



EAGLE

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EAGLE Network

Wildlife Law Enforcement Briefing

- ✓ *A Chinese national arrested in a glass eels trafficking crackdown in an exceptional France-Senegal collaboration in Senegal*
- ✓ *2 traffickers arrested with 2 leopard skins and some pangolin scales in Congo*
- ✓ *2 traffickers arrested with parts of 2 killed gorillas in Cameroon*
- ✓ *A leopard skin trafficker arrested with several pieces of wildlife and a rifle in Cote d'Ivoire*



2 traffickers arrested with body parts of 2 killed gorillas in Cameroon.



A Chinese national arrested in a glass eels trafficking crackdown

Summary

A Chinese national arrested in a glass eels trafficking crackdown in an exceptional France-Senegal collaboration. A French delegation led by an investigating judge arrived in Senegal to investigate the African side of an international trafficking ring in the protected European glass eels. The ring that was first busted in Paris was about to export 300kg of eels to Senegal. Senegal is a transit country from Europe to Asia.

This coincided with a two-year EAGLE investigation of this important trafficking that found connections to the same French trafficking ring. The EAGLE Senegal Team exposed a vast glass eels criminal operation stretching over several warehouses, locating numerous members of the ring.

2 traffickers arrested with 2 leopard skins and some pangolin scales in Congo. The first trafficker travelled over 90 km and arrived a day before his arrest in Oyo. He concealed the leopard skins in a jute bag and on the day of the arrest he was accompanied by an accomplice. They were both transported on two separate motorcycles to the place of transaction and were arrested while attempting to sell the leopard skins and 5 kg of pangolin scales.

2 traffickers arrested with body parts of 2 killed gorillas in Cameroon. The parts that included heads and limbs had blood still dripping indicating the gorillas were recently killed. The two were specialised in poaching and trafficking in great apes. Due to corruption, the two disappeared right after a jail visit that



2 traffickers arrested with body parts of 2 killed gorillas in Cameroon.

was done by the Legal Team on the ground. They were reported to have “escaped”. The hunt is ongoing, and the corruption incident is under investigations.



2 traffickers arrested with 2 leopard skins and some pangolin scales in Congo.

A leopard skin trafficker arrested with several pieces of wildlife and a rifle in Cote d’Ivoire. Following the arrest of two leopard skin traffickers last month, a follow up investigation led to his arrest. During the operation, he physically resisted arrest but was quickly subdued. He is the supplier of wildlife contraband to several other traffickers.



A leopard skin trafficker arrested with several pieces of wildlife and a rifle in Cote d’Ivoire.

Cameroon – LAGA

- 2 traffickers arrested with body parts of 2 killed gorillas. The parts that included heads and limbs had blood still dripping indicating the gorillas were recently killed. The two were specialised in poaching and trafficking in great apes. Due to corruption, the two disappeared right after a jail visit that was done by the Legal Team on the ground. They were reported to have “escaped”. The hunt is ongoing and the corruption incident is under investigations.
- The Deputy Director held a meeting with the Chief of Service in charge of wildlife crime at the INTERPOL National Central Bureau to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.
- The Legal Team held meetings with several State Counsels to discuss ongoing cases in their respective jurisdictions.



Republic of the Congo – PALF

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Oyo. He concealed the leopard skins in a jute bag and on the day of the arrest he was accompanied by an accomplice. They were both transported on two separate motorcycles to the place of transaction and were arrested while attempting to sell the leopard skins and 5kg of pangolin scales. He managed a shop that sold assorted traditional products.

- The Coordinator and the Legal Team held several meetings and discussions with wildlife and law enforcement officials including the Director General of Water and Forests, the Pointe Noire Departmental Director of Forest Economy, the State Counsel in Oyo, the Commanders of the Owando and Oyo Gendarmerie Regions, the Commander of the Brazzaville Judicial Research Section, the Head of Detention at Pointe Noire Prison and the Sibiti Departmental Director of Forest Economy. The meetings and discussions were focused on strengthening the fight against wildlife crime.

Togo – EAGLE Togo

- The Interim Coordinator met with the Commissioner in charge of the Customs Brigade at Lomé airport to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.
- He participated at a workshop organized by the Ministry of the Environment and Forest Resources (MERF) that focused on awareness-raising and capacity-building for law enforcement agencies to combat the illicit trade in ivory and ivory-based

products in Benin, Burkina-Faso, Niger and Togo. He highlighted the fight against corruption among other proposals, he made.

- Recruitment was intensified with several interviews done and two candidates selected to start their test.

Senegal – EAGLE Senegal

- A Chinese national arrested in a glass eels trafficking crackdown in an exceptional France-Senegal collaboration. A French delegation led by an investigating judge arrived Senegal to investigate the African side of an international trafficking ring in the protected European glass eels. The ring

that was first busted in Paris was about to export 300kg of eels to Senegal. Senegal is a transit country from Europe to Asia.

- This coincided with a two-year EAGLE investigation of this important trafficking that found connections to the same French trafficking ring. The

EAGLE Senegal Team exposed a vast glass eels criminal operation stretching over several warehouses, locating numerous members of the ring.

- Working with the police Department of Criminal Investigations, several ring members were arrested, including a Chinese national, against whom an international arrest warrant was issued, and is expected to be extradited to France. Several searches were carried out, allowing valuable evidence to be collected and a large quantity of equipment



used by the trafficking network to be seized (air conditioners, water purifiers, water oxygenation devices, basins, freezers, and more).



- The trafficking of glass eels is one of the most substantial and lucrative illegal trades of protected species across the globe, led by organized criminal networks. The glass eels are poached in the mouth of European rivers and then illegally trafficked to Asia, to be used as a delicacy, or to enter fish farms to be raised and sold later. Eels are critically endangered and listed in the Appendix II of CITES, as their numbers in nature keep plummeting.
- Eels' populations have been trafficked to the verge of extinction, and the European Union therefore placed a ban on import and export of eels in 2010.
- The Coordinator held meetings with several international officials to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.
- The training of a legal adviser and an investigator for Guinea EAGLE continues in Dakar. The accountant who was equally undergoing training came to the end of the process and returned to EAGLE Guinea.



Glass Eel Trafficking

The trafficking of glass eels is one of the most substantial and lucrative illegal trades of protected species across the globe, led by well organized criminal networks. The glass eels are poached in the mouth of European rivers and then illegally trafficked mostly to Asia, to be used as a delicacy, or to enter fish farms to be raised and sold later. European Union placed a ban on import and export of eel in 2010. In 2016 EUROPOL launched an operation LAKE, and arrested 750 international traffickers since then,

256 of them arrested in 2022 - 2023. It is estimated that around 100 tonnes of glass eels may be smuggled from Europe to Asia every year.

River eels are rye-finned fish, living in rivers and lakes of Europe, Asia and Northern America. They are on the IUCN Red List as critically endangered species and listed in the Appendix II of CITES, as their numbers in nature are drastically decreasing. The life cycle of the eel is unusual and not fully understood yet, however, it is known, that when the fish matures, it swims more than 3,000 km to Sargasso Sea to reproduce. The larvae then live in the ocean for several years, feeding on plankton. They are about 5 - 7 cm long when they reach mouth of the rives, usually in huge numbers. They have a transparent elongated body; therefore, they are called glass eels. Glass eels are traditionally valued delicacy not only in Europe, but mostly in Asia. The eels' populations have been trafficked to the verge of extinction. Since the 1970s, the numbers of eels reaching Europe is thought to have declined by around 90% (possibly even 98%). The reasons are several, illegal overfishing and trafficking is seen as the most important one.

Côte d'Ivoire – EAGLE Côte d'Ivoire

- A leopard skin trafficker arrested with the several pieces of wildlife and a rifle. Following the arrest of two leopard skin traffickers last month, follow up investigations led to his arrest. During the operation, he physically resisted arrest but was quickly subdued. He is the supplier of wildlife contraband to several other traffickers. He was arrested close to the Tai National Park.
- The project worked closely with the OIPR, the Ivorian agency managing the national parks in the investigations leading to the operation.
- The Coordinator held meetings with officials of the UCT to discuss long term investigations and strengthen collaboration.



Guinea - EAGLE Guinea

- The Team continues to follow the administrative procedures on the Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, of the National Police, the General Directorate of Customs and a collaborative agreement with the National Central Bureau of INTERPOOL
- Investigation on the trafficking of several wildlife species were conducted all over the country.
- The newly recruited accountant who was undergoing training in Senegal completed the process and returned to Guinea. Meanwhile two others, a legal adviser and an investigator, continued their training in Dakar at EAGLE Senegal.

Uganda - EAGLE Uganda

- The Team continues to strategize and adopt new recruitment techniques to ensure that quality investigators are recruited. Tools were developed to help analyse and evaluate field investigations to improve performances.
- The Team continued to work on recruitment possibilities especially for the investigation departments.

Headquarters

- Ofir Drori, the Founding Director, travelled to the US where he held meetings and talks at several events. He gave a presentation to the US Government's Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking that brings together 17 federal departments and agencies to implement the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking.
- He held a meeting with a Deputy Undersecretary in the Department of Interior. Three senior officials of the USFWS were also present.
- He was a keynote speaker in two different Primate Conferences - one in South Carolina of the International Primate Protection League (IPPL), and the other in Florida of the Annual Florida Primates Meeting.

THE EAGLE Network

EAGLE: Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement, is a network of members across Africa, who are replicating effectively a program and operational model to undertake wildlife law enforcement, which is based on the LAGA-Cameroon model, trailed, practiced and tested since 2003. The EAGLE Network currently operates in nine African countries and keeps expanding.

The over-arching objective of the EAGLE Network is: *Developing civic activism and collaborating with governments and civil society to improve the application of national and international environmental legislation, through a program of activities: investigations, arrests, prosecutions and publicity. Through this, EAGLE aims to generate a strong deterrent against the illegal*

trade in wildlife, timber and related criminal activities, including corruption.

Contacts:

1. Cameroon – LAGA - ofir@eagle-enforcement.org
2. Congo – PALF – jules@eagle-enforcement.org
3. Togo – EAGLE Togo: darius@eagle-enforcement.org
4. Senegal – EAGLE Senegal - cebloch@eagle-enforcement.org
5. Côte d'Ivoire - gaspard@eagle-enforcement.org
6. Uganda – EAGLE Uganda - ofir@eagle-enforcement.org
7. Guinea – EAGLE Guinea - cebloch@eagle-enforcement.org