

UNVEILING THE CRIMINAL
NETWORKS BEHIND
JAGUAR TRAFFICKING
IN BOLIVIA

A just world that values and conserves nature.

2020

Photo Jaguar © Cuatrok77

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COLOFON

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Jaguars (*Panthera onca*) are being seriously threatened by poaching and trafficking, impacting not only the jaguars themselves, but also the ecosystems they belong to, the local communities concerned, and, last but not least, the rule of law.

On behalf of the IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands (IUCN NL), Earth League International (ELI) conducted undercover investigations on jaguar poaching and trafficking in Bolivia. The intelligence-led operations started in January 2018 and aimed to compile and analyse information on the trafficking routes, the main destinations, and the key drivers.

A summary of the main findings is set out below. All findings are backed by evidence provided in the Confidential Intelligence Brief (CIB) produced by ELI and available for law enforcement.

Through their investigation, ELI was able to identify 25 Persons of Interest (PoI) in Bolivia and more than 50 Persons of Interest in other Latin American countries, including Peru and Suriname. The investigation identified at least 3 criminal groups in Bolivia that are involved in jaguar trafficking. All the individuals involved stressed how caution is vital when dealing with this business. However, the demand is still high, and the profits to be made outweigh the risk.

Jaguars are poached for their meat, teeth, bones, skin, penis and testicles. In China, jaguar parts are attributed as having medicinal power and the genitals are perceived as being an aphrodisiac. The price of jaguar fangs in China (but sold as a tiger) is up to ten times the price paid in South America. The price for teeth encapsulated in pendants is even higher.

Santa Cruz and the Beni are mentioned as the main hotspot for jaguar trafficking in Bolivia. Locals (Bolivian nationals) act mostly as hunters or are involved in sourcing jaguar parts. However, some of them can act as middlemen, sourcing jaguar teeth in fellow Bolivians' homes and then selling the teeth directly to Chinese first buyers or other Asian middlemen.

Customers are all Asian, with the majority being Chinese nationals. The type of illegal jaguar products offered by traders to a large extent depends on the demand from mainland China, often coming from China's business elite.

The key Persons of Interest (PoI) identified by ELI has solid fully functioning networks that allow them to smuggle jaguar parts without major issues as well as every sort of illegal goods from South America to mainland China. The preferred means of transport is by plane, with individuals carrying the jaguar parts in pieces of luggage or on their bodies whenever possible. Traffickers often bribe high-level police officers to get support in passing the borders. Illegal goods are most often smuggled via transit points to the final destination in China, in order to avoid direct routes or airports with stricter controls.



Jaguar teeth and bones shown by sellers © ELI

1. INTRODUCTION

Scientist's estimates about the size of the global jaguar population vary greatly. A study by De la Torre et al (2018)ⁱ estimated the global population of jaguars to be 64,000 individuals, while Jędrzejewski et al (2018)ⁱⁱ estimate that there are 173,000 (138,000±208,000) jaguars left in the wild, mostly concentrated in the Amazon basin. It is estimated that there are 12.000 jaguars in Bolivia. Local expert Angela Nuñez and other experts consider this number to be elevated and the actual jaguar population to be lower.

1.1. Objectives and scope

Operation Jaguar is a joint project between IUCN NL, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and Earth League International (ELI) and is made possible by the Dutch Postcode Lottery.

The project tackles the poaching and illegal trade in jaguars in Bolivia, Suriname, and Guyana by exposing criminal networks. To ensure this top predator continues to play its important role in the ecosystem, Operation Jaguar supports investigation into poaching and illegal trade, encourages prosecution by the relevant authorities and works on prevention by disincentivizing jaguar poaching.

Researchⁱⁱⁱ commissioned by IUCN NL on poaching and trafficking of wildlife in Bolivia and Suriname showed a clear spike in reports of jaguar trafficking in Bolivia from 2014 onwards, fuelled by Chinese individuals and/or networks. Under the project Operation Jaguar, ELI has built further on this research and conducted missions to Bolivia in order to gather intelligence on the trafficking of jaguar parts, the key players, and their modus operandi.

