



August 2023  
EAGLE Network

**EAGLE**

# Wildlife Law Enforcement Briefing

- ✓ **12 traffickers arrested in 2 countries**
- ✓ **9 traffickers arrested in Gabon with 21 elephant tusks weighing 131 kg in a crackdown on a major ivory trafficking ring using hidden compartments in vehicles. The seizure of 21 tusks and 4 ivory pieces is a mere snapshot of the regular activities of this vast network operating for many years with representatives and stations spread all over Gabon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon, trafficking ivory between Central and West Africa.**
- ✓ **An ape trafficker arrested, and a baby chimpanzee rescued in Cameroon**
- ✓ **2 more traffickers arrested with a young mandrill in Cameroon**



9 traffickers arrested in Gabon with 21 elephant tusks weighing 131 kg

An ape trafficker arrested and a baby chimpanzee rescued in Cameroon

# Summary

9 traffickers arrested in Gabon with 21 elephant tusks weighing 131 kg in a crackdown on a major ivory trafficking ring using hidden compartments in vehicles. The seizure of 21 tusks and 4 ivory pieces is a mere snapshot of the regular activities of this vast network operating for many years with representatives and stations spread all over Gabon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon, trafficking ivory between Central and West Africa.



9 traffickers arrested in Gabon with 21 elephant tusks weighing 131 kg

This network, that is estimated to have generated the killings of thousands of elephants, demonstrates that corruption is the main enabler of organized wildlife trafficking. One of its heads has been arrested in Cameroon 3 years ago with 600 kg ivory but was awarded a ridiculous sentence sending him right back to resume his illegal activities.

6 operations were carried to arrest the traffickers. The first and most crucial of the operations was carried out on August 8, when a Gabonese national of Cameroonian origin was arrested in Lambarene, Centre Gabon. He was driving a car with a partner inside. 19 elephant tusks and 4 pieces of ivory weighing a total of 120 kg were concealed in a hidden compartment of the vehicle. 18 rounds of 458 calibre ammunition, close to one million CFA francs in cash and an expired residence permit belonging to a well-known Cameroonian ivory trafficker were also uncovered in the car.

On August 9, another main trafficker who had already been arrested for another case was denounced and arrested, for his role in the selling of some of the

seized ivory. On August 10, a key man in the ivory trafficking network was arrested. He had facilitated one of the ivory transactions. On August 11, a major trafficker who had been sentenced to prison in recent years was denounced and arrested in Makokou, North-East Gabon. He was in charge of collecting ivory in the East and North-East of Gabon. He was waiting to be delivered more ivory by the traffickers arrested on August 8. Investigations led to the arrest of 4 more traffickers and the seizure of 2 ivory tusks weighing 11 kg on August 17 and 18, all being members of the same trafficking ring.

An ape trafficker arrested and a baby chimpanzee rescued in Cameroon; the ape trafficker was arrested while attempting to sell the chimpanzee. The animal had been chained and caged alongside a dog in the home of the trafficker. She was frail and aggressive and looked like she had suffered from trauma. The trafficker talked about trying to sell the chimp to a governor.

2 more traffickers arrested with a young mandrill in Cameroon. The mandrill was spotted in the street by the arresting team.



2 traffickers arrested with a young mandrill in Cameroon

# Cameroon – LAGA

- An ape trafficker arrested, and a baby chimpanzee rescued; 2 more traffickers arrested with a young mandrill. The ape trafficker was arrested while attempting to sell the chimpanzee. The animal had been chained and caged alongside a dog in the home of the trafficker. The little female was frail and aggressive and looked like she had suffered from trauma. The trafficker talked about trying to sell the chimp to a governor. The mandrill was spotted in the street by the arresting team. The trafficker was arrested and a second detained at the police station when he showed up after police requested for his presence.



- The Deputy Director participated at an event to welcome new embassy officials of the Political and Economic Section of the US Embassy in Yaounde. He held brief discussions with the US Ambassador and the Second Secretary of the Japanese Embassy in Yaounde. Discussions focused on wildlife law enforcements and the fight against wildlife crime.

- The Deputy Director and the Head of the Legal Department held a meeting with the newly appointed Centre Regional Chief of Wildlife to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.
- The Head of the Investigation Department held a meeting with the Judicial Police Chief of Ebolowa in the South Region to renew collaboration in fighting wildlife crimes.
- The Legal Team held meetings with several State Counsels to discuss ongoing cases in their respective jurisdictions.

## Republic of the Congo – PALF

- The Coordinator and the Legal Team held several meetings with officials including the Director General of Water and Forests, the Departmental Director of Water and Forests in Brazzaville, the Departmental Director of Water and Forests at Pointe Noire, the President of the High Court of Oyo, the State Counsel of the High Court of Oyo, the Director of the Oyo prison, the Company Commander of the Oyo Gendarmerie, the Chief of Staff of the

Cuvette Gendarmerie Region, the State Counsel of the Owando High Court. The meetings focused on strengthening collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.

