

Wildlife Law Enforcement Briefing



Charlotte Houpline, the WARA/GALF director, with one of the young chimpanzees rescued during an arrest of a Colonel in his illegal zoo in Guinea.

- ✓ *42 wildlife traffickers arrested in 7 countries*
- ✓ *A Colonel of the Guinean army arrested with 3 accomplices and 4 chimps and more than 30 other animals rescued in a significant victory against impunity and corruption*
- ✓ *3 traffickers arrested with 783 python skins in Togo, a quantity representing a weekly trade exposing a new magnitude of trade in snake skins.*
- A corrupt wildlife officer arrested in Congo with two others with 20kg ivory. For a decade, he was well known to traffic ivory while being paid to protect elephants, showcasing conservation's laxity and tolerance to corruption.
- ✓ *A catholic priest arrested with 2 tusks, a leopard skin and several leopard teeth in Cameroon*
- ✓ *18 traffickers including a corrupt police officer arrested in 5 operations in Uganda, 118 kg of ivory seized*

Summary

42 wildlife traffickers were arrested in 7 countries this month.

A Colonel and 3 other traffickers were arrested and 4 chimps rescued in a high quality two back-to-back operations – a significant victory against impunity and corruption in Guinea. Colonel Ibrahim Bangoura, an influential army high official, was involved in the wide spread wildlife trade in the country, he was in charge of the army's oil supply, the same lucrative and powerful post that was occupied by the former Dictator before he took power by force (Captain

the Odzala National Park. It seems his illegal activities have been known for years and yet he still kept his job and uniform all along. This laxity and tolerance for corruption



3 traffickers were arrested with 783 python skins in Togo.

Dadis Camara). These operations have been prepared for a long time as they were extremely difficult logistically as well as challenging in aiming to break impunity and get a powerful colonel behind bars. Colonel Ibrahim Bangoura ran an illegal zoo with many animals that kept dying and being replaced by new ones from the wild. He also kept more animals in his home 100km from the zoo. WARA/GALF team carried out two simultaneous operations in the two locations which required thorough planning and logistics. In the two operations more 4 adult and young chimpanzees and more than 30 other animals were rescued.

3 traffickers were arrested with 783 python skins in Togo. This quantity represents a weekly trade for the head of the ring, who has been trading skins for years. This is the biggest quantity of snake skins we ever caught exposing a new magnitude of trade in snake skins never imagined possible.

3 traffickers arrested with 20kg of ivory in Congo. One of them had been a corrupt wildlife officer for a decade, trafficking ivory while being paid to protect elephants around



A Colonel and 3 other traffickers were arrested and 4 chimps rescued in Guinea

and complicity lasting for a decade has to stop. The traffickers transported the elephant tusks of two massacred elephants concealed in a bag.

A catholic priest was arrested with 2 elephant tusks, a leopard skin and several teeth from a recently killed leopard. The clergy man has been trafficking ivory for over 5 years, running a network of poachers and providing money and supplies of essentials for poaching such as bullets and clothing and food to the poachers' families. He supplied some major Cameroonian cities with raw ivory, transporting the ivory without raising suspicion at checkpoints hiding behind the impression of high morality and was never bothered or his car searched. The arrest highlights that religious positions just as any other influential position can be used as a cover for the illegal wildlife trade.

EAGLE Uganda continued its unprecedented hunt of wildlife traffickers, by arresting a corrupt police officer and 17 other traffickers in 5 separated operations. 118kg of ivory was seized including two extremely large tusks weighting 70 kg and one live pangolin was rescued.

Cameroon – LAGA

■ A catholic priest was arrested with 2 elephant tusks, a leopard skin and several teeth from a recently killed leopard. The clergy man has been trafficking ivory for over 5 years, running a network of poachers and providing money and supplies of essentials for poaching such as bullets and clothing and food to the poachers' families. He supplied some major Cameroonian cities with raw ivory, transporting the ivory without raising suspicion at checkpoints hiding behind the impression of high morality and was never bothered or his car searched. The arrest highlights that religious positions just as any other influential position can be used as a cover for the illegal wildlife trade.

