



EAGLE

June 2024
EAGLE Network

Wildlife Law Enforcement Briefing

- ✓ *8 traffickers arrested in 4 countries*
- ✓ *A trafficker arrested with 3 lion skins in Uganda*
- ✓ *4 traffickers arrested with 11 tusks, 8 ivory pieces and 7 hippo teeth in a crackdown on a cross-border trafficking ring in Togo*
- ✓ *A trafficker from Burkina Faso arrested with two elephant tusks in Lomé, Togo.*
- ✓ *A trafficker arrested with two leopard skins in Côte d'Ivoire.*
- ✓ *A significant notorious ivory trafficker arrested in Cameroon*



Summary

A trafficker arrested with 3 lion skins in Uganda. She seems to specialize in lion parts trafficking. One of the skins was very fresh. This is a mere snapshot of an ongoing regular lion skins trafficking of this ring. Lion numbers in Uganda are plummeting, estimated to have only 200-300 remain in the whole country



A trafficker arrested with 3 lion skins in Uganda.

4 traffickers arrested with 11 tusks, 8 ivory pieces and 7 hippo teeth in a crackdown on a cross-border trafficking ring in Togo. Two of the traffickers are Burkina Faso nationals and operated with the two others trafficking between the two countries. The gang was involved in organised ivory trafficking for several years as well as illegally traded mercury from Ivory Coast and operated a fraud scheme of old bills.

A trafficker from Burkina Faso arrested with two elephant tusks in Lomé, Togo. He is a government official, trafficking ivory cross-border in collaboration with his boss. The trafficker is involved in counterfeit money criminality. The ivory tusks were well-pack-



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aged and concealed in a travelling bag. He smuggled the contraband from Burkina Faso across the border to Lomé, on a public transport bus.

A trafficker arrested with two leopard skins in Côte d'Ivoire. The skins were concealed in a rice sack. The trafficker is well connected to the Sahel routes from where most of the skins enters Côte d'Ivoire. During interrogations, he admitted the skins were smuggled from Mali.

A significant notorious ivory trafficker arrested in Cameroon. Using corruption he negotiated his release from police custody in Nigeria. He was arrested by Nigeria customs in February at a border town with a handgun and 200 kg of ivory tusks he trafficked from Cameroon. He was also under investigations for his connection to the seizure of 131 kg of ivory in August last year and the arrest of 9 traffickers in Gabon.



A trafficker from Burkina Faso arrested with two elephant tusks in Lomé, Togo.

Cameroon – LAGA

- A significant notorious ivory trafficker arrested. Using corruption he negotiated his release from police custody in Nigeria. He was arrested by Nigeria customs in February at a border town with a handgun and 200 kg of ivory tusks he trafficked from Cameroon. He was also under investigations for his connection to the seizure of 131 kg of ivory in August last year and the arrest of 9 traffickers in Gabon. The ivory tusks were hidden deep inside a truck that was on the way to Nigeria via Cameroon. The truck had to be pulled open and parts removed to find the ivory. He had earlier been arrested in October 2020 in Cameroon, sentenced and served a jail term of only 4 months. He was found guilty of illegal possession of 626 kg of elephant tusks that were seized by Cameroon customs at a border town close to Gabon. The elephant tusks were trafficked from Gabon. He is part of a transnational criminal syndicate that uses corruption to facilitate the smuggling of ivory tusks across the sub region and beyond.
- The Deputy Director participated at a workshop in Douala that wound up a two-year project of TRAF-FIC on Ivory Stock Management. He did presentation on wildlife crime focusing on the causes, trends and impact. Participants included wildlife officials, the police, customs, justice and territorial administration officials.
- The Heads of the Investigation and Legal Departments held a meeting with the Chief of Service in charge of Wildlife Crime at the INTERPOL National Central Bureau to discuss issues related to the arrest of the notorious wildlife trafficker.
- The Legal Team held meetings with several State Counsels to discuss ongoing cases in their respective jurisdictions.

Republic of the Congo – PALF

- 2 wildlife traffickers were sentenced to 2 years in prison. They were arrested in May with several parts of protected wildlife species including ivory tusks, a leopard skin and a gorilla parts among others.
- The Coordinator and the Legal Team held meetings and or discussions with wildlife and law enforcement officials including the Director General of Water and Forests, the Commander of the Judicial Research, the President of the Sibiti High Court, and the Deputy State Counsel of the Oyo High Court. The meetings and discussions were focused on strengthening the fight against wildlife crime.

