reserve. In October 2015, AFRICOM and USFWS conducted a needs assessment of efforts to address poaching and wildlife trafficking in northeast Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the eastern Central African Republic. Separately, the Department of State provided park rangers with 550 one-man tents, sleeping bags, ground mats, and gear for newly-hired rangers.

- As part of the African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) law enforcement teams onboard a U.S. Navy vessel conducted joint boardings and training with representatives from Cabo Verde, Ghana, and Senegal to deter illegal fishing. And in Gabon, at the request of the Gabonese government, DOD coordinated with the United States Embassy in

Libreville to train Gabonese park rangers in infantry tactics to enhance their capacity to thwart trafficking in ivory and other wildlife products.

- In 2015, NOAA implemented several measures to improve the capacity of foreign partners to combat the illegal trade in marine species. NOAA supports the International Monitoring and Control Surveillance Network, whose 50 member countries partner with INTERPOL's Fisheries Crime Working Group to train INTERPOL's 190 member counties. NOAA also provided funding to support the NGO Born Free USA's work to ensure the legality of the trade in CITES-protected marine species in west Africa. Further, NOAA sent special agents to participate in fisheries enforcement and prosecution workshops in multiple countries (including Mexico, Honduras, Senegal and Ghana) to address a range of operational law enforcement matters, such as species identification, investigation tools, case preparation, fisheries regulations, evidence collection/preservation, information



criminal activity. In 2015, USAID pursued numerous projects to support and strengthen community based-conservation. For example, in Kenya, USAID and the Department of State partnered with Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) and Laikipia Wildlife Forum to assist community conservancies and create ranger units that carry out regular patrols and work closely with the Kenya Wildlife Service and other

authorities. Conservancies such as these also have strong education conservation programs for local communities that create awareness of the dangers of poaching, while collecting information as part of community policing. Results have been excellent; in fiscal year 2015 NRT documented a 46 percent reduction in elephant poaching compared to poaching levels experienced in the area during 2012-2013.

In many African countries, USAID and USFWS supported using the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART), an open-source software for improved ranger-based monitoring, and the Management Oriented Monitoring System in wildlife management areas to professionalize monitoring and reporting, as well as to increase the use of data to track ranger activity, target illegal activity, and track wildlife locations and trends. These tools greatly improve the efficiency, efficacy, transparency and accountability of law enforcement and enforcement personnel. In the landscape that includes the Salonga National Park in the DRC, intelligence from local communities led to the re-arrest of a notorious poacher who had escaped from a local prison.

USAID support has enabled similar results in Asia. In the Philippines, an anonymous maritime law violations hotline generated more than 3,000 reports that led to numerous arrests for illegal wildlife contraband. This hotline program has been extended to other key marine biodiversity areas in the Philippines. In Nepal, hundreds of community-based anti-poaching units have been established involving thousands of young adults who patrol community-managed forests and report signs of wildlife or timber crime. USAID partners formed 196 such units in 2015 and trained 2,500 volunteers, for a total of 300 anti-poaching units consisting of 13,000 trained youths. Nepal again saw zero poaching of rhinos in 2015, though growing risks demand continued vigilance.

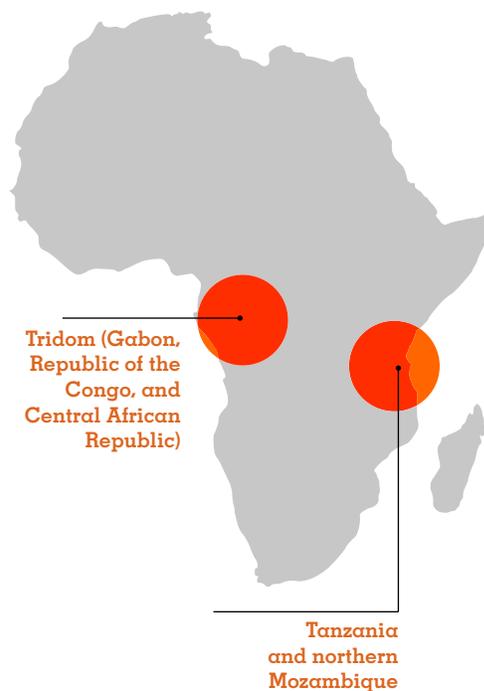
Combating Trafficking with the Best Technologies and Tools. In 2015, Task Force agencies dedicated substantial effort and resources to effectively deploying technology in the fight against wildlife trafficking. Standout projects include:

- USAID supported five action-oriented research programs to reduce wildlife poaching and trafficking in Kenya. Research grants from USAID and its partners were competitively awarded to the Kenya Wildlife Service, the National Museum of Kenya, and the International Center for Insect Physiology and Ecology for DNA analysis, molecular genetics for elephant conservation, and molecular and DNA barcodes to track disease transmission and trafficking patterns.
- USAID equipped and trained more than 400 rangers in the DRC and Republic of the Congo on the use of GPS units, hand-held computers for data collection, and SMART. SMART patrols are now providing credible, actionable data on wildlife presence and threats, which managers use to deploy ranger teams to high-intensity poaching areas to enable the arrest (and subsequent prosecution) of poachers at entry and exit points. More strategic patrols and other measures across eight landscapes in the two countries resulted in the destruction of nearly 1,800 snares and traps, seizure of 2,800 firearms, the apprehension of 416 poachers, and seizures of elephant tusks and other wildlife products. Close collaboration between various authorities in DRC led to 15-20 year prison sentences for two notorious poachers.
- USAID funded the East Africa Anti-Poaching Partnership, comprising 35 Tanzanian and Kenyan stakeholders from those governments, NGOs and the private sector which, among other things, collaborated with Strathmore

University iLab to develop WILD, a mobile application. WILD collects, analyzes, and distributes information on poaching, human-wildlife conflict, and biodiversity indicators in real time. WILD was piloted in July 2015 for use in Tanzania and Kenya.