■ 3 traffickers arrested with a lion skin, two leopard skins and two crocodile skins. Using a car, one of the traffickers transported the contraband concealed in a bag of maize for hundreds of kilometres and joined an accomplice shortly before the arrest. He had supporting documents proving he was travelling with maize with him. The traffickers have been supplying wildlife contraband to clients based in Yaoundé and Douala for years, one of them is also suspected of gold trafficking. Lions are facing serious threats with just a few hundred remaining in the wild in the Northern part of the country.

■ A trafficker arrested with 118 kg of pangolin scales. The owner of a store in the countryside has been regularly supplying pangolin scales to clients in Yaoundé and Douala. He would transport and sell bags of scales to the cities and returning to his base he would buy provisions and supplies for his store.

■ 8 court judgements were passed convicting 13 wildlife traffickers.

■ The Deputy Director and the Head of the Legal Department held a meeting with several US diplo-



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mats to discuss the wildlife law enforcement process and some challenges related to it.

■ A legal adviser from Guinea arrived to Cameroon for training under the EAGLE Network Exchange Programme.



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A trafficker arrested with 118 kg of pangolin scales.

Congo – PALF

- 3 traffickers arrested with 20kg of ivory. One of them had been a corrupt wildlife officer for a decade, trafficking ivory while being paid to protect elephants around the Odzala National Park. It seems his illegal activities have been known for years and yet he still kept his job and uniform all along. This laxity and tolerance for corruption and complicity lasting for a decade has to stop. The traffickers transported the elephant tusks of two massacred elephants concealed in a bag.
- The 2 traffickers including the ex-ecoguard were prosecuted at the end of the month and sentenced both to 3 years in prison and to pay almost 8,000 USD on fines and damages.
- A good deterring sentence was achieved in the case of 4 traffickers, arrested in February with 31 kg of ivory. One of the heads of the ring was sentenced to 5 years in jail.
- One of the others sentenced was released from prison by a corrupt police officer on duty, a situation which points to a widespread corruption in police and justice sectors. PALF team succeeded in getting the corrupt prison police officer arrested and is fighting for the arrest of the Director of the Ouessou Prison, who would also be involved in this escape. The PALF coordinator worked hard to involve the highest authorities of the country. The search for the trafficker on run continues.
- The Coordinator met with the technical team of the Ministry of Forest Economy and Sustainable Development to continue the discussion of the Memorandum of Understanding between PALF and the Ministry.
- She also met with the Director of the Cabinet of the Minister of Justice to discuss the follow-up of legal cases on the national level.
- The coordinator held several meetings with the General State Counsel of the Supreme Court, the regional head of Gendarmerie in Brazzaville, the State Counsel and the Regional Director of Forest and Protected Areas in Cuvette region to discuss the ongoing legal cases.



3 traffickers arrested with 20kg of ivory.



The ex-officer kept his uniform in his bag

Gabon – AALF

- A Malian trafficker arrested after his accomplices, arrested at the end of March, denounced role behind leopard skins trafficking. He was known to trade metals, using the trade to cover his criminal activities.
- A trafficker arrested with a leopard skin and a golden cat skin in the North of the country. He was arrested in the act when he was trying to sell the skin in a secure location. Trafficking of wildlife contraband is still common in this part of Gabon.

- 2 traffickers arrested with 5 leopard skulls, 4 tusks and an elephant tail. One of them was arrested during an attempt to sell the ivory tusks, and later leopard skulls were recovered during the house search. A weapon and an elephant tail were found later. He soon revealed a name of his accomplice, who was arrested the day after.
- Another Malian trafficker arrested in the centre of the country with 2 tusks, weighting about 3.5 kg.
- A trafficker, arrested in March with 2 leopard skins was sentenced to 3 months in prison and 8,000 USD on fines and damages, and a trafficker, arrested in January with 2 tusks was sentenced to 3 months in prison and 700 USD on fines and damages.
- The coordinator met with General Secretary and

Deputy of the General Director of the Ministry Environment and Sustainable Development to discuss the Conservation Justice projects and trainings in May by CJ for 100 forest officers.

