

COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

The illegal trade of endangered and threatened wildlife and their parts—including elephant ivory, rhino horn, tiger bones, pangolins, and shark fins—is a transnational organized crime that generates billions of dollars annually. These illicit profits finance criminal syndicates and extremist groups that threaten U.S. security interests, undermine developing economies, and corrupt the rule of law.

WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING THREATENS U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY

Rising demand in Asia for elephant ivory, rhino horn, and other products has led to an explosion in the global illegal wildlife trade and an ongoing poaching crisis, with implications for U.S. security and foreign policy.

- The illegal wildlife trade is worth as much as \$23 billion each year and has led to the deaths of 7,000 rhinos and 200,000 elephants over the last decade.
- Profits from the illegal wildlife trade finance criminal syndicates and extremist groups, including some with ties to terrorism.
 - The Lord's Resistance Army, Janjaweed militias, and Boko Haram have all been linked to the illegal ivory trade in Africa.
- The same criminal networks that traffic in drugs, guns, and people also frequently traffic in illegal wildlife and wildlife parts.
 - Because wildlife trafficking has not been treated as a serious crime—penalties are often quite low—criminals are drawn to it because of its high profits and low risks.
- Wildlife traffickers and poachers rob countries of their natural resources, undermining developing economies and rural communities while promoting corruption and weakening the rule of law.

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Eco guard with seized poacher's weapons and poached ivory, Gabon. © WWF / James Morgan

THE U.S. IS A GLOBAL LEADER IN COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

The U.S. is a leader in the fight against wildlife trafficking, working with other countries, international and non-governmental organizations, and private-sector partners.

- Through modest investments in international conservation programs, the U.S. is disrupting criminal networks, reducing demand for illegal products, enhancing law enforcement efforts, and helping countries protect their wildlife from poachers.
- A U.S. Task Force of over a dozen agencies, led by the Departments of State, Interior, and Justice, is implementing the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking.
- President Trump included wildlife trafficking as part of his Executive Order on Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking.
- Since FY 2014, Congress has appropriated dedicated funding to combat wildlife trafficking, and has worked on a bipartisan basis to pass legislation to address the issue, including the END Wildlife Trafficking Act, which increased penalties for wildlife trafficking and directs support and technical assistance to key countries.
 - U.S. agencies and missions are currently implementing this law and developing strategic plans to work with 26 priority countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

SMALL U.S. INVESTMENTS HAVE HUGE IMPACT

Dedicated U.S. funding for combating wildlife trafficking and poaching has helped to reduce demand for illegal wildlife parts and products. As of 2017, U.S. government support has:

- Funded 65 anti-trafficking and anti-poaching projects in 25 countries.
- Disrupted transport hubs and seized more than 4.4 tons of illegal ivory and rhino horns.
- Provided diplomacy that motivated China to introduce a domestic ivory ban in 2017.
- Catalyzed high-level political action in other countries to treat wildlife trafficking and poaching as serious crimes.
- Helped reform wildlife laws and build law enforcement, prosecutorial, and judicial capacity in key countries.
- Produced intelligence reports confirming the connections between the illegal wildlife trade and financing for armed groups, particularly in Africa.
- Improved the management of protected areas in Africa and Asia, leading to a decrease in poaching of elephants, rhinos, and other species within their boundaries.
- Invested in community-based conservation programs in Africa and Asia that have restored populations of elephants, rhinos, lions, and tigers while generating jobs and tens millions of dollars in income for rural communities.

By stopping illegal wildlife trade and the illicit financing it provides, we are defending America's national security interests around the globe while helping developing countries to protect, and prosper from, their valuable wildlife resources.

