

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 1, 2013

FACT SHEET: U.S. Efforts to Combat Wildlife Trafficking

Wildlife trafficking is a multi-billion dollar illicit business that is decimating Africa's iconic animal populations. Many species -- most notably elephants and rhinoceroses -- now face the risk of significant decline or even extinction. Like other forms of illicit trade, wildlife trafficking undermines security across nations. Well-armed, well-equipped, and well-organized networks of poachers, criminals, and corrupt officials exploit porous borders and weak institutions to profit from trading in illegally taken wildlife.

The United States is committed to combating wildlife trafficking, related corruption, and money laundering. With our international partners, we are working to reduce demand, strengthen enforcement, and building capacity to address these challenges bilaterally, regionally, and multilaterally.

A New Executive Order to Better Coordinate the U.S. Response

Today the President will sign an Executive Order (E.O.) to enhance coordination of U.S. Government efforts to combat wildlife trafficking and assist foreign governments in building the capacity needed to combat wildlife trafficking and related organized crime.

The E.O. establishes a Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking charged with developing a National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking. It also establishes an Advisory Council on Wildlife Trafficking comprised of eight individuals with relevant expertise from outside the Government to make recommendations to the Task Force.

New Assistance to Support Regional Partners

As the President will announce today in Tanzania, the U.S. Department of State will provide an additional \$10 million in regional and bilateral training and technical assistance in Africa to combat wildlife trafficking. This will include approximately \$3

million in bilateral assistance to South Africa, \$3 million in bilateral assistance to Kenya, and \$4 million in regional assistance throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

This training and technical assistance aims to:

- 1) Strengthen policies and legislative frameworks;
- 2) Enhance investigative and law enforcement functions;
- 3) Support regional cooperation among enforcement agencies; and,
- 4) Develop capacities to prosecute and adjudicate crimes related to wildlife trafficking.

In addition, USAID will launch a wildlife technology challenge, which will promote the use of innovative technologies like mobile phone applications and wildlife DNA analysis techniques to assist in combating wildlife trafficking.

The State Department, USAID, and the Department of Interior U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) will also assign a USFWS official to our Embassy in Dar es Salaam to support the Government of Tanzania's efforts to develop an overarching wildlife security strategy.

New U.S. Enforcement and Regulatory Efforts to Combat Wildlife Trafficking

The Transnational Organized Crime Rewards Program, which was signed into law on January 2013, enables the Secretary of State to offer rewards up for information leading to the arrest, conviction, or identification of significant members of transnational criminal organizations who operate primarily outside the United States.

The law also allows for rewards for information that dismantles such organizations or leads to the disruption of their financial mechanisms. The United States intends to leverage this new authority, as appropriate, to combat the most significant perpetrators of wildlife trafficking.

In addition, the Department of Interior will enhance regulations that directly affect illegal wildlife trafficking of elephants and rhinoceroses. These regulations pertain to U.S. federal laws including the Endangered Species Act, the African Elephant Conservation Act, and the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act.

Successes to Date and Building on On-going Activities

These new commitments build on on-going efforts within the U.S. Government, and with foreign governments, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to reduce demand and strengthen enforcement and institutional capabilities. Representative examples include:

Capacity Building from Asia to Africa

- USAID supports over \$12 million per year in counter-wildlife trafficking activities, including support for anti-poaching activities in Africa and Asia, capacity building, and demand reduction campaigns in Asia.
- The State Department and Department of the Interior / USFWS support the International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone, Botswana, which has trained 350 law enforcement officers in wildlife crime investigations since 2002.
- To specifically address transcontinental trafficking, USAID is funding a three-year program with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the wildlife trade monitoring network TRAFFIC to improve understanding of current trends in wildlife trafficking and identify priority wildlife trafficking issues on behalf of the broader law enforcement and security communities.
- The State Department is providing more than \$2 million to support investigation, interdiction, and prosecution efforts in East Asia and the Pacific, including park ranger training and special investigative training for wildlife managers at the U.S. International Law Enforcement Academy in Bangkok.
- The USFWS is providing an additional \$2 million annually to support the Wildlife Without Borders capacity building program, which aids government agencies and non-governmental partners in enhancing wildlife law enforcement training, promoting best practices for community stewardship of wildlife resources, and addressing other critical conservation needs.
- The Department of Justice and the USFWS jointly investigate and prosecute wildlife trafficking cases, working alongside international partners, to provide training and state-of-the-art forensic support for investigating and prosecuting wildlife crimes.

Conservation and Demand Reduction

- The USFWS provides \$10 million annually to enhance and support wildlife conservation throughout Africa and Asia. The funds support essential wildlife protection activities in 25 African countries, including improving capacity to carry out investigations and prosecutions of wildlife crime; developing effective park law enforcement and management to deter illegal hunting; improving management of key wildlife species and protected areas; and developing community management schemes.
- USAID invests \$200 million a year in biodiversity conservation, \$70 million of which is in Africa. These investments provide support for community-based approaches to natural resources management in Africa, including community-scouting and ranger programs.
- In consumer nations in Asia, USFWS supports government partners in awareness and demand reduction campaigns, which include public outreach to discourage consumption, noting the cost to wildlife of purchased exotic items, and highlighting criminal consequences of consuming illegally trafficked or purchased wildlife products.

Building a Coalition of Partnerships

- The United States is working with the International Consortium to Combat Wildlife Crime and other interested partners to support the creation of a global network of regional and national Wildlife Enforcement Networks to improve communication and strengthen response actions across enforcement agencies globally. USAID has invested \$17 million since 2005 to specifically support improving these regional networks of wildlife enforcement officials, as well as increasing public awareness, reducing demand for wildlife products, and building political will. The United States is also supporting the creation of new networks in central Africa and the Horn of Africa, among others in Asia and South America.
- Additionally, the United States encourages participation by governments, civil society, and the private sector in existing partnerships that combat wildlife crime, such as the Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT).

Raising the Issue in International Fora

- The United States successfully co-sponsored a resolution at the 2013 UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice encouraging UN Member States to classify wildlife trafficking as a “serious” crime as defined in the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. This will facilitate further international cooperation among states that have ratified or acceded to the treaty, and will lead to increased penalties for traffickers.
- Through U.S. advocacy, the 2012 APEC Leaders Declaration included commitments to address both the supply and demand for endangered and protected wildlife, including through capacity building and increased enforcement.

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