- The coordinator met with the President of the court of Libreville to discuss training of Magistrates prepared for May.
- The coordinator met with the representatives of the AFD (French Development Agency) to discuss the projects they fund in the area of environment, who arrived after meeting with the chief of project of AFD for Agriculture, Rural Development and Biodiversity, based in Paris.
- New legal adviser started his test period this month.



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A Malian trafficker arrested in the centre of the country with 2 tusks,



A trafficker arrested with a leopard skin and a golden cat skin

Republic of Guinea – GALF

- A Colonel and 3 other traffickers were arrested and 4 chimps rescued in a high quality two back-to-back operations – a significant victory against impunity and corruption. Colonel Ibrahima Bangoura, an influential army high official, was in-

volved in the wide spread wildlife trade in the country, he was in charge of the army's oil supply, the same lucrative and powerful post that was occupied by the former Dictator before he took power by force (Captain Dadis Camara). These

operations have been prepared for a long time as they were extremely difficult logistically as well as challenging in aiming to break impunity and get a powerful colonel behind bars. Colonel Ibrahima Bangoura ran an illegal zoo with many animals that kept dying and being replaced by new ones from the wild. He also kept more animals in his home 100km from the zoo. WARA/GALF team carried out two simultaneous operations in the two locations which required thorough planning and logistics: employing 12 pickup cars, and 45 people for the operations including INTERPOL NCB, Special Anti-banditism brigade, wildlife officers. 12 team members of WARA/GALF were supported by Cecile Bloch, the coordinator of SALF project, who arrived from Dakar specifically to help with the confiscation of animals, and a vet from Chimpanzee Conservation Center sanctuary. The whole action was covered by the international press like the REUTERS crew and Guinean televisions.



- On the operation coordinated by Charlotte at the zoo the team rescued 4 adult and young chimpanzees, 9 crocodiles, 1 mongoose, 1 civette, 3 furrowed turtles, 2 trionyx turtles, 2 pelomedusa turtles, 2 crowned cranes. On the operation coordinated by Saidou at the Colonel's home: 1 serval, 1 baboon, crowned cranes and parrots. The traffickers are all behind bars including the Colonel. Most of the animals could be released back to the wild, and the four chimpanzees are getting professional care at Chimpanzee Conservation Center.
- 2 traffickers, one of dual citizenship – Guinea and Nigeria - arrested with a lion head skin and two

- leopard skins in the centre of the country. These arrested are connected to a ring of 7 traffickers arrested in 2012. The Nigerian Embassy tried to intervene to release the trafficker with Nigerian citizenship, but both of them remain behind bars.
- The coordinator met with the British Ambassador and the Political Advisers of US and EU Embas-