Bolivia was selected as the focal country for ELI's investigation, as IUCN NL has had a presence in the country for 20 years. Bolivia has appeared in several investigations as an important country for Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT).

Chapters two and three of this report provide general background and context based on open-source information. This is primarily taken from the 2019 study; 'An assessment of wildlife poaching and trafficking in Bolivia and Suriname' a report commissioned by IUCN NL with support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Chapter four presents the key findings from ELI's Bolivian based investigation into the trafficking of jaguar parts and fangs from Bolivia to mainland China.

This report is produced in coordination with the Bolivian authorities in direct response to a request by CITES. The CITES secretariat encouraged parties and stakeholders to submit relevant information to complete the study on illegal trade in jaguars: Decision 18.251, paragraph a).

1.2. Methodology

Over a two-year timeframe, ELI undertook multiple missions to the region, targeting both the Chinese and local communities. The information gathering and investigative operation began in Bolivia in 2018.

For a variety of reasons, including budget restraints and accessibility of targets, certain aspects and lines of investigation were prioritised over others. This led to a focus on particular aspects of the trade in jaguar parts over others, namely the focus on jaguar parts and fangs over the focus on jaguar meat being served in restaurants.



Jewellery from jaguar teeth © ELI

2. SETTING THE SCENE: BOLIVIA

Bolivia is one of the most biologically diverse countries in the world. Its location in the tropics combined with dramatic variations in topography and climate results in a wide range of ecosystems—from the mountain landscapes of the Andes to the rainforests of the Amazon to the unusual dry forests of the Chaco. Bolivia has designated more than 17% of its land as protected areas^v. More than 1.5 million rural people live in or near the country's protected areas^v.

2.1 **Economic development**

Bolivia is rich in non-renewable resources. Strong growth, attributed largely to natural gas exports to Argentina and Brazil, has enabled significant public spending. Yet the country remains one of the least developed in Latin America due to a poor business climate and state intervention in the economy that deters investment and private sector growth. High commodity prices between 2010 and 2014 sustained rapid growth and large trade surpluses. However, the global decline in oil prices from late 2014 negatively impacted Bolivia's revenues for exported gas, resulting in lower GDP growth, losses in government income, and fiscal and trade deficits^{vi}.

2.2 **Foreign investment**

A lack of foreign investment in the key sectors of mining and hydrocarbons, along with conflict among social groups, pose challenges for the Bolivian economy. In 2015, in an attempt to improve the investment climate, former President Evo Morales expanded efforts to attract international investment and boost Bolivia's energy production capacity^{vii}. This move was welcomed by China. Chinese companies have significantly increased their presence in Bolivia in recent years, particularly active in the energy and transport infrastructure and mining sectors. However, as with Ecuador and other regional neighbours, much of China's investment in Bolivia remains focused on the extraction and transport of raw materials, helping to lock in the "resource curse"^{viii}. According to data from the Bolivian Institute of Foreign Trade, China is the largest exporter to Bolivia, accounting for around 18% of the country's total imports. It is also the fifth-largest destination for Bolivian exports, mostly raw materials and minerals^{ix}.

2.3 **Political situation**

The national elections were held on October the 18th 2020 and the MAS party won after the first round. Sub-national elections (municipal and departmental) will be carried out in 2021. Aside from this electoral process, the 2019 post-election crisis has left the country extremely polarised. Many political analysts fear this may lead to a deeper crisis than after the disputed election of October 2019. Although electoral polarisation is led by political parties, they have social and / or business actors backing them.

In this context, tackling illegal Wildlife Trade is not a government priority, given the major challenges the Bolivian government is facing; forest fires, economic crisis, COVID, and political unrest.

