



## U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations



# WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING PROGRAM

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Commercial Fraud Unit oversees the wildlife trafficking program for the agency. ICE HSI special agents have primary jurisdiction and authority among all federal law enforcement officials to investigate cross-border violations including, but not limited to, violations of Chapter 27 of Title 18 of the U.S. Code (18 U.S.C. § 541 et seq.) and Title 19. ICE HSI has the authority to enforce the Lacey Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 3371–3378), making it unlawful to import, export, sell, acquire, or purchase fish, wildlife, or plants that are taken, possessed, transported, or sold: 1) in violation of U.S. or Indian law, or 2) in interstate or foreign commerce involving any fish, wildlife, or plants taken, possessed, or sold in violation of state or foreign law. A Lacey Act violation may serve as predicate offenses for 18 U.S.C. § 541 (misclassification), 18 U.S.C. § 542 (fraudulent importation documentation), 18 U.S.C. § 545 (importation contrary to law), or 18 U.S.C. § 554 (exportation contrary to law). ICE HSI enforces the Endangered Species Act of 1973 which makes it unlawful for a person to take an endangered or threatened species from its habitat without a Federal permit.



Domestically, ICE HSI is uniquely positioned with full law enforcement and customs authorities at and beyond the border. HSI is the only U.S. agency with the combination of border search authority and full access to trade data and bank secrecy act data . These are powerful tools for conducting complex criminal investigations. ICE HSI's skill-set includes investigations of entities that exploit vulnerabilities in the commercial supply chain for illicit financial gain. ICE HSI has 67 foreign offices in 50 countries facilitating investigations of transnational criminal organizations involved in wildlife trafficking, supporting capacity building, and assisting foreign law enforcement investigations.

In 2013, President Obama signed an Executive Order entitled “Combating Wildlife Trafficking,” which directed the formulation of a task force to develop a U.S. Government National Strategy and subsequent implementation plan. Strengthening enforcement and building international cooperation are key components of the strategy implemented by joint in-country investigations, supporting governments in building capacity and multinational enforcement operations. ICE HSI was active in building the implementation plan and focused input on existing ICE HSI resources and expertise capable of executing the plan's enforcement and investigative fundamentals. ICE HSI has demonstrated the ability to successfully advance the goals of the national implementation plan both domestically and internationally. More recently, on February 9, 2017, President Trump signed an Executive Order “enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking.”