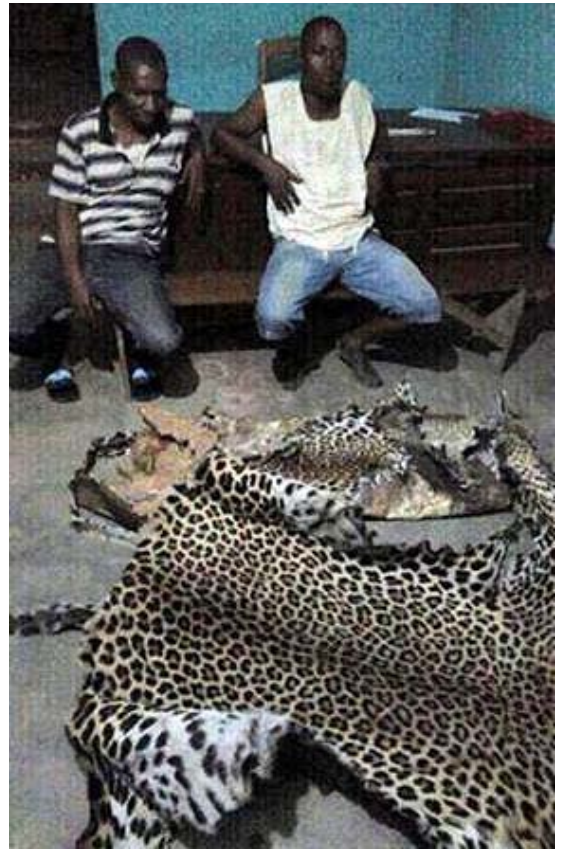


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The EAGLE NETWORK – LAGA, PALF, AALF, GALF, EAGLE Togo, SALF, AALF-B, EAGLE Uganda, ALARM Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Togo, Senegal, Benin, Uganda, Madagascar

sies to discuss their support of the arrest operation of the Colonel.

- He also met with the Minister of Environment and with other governmental authorities to prepare the operation including the National Director of Water and Forests, the Focal Point for Wildlife Crime and the inspector of INTERPOL, the Focal Point of CITES, the State Counsel and the Judge of the court in Kindia and the Head of the Prefecture Department of Water and Forests in Kindia.
- A legal adviser went to Cameroon to be trained under the EAGLE Network Exchange Programme.
- 3 investigators continued their test period.



2 traffickers arrested with a lion head skin and two leopard skins

Togo – EAGLE Togo

- 3 traffickers arrested with 783 python skins. This quantity represents a weekly trade for the head of the ring, who has been trading skins for years. This is the biggest quantity of snake skins we ever caught, exposing a new magnitude of trade in snake skins never imagined possible. The skins, weighing 219 kg, were brought in 3 big new suitcases to the selling point. It seems all the skins are trafficked through Nigeria.



3 traffickers arrested with 783 python skins. This quantity represents a weekly trade for the head of the ring,

- The deputy coordinator met with the Director of Forestry Resources, the divisional Chief of Protected Areas and the President of Legal Advisers of MERF to discuss cooperation in wildlife law enforcement.



Rock python

Skinned...

- The Coordinator and the Deputy Coordinator met with the Director, the Deputy Director, the Chief of UMCC and the Chief of Operations of OCRTIDB to ensure all necessary procedures would be followed in the case of the arrest of snake skins traffickers.
- They also met with the CITES Scientific Authority

to discuss collaboration.

- The media officer started his test period.
- The website of www.EAGLE-Togo.org has been launched.

A new era of EAGLE-Togo started this month by an arrest of 3 traffickers arrested with 783 python skins. This is the biggest quantity of snake skins we ever caught exposing a new magnitude of trade in snake skins never imagined possible. The project is fast developing under the leadership of Rens Ilgen and Mensah Akomedi.



Rens Ilgen - The Coordinator

Since his childhood he has been amazed by the beauty of the natural world but very soon became frustrated by the way we exploit our natural riches. He applied to study biology and focused his courses and research on ecology. What struck him was that even with all this scientific evidence underlining the dependence of our own future on a healthy environment, we don't act upon that knowledge. He concluded that conservation is a social problem and turned away from a scientific carrier to become an activist, bringing in real solutions for environment.

Travelling around, in many countries he witnessed marginalized, empty forests, deprived local communities, pollution up until the remotest islands and all under the immense pressure of just a few greedy fingers. Exploitation and corruption turned out to be best buddies wherever he went, and he decided to fight!

"I'm motivated by a strong urge to fight the exploitation of the natural world as we dance more and more out of tune with her," Rens says. "Without much hesitation we're destroying timeless cultures and countless ecosystems in a men's lifetime, and we call this development. In our quest to grow for the purpose of growing, we became blind to the beauty of each other and the world we live in. For me, activism is a moral fight to make people blinded again by beauty."

