



Illegal Trafficking of Wildlife and Other Natural Resources

June 9, 2016

FY 2015 Report to Congress



Homeland
Security

Message from the Secretary

June 9, 2016

I am pleased to present the following report, “Illegal Trafficking of Wildlife and Other Natural Resources,” prepared by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

This report is submitted pursuant to the language set forth in Senate Report 113-198 accompanying the *Fiscal Year 2015 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act* (P.L. 114-4).

The report reinforces the Department’s active engagement with the Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking, as established by Executive Order No. 13468 on July 1, 2013, and highlights our collaborative efforts in preventing and enforcing these illegal activities.



Pursuant to congressional requirements, this report is being provided to the following Members of Congress:

The Honorable John R. Carter
Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

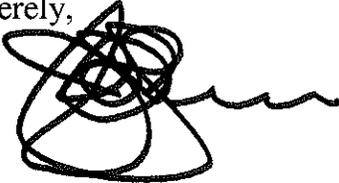
The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable John H. Hoeven
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 282-8203 or the Department's Deputy Under Secretary for Management and Chief Financial Officer, Chip Fulghum, at (202) 447-5751.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeh Charles Johnson". The signature is highly stylized and somewhat illegible due to its cursive and overlapping nature.

Jeh Charles Johnson

Executive Summary

This report highlights recent activities and initiatives that DHS has put forth to address wildlife and natural resources trafficking—illegal activities that pose both a conservation and a national security threat to the United States.

Through its engagement with the Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking, DHS has taken steps to improve coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Office of Law Enforcement and has worked to help implement the National Strategy on Wildlife Trafficking. Further, DHS has aligned its resources to meaningful activities and initiatives designed to address and eliminate the threat from these unlawful activities.

DHS remains strongly committed to combating wildlife trafficking, assisting foreign nations in building capacity to combat wildlife trafficking, and working with its partners to combat transnational organized crime.



Illegal Trafficking of Wildlife and Other Natural Resources

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I. Legislative Language

This document was compiled pursuant to the legislative language set forth in Senate Report 113-198 accompanying the *Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act (P.L. 114-4)*.

Senate Report 113-198 states:

The Committee directs the Secretary to submit a status update report, not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this act, outlining the specific steps being taken by the Department to further address wildlife trafficking and illegal natural resources trade, the engagement of DHS with the Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking, including steps to improve coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement, steps taken by DHS to implement the National Strategy on Wildlife Trafficking, and what resources have been aligned to activities and initiatives to address wildlife and natural resources trafficking.

II. Background

Wildlife trafficking has become an international crisis that threatens security, hinders sustainable economic development, and undermines our laws. The illicit trade in wildlife is decimating many species worldwide and threatens iconic species such as the rhinoceros, elephant, and tiger with extinction. The connections between trafficking in illegal wildlife and natural resources with the financing of groups involved in transnational organized crime pose additional threats to the United States.

In Executive Order No. 13648, issued on July 1, 2013, President Barack Obama committed to addressing the significant effects of wildlife trafficking on the national interests of the United States. The order established the Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking (Task Force), led by the Department of State (DOS), Department of Justice, and Department of the Interior and joined by 14 other agencies, including DHS. The Task Force created a National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking (Strategy) that included consideration of issues relating to combating trafficking and curbing consumer demand.

On February 11, 2015, the Task Force issued the Strategy's Implementation Plan, which reaffirmed our Nation's commitment to work in partnership with governments, local communities, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to stem the illegal trade in wildlife. DHS continues to work in concert with other agencies to help implement the key objectives of the Strategy: strengthening enforcement, reducing demand for illegally traded wildlife, and expanding international cooperation.

III. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Engagement

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations has a primary role in DHS for investigating illegal wildlife trafficking. CBP collaborates with both ICE Homeland Security Investigations and the U.S. Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in addressing threats related to this important issue. CBP partners with FWS to ensure that commodities/goods (in both the passenger and commercial environments) meet requirements for legal entry into the United States.

CBP made more than 1,300 interdictions in passenger baggage in FY 2014 and FY 2015 on behalf of FWS. Interdictions included items protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and the Endangered Species Act. FWS personnel also are stationed at various ports of entry and enforce their regulations alongside CBP Officers and CBP Agriculture Specialists.

CBP also works with ICE Homeland Security Investigations and FWS through CBP's Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center to enhance efforts to combat illegal imports of endangered wildlife. The Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center's mission is to join together federal agencies with authority over safety regulations of products imported into the United States. The Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center facilitates information sharing and leverages the collective resources of the 11 Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center Partner Government Agencies¹ to enhance the prevention, preemption, deterrence, analysis, and investigation of violations of importation laws that affect the United States' interest in the import safety environment. FWS joined the Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center on April 1, 2014. The inclusion of FWS in the Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center allows for better coordination and enhancement of operations toward thwarting illegal wildlife trade by joining FWS with other Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center Partner Government Agencies, including CBP and ICE Homeland Security Investigations.

FWS has committed multiple resources such as intelligence analysts and law enforcement agents, who are physically co-located at the Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center.