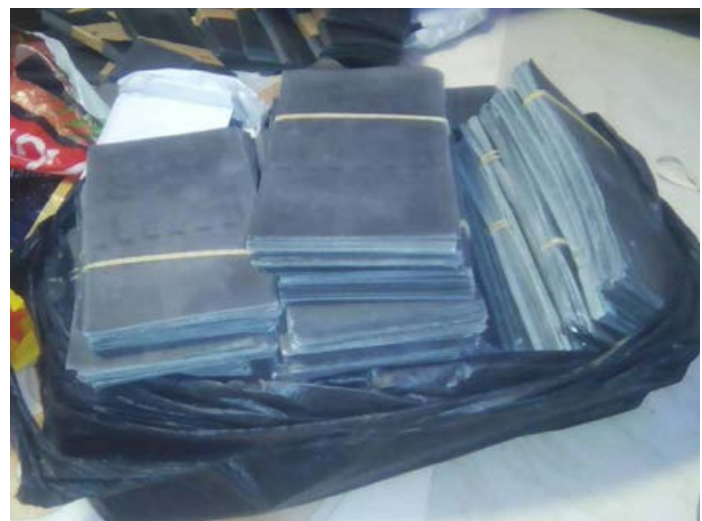
Togo – EAGLE Togo

- A trafficker from Burkina Faso arrested with two elephant tusks in Lomé. He is a government official, trafficking ivory cross-border in collaboration with his boss. The trafficker is involved in counterfeit money criminality. The ivory tusks were well-packaged and concealed in a travelling bag. He trafficked the contraband from Burkina Faso across the border to Lomé, on a public transport bus. He would later use a motorcycle to the place of transaction. The trafficker ran illegal businesses out of Burkina Faso, regularly vacating his duty post.
- 4 traffickers arrested with 11 tusks, 8 ivory pieces and 7 hippo teeth in a crackdown on a cross-border trafficking ring. Two of the traffickers are Burkina Faso nationals and operated with the two others trafficking between the two countries. The gang was involved in organised ivory trafficking for several years as well as illegally traded mercury from Ivory Coast and operated a fraud scheme of old bills. They concealed all the contraband in a large travel suitcase.



4 traffickers arrested with 11 tusks, 8 ivory pieces and 7 hippo teeth

- Recruitment was intensified in the Investigation Department; interviews conducted and a candidate retained for a testing period beginning next month.
- The Coordinator participated at the ceremony marking the US Independence Day. He held discussions with the Chargé d’Affaires and the new First Counsellor of the US Embassy.
- During the ceremony, he met and discussed with the Ambassador of the European Union in Lomé, who informed him of positive discussions he had with the outgoing US Ambassador on the EAGLE-Togo project
- He also held discussions with the Brazilian Ambassador on fighting wildlife crime in the country.
- He seized the opportunity to meet the Minister Special Advisor to the Presidency of the Republic in charge of Political Affairs to introduce the EAGLE-Togo project.
- He held several meetings with some law enforcement and judicial officials on fighting wildlife crime and strengthening collaboration.



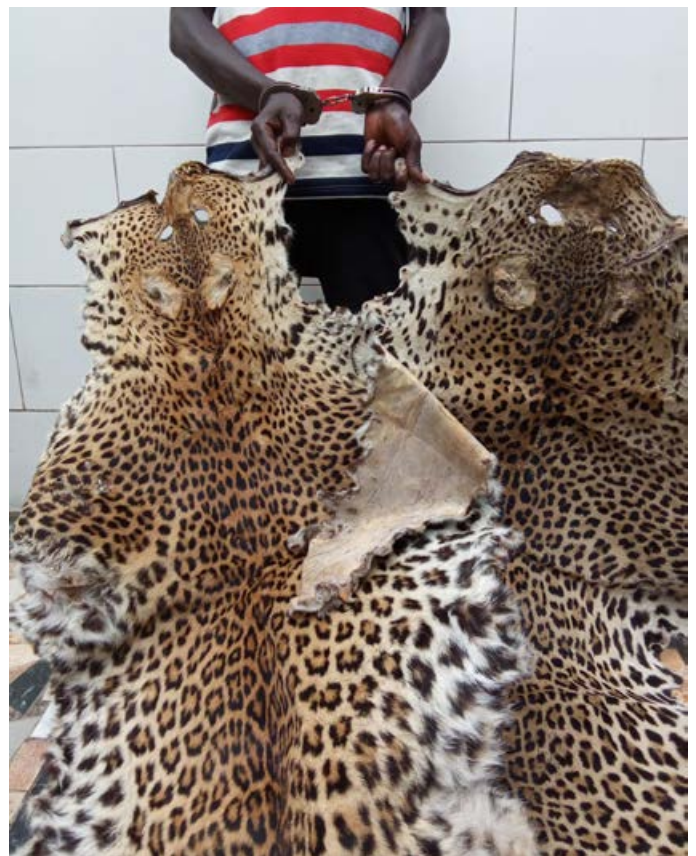
A trafficker from Burkina Faso arrested with two elephant tusks in Lomé, Togo.

Senegal – EAGLE Senegal

- The Coordinator met with the Regional Customs Officer of the UK Embassy to discuss ways of improving collaboration in the fight against wildlife trafficking. She shared the EAGLE experience with their environmental crime taskforce.
- She had several exchanges with the foreign and diplomatic officials in Conakry to garner support for the signing of the MoU with the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development and the new EAGLE Guinea project.
- She also participated in 2 coordination meetings of the Joint Organizational Program, a program of CIVIPOL, European Union, to discuss wildlife crime and strengthen collaboration.
- She also met with a BBC film-maker of an upcoming documentary in which eel trafficking is the main theme, and in which EAGLE Senegal will be participating.
- The Team followed up the administrative procedures on the Memorandum of Understandings with the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development and the Directorate General of Customs.

Côte d'Ivoire – EAGLE Côte d'Ivoire

- A trafficker arrested with two leopard skins. The skins were concealed in a rice sack. He was arrested while attempting to sell the contraband. The skins were trafficked from Mali by the well connected criminal
- The Legal Team met the UCT to prepare the arrest operation of the skin trafficker.



Guinea - EAGLE Guinea

- Several investigation missions were carried out in the field and have continuously been intensified since February 2024 following the installation of the team.
- The Team followed up the administrative procedures on the Memorandum of Understandings with the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, the Directorate General of the National Police, the Directorate General of Customs and the National Central Bureau of INTERPOL.
- A legal assistant returned to the country after completing a 5-month training in Senegal.

Uganda - EAGLE Uganda

- A trafficker arrested with 3 lion skins. She seems to specialize in lion parts trafficking. One of the skins was still very fresh. This is a mere snapshot of an ongoing regular lion skins trafficking of this ring. Lion numbers in Uganda are plummeting, estimated to have only 200-300 remain in the whole country. The trafficker used a motorbike to arrive at the place of transaction carrying the lion skins. They were concealed in rice sacks that were hidden inside a blue polythene bag. She cautiously explored the surroundings.
- Recruitment was intensified and 3 investigators and a legal adviser were selected to start their testing.
- Rebecca Sandoval, a former Project Coordinator, was contracted once more to support investigations and assist with recruitment in the department.



- The Team held several meetings with Ugandan Revenue Authority officials, including the Head of Intelligence, to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.
- The Team received support to get the project to action, from the Coordinator of EAGLE Cote d'Ivoire, Gaspard Julien-Laferriere, who arrived in Kampala for the two-week mission.
- Rens Ilgen, a former Coordinator, also travelled to Uganda where he provided support to get the project to action and also support ongoing investigations.
- The project is moving offices for appropriate space and security.



The plight of the lions

A trafficker was arrested in Uganda with 3 lion skins. One of the skins was still fresh, indicating the lion was recently killed. This seizure represents a mere snapshot of the regular constant illegal trade of this trafficking ring generating a far greater slaughter. Uganda once had thousands of lions but today, they are on the brink of extinction in the country. Estimates put the lion population left between 200 – 300 individuals in the whole country.

This situation is not singular as many countries in West, Central and East Africa face similar crisis.