Brought in by Naftali Honig he started in Congo, as a volunteer for the sniffer dog program aiming to tackle the transport of illegal wildlife products. He later joined the EAGLE supervolunteers program and moved to coordinate the Madagascar replication, where he contributed to the first arrests of 9 reptile traffickers. In January he joined newly established EAGLE-Togo as the Coordinator and together with the team brought the largest snake skin operation in EAGLE history.



Mensah Akomedi - the Deputy Coordinator

Mensah has a degree in Law and Environmental Policy, specialization on protection of wildlife by criminal law from the University of Lomé in Togo. He is passionate about biodiversity, particularly about the protection of the iconic wildlife species.

The first field missions and research he conducted in Togo's protected area, the Fazao-Malfakassa National Park,, where he was terrified by the scale of the illegal logging, poaching, illegal trade in wildlife and the destruction of the African wildlife.

All this was a result of a corruption and a poor application of the law. This was a life changing experience, and he decided to commit to the fight against wildlife crime. Mensah decided to become an integral part of the EAGLE Family fighting illegal trade in wildlife and logging and contributing to the conservation and protection of the iconic African species.

In October 2013 he joined the TALFF project as a legal adviser and later an assistant coordinator. He contributed to many significant arrests. His work lead to the seizure of more than 2 tons of ivory in February 2014, about 45 traffickers arrested and put in jail in 2014 - 2016; 150 royal pythons saved from the death and sent to the national Malfakassa park; about 200 kg of ivory seized in different operations. TALF team also brought some new arrests with a contraband never seen before – like shark fins or manatee bones and skulls.

“For me being a great activist is not enough. My dream is to become a great expert in the enforcement of the Fauna and Flora Act. This would enable me not only combat wildlife crime effectively, but I want also to contribute to improving the national wildlife law.” To fulfill his dream, Mensah is finishing his Master degree in Environmental Law this year at University of Lome with a thesis on Protection of Wildlife by a Criminal Law.

In January 2017 Mensah became the Deputy Coordinator of newly established EAGLE – Togo and is significantly contributing to the building the new team and first arrest operations.

Senegal - SALF

- The SALF coordinator travelled to Guinea to support GALF team in a major operation of arrest of Colonel Bangoura and his accomplices and seizure of more than 33 wild animals, including 4 chimpanzees, kept at an illegally-run private zoo.
- The recruitment process to build a new SALF team continued by selection process and evaluation of applications received.
- The coordinator held a series of meetings with several ambassadors. With the support of the British Ambassador she met with the Ambassadors of Spain, South Africa and Austria to discussed with them a cooperation and support in the fight against wildlife crime.

Cecile, the SALF coordinator travelled to Guinea to support GALF team in a major operation of arrest of Colonel and rescuing the animals from his illegal zoo



Benin – AALF-B

- 2 traffickers arrested and two live pangolins rescued. One of them was using the internet to advertise the live animals for sale. He and his accomplice brought the white bellied pangolins to a hotel room, concealed in a box, and were swiftly arrested. They have been trading live animals for years, originally supplying a private illegal zoo, which was closed, so they were looking for a new market. They remain behind bars, awaiting trial.
- A deterring sentence was achieved when 4 of the 6 ivory traffickers arrested in March with 14 kg of ivory were sentenced to 1 year in prison and to jointly pay about 26,500 USD – the damages and fines.
- The assistant coordinator and the legal team held a series of meetings to prepare the operation, namely with the State Counsel, the forestry officers of DGEFC and the Head of forest inspection in Parakou, with the commissariat and the Head of forest inspection in Dassa and other officials.
- The coordinator participated in a workshop on securing West African Park and on coordinating the fight against wildlife crime in the protected areas of Benin, Niger and Burkina Faso.
- One investigator and one legal advisor continued their test period, intensive recruitment process continued to strengthen the team.