2.4 Organised crime

The level of organised crime is high in Bolivia. The country is the world's third-largest cultivator of coca and producer of cocaine. It furthermore serves as a transit country for Colombian and Peruvian cocaine destined for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Europe. Border controls are weak. The criminal networks engaged in cocaine production and trafficking also commit other serious crimes that impact on Bolivia's economy and rule of law, including bribery, tax fraud, and evasion and money-laundering^x.

2.5 Legal framework

In 1986 Bolivia declared a total ban on the capture, conditioning, commercialisation and export of wild animals, their by-products, and secondary products. This ban was further refined by subsequent decrees in 1990 and 1995. In 2016 the rules for wildlife trade were tightened. Article 10 creates an exception to the general trade ban if: a) the trader can prove the specimens involved come from activities of sustainable use and/or wildlife management and the use of the species will not put the wild population at risk; b) it is based on authorised national quotas, and c) based on a Non-Detriment Finding Report for CITES-listed species.

The Bolivian Environmental Law (Ley 1333 of 27 April 1992) sets out the general framework for protection of the (natural) environment. A key provision is Article 106, which declares that crimes against the environment are penalised by Article 223 of Bolivia's Penal Code, and provides a 1-6 year prison sentence. Article 44 of Ley 300 (Law of Mother Earth and Integral Development for Living Well, 2012), stipulates that in the case of crimes related to Mother Earth there will be no alternative measures to detention, the prison sentence must be served. In addition, crimes related to Mother Earth are imprescriptible. For reoffenders the sentence is increased by one third of the maximum penalty. Currently there are only 2 people in prison with a sentence of 3 years, by application of Article 44.

2.6 Illegal wildlife trade

Bolivia's rich and unique biodiversity has been the target of wildlife traffickers for many decades. Soon after Bolivia joined CITES in 1979 and many of its species became protected by international law, the country saw a major emergence of illegal wildlife trade. At CITES' Fifth Conference of the Parties in 1985, other Latin American countries expressed concern about the depletion of their wildlife resulting from Bolivia's ever-growing and destructive illegal trade. CITES consequently imposed trade sanctions, which caused Bolivia to take measures to ensure proper implementation^{xi}. Faced with heavy international criticism for its

The Jaguar Action Plan

In 2017 civil society organisations and the Bolivian government co-designed a Jaguar and Spectacled bear Action Plan. The jaguar plan contains several actions that are important to help combat trafficking. Some of these actions are laid out below:

- Drafting of new control and monitoring protocols to deal with cases of illegal trafficking including cross border.
- Strengthening the CITES-Bolivia Authority.
- Effective supervision of megaprojects in areas where jaguars live (energy, infrastructure, mining).
- Training, information and awareness campaigns for municipal, departmental and indigenous authorities and the general public about the ecological and cultural importance of jaguars and the regulations that protect them.
- Institutional strengthening of Forestry – and Environmental Police, prosecutors and the judiciary.
- Promote information campaigns aimed at the cattle sector in places with a high risk of livestock-jaguar conflict and where there are activities related to the purchase of jaguar parts.

corrupt wildlife trade practices^{xii} and failure to comply with CITES, Bolivia banned the export of all wildlife in 1986^{xiii}. Unfortunately, the export ban and subsequent decrees - which introduced a general prohibition for capture and trade of native species - have not been enough to stop the illegal export of Bolivia's protected wildlife species. Wildlife smuggling occurs across all the borders that Bolivia shares with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Peru. Bolivia is both a source and a destination for wildlife specimens from neighbouring countries and is also believed to be a transit country. For example, several researchers believe that Bolivia functions as a bridge for illegal wildlife trade between Brazil and Peru^{xiv}. This cross-border trafficking mainly concerns live specimens destined for the pet trade and animal parts and - products or consumption, traditional use, or religious festivals. In November 2018 two Chinese citizens were sentenced to four and three years in prison respectively, for the trafficking of animal parts. The pair was arrested in their restaurant on 23 February 2018. In the raid, police confiscated 185 jaguar fangs, one jaguar skin, one African leopard (*Panthera pardus pardus*) skin, three other feline skins, two rattle snakes, 11 ivory statues of Chinese idols, three marsh deer (*Blastocerus dichotomus*) and one giant armadillo (*Priodontes maximus*) claw.^{xv}