- USAID is supporting the development of two key science and technology-based tools for combating wildlife trafficking and IUU fishing in the Philippines: the Fisheries Law Enforcement Management Information System and the Landscape and Wildlife Indicators application.
- USAID, the Department of State, and USFWS are supporting key science and technology-based tools for combating wildlife trafficking and IUU fishing in the Philippines. The Department of State escorted high-level Philippine environmental and law enforcement officials to a USFWS site in Lakewood, Colorado, to develop a Philippine interagency

IVORY POACHING HOT SPOTS, 2006-2014



law enforcement management information system. USAID is also supporting the development of a Landscape and Wildlife Indicators application.

- USAID contributed to the development of WildScan, a mobile application that helps authorities identify more than 300 endangered species and illegal wildlife products commonly trafficked into and throughout Southeast Asia. The application was successfully launched in Vietnam in 2015 and is in especially high demand in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and some nations in Africa and the Americas.
- The Department of State and USFWS supported and facilitated DNA analysis of major ivory seizures, conducted by the [University of Washington](#). Most of the analyzed seizures came from just a few areas, which may indicate that there are fewer major poaching hotspots in Africa than previously thought. This information may greatly assist law enforcement in targeting a response to major elephant poaching hotspots, and may assist in the disruption of criminal networks involved in ivory trafficking. Such data, when combined with shipment data, may also help trace ivory to bottleneck ports and further refine targeting of foreign assistance and law enforcement efforts.
- U.S. agencies are also supporting comparable efforts to develop and deploy suitable technologies to identify timber species and track timber. USDA has contributed technical expertise, and served as chair of the Steering Committee, to advance the Global Timber Tracking Network to generate and share expertise on genetic, chemical,



Coral reef. Photo courtesy NOAA National Ocean Service Image Gallery.

and other methods to identify and track timber. With financial and other support from the Department of State, USDA scientists are researching genetic and anatomical approaches to assist countries and traders to identify illegal trade in wood. USDA also actively participates as a member of the ICCWC Expert Group developing guidelines on methods and procedures for timber identification and analysis. The Department of State also supported countries in developing policies and legality verification systems to track timber.

Improving Communication with International Enforcement Partners. In 2015, Task Force agencies worked toward improving the flow of information between U.S. agencies and our international partners. NOAA's efforts illustrate the range

Pursuing Multinational Enforcement Operations. U.S. law enforcement agencies have a proven track record of successful joint and multinational enforcement operations. The Implementation Plan acknowledges the imperative of continuing that trend in the area of anti-wildlife trafficking. An excellent example is Operation Flyaway, a WCO-led operation that included USFWS, DHS (ICE and CBP), and NOAA and focused on illicit wildlife from South America and Mexico, destined for the United States and Europe through passenger and mail/express routes. In June 2015, these Task Force agencies collaborated with key enforcement entities from Mexico, South America, and Europe during a 10-day international effort of enhanced coordination, information sharing, and increased action against wildlife trafficking that resulted in 25 seizures at airports and international mail facilities in Miami and Los Angeles. Internationally, Colombia led the way with 23 arrests and nearly 3,000 seizures, at an estimated value of \$6 million. Items seized in the United States during the operation included queen conch shell meat, sea turtle shells and skulls, elephant meat, tiger teeth and ivory pendants. In all, 13 countries participated in this operation.



USFWS K-9 sniffs out illegal wildlife. Photo courtesy USFWS.

of methods used to improve information sharing. Like USDA, NOAA has met with Korean fisheries authorities to discuss the operational aspects of their work and to find possible areas of collaboration. Furthermore, a September 11, 2015, agreement between the United States and Russia on IUU fishing formalizes a process for direct NOAA enforcement communication and information-sharing on investigations and trafficking of IUU products. With support from USAID,

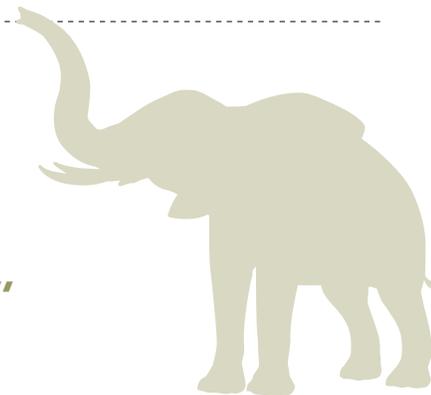
has led to increased information-sharing supporting transnational CITES investigations.

Task Force agencies also cooperated with ICCWC members, such as INTERPOL. For example, the Department of State and USAID supported INTERPOL police investigative training in Vietnam and development of the Vietnamese plan for participation in INTERPOL's coordinated regional Operation PAWS

III involved INTERPOL, EUROPOL, WCO, and officers from customs, police, forestry, wildlife and other law enforcement agencies from 62 countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe. With technical assistance from USAID's Asia Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking (ARREST) program, Cobra III resulted in more than 300 arrests and more than 600 seizures (comprising tens of thousands of wildlife products), primarily in Europe and Asia.

“WE MUST TAKE THE PROFIT OUT OF WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING TO STOP THE CRIMINALS WHO ARE ROBBING FROM OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN THE GREAT DIVERSITY OF LIFE ON OUR PLANET.”

JOHN C. CRUDEN, ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



a coordinated Combating Wildlife Trafficking assessment by NOAA and the Government of the Philippines will address smuggling of marine turtles, with the potential to include illegal trade in corals and precious shells. Additionally, DOJ, USDA, and other agencies hosted a Lacey Act study tour for representatives from the Korean Forest Service to share information to assist Korea in developing a system to combat illegal logging and associated trade.

ICE also engaged in successful multilateral cooperation in Singapore, where on May 19, 2015, ICE Singapore special agents reported the seizure of 3.7 tons of illegal ivory (1,783 pieces), 4 rhino horns, and 22 African big cat teeth. The seized contraband, transiting Singapore from Kenya en route to Vietnam, was estimated to be worth over \$6 million. ICE Singapore's engagement on wildlife trafficking matters with Singapore Customs, the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority and other regional partners

(Protection of Asian Wildlife Species). Following successful implementation of Phase I of the PAWS program in 2014 (including participation by all 13 tiger range countries), Phase II of the program in 2015 saw more than 300 arrests and the seizure of 12 big cat skins, 9.3 tons of ivory, 37 rhino horns, almost 2,000 turtles and reptiles, 282 pangolins, and five tons of pangolin meat.