2 traffickers arrested and two live pangolins rescued.

Uganda - EAGLE Uganda

- 5 traffickers arrested with 6 ivory pieces weighting 20 kg. They were arrested in act after they brought the ivory, concealed in two bags, to a store of dry beans. They had been regularly trafficking ivory from Uganda's national parks and also from South Sudan.
- 4 traffickers arrested the same day with 2 large tusks, weighting 70 kg. The team travelled 120 km to arrest the two Karamajong warriors and their accomplices. Then they carried them on a motorbike, concealed in two bags, to the nearby town, where they were arrested in act.
- 3 traffickers including a corrupt police officer arrested with one live pangolin and two skinned pangolins. The police officer was known as a big boss in wildlife trade with international connections, involved in it for many years. The other trafficker is a medical officer. They have been trafficking pangolins as well as ivory, which they were trafficking from Kenya. They were arrested in act during an



2 traffickers arrested with 20 kg of ivory.



5 traffickers arrested with 6 ivory pieces weighting 20 kg

attempt to sell the pangolin and the skins near the capital city. The live pangolin was handed to UWA and taken to a sanctuary to recover.

- 2 traffickers arrested with 20 kg of ivory. They brought the contraband concealed in a bag on a motorbike to a restaurant where they were arrested during an attempt to sell it. They have been trafficking ivory from DRC and Uganda's national parks for several years.
- 4 traffickers arrested in Kampala with 8kg of ivory and 13kg of hippo teeth. They arrived with the contraband concealed in a bag to the capital city and were arrested in a sting operation on the way to a bank. They all are experienced traffickers, who had been running the illegal business for years.

- 2 ivory traffickers, arrested in November 2016 with 17 kg of ivory, were both sentenced to 3 years in jail with no option of fine.
- NRCN team met with USFWS service military attaché and Uganda Wildlife Authority to discuss USFWS support of the investigation of wildlife crime in Uganda.
- The team members attended media training with support from Wildlife Conservation Society in Uganda to improve quality of news reporting, on the print, electronic media, photos, to improve recording during and after operations and court room reporting for State Counsels.
- One investigator and a new financial officer started their test period.



4 traffickers arrested with 2 large tusks, weighting 70 kg.



3 traffickers including a corrupt police officer arrested with one live pangolin and two skinned pangolins.

Madagascar - ALARM

- The legal team followed a case of 4 reptile traffickers with 8 young Angonoka tortoises, critically endangered species, arrested by customs at the Ivato Airport, in March. Two of them were prosecuted and sentenced to 2 years in jail and to pay 1,200 USD on fines and damages. The team also followed another case of a turtles seized in Honk Kong, which lead to 2 traffickers arrested in Madagascar.
- A meeting held with TRAFFIC at AVG headquarters on resulted in TRAFFIC issuing a quota document for Malagasy species listed by CITES. This document will further strengthen the ALARM Project's knowledge of wildlife.
- A recruitment process continued to build a new ALARM team.

Headquarters

- Nicolas Charron, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer conducted a mission to Ivory Coast to support recruitment new team members for a newly prepared replication, testing and training them.

International Media Coverage

- In Guinea, an army colonel was arrested for illegal trade in endangered animals, an arrest that resulted in the release of these animals – le Journal Afrique sur TV5Monde.

