



Illegal Trade in Wildlife

Fact Sheet

Background

Transnational criminal groups are exploiting the interconnected air transport system to trade wildlife illegally. Although the duty of apprehending and prosecuting these offenders rests with national enforcement authorities, airline staff can be an important source of intelligence and contribute to halting this illegal trade.

The international illegal wildlife trade (excluding timber and fisheries) is estimated to be worth at least USD 19 billion per year, making it the fourth largest illegal global trade (after drugs, counterfeiting and human trafficking) and covers a broad range of endangered species.

This trade poses a significant threat for many endangered animals, with the latest data from conservation organizations revealing the critical status of many iconic species. Tigers, elephants, rhinoceros, some of the other big cats and pangolins are of particular concern. In addition to threats to these and other endangered species, this illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products also strengthens criminal networks, poses risks to global health, and threatens nature-based tourism and the communities which depend on it.

Wildlife trafficking is dependent on an interconnected logistics and transport network, involving air, land and sea ports, passenger and cargo airlines, shipping companies, express couriers, postal companies and freight forwarders. Its high value has a potential corrupting influence on officials and aviation employees, and, hence may represent a secondary threat to aviation security.

IATA Activities

- IATA's focus has been on raising awareness of this issue with airlines and other aviation stakeholders.
- The aim of IATA's involvement is to support enforcement authorities in the identification and reporting of suspicious passenger behavior and unusual shipments.
- In 2015, IATA's DG participated in the Duke of Cambridge's [United for Wildlife Transportation Taskforce](#) with the CEOs of Emirates and Kenya Airways and a number of other leaders from the transport, logistics and conservation sectors.
- Since then, some 61 airlines have signed the [Declaration](#) of the United for Wildlife International Taskforce on the Transportation of Illegal Wildlife Products. Signatories from the aviation community also include Airports Council International (ACI), London Heathrow Airport, African Airlines Association (AFRAA), Association of Southern Pacific Airlines (ASPA), and Airlines Association of Southern Africa (AASA).
- IATA strengthened its cooperation with the Secretariat of the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#) and signed a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) at the 71st IATA AGM in 2015 to work closely with the organization to reduce illegally traded wildlife and ensure safe and secure transport of legally traded wildlife.
- IATA and ACI signed an annex to an existing MoU at the 73rd IATA AGM in 2017 to include the development and promotion of measures to assist in combatting the trade.
- IATA has joined with a consortium of international conservation organizations as a Core Member of the [US Agency for International Development \(USAID\) Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species \(ROUTES\) Partnership](#). This is a five-year partnership to support the transport sector with information on high risk species, routes and concealment methods, awareness raising activities with staff, passengers and cargo customers and the facilitation of the reporting of suspected traffickers and suspicious cargo. Now into its third year, IATA's involvement in the ROUTES Partnership includes the integration of an independent certification into the IEnvA (IATA Environment Assessment) program, the development of a reporting application for aviation staff and strengthening protocols, standards and procedures related to helping combat wildlife crime and raising awareness at industry events and

conferences. IATA is also working on a pilot project with an enforcement agency on automated detection of illegal wildlife.

- IATA has launched a video for aviation staff, supported by the USAID ROUTES Partnership, highlighting the important role front-line workers in the industry can play to catch wildlife traffickers. IATA has also launched a video for passengers, aimed at reducing demand for illegal wildlife.
- The IATA 72nd AGM in Dublin 2016 unanimously endorsed a Resolution denouncing the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products and pledging to partner with government authorities and conservation organizations in the fight against traffickers of endangered species. The Resolution urges governments to commit additional resources to address wildlife trafficking and calls on airlines to:
 - Increase passenger, client, customer and employee awareness about the nature, scale and consequences of the illegal wildlife trade
 - Partner with airports, freight forwarders and other stakeholders to work proactively with enforcement agencies and conservation organizations to address the problem
 - Consider the adoption of appropriate policies and procedures to discourage trafficking through awareness programs, information sharing and incident reporting
- An [Environment Committee Task Force](#) has been established to identify and review emerging wildlife conservation issues with industry relevance and to determine appropriate response strategies. This has been formalized as the “IATA Wildlife Task Force” (IWTF).
- A number of other IATA governing bodies have adopted appropriate policies such as:
 - The adoption by the Joint Passenger Services Conference (JPSC) of a Recommended Practice (RP) on raising passenger awareness of the illegal wildlife trade and an additional RP on the carriage of prohibited wildlife in baggage.
 - An addition to the Live Animals Regulations (LAR) which came into effect on 6 July 2017
 - Guidance on the safe handling of escaped animals in the cabin included in the next reissue of the Cabin Safety Best Practice Guide

More info: www.iata.org/wildlife