



INTERPOL

PROJECT WISDOM

An INTERPOL initiative aiming to disrupt and dismantle transnational organized criminal networks involved in the illegal trade in elephant ivory and rhinoceros horn.



Situation

The illegal wildlife trade is a multi-billion dollar form of organized crime, constituting a low-risk, high-profit criminal enterprise. It has evolved into a serious threat to security, undermining the rule of law, fueling corruption and corroding economic development.

Divergent international legal frameworks at a prosecution level, infrequent use of wildlife forensic techniques, lack of international coordination and corruption are the major challenges faced by law enforcement when combating this form of organized crime.

INTERPOL is working to reverse the trend by strengthening law enforcement cooperation and targeting illegal wildlife trade across the supply chain.

Response

At a national level, Project Wisdom's response to effectively undermine wildlife trafficking comprises expertise and technical support for investigations, assistance for quality data collection, criminal intelligence analysis and the use of forensic tools and techniques.

Project Wisdom facilitates information sharing between countries to support transcontinental investigations targeting the chokepoints of organized criminal networks. In order to achieve these goals, INTERPOL offers a variety of resources for member countries, such as the deployment of Investigative Support Teams (IST), the delivery of Regional Analytical Investigative Case Meetings (RIACM) and the establishment of multi-agency National Environmental Security Task Forces (NEST).

Upon request, member countries can further benefit from assistance and training on an array of techniques, including DNA sampling and analysis, controlled delivery operations, skilled intelligence-led mentoring and case-oriented investigations.

In light of the challenges to counteract the impact of organized crime behind the illegal wildlife trade, it is crucial to extend the combined use of ENS resources and expertise to all affected countries.

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Activities

- Detect, apprehend, prosecute criminals and disrupt transnational criminal networks;
- Enhance INTERPOL law enforcement cooperation and strengthen information sharing via the INTERPOL I-24/7 secure communications system;
- Issue INTERPOL notices and alerts in support of investigations;
- Provide experienced intelligence-led policing guidance;
- Sensitize law-enforcement agencies and encourage them to use and expand their resources efficiently;
- Deliver subject-specific Specialized Enforcement Trainings (SET) in practical areas and provide assistance on specialized law-enforcement techniques;
- Offer wildlife forensic expertise (e.g. DNA sampling and analysis, ballistic forensics, etc.) and criminal intelligence analysis;
- Promote transnational investigations and provide skilled guidance for transcontinental operations;
- Conduct Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Management (RIACM);
- Deploy Investigative Support Teams (IST).

Operational successes

- Coordination of more than seven operations targeting ivory and rhino horn traffickers, which have collectively resulted in the arrest of 1,180 suspects charged with ivory and rhino horn-related offences.
- Identification and subsequent shutdown of key ivory carving factories. These operations resulted in more than 80% conviction rates, the recovery of more than five tonnes of raw ivory and around 50,000 carved ivory pieces.
- Publication of more than 30 internationally wanted Red Notices and 20 Purple Notices seeking information on the modus operandi of ivory and rhino horn trafficking suspects.
- Seizure of large quantities of live animals, bushmeat and other illegal wildlife products, along with non-wildlife contraband, including illicit military firearms.



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