The Department of State also funded INTERPOL investigative training sessions that helped lay the groundwork for INTERPOL's Infra Terra (a public list of persons wanted for environmental crimes) and other measures that resulted in the arrest of two high-profile alleged wildlife traffickers.

A notable large-scale, coordinated, multinational enforcement operation is Operation Cobra III, which occurred in the spring of 2015 under the chairmanship of the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (WEN). Cobra

INTERPOL has now formally established Program Cobra to institutionalize and fund this activity going forward. To improve future collaborative actions, USAID supported an operational review of Cobra III by the Lusaka Agreement Task Force during a September 2015 workshop with African and Asian government representatives.

Task Force Agency Support for Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs). Task Force agencies have directed significant efforts in 2015 toward the development and operation of effective regional WENs, both existing and new, with the aim of WENs engendering improved regional cooperation and successful enforcement and prosecutions.

The United States seeks to continue to support the development of new WENs and strengthen existing WENs' ability to identify risk and detect and intercept illicitly-traded wildlife being transported in the region. While ASEAN

WEN has largely graduated from years of U.S. support, in 2015, the Department of State, in partnership with CBP and assistance from ICE and the Philippines, hosted a capacity-building workshop through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to bolster the skills and abilities of customs officials from the ASEAN WEN countries.

Together with INTERPOL, USAID and its partners in the regional ARREST program facilitated the creation and continued development of the South Asia WEN (SA-WEN). During 2015, direct assistance to INTERPOL's Project Predator provided training for 171 enforcement personnel from SA-WEN member countries in crime scene investigation techniques for poaching incidents, intelligence gathering, investigative skills, and controlled deliveries of illicit products. INTERPOL training improved coordination between information systems of rangers and police, on the one hand, and prosecutors and the judiciary on the other. Such efforts are improving analytical capability in tiger range countries and have been well-received in media reports addressing the fate of the tiger in the Bangladesh Sundarbans region.

The Department of State, DOI, and DOJ continue to support the development and operation of the Central American WEN (known by its Spanish acronym ROAVIS). Partial funding for ROAVIS is through environmental cooperation related to the U.S.-Dominican Republic-Central America- Free Trade Agreement. In 2015, the Department of State, DOI, and DOJ supported 14 ROAVIS events that provided capacity building to 330 participants from Central America. These events included six capacity building workshops on CITES for 158 participants in four Central American countries, three capacity building workshops on environment and wildlife cases for 80 judges and prosecutors, one capacity building workshop on the

application of wildlife law and procedures for prosecutors, two bi-national law enforcement coordination meetings, one environmental law congress, and one ROAVIS annual meeting. These training activities and bi-national coordination meetings resulted in a cross border operation run by the Governments of Panama and Costa Rica which led to confiscations and disruptions of illegal wildlife activity as well as public education regarding wildlife laws in Panama. The species benefiting from this operation included CITES Appendix I Hawksbill sea turtle, black-crowned Central American squirrel monkey, and jaguar, and CITES Appendix II collared peccary and queen conch, as well as coral tree and collared aracari toucan. This operation has resulted in commitment by both governments to repeat a bi-national operation in 2016.

In southern Africa, the United States Embassy in Botswana coordinated discussions among representatives of the European Union (EU), the Southern African Development Community, the United States and Botswana to secure EU funding in support of a Technical Advisor for the Wildlife Enforcement Network for Southern Africa (WENSA), who began work in February 2016. A WENSA workshop is planned for 2016 to help move the organization into a more operational phase.

The Horn of Africa WEN (HAWEN), originally conceived in a workshop funded by the United States Embassy in Addis Ababa, also appears poised to move forward. The HAWEN steering committee is now seeking endorsement by a majority of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development in East Africa countries to formally launch HAWEN. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Netherlands office indicated it may provide seed money for a HAWEN secretariat and to promote capacity building. United States Embassies are also working in other

regions, including South America, to support emerging WENs.

An important catalyst for, and result of, increased cooperation through WENs is promoting a coordinated, interagency response to wildlife trafficking at the national level (not unlike the approach reflected in the National Strategy and



Maasai women in traditional dress, community rangers in background. Photo courtesy USAID.

Implementation Plan). Toward that end, in the Philippines, USAID convened a wildlife enforcement working group that led to an executive order calling for a National Anti-Wildlife Crime Council under the Office of the President, which would investigate and prosecute illegal logging, wildlife trafficking and IUU fishing. And in Kenya, USAID efforts helped to bring together the major Kenyan conservation actors to form the Kenya Conservation Alliance.

Treating Wildlife Trafficking as a Serious, Transnational Crime. Wildlife trafficking has evolved to become a serious form of transnational organized crime. As such, the Department of State has applied diplomatic pressure in various anti-crime and corruption fora to designate wildlife trafficking as a serious crime in line with the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), a domestic act of criminalization that unlocks the capacity

of a State Party to UNTOC to engage in mutual legal assistance and extradition cooperation with other States Parties on such crimes by transnational organized criminal groups. The United States has proactively encouraged the application of UNTOC as a tool to combat wildlife trafficking at the United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, INTERPOL Environmental and Compliance Conference, Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Conference of the Parties to the UNTOC, and the G-7 Roma–Lyon Group (RLG). To complement these diplomatic efforts, in March 2015, Germany and the United States co-hosted an experts’ meeting on wildlife trafficking at the RLG, which included representatives from Task Force agencies, to increase cooperation on the topic in the G-7 and to identify additional actions for the RLG to take. With U.S. encouragement, Germany identified wildlife trafficking as one of the top three priorities for its 2015 Presidency of the RLG.

The Department of State also supported, through active official advocacy and participation in a March 2015 ASEAN Regional Forum workshop, Thailand’s successful proposal which resulted in the ASEAN Ministers responsible for Transnational Crime-related issues agreeing to shift wildlife trafficking into the ASEAN Political-Security Community. The decision will lead to ASEAN assuming greater responsibility for wildlife and timber trafficking, and will help to mobilize the Southeast Asian law enforcement community to further engage on these important issues.