- The Legal Team followed up the various cases in courts and carried out jail visits for detainees and convicted traffickers serving a prison sentence.
- Recruitment of investigators was intensified with the files of several potential candidates examined.

## Gabon – AALF

- 9 traffickers arrested with 21 elephant tusks weighing 131 kg in a crackdown on a major ivory trafficking ring using hidden compartments in vehicles. The seizure of 21 tusks and 4 ivory pieces is a mere snapshot of the regular activities of this vast network operating for many years with representatives and stations spread all over Gabon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon, trafficking ivory between Central and West Africa.
- This network, that is estimated to have generated the killings of thousands of elephants, demonstrates that corruption is the main enabler of organized wildlife trafficking. One of its heads has been arrested in Cameroon 3 years ago with 600



kg ivory but was awarded a ridiculous sentence sending him right back to resume his illegal activities.

- 6 operations were carried to arrest the traffickers. The first and most crucial of the operations was carried out on August 8, when a Gabonese na-



tional of Cameroonian origin was arrested in Lambaréne, Centre Gabon. He was driving a car with a partner inside. 19 elephant tusks and 4 pieces of ivory weighing a total of 120 kg were concealed in a hidden compartment of the vehicle. 18 rounds of 458 calibre ammunition, close to one million CFA francs in cash and an expired residence permit belonging to a well-known Cameroonian ivory trafficker were also uncovered in the car.

■ On August 9, another main trafficker who had already been arrested for another case, was denounced and arrested for his role in the selling of some of the seized ivory. On August 10, a key man in the ivory trafficking network was arrested. He had facilitated one of the ivory transactions. On August 11, a major trafficker who had been sentenced to prison in recent years was denounced and arrested in Makokou, North-East Gabon. He was in charge of collecting ivory in the East and North-East of Gabon. He was waiting to be delivered more ivory by the traffickers arrested on August 8. Investigations led to the arrest of 4 more traffickers and the seizure of 2 ivory tusks weigh-

ing 11 kg on August 17 and 18, all being members of the same trafficking ring.

■ At different levels, all of these traffickers were working in the same syndicate.

- It was estimated that more than \$40 000 have been spent in buying ivory only in the past 9 months. That could be estimated to more than 1 ton of ivory traded within less than a year.
- One of the kingpins of who was arrested in October 2020 in Cameroon, with more than 600 kg of ivory, on his way to selling the contraband, dis-simulated it in a hidden compartment of his truck. While still on trial, he was busy with his illegal activities of collecting ivory in the neighbouring countries. The seizure in Gabon of 131 kg was on its way to be delivered right at his doorstep.
- The impunity driven by corruption and the light sentences given to major traffickers remains the key problem to organized wildlife crime.
- The prosecution rate to jail term for ivory trafficking is fortunately high in Gabon and all the arrest-ed traffickers were remanded in prison custody in Libreville.
- The Legal Team accompanied by two other mem-bers held several meetings in Lambaréne with officials including the Provincial Head of the Research Unit of the Gendarmerie (DGR), the Head of the Provincial Judicial Police Unit, the State Counsel of the Court of First Instance, the Provin-cial Director of Water and Forests and the Head of the Wildlife Office of the Provincial Directorate.
- They also met with the Provincial Judicial Police Unit, the Provincial Director of Water and Forests, the State Counsel and the Provincial Head of the Research Unit of Gendarmerie (DGR) in Makokou.
- They also met with the State Counsel of the Spe-cial Court in Libreville, the Examining Judge in charge of the third specialised office.

## Togo – EAGLE Togo

- The Interim Coordinator held a meeting with the Head of the European Union Delegation to Togo to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime and corruption. He introduced the EAGLE network in general and the EAGLE Togo project in particular. During discussions he fo-cused on important wildlife law enforcement op-erations carried out in the country.
- The Interim Coordinator held a meeting with the Head of the Airport Anti-Trafficking Unit at the air-

port to strengthen collaboration in the fight against trafficking in wildlife species.

- The Interim Coordinator held a meeting with the Director of OCRTIDB to discuss common strate-gies in the fight against wildlife trafficking and to strengthen collaboration.
- Recruitment of investigators was intensified. Sev-eral interviews were conducted, and a candidate selected to be tested and trained.

## Senegal – EAGLE Senegal

- The Legal Team followed up the various pending issues with the Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, where meetings were held.
- The Coordinator and the Head of the Legal De-partment participated at training for Heads of Air-port Anti Trafficking Units from Senegal, Camer-

oon, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Togo. They presented various modules on combating wildlife crime during the training sessions.

- The Coordinator and the Head of the Legal De-partment travelled to Guinea to install the new team of EAGLE Guinea activists who came to the end of their training in Dakar.