[Link to the video](#)

- Guinea colonel accused of trafficking as police seize his 'private zoos' – Article in Reuters:

[Link to the article](#)

- “Six suspected wildlife traffickers arrested in Guinea since February” – Article in Sciences Avenir (in French)

[Link to the article](#)

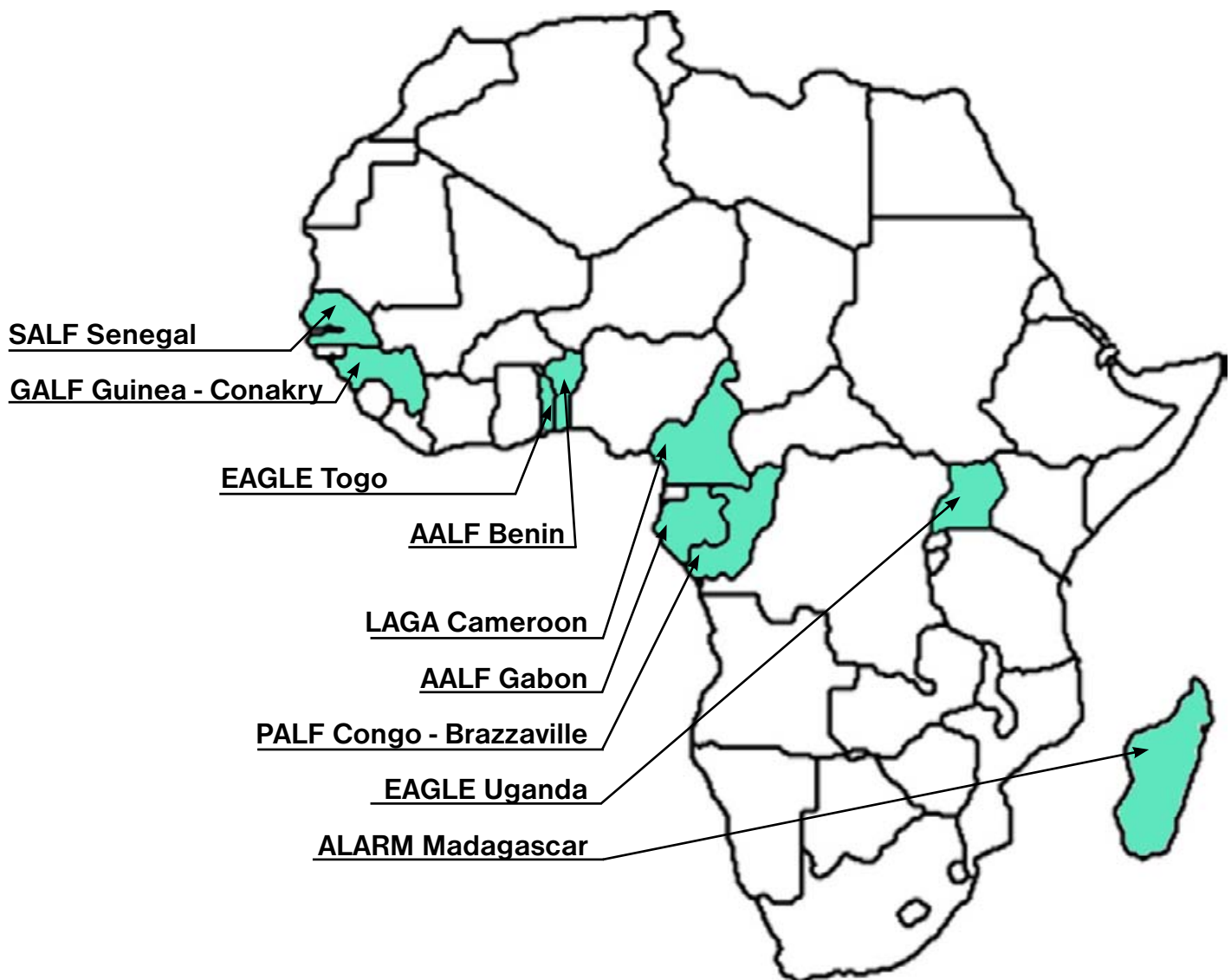
- Guinea colonel accused of trafficking as police seize his “private zoos” – article in Citizen Digital, Kenya

[Link to the article](#)

- Video on the arrest of the Colonel and rescue of more than 33 animals in Guinea - on MSM News

[Link to the video](#)

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-Cameroon 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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