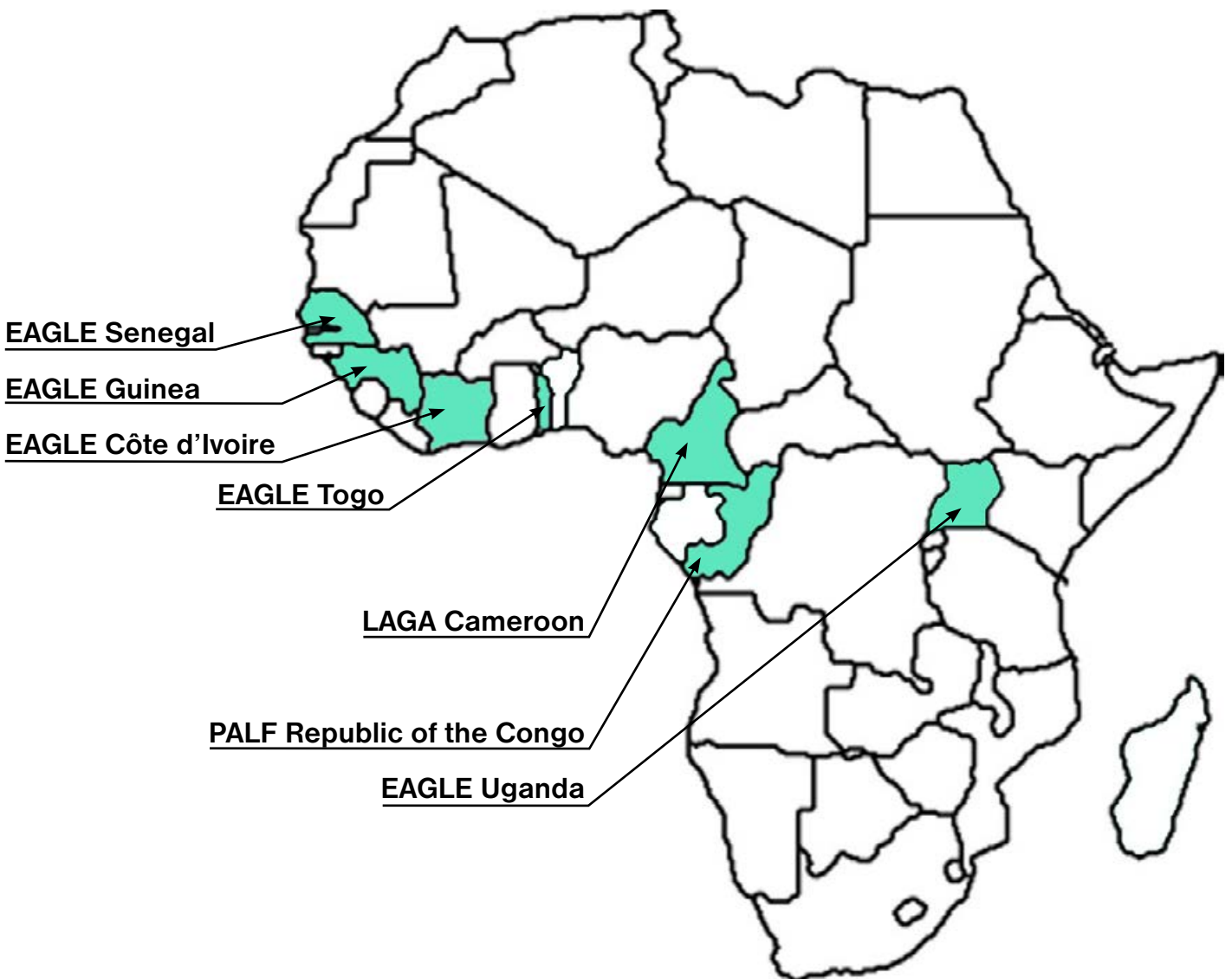
Lions are already extinct in 26 countries across Africa. The lion population in Africa has decreased by 90% in the last century and there are half as many African lions than there were 25 years ago. There are currently only about 23,000 lions left in the wild, and the number keeps dropping. Lion populations become more fragmented and some less viable. Studies predict that the African lion will become extinct by the year 2050. Often poison is used to kill lions, leading to very painful and cruel death. Lions' bones are also more and more used in the illegal trade to replace tigers' bones in traditional Chinese medicine, as tigers become rarer.

In Cameroon, a country in the Central African Sub Region for example, estimates put the population to about the same number like Uganda – 300. Whereas the species is a national symbol and lends its name to the country's elite football team - the Indomitable Lions. The Teranga Lions is the name of the Senegalese football team and the country has a worse story to tell. The estimated population of lions in the country is 20.

Lions are often used as a symbol of power, they appear not only in the emblems of football clubs, but also in the state symbols. Wildlife crime is mainly responsible for the silent demise of the species. Paradoxically, while the lion is such an iconic specie, it is silently, gradually and ruthlessly being killed to extinction without much outcry. The operation in Uganda comes as a reminder that the species is faring no better than other species in several parts of Africa.



Structure of the EAGLE Network



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.

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