# Côte d'Ivoire – EAGLE Côte d'Ivoire

- The Coordinator met with the Political Officer of the US Embassy to discuss wildlife law enforcement and to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.
- The Legal Team participated in a workshop that focused on crafting a national strategy to fight

wildlife crimes. Participants included officials of the Ministries of Waters and Forests, Justice, and Interior and several other conservation NGOs.

# Guinea - EAGLE Guinea

- Four Guinean activists who were trained in Senegal returned to Conakry to start the new EAGLE Guinea project. The offices were opened, and activities went underway. The training of the last Guinean activist is continuing in Senegal.
- The Coordinator and the Head of the Legal Department of EAGLE Senegal travelled to Guinea

to open the office and install the new team. They carried out an assessment of the situation in Conakry.

- They also intensified recruitment. Three candidates for investigations and one for legal adviser were selected and shall be sent to Senegal for training.

# International Media

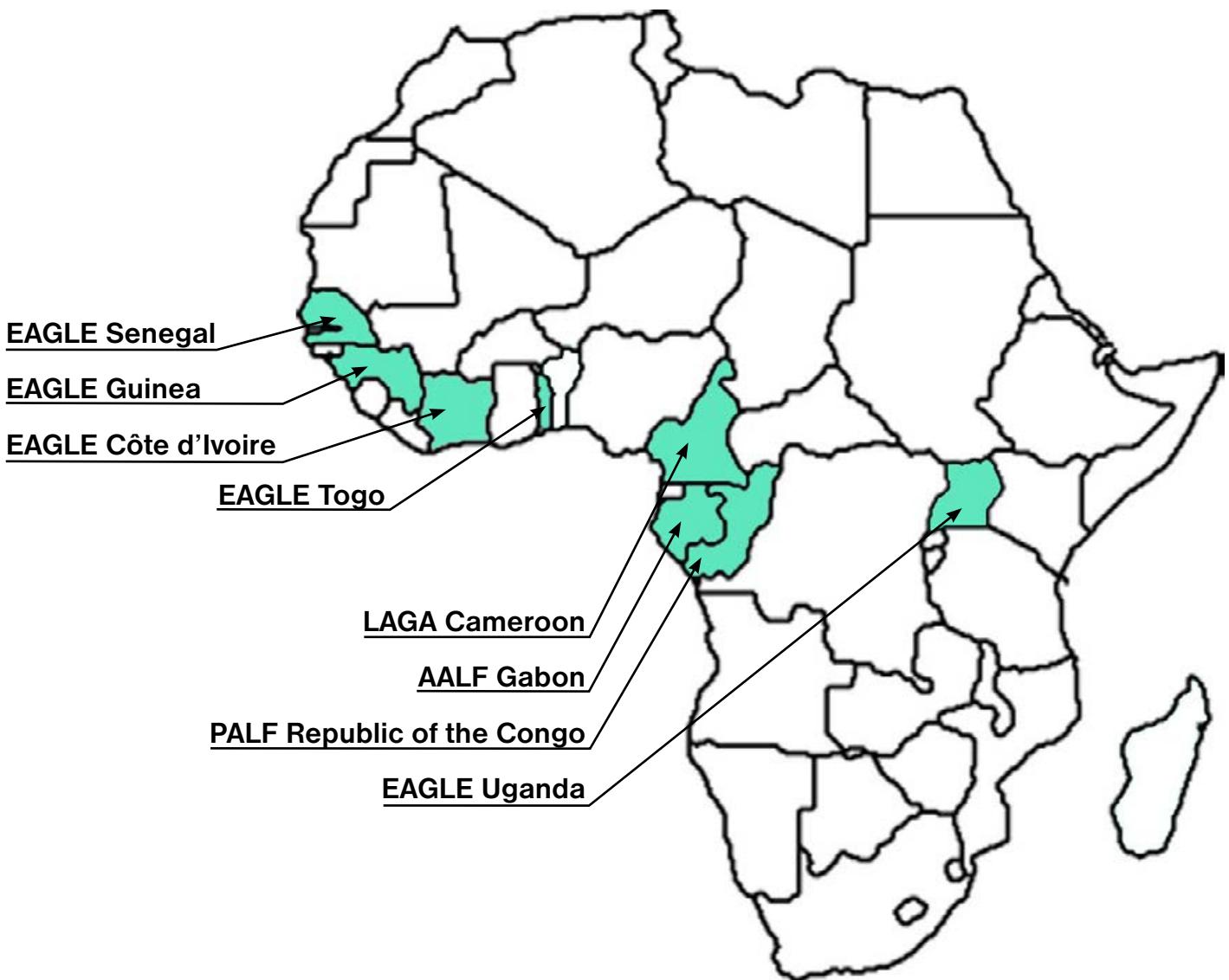
- The arrest of 9 ivory traffickers in a crackdown on a major ivory trafficking ring in Gabon was widely reported in the international media. Some links:

[Express](#)

[RFI](#)

[All 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-Cameroun 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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