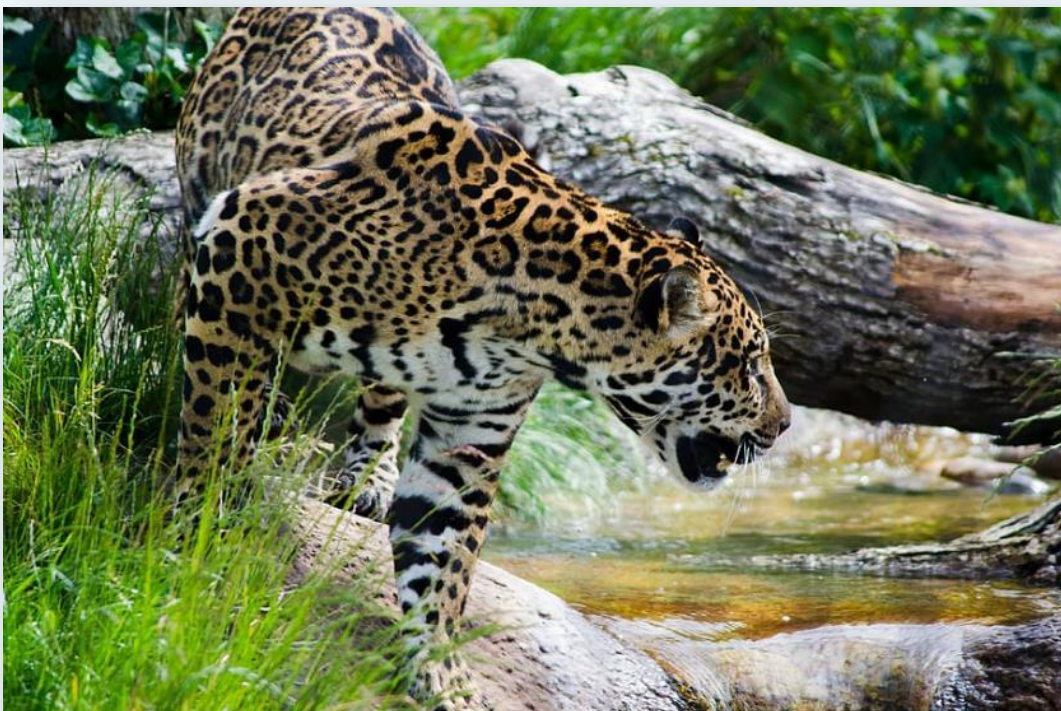


Jaguar teeth offered to ELI's team © ELI

3. JAGUAR TRAFFICKING IN BOLIVIA

The jaguar is listed on CITES Appendix I and is classified by IUCN as 'near threatened'. Numerous recent journalistic and academic reports highlight a surge in jaguar trafficking in Bolivia. Scientists have different estimates about the size of the global jaguar population. A study by De la Torre et al (2018)^{xvi} estimated the global population of jaguars to be 64,000 individuals, while Jędrzejewski et al (2018)^{xvii} estimated there are 173,000 (138,000±208,000) jaguars left in the wild, mostly concentrated in the Amazon basin. For Bolivia, their estimate is 12.000 jaguars. Bolivian expert Angela Nuñez and other experts consider this number elevated and the real number to be lower.

Angela Nuñez states: The variation in estimates about the size of the jaguar population could be due to the fact that the De la Torre et al study considered an analysis based on sub-populations, which allows the population to be assessed in more detail and avoids overestimating the overall population. The authors claim to have taken this precaution because as a species with a wide range, there is a tendency to assign them to a category that does not reflect their true conservation status, as even when their area of distribution decreases, they maintain a wide range. The higher estimate of the jaguar population by Jędrzejewski et al (173,000) is a global assessment that may reflect how the jaguar's distribution behaves rather than the estimate of the number of jaguars, the authors state that the large number of jaguars results from the large total area still occupied, almost 9 million km². Angela Nuñez personally considers the lower number for the global population to be more realistic.