Task Force Agency Actions Targeting Corruption and Illicit Proceeds. The Task Force agencies’ experience working with our international partners to thwart wildlife trafficking, along with illegal logging and other forms of transnational organized crime, has consistently shown that this type of crime flourishes in an environment of official corruption and one where criminals can take advantage of illicit financial networks. As a result, the National Strategy and Implementation Plan take aim at corruption and the illicit proceeds of wildlife trafficking. Training by Task Force agencies to our foreign partners routinely includes training modules on fighting official corruption, money laundering, and tracing and seizing proceeds and other illicit assets associated with wildlife trafficking. Also more generally, Task Force agencies during 2015 continued to cooperate through members of ICCWC, such as INTERPOL and UNODC, to elevate issues of corruption and money laundering in the context of countering wildlife trafficking.

The Department of State, in partnership with UNODC and the American Bar Association, in 2015 worked in the Asia-Pacific region to build capacity on anti-corruption. The program identifies solutions to fight corruption and combat wildlife crime, build criminal intelligence capacity in Southeast Asia, and support workshops bringing together key African and Asian countries’ financial intelligence units and wildlife officials to enhance the use of anti-money laundering techniques to combat wildlife crime.

As a result, our international partners in the Asia-Pacific region are now actively pursuing the issue of wildlife trafficking in APEC, ASEAN and, increasingly, Pacific Island Forum countries—with a strong focus on anti-money-laundering and tainted asset recovery. For example, the United States supported an APEC Pathfinder Dialogue in August 2015 that discussed strategies to combat illicit trafficking and trade, with an emphasis on corruption risk assessment and the effective use of systems and technology to detect money laundering.

The Department of the Treasury continues to engage with interagency, civil society, and international partners to enhance information-sharing and target the financial underpinnings of wildlife trafficking. Treasury analyzes available information for its usefulness in exercising U.S. sanctions authorities against individuals and entities who engage in wildlife trafficking. Additionally, Treasury represents the United States in the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG), one of eight regional bodies operating under the umbrella of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to uphold international standards on anti-money laundering and countering terrorism financing. Treasury has played a role as liaison for ESAAMLG experts with their counterparts in the Asia-Pacific Group, another regional body operating under the FATF. The Department of State contributed to this effort by supporting a series of workshops on money laundering, bringing together both the Asia and Africa FATF-style regional bodies.

A Hawksbill Sea Turtle swims past a coral reef.
Photo courtesy Rich Carey/Shutterstock.





REDUCING DEMAND FOR ILLEGALLY TRADED WILDLIFE

Anti-poaching and anti-trafficking enforcement efforts must be complemented by a directed effort to curtail the persistent market demand that drives this illegal trade. Task Force agencies have applied their expertise and efforts toward educating and informing the public, helping to alter consumption patterns and reducing the demand for illegal wildlife and wildlife products. Another way to combat trafficking and reduce demand is to diminish the ability of traffickers to launder illegally-traded goods through the market of legally-traded goods. To this end, the USFWS proposed revising its regulations to further restrict African elephant ivory trade (as described previously).

Perhaps the most visible demand reduction activity by Task Force agencies in 2015 was USFWS's second [ivory crush](#) on June 19, 2015, in Times Square, New York City. The crush destroyed ivory from seizures and cases that had been resolved since the first USFWS crush in 2013. Approximately one ton of elephant ivory was destroyed including full tusks, carved tusks, hundreds of smaller carvings, and other objects. Both ivory crushes generated significant worldwide media coverage, and ignited conversation on social media. To capitalize on this, the Department of State promoted the United States' ivory crushes to audiences around the world, advocating for other countries to take similar actions. Indeed, in 2015, with the support and encouragement of United States officials, the governments of

China, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Republic of the Congo, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates crushed or burned all or significant parts of their respective stockpiles of seized ivory.

United States embassies around the world have also worked to raise public awareness of wildlife trafficking. In 2015, United States embassies posted hundreds of messages in the media and on social media, reaching a cumulative global audience of more than 100 million people. For example, the #Tweet4Elephants campaign initiated by the U.S. Ambassador to Kenya reached more than 36 million people with more than 136 million Twitter impressions in its first week alone. The campaign raised awareness of the escalation in illegal wildlife trade that is threatening

“WE ARE COMMITTED TO A MULTI-PRONGED FIGHT AGAINST WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING THAT INCLUDES WORKING TO REDUCE DEMAND AND SALES OF ILLEGALLY TRADED IVORY AND OTHER WILDLIFE PRODUCTS RIGHT HERE AT HOME.”

**SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
SALLY JEWELL**



elephants, rhinos, and other wildlife, and continues to curb demand through deepening civil society participation. Evidence that these efforts are effective is mounting. The Kenya Wildlife Service, for example, credits national and global anti-poaching campaigns with a sharp reduction in elephant and rhino poaching in Kenya in 2015.

United States embassies are bringing together governments, NGOs, students, and celebrities in individual countries for visits and exchanges and to work to raise awareness and to stop the illegal trade in rhino horn and other wildlife products from protected species. Some representative demand reduction strategies deployed in 2015 include:

- The United States Embassy in

Vietnam, in partnership with the Government of Vietnam, the Government of South Africa, and civil society, launched Operation Game Change, a demand reduction campaign that included a series of public outreach events focused especially on reducing consumption of rhino horn. Launched on World Wildlife Day, the campaign included the participation of Vietnamese Ministers and included multiple outreach events, such as awareness-raising bike rides led by the U.S. Ambassador and a film and concert festival called Wildfest that attracted approximately 2,500 people. The campaign effectively engaged key government officials, civil society, and business leaders, notably leading to a new partnership between Vietjet



Opposite page: Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, center, with Department of State Acting Assistant Secretary Judith Garber and Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe, participated in the Ivory Crush. Photo courtesy Tami A Heilemann/DOI. Top: Seized ivory to be crushed at the Times Square New York City Ivory Crush Event. Photo courtesy Tami A Heilemann/DOI. Bottom: Ivory burn in the Republic of the Congo. Photo courtesy Wildlife Conservation Society.



Operation Game Change. Photo courtesy U.S. Embassy Hanoi.

Airlines and the United States to reduce illegal wildlife consumption.

- As part of ongoing dialogue with the Holy See, the Department of State conducted outreach on combating wildlife trafficking to Vatican leadership. Pope Francis spoke out against ivory trafficking during his comments to the United Nations Environment Programme in Kenya in November.
- The Department of State also reached out to religious leaders in the Philippines, seeking their

collaboration in engaging their communities to reduce demand for illegally traded wildlife. In November, the Philippines Conference of Catholic Bishops called on clergy not to accept donations of or to bless any new statue or religious object made from ivory or other materials associated with protected species.

- In April, Embassy Phnom Penh hosted YSEALI Generation: EARTH, a workshop for dozens of young leaders from every ASEAN nation and the United States as part of President Obama’s Young Southeast

Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI). The participants worked in teams to identify and brainstorm solutions to wildlife trafficking and other environmental challenges facing Southeast Asia, with each team receiving a grant of seed money to help them develop environmental awareness projects throughout the region.

- United States embassies also provided training to raise awareness about wildlife trafficking. For example, Embassy Phnom Penh provided its Ambassador’s Youth Council with hands-on training which culminated in a public concert for an audience of more than 3,000 in January 2015 at the Phnom Penh Night Market to raise awareness about wildlife trafficking, environmental protection and wildlife conservation.

Efforts by USAID in 2015 to increase public awareness and concern also reached impressive numbers in countries like China, Vietnam, and Thailand. In China, for instance, USAID-supported public service announcements in transportation hubs, bus stations, and subways reached 23 million Chinese people daily. In Vietnam, a scorecard approach to monitoring the prevalence of wildlife crime at restaurants, pet shops, pharmacies and related businesses, as well as the success of authorities in addressing violations, resulted in a steady decline in wildlife crime in Hanoi and other cities since 2014. And in Thailand, 21 more hotels joined the Blue List of businesses pledging to refrain from serving shark fin, bringing the total to more than 180 businesses since the USAID-supported Fin Free Thailand campaign began in 2013.



Well-known appraiser Zhai Jianmin calls for fellow art collectors to reject ivory products and spare the lives of elephants. Translation: The ultimate joy of a collector is to find a treasure. What then is treasure? Ivory to you is just an object, yet it comes from taking the life of an elephant. Do not take away the ultimate treasure of an elephant.

CRUSH AND BURN

Since 1989, 16 nations have crushed and burned a total of more than 142 metric tons of confiscated ivory (over 310,000 pounds). This represents roughly more than 14,200 elephants. The latest occurred in Sri Lanka on January 26. Why take this action? Together, these countries have sent a powerful message: the illegal ivory trade won't be tolerated. WCS and its 96 Elephants campaign are working with partners around the world to stop the killing, stop the trafficking, and stop the demand.



Graphic courtesy Wildlife Conservation Society.



EXPANDING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & COMMITMENT

A third, foundational priority in countering wildlife trafficking is successfully engaging governments and stakeholders around the world to join the fight. The U.S. government mobilized global support for anti-poaching and anti-trafficking measures by strengthening international agreements and arrangements that protect wildlife, promoting conservation commitments, and by reaching out to engage the full range of potential international partners (including governments, NGOs, local activists, private industry and the media).

Pursuing Multilateral Cooperation on Wildlife Trafficking. The United States has actively worked to promote global political will on wildlife trafficking, which is often reflected in the inclusion of text in multilateral statements indicating

governments' commitments to take further or increased action to combat wildlife trafficking. In 2015, such results included the first United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution on illicit wildlife trafficking and inclusion of wildlife trafficking in the annual UNGA omnibus resolution on crime prevention and criminal justice matters. Other results include incorporation of a commitment to fight wildlife trafficking in the G-7 Leaders Statement, in the November APEC Leaders and Ministers Declarations, as well as in the November ASEAN-U.S. Strategic Partnership Joint Statement, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, and the August ASEAN-U.S. Plan of Action 2016-2020. The G-7 Roma-Lyon Group Heads of Delegation adopted a project roadmap of various wildlife anti-

trafficking initiatives, following a meeting convened for law enforcement officials in Berlin in March to develop a proposal for improving G-7 coordination in this field. Through the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Charting Illicit Trade Task Force, the Department of State and partners brought together key African and Asian wildlife law enforcement to improve global coordination.

Work in 2015 progressed with other international partners fighting wildlife trafficking. United States embassies reached out to governments at the highest levels, accompanied by targeted media intervention and community outreach to raise awareness about wildlife trafficking.

Pursuing Bilateral and Regional Cooperation on Wildlife

Trafficking. The U.S. government also actively pursued cooperation with other governments and regional organizations to address wildlife trafficking. Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Obama in September 2015 agreed to enact nearly complete bans on ivory import and export, and to take significant and timely steps to halt the domestic commercial trade of ivory. To further raise public awareness, the Department of State published in Chinese newspapers and websites an Op-Ed commending these commitments and calling for their quick implementation, reaching tens of millions of Chinese citizens.

In addition to the Obama-Xi statement, the United States continued to engage China at multiple levels throughout 2015. In June, the Task Force Co-Chairs and most Task Force agencies participated in a day-long breakout session on wildlife trafficking as part of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED), including a public event with significant media attendance. Discussions at this meeting led to an agreement to collaborate with China in stemming the illegal trade in totoaba and sea turtles, to work jointly on enforcement, and to explore opportunities to use new and emerging technologies to inform and improve wildlife protection and law enforcement. The United States and China also reaffirmed their commitment to trilateral cooperation in Africa. Other significant engagement with China in 2015 included:

- Following the S&ED, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) and the Department of Commerce and their Chinese counterparts agreed at the Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT) to build on previous JCCT and S&ED

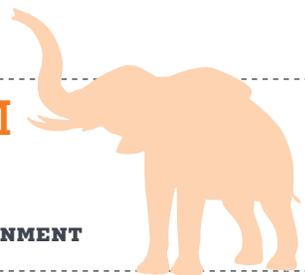
commitments by enhancing information exchange and cooperation, under existing and appropriate agreements and mechanisms, in the areas of IUU fishing, wildlife trafficking, and illegal logging and associated trade.