¹ Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center Partner Government Agencies: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, CBP, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Food and Drug Administration, FWS, USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, ICE, U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce (Commerce) National Marine Fisheries Service, DOT Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

CBP has provisioned these FWS representatives with access to several CBP systems in order to facilitate import targeting. CBP also has provided intensive systems and targeting training through the National Targeting Center - Cargo in Herndon, Virginia.

FWS has established a Field Inspection Support Targeting Program at the Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center. In FY 2015, the FWS Field Inspection Support Targeting Program referred 357 shipments for inspection, leading to the discovery of undeclared wildlife products in 31 examined shipments. The FWS Field Inspection Support Targeting Program also resulted in 12 shipments seized for undeclared wildlife products, including items containing caviar extracts, tridacnidae gigas species (giant clam), aloe ferox (cape aloe or bitter aloe), monitor lizard, python skins, and cowrie (cowry) shells (sea snails).²

In FY 2015 CBP, ICE Homeland Security Investigations, FWS, and Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) participated in the multinational, World Customs Organization-led Operation FLYAWAY. Operation FLYAWAY focused on the trade of illegal wildlife originating from South America and Mexico to the United States and Europe. The operation resulted in 23 arrests and the seizure of 775 animal specimens, including live tortoises, turtles, parrots, and monkeys, as well as a caiman and a white-tailed deer. Additionally, 17 tons of dried brown sea cucumbers, 168 kilograms of shark fins, and more than 2,000 timber logs were seized.³

FWS broadened the scope of the Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center by bringing its subject matter expertise and resources to the targeting of illegal wildlife trade at our Nation's borders. The information sharing and collaboration efforts between FWS and the Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center Partner Government Agencies play a key role in tackling illegal wildlife trade, which contributes to advance FWS's mission.

² Source: Commercial Targeting and Analysis Center FY 2015 Statistical Report (released December 2015) – FWS Statistics.

³ Source: World Customs Organization article: “Multi-agency Efforts Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking” – Operation FLYAWAY statistics <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2015/july/multi-agency-efforts-disrupt-wildlife-trafficking.aspx>.

IV. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Engagement

ICE Homeland Security Investigations is the lead DHS agency on the Presidential Taskforce on Wildlife Trafficking and was actively involved in building the implementation plan and identifying existing DHS resources and expertise capable of executing the plan's enforcement/investigative fundamentals. ICE Homeland Security Investigations is well positioned to disrupt and dismantle Transnational Criminal Organizations involved in wildlife trafficking using its domestic/international resources, expertise, and authorities.

ICE Homeland Security Investigations personnel are actively engaged with other U.S. Government agencies and nongovernmental organizations to promote ICE Homeland Security Investigations' role in capacity building as it relates to illegal wildlife trafficking, both domestically and abroad. These entities include FWS, the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, the World Customs Organization, and several nongovernmental organizations. During FYs 2014 and 2015, ICE Homeland Security Investigations led four wildlife trafficking investigations courses in Thailand, which included training various Thai and Laos law enforcement agencies engaged in enforcement and investigation of wildlife trafficking and poaching crimes. Instructors provided advanced investigation techniques to the participants through classroom lecture, practical demonstration, and hands-on practice and application for real world scenarios. Pending DOS funding, ICE Homeland Security Investigations intends to continue this successful training model to build the capacity of nations around the world.

In FY 2015, ICE Homeland Security Investigations Pretoria organized a cyber/financial investigations regional training in South Africa. The training was focused on law enforcement agencies and personnel involved in investigating wildlife trafficking and poaching.

In November 2014, ICE Homeland Security Investigations submitted the Operation FLYAWAY plan to the World Customs Organization for consideration. World Customs Organization Operation FLYAWAY was conducted from June 17-26, 2015, and ICE Homeland Security Investigations led the U.S. Government involvement by coordinating the operation with CBP, FWS, and NOAA. ICE Homeland Security Investigations attachés in South America engaged host country police, customs, and wildlife officials, encouraging participation and coordinating operational details. Fourteen countries within the origin, transit, or destination chain participated in the operation.

Illicit wildlife entering or leaving the United States is not a new trend, and ICE Homeland Security Investigations and CBP have been involved in preventive, investigative, and interdiction activities for decades. ICE Homeland Security Investigations is conducting wildlife trafficking investigations around the Nation, many in conjunction with FWS and other U.S. Government agencies. ICE Homeland Security Investigations has been the lead agency on several successful international controlled deliveries of illegal wildlife shipments that resulted in arrests and additional seizures by foreign counterparts.

V. Conclusion

DHS remains steadfast in its commitment to combat wildlife trafficking and the illegal trading of other natural resources. Through its collaboration with interagency partners, DHS will continue to work and build upon the Strategy's three objectives: strengthening enforcement; reducing demand for illegally traded wildlife; and building international cooperation, commitment, and public-private partnerships.

VI. Appendix: List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DOS	U.S. Department of State
DOT	U.S. Department of Transportation
FWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
FY	Fiscal Year
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration