



WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IS GLOBAL, ORGANIZED CRIME

- Wildlife trafficking is the 4th largest black market behind narcotics, counterfeit goods and human trafficking, and ahead of the illegal arms trade.
- It puts \$9-20 billion a year into the hands of organized criminal syndicates.¹
- Once traffickers have established safe routes and a network of known and trusted corrupt officials (within governments and the private sector), they will utilize the same channels for other forms of trafficking. This increases border security risks. Any form of organized crime destabilizes good governance which ultimately has a detrimental effect on legal and enforcement systems.
- Wildlife trafficking is a significant criminal enterprise and it is accompanied with corresponding rises in corruption, organized crime and conflict across the routes and networks where it operates.²

WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IS WIDELY EXPLOITING THE AVIATION SECTOR

- Traffickers smuggle illegal wildlife through both cargo and passenger flights.
- Some flight routes and airports face more of a problem than others, but it is widespread across every urbanized continent.
- Airport seizures recorded between 2009-2017 years have intercepted items in 136 individual countries, coming from 185 different countries, and destined for 65 different countries.³
- Traffickers moving ivory, rhino horn, reptiles, birds, pangolins, marine products and mammals by air typically rely on large hub airports all over the world. Collectively, these categories account for about 81% of all trafficked wildlife.¹
- Air routes of products such as ivory, rhino horn, and pangolin, tend to flow from Africa to Asia, often transiting first through the Middle East and Europe. China is by far the most common destination for illegal wildlife products.¹
- Airport seizure data from 2017 shows high spikes in pangolin and rhino horn seizures. The number of rhino horn seizures nearly tripled between 2016 and 2017.¹
- Wildlife traffickers carrying live animals, such as live birds and reptiles, generally rely on direct flights, widely dispersed around the world, with different hotspots in every region.¹

WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IS DRIVING SPECIES TO EXTINCTION

- Wildlife trafficking impacts more than 7,000 species of animals and plants. Many endangered species are at increasing risk of extinction as a result of poaching for the trade.
- In 10 years, over 20% of African Elephants have been lost at an average rate of 20,000/yr.⁴
- Since 2008, almost 6,000 rhinos have been killed across Africa. The Western Black Rhino was declared extinct in 2011, and the rate of poaching is the equivalent of 1 rhino every 8 hours.⁵
- Emerging evidence that giraffe and lion are now being targeted.⁶
- Loss of species has serious impacts for global biodiversity which has consequences for people and future generations as well as the animals themselves.
- If populations of iconic species continue to be killed to extinction by poachers, there may be impact on countries and businesses whose economies depend on wildlife tourism.

WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING EXPOSES THE AVIATION SECTOR TO SERIOUS RISKS

1. **Risks to reputation** from negative press and reports against a brand;
2. **Legal risks** where companies may be liable for lacking due diligence;
3. **Economic risks** when legal and safety issues result in financial loss, and;
4. **Safety risks** because trafficked wildlife can pose health and safety concerns.



COUNTERING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IS A BUSINESS CONCERN

- Wildlife trafficking is not just a conservation issue, nor a wildlife issue, nor a health issue: it is also a business issue.
- If smuggled wildlife is discovered on board an aircraft, it is likely to at minimum result in a delayed departure at the expense of the company.
- Border security risks may increase if wildlife trafficking continues unchecked. Ports weakened by wildlife trafficking (corrupted officials, for example) could be exploited more easily by other forms of trafficking, including human trafficking and narcotics.
- As counter-trafficking governance and regulation tightens in every region, risk of legal liabilities increase.
- A major smuggling incident, especially if due diligence appears not to have been followed, can result in negative media coverage and consumer reviews and impact a company's reputation and brand value.
- However, by making sure staff are aware of and well trained in counter wildlife trafficking, airports and airlines will be taking actions aligned with both consumer interests by helping to protect endangered species, and with investor interests by proactively protecting their operations against future incidents.

WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING POSES THREATS TO HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Diseases can be spread by unregulated, uncertified, unsanitary and incorrectly transported wildlife parts and products.
- Wildlife traffickers do not conform to the paperwork and procedures necessary to ensure the health of their cargo nor the protection of those who may come into contact with it.
- Diseases that pass through aviation transit hubs have the potential to be dispersed at rapid and epidemic proportions.
- Birds can carry over 60 diseases that are transferable to humans, including Salmonellosis, *E. coli*, avian tuberculosis, and multiple bird flu virus strains. The World Health Organization lists the human mortality rate of one strain, H5N1, in the region of 60%.⁶
- Smuggled live wildlife may escape on board a flight, posing a health and safety risk from bites or stings and disruption to passengers and crew. Escaped wildlife could even impact the weight and balance of an aircraft if multiple passengers panic and move suddenly.
- Baggage inspectors or handlers may be injured by live wildlife that is not properly caged or contained in an effort to conceal it.

COUNTER TRAFFICKING MEASURES ARE ONLY AS STRONG AS THE WEAKEST LINK

- It can't be one airport, one airline, one supplier taking the right preventative measures alone.
- A border is only as strong as its weakest point: our whole industry must be committed to knowing what best practice is, following it, and making sure everyone else does too.
- No one wants to see a bust, seizure or exposure of traffickers exploiting our industry in tomorrow's headline news, especially when there are easy actions that can be taken to counter wildlife trafficking.

THE AVIATION INDUSTRY CAN TAKE EASY AND IMMEDIATE ACTION

- The industry is taking steps to counter wildlife trafficking but a lack of awareness and knowledge is frequently mentioned as barriers to doing more.
- Simple actions include understanding what your own organization is doing already, and identifying any gaps. Action steps then might include staff training, policy updates, internal and external communication.

The USAID ROUTES Partnership can help with ideas, guidelines and resources. ROUTES brings together transport and logistics companies, government agencies, development groups, law enforcement and conservation organizations to aid the sector.

www.routespartnership.org

ROUTES
Reducing Opportunities
for Unlawful Transport of
Endangered Species



This document is made possible by the generous support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Freeland and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, the United States or the ROUTES Partnership.

Sources: 1. C4ADS Report, 'In Plane Sight', August 2018; 2. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/wildlife-and-forest-crime/overview.html> 3. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), World Wildlife Crime Report 2016; 4. <https://www.iucn.org/news/poaching-behind-worst-african-elephant-losses-25-years-%E2%80%93-iucn-report> COP17 Doc 68, Annex 5 (IUCN SSC); 5. www.savetherhino.org/rhino-facts/poaching-stats; 6. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com.au/animals/as-tigers-become-rarer-poachers-are-targeting-lions.aspx>; www.giraffeconservation.org/