- In 2015, United States Mission China conducted official advocacy across multiple regions in China and at all levels, up to President Xi Jinping, to engage the Chinese government to develop a plan to combat wildlife trafficking. The work included policy advocacy, training, public diplomacy, outreach, and work with NGOs.
- The U.S. Ambassador to China filmed an anti-ivory public service announcement for Chinese media and conducted an anti-wildlife trafficking print media campaign of billboards across China using his image. He also conducted official meetings with high-level Chinese officials to encourage action on wildlife trafficking, conducted and publicized visits to wildlife sanctuaries, and met with NGOs.
- In September 2015, USFWS organized a trilateral discussion with CITES and fisheries authorities from the United States, China, and Mexico on the illegal trade in totoaba and areas of cooperation to help address this trade. The discussion raised awareness about the trafficking problem in this endangered fish species and encouraged continued collaboration and dialogue on ways to combat this illegal trade.

Opposite page: President Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping meet in September 2015. Photo © AP Images, courtesy of Bureau of Public Affairs, DOS.

Below: Forest elephant and calf. Photo courtesy Daphne Carlson Bremer/USFWS.





“WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IS A GLOBAL PROBLEM THAT DEMANDS A GLOBAL SOLUTION.”

CATHERINE A. NOVELLI, UNDER SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Many U.S. Ambassadors in Africa regularly urged senior government officials throughout 2015 to take increased action to combat wildlife trafficking, and spoke in multiple media outlets about the importance of conserving wildlife, linking conservation to increased prosperity for those living in areas that could substantially benefit from tourism. As a result, we have seen an increase in regional agreements and high level focus on wildlife trafficking.
- The U.S. Ambassador to Tanzania and Tanzania’s Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism signed a Memorandum of Understanding to build Tanzania’s capacity to improve legislative frameworks for combating wildlife crimes, enhance law enforcement capability to deter and respond to wildlife crimes, and support prosecutorial and judicial capacity to prosecute and adjudicate wildlife crimes.

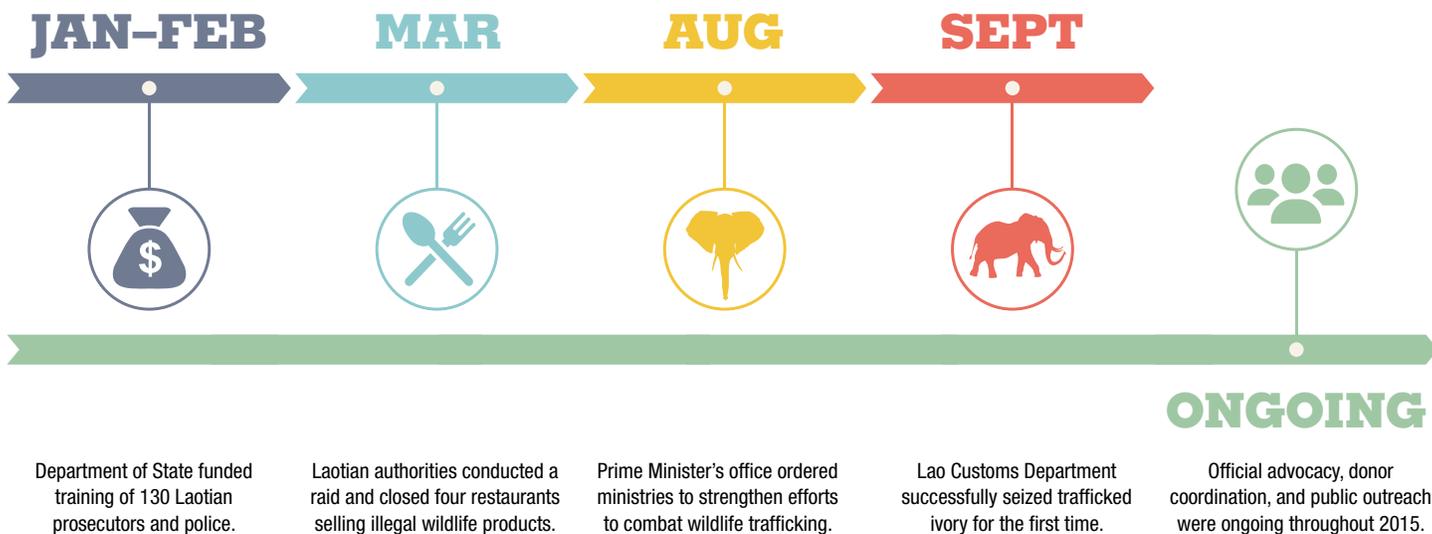
- Throughout 2015, the United States Embassy in Laos worked to coordinate relevant donor efforts and advocated prevention, enforcement, and partnerships with the Lao government. In August 2015, the Prime Minister’s office ordered ministries to strengthen efforts to combat wildlife trafficking. And in September 2015, the Lao Customs Department successfully seized trafficked ivory for the first time.

Across southeast Asia, USAID facilitated the adoption and implementation of many regional, bilateral, and national agreements, strategies, plans, and protocols that combat wildlife trafficking and support ASEAN’s good governance and environmentally-sensitive development goals. For example, in April 2015, USAID helped the Philippines’ National Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee organize the Third National Environmental Law Summit, resulting in a five-year action plan on environmental law enforcement, including wildlife

crime. And in May 2015, USAID and the Department of State co-sponsored a workshop for law enforcement officials in Indonesia and the Philippines to exchange information and best practices and strengthen counter wildlife crime cooperation between the two countries.

There have been similar policy results at the national and local levels in Africa, such as in the DRC, where USAID and its partners contributed to a provincial Minister of the Environment signing a decree forbidding ivory trafficking. In Mozambique, USAID’s main partner countering elephant poaching in Niassa National Reserve seconded a law enforcement advisor to Mozambique’s wildlife management agency, improving the coordination of national and bilateral efforts to combat wildlife trafficking. Such technical assistance combined with encouragement from USAID and the United States Embassy contributed to Mozambique inventorying part of its stockpile of confiscated ivory (2.4 tons)

2015 MILESTONES IN LAOS



and rhino horn (193 kilograms), then burning it in a high-profile public event.

In 2015, USFWS cooperated with Vietnam and other range states to stem the illegal trade in pangolins, the most trafficked mammals in the world. Vietnam and the United States co-hosted the First Meeting of the Pangolin Range States in Danang in June 2015. Delegates from African and Asian pangolin range countries joined together for the first time to develop a unified conservation action plan to protect pangolins against over-exploitation from trafficking and unsustainable legal trade. The working group made recommendations to the CITES Inter-Sessional Pangolin Working Group for their consideration at the 66th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee.

Prioritizing Wildlife Trafficking in Trade Agreements. In 2015, USTR, the Department of State, and other Task Force agencies engaged with senior-level environmental officials under existing free trade agreements (FTAs) with the Dominican Republic-Central America, Peru, Singapore, Chile, and Republic of Korea to discuss the parties' implementation of their respective FTA Environment Chapters and commitments, including as to enforcement of wildlife protection laws as well as CITES implementation. An important feature of these meetings is the public session for stakeholders and the public to provide input on issues of concern.

USTR, the Department of State, and other Task Force agencies also prioritized anti-wildlife trafficking and related conservation objectives in environmental cooperation projects to support implementation of the obligations in the environment chapters of existing FTAs. Under the U.S.-Australia FTA, the U.S. provided forensics training pertinent to the implementation of the CITES to Australia from 2013 through 2015. Under the framework of the U.S.-Chile



Negotiating Protections for Wildlife under New Trade Agreements. The Asia-Pacific region is home to some of the fastest-growing markets in the world, the fastest-growing natural resource use of any region, and a significant transit point for trade, including of illegally harvested timber, IUU fish products, and wildlife and wildlife products, such as elephant ivory and rhino horn.



The U.S. secured in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) the most comprehensive environmental protections of any trade agreement, targeted to address some of the greatest environmental threats in the Asia-Pacific. Negotiations of the landmark agreement concluded in October 2015.

The twelve TPP parties include several mega-diverse countries (such as Peru, Malaysia, Australia and Mexico), range states and major markets (such as Vietnam) for wildlife and wildlife products, as well as key fishing nations.

The TPP creates new tools to hold all partners accountable for protecting wildlife and well as forests, oceans, wetland preserves and other protected areas. The TPP has fully-enforceable provisions that commit countries to implementing their CITES obligations; effectively enforcing their environmental laws and regulations; combatting illegal trade in wildlife, plants and fish regardless of the source. TPP matches new protections with new cooperative tools that will spur and support regional action on an unprecedented scale.

Top: Photo courtesy USTR. Inset: The TPP will help protect pangolins, one of the world's most trafficked mammals. Photo © AP Images, courtesy of Bureau of Public Affairs, DOS.



Environmental Cooperation Agreement, the U.S. is cooperating with Chile on protected area management, glacier monitoring, and biodiversity governance, among other areas. This includes work that supports new and existing sister park arrangements between U.S. and Chilean parks, strengthens laws and regulations for CITES implementation and enforcement to protect wildlife. Additional projects and activities to combat wildlife trafficking are slated to be carried out under forward-looking bilateral environmental cooperation work programs with FTA partner countries, including Singapore, Chile, Colombia, Panama, Peru, Jordan, Oman and Morocco.

Helping to Build Effective

Partnerships. Task Force agencies undertook several projects in 2015 to encourage and foster partnerships on combating wildlife trafficking between governments, NGOs, business, and civil society. For example, the United

States-facilitated Congo Basin Forest Partnership Meeting of Parties in Yaoundé, Cameroon resulted in the first targeted policy recommendation for Congo Basin ministers to enhance wildlife conservation. These efforts also encouraged Cameroon to re-launch the Organisation Pour la Conservation de la Faune Sauvage en Afrique, a Central African-led initiative to fight wildlife trafficking in the region.

Additionally, USAID, in collaboration with the Department of State, USFWS, and DHS, is constructing a partnership to prevent trafficked wildlife and wildlife products from entering transportation supply chains. This new partnership – known as Reducing Opportunities for the Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species or ROUTES – brings together governments, inter-governmental organizations, NGOs, the private sector and academia to: (1) improve data and analysis on wildlife trafficking within passenger and cargo supply chains; (2)

expand industry engagement; (3) enable transportation personnel to inform and assist law enforcement; (4) incorporate anti-wildlife trafficking measures into industry standards; and (5) increase awareness of wildlife trafficking among passengers and clients.

USAID also funded IUCN's and TRAFFIC's work with the WCO to organize a planning meeting in January 2015 with transportation companies, customs agents, and representatives of NGOs and government interests to identify gaps, opportunities and recommendations for private sector companies to reduce the inadvertent transport of illegal wildlife. Linking with the Royal Foundation's United for Wildlife partnership and USAID's ROUTES program, this investment has realized early success with follow-on training and workshops with the private sector.

To strengthen regional collaboration, USAID's Oceans and Fisheries Partnership aims to combat IUU fishing in Asia and the Pacific region. USAID is partnering with the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center and the Coral Triangle Initiative for Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security to strengthen regional, sustainable fisheries management through an electronic catch documentation and traceability system. The system engages private sector stakeholders to use the latest scientific and technological innovations.

Further private sector collaboration includes USFWS working with the United States Wildlife Trafficking Alliance, a diverse coalition of partners from a cross-section of leading NGOs, foundations, companies, and media interests to combat illegal wildlife trade in the United States by addressing both supply and demand.

African grey parrot. Photo courtesy Colleen O'Donnell.



Issuing a Challenge to Innovate. Identifying and deploying advanced technologies is a key component of stanching the trade in illegal wildlife and wildlife products. On Earth Day 2015, USAID (in collaboration with partners) launched the Wildlife Crime Tech Challenge and called on the global community to harness the power of science and technology to address wildlife crime. Targeting non-traditional problem solvers from the scientific and technology communities, the Tech Challenge seeks solutions to four critically important wildlife crime issues: detecting transit routes, strengthening forensic evidence, reducing consumer demand, and tackling corruption along the supply chain. Over 300 applications were submitted, representing 52 countries, most from outside the United States. From this, 44 finalists from 17 countries were selected to advance. Solutions ranged from portable, handheld DNA sequencers to electronic noses that can identify illegal cargo to mobile apps to identify illegal wildlife in stores and markets.

