

The transportation and logistics sector, comprised primarily of passenger and cargo airlines, express couriers, freight forwarders and shipping companies, has long been a critical link in the trade chain for illegal wildlife. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected by advancements in transportation networks for both goods and people, these companies are being exploited by criminal networks to move large volumes of illegal wildlife and wildlife products such as elephant ivory, rhinoceros horn, abalone, pangolin and timber across the globe with increasing efficiency. Despite the fact that the global value of illegal wildlife trade is estimated to be among the top five most lucrative forms of transnational crime, previous engagement by the

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transportation industry in helping to find solutions has been limited. This lack of engagement was due to numerous reasons ranging from a lack of awareness of the scope and scale of the problem within the wider industry and at the company level, an emphasis on the role of law enforcement, and fears of increased trade regulation, screening and liability, which could impact trade efficiency and profit margins. However, in 2015 TRAFFIC witnessed the most dramatic shift in the transportation industry's commitment to the fight against illegal wildlife trade globally.

This sudden "sea change" can be attributed to several factors. Over the past few years, landmark measures such as President Obama's Executive Order 13648—Combating Wildlife Trafficking in 2013, the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade Declaration in 2014 and the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Tackling Illicit Trafficking in Wildlife in 2015, to name a few, have solidified the issue at the highest levels of the global political agenda in response to the alarming rates of poaching and trade of some of the world's most iconic species. Central to these pronouncements of political will was the acknowledgement of the need for greater resources aimed at collaboration between public and private sectors. Global initiatives such as the USAID-funded Wildlife Trafficking Response Assessment and Priority Setting (Wildlife TRAPS) project and Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species (ROUTES) partnership co-ordinated by TRAFFIC, have acted as catalysts for the meaningful engagement of the transportation industry by creating a space for collaboration and dialogue between companies, law enforcement, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around creative solutions. Similarly, the United for Wildlife International Taskforce on the Transportation of Illegal Wildlife Products, led by the Rt Hon. the Lord Hague of Richmond, through the Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry, has captured the commitments of over 50 CEOs of large transportation companies and agencies through the signing of the recent Buckingham Palace Declaration in March 2016.

An event that proved to be a catalyst for TRAFFIC's wider engagement with the transportation sector came in January 2015, when TRAFFIC convened a ground-breaking workshop in Bangkok, Thailand, through the Wildlife TRAPS project, to raise awareness on the issue of illegal wildlife trade within various supply chains, and identify gaps and opportunities to improve co-ordination and screening of illegal wildlife products with industry players. The event

was attended by industry and transport associations, several airlines, supply chain experts, Customs officials, express courier companies, NGOs and government representatives. In retrospect, the success of the event was certainly influenced by the growing appetite to address this illicit trade as a result of increased media attention and global outcry. However, there were other factors that contributed to securing the participation from such a large cross-section of the industry. First, the workshop concept was grounded in acknowledging the potential risks to industry players including reputational, legal and economic risks due to the growing scale of the trade. Co-hosting the event together with the World Customs Organization (WCO) provided reassurance to participants that discussions would remain within existing agency mandates and would examine the interface between law enforcement and the private sector more closely. The workshop also focused on tangible solutions that could be undertaken by identifying priority actions that could realistically be undertaken by participating agencies in the future. Lastly, the priority actions identified could be supported with sufficient financial resources for implementation over a long-term period to ensure sustained engagement.

The Wildlife TRAPS project is currently advancing collaborative partnerships with several companies and associations including airlines, express couriers and freight forwarders that participated in the workshop in January 2015. The ROUTES partnership is focusing on air passenger and cargo companies globally and will expand to other sector partners such as shipping in subsequent years of implementation. Both initiatives are working with partners to influence change at multiple levels. Specific activity areas include: improving data and analytics on wildlife trafficking with passenger and cargo supply chains for evidence-based action, integration of wildlife trafficking responses into relevant industry standards and protocols, engaging leadership by developing corporate buy-in strategies, improving the ability of transport personnel to assist law enforcement by developing systems for information exchange and screening practices, staff training for companies and increasing passenger and client awareness through targeted campaigns. This multi-level approach is therefore designed to address identified weaknesses and loopholes along the trade chain and achieve significant systemic change from within the industry.

This dramatic shift in the transportation sector's engagement in such a short period of time is remarkable, but is also a result of a growing voluntary commitment by companies and acknowledgement that any solution to the current wildlife trade crisis requires collective action. High-level political attention has greatly assisted in securing buy-in, and activities such as those being undertaken through the Wildlife TRAPS project and ROUTES partnership demonstrate how seemingly insurmountable challenges can be more effectively addressed by fostering industry-led actions and setting realistic expectations across partnerships. This approach is already creating a culture of accountability between agencies which will undoubtedly continue to raise necessary awareness and develop targeted action and creative solutions where it can achieve the greatest impact along the trade chain.

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