In January 2016, 16 prize-winning projects were selected from 300 applicants around the world. Winners include Central America-focused nonprofit Paso Pacifico, which will construct artificial sea turtle eggs embedded with GPS tracking devices and plant them in real sea turtle nests to map and monitor trafficking routes. Australia's University of Technology Sydney will develop a portable electronic nose that uses smell to determine the origin of wildlife products onsite. The University of Washington will use genetic analysis to identify the geographic origin of seized pangolins and alert law enforcement to the most heavily poached populations. And the National Whistleblower Center will create an online system in several languages to help wildlife crime whistleblowers around the world expose corruption and illegal activity. Winners will receive \$10,000, technical assistance and networking support, and the opportunity to apply for a Grand Prize worth up to \$500,000 to scale their solutions.

“USAID VIEWS TECHNOLOGY AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER IN THE WAR ON WILDLIFE CRIME, WITH POTENTIAL TO SCALE THE REACH, IMPACT, AND EFFECTIVENESS OF EVERY INTERVENTION.”

ERIC G. POSTEL, USAID ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR

Top left: Members of Paso Pacifico, a conservation organization active in Central America, will lead a coalition of private sector, civil society and government partners to monitor and map trafficking routes for sea turtle eggs. Mobile phone networks used to track artificial sea turtle eggs placed in nests at high risk of poaching, with each egg containing forensic markers and a covert GPS device. Photo courtesy Paso Pacifico.

Top right: Jon Wetton (pictured) and his team at University of Leicester aim to pilot a hand-held nanopore DNA sequencer, which would fully automate DNA sequencing at a wildlife crime scene, reducing the time required to identify species from days to about an hour. Photo courtesy University of Leicester.

CONCLUSION

The Task Force's considerable efforts are having an impact, although significant work remains. In the coming year, the Task Force will build on its momentum from actions in 2015 to strengthen enforcement, reduce demand, and expand international cooperation to stem the illegal trade in wildlife. With the successes of Operation Crash and Operation Totoaba Drama, U.S. enforcement agents and prosecutors will continue to target high-level wildlife traffickers and seek to use all available tools to take the profit out of trafficking. After reviewing more than one million public comments on its proposal, USFWS anticipates publishing a final rule in the first half of 2016 to revise the ESA special rule for the African elephant regulations to effect a near-total ban on the domestic commercial trade of African elephant ivory. The Task Force will continue to work with China to implement President Xi's September 2015 commitment, and work with other demand countries as we press them to take similar steps.

The Task Force will take advantage of important meetings in 2016 to build up global momentum, including the World Conservation Congress, the CITES Conference of the Parties, and a Vietnam-hosted Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade. The Task Force will also look to work closely with international partners, including the European Union, which is developing an Action Plan Against Wildlife Trafficking.

Task Force member agencies are beginning to help lay the groundwork for a Caribbean WEN, and will seek to further operationalize the Wildlife Enforcement Network for Southern Africa. Agencies will continue to strengthen law enforcement capacity and promote cross-border cooperation to combat wildlife trafficking and related converging threats such as corruption, organized crime, and money laundering. This will include through sponsoring efforts in APEC, ASEAN, and in collaboration with members of ICCWC. In support of law enforcement efforts in the U.S. and abroad, USFWS will station additional special agent attachés.

In 2016, as new data become available, the Task Force will regularly assess the effectiveness of its actions and update its information. The Task Force will continue to identify gaps and intensify U.S. government anti-wildlife trafficking efforts to end this pernicious trade. Major new programs are expected to be launched in Vietnam, southern Africa, and Tanzania. Task Force members, led by USAID's ROUTES program, will strengthen partnerships with the private sector to prevent illegal wildlife and wildlife products from entering legal transportation supply chains.

Throughout the year, the Task Force will continue to work closely with Congress to ensure the most effective use of the growing foreign assistance funds to combat wildlife trafficking, and toward the enactment of new legislation to further strengthen our efforts.

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFRICOM	DOD U.S. Africa Command
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARREST	Asia Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN-WEN	ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network
CBP	DHS U.S. Customs and Border Protection
CITES	Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CTAC	Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center
CWT COI	Combating Wildlife Trafficking Community of Interest
DOD	Department of Defense
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOI	Department of the Interior
DOJ	Department of Justice
DOS	Department of State
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ESA	Endangered Species Act
ESAAMLG	Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group
EU	European Union
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
HAWEN	Horn of Africa WEN
ICCWC	International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime
ICE	DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement
ILEA	International Law Enforcement Academies
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IUU	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing
JCCT	Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOAA	National Oceans and Atmosphere Administration
NOAA-NMFS	NOAA-National Marine Fisheries Services
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFAC	Office of Foreign Assets Control
PACOM	DOD U.S. Pacific Command
PAWS	Protection of Asian Wildlife Species
RLG	G-7 Roma–Lyon Group
ROUTES	Reducing Opportunities for the Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species
S&ED	U.S.–China Strategic and Economic Dialogue
SA-WEN	South Asia WEN
SMART	Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCG	U.S. Coast Guard
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USDA-APHIS	USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
USDA-FS	USDA-Forest Service
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USTR	U.S. Trade Representative
WCO	World Customs Organization
WEN	Wildlife Enforcement Network
WENSA	Wildlife Enforcement Network for Southern Africa
YSEALI	Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative



Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking

Department of State

Department of the Interior

Department of Justice

U.S. Agency for International Development

Council on Environmental Quality

Department of Agriculture

Department of Commerce

Department of Homeland Security

Department of Defense

Department of Transportation

Department of the Treasury

Domestic Policy Council

National Security Staff

Office of the Director of National Intelligence

Office of Management and Budget

Office of Science and Technology Policy

Office of the United States Trade Representative