Jaguar in the wild © Stan V. Peterson

3.1 Significant rise in jaguar trafficking

Analysis of seizures of jaguar parts implicating Bolivia as a source country has shown a significant rise in jaguar trafficking since 2012. Between 2014 and 2016 an estimated 337 fangs were seized in Bolivia (equivalent to 85 jaguars). The Bolivian postal service, ECOBOL, discovered these 337 fangs in 16 packages headed for China^{xviii}. A report delivered by the Bolivian Minister of Environment and Water at the beginning of 2018, indicates that these cases were awaiting the assignment of a Prosecutor. However, information is not always consistent. When the State Prosecutor's Office and the Prosecutor's Office of the Department of La Paz sent a specific request (PIE) enquiring about the packages containing jaguar fangs, the answer was that there are no open criminal cases. The current status of these processes and the whereabouts of the 337 pieces of jaguar fangs are unknown. In addition, in 2015 a Chinese citizen was arrested at Beijing airport for trafficking 119 jaguar fangs from Bolivia. These confiscated fangs added to 304 fangs seized until early 2019 (6 cases) make a total of 760 fangs that have been seized. To date the location of the seized fangs is unknown. It is worth noting that of the 6 cases mentioned, one in particular (185 confiscated fangs), ended with a final sentence, however, the fangs were not delivered, despite having been requested by the National and the Departmental Competent Environmental Authority^{xix}



Jewellery from jaguar teeth © ELI

Remarkably, since January 2019 there have been no seizures of jaguar parts in Bolivia. The emergence of new routes and trafficking methodologies is likely to play a role here^{xx}. An overview of seizure data (up to 30 January 2018) collected from open sources can be found in the 2019 IUCN NL study.^{xxi}

3.2 New roads

As is the case elsewhere in Latin America, infrastructural developments in Bolivia are a key factor driving wildlife poaching. Chinese-related market forces associated with the supply side of the chain and socioeconomic factors like corruption and income, are related to the jaguar parts seized.^{xxii} Newly constructed roads are opening up the forest to poachers, while the influx of workers, specifically Chinese nationals, in infrastructure and mining industries, often creates new demand for bushmeat. Some engage directly in poaching themselves as well.

In Bolivia, there is a highly controversial plan to build a new highway through Bolivia's Isiboro Sécuré Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS). From the evidence collected to date, the highway as proposed will inevitably prompt a rise in the hunting and trafficking of increasingly rare and vulnerable wildlife.

A never-released study written by an offshoot of the Bolivian government's Forestry Service predicted that for every mile of paved roadway, up to six square miles will likely be deforested for a new agricultural frontier based mainly on coca. The report furthermore predicts that the highway will lead to an increase in illegal logging and will take its toll on the park's animals and wildlife habitat^{xxiii}.

3.3 Chinese demand

Bolivian media have suggested that the surge in jaguar trafficking is related to the recent influx of Chinese companies involved in large development projects by the Bolivian government, resulting in opening up previously inaccessible wilderness territory and providing new sources of consumer demand.

Open-source research indicates that since 2013, Chinese individuals living in Bolivia have started buying jaguar parts (fangs in particular) and smuggling these to China, sometimes helped by Bolivians. Adverts aired on local Bolivian radio stations, as well as posters and flyers, distributed in rural areas, have requested jaguar parts for sale. Angela Nuñez, a biologist specialising in wildlife conservation and management, has alerted the international media of her belief that - due to the growing trade links between Bolivia and China - a large number of Chinese citizens are promoting illegal jaguar hunting and creating illegal trafficking networks. This analysis was validated through statistical analysis by Morcatty, et al. 2020 in a study conducted at a regional level^{xxiv}

In 2017 local radio station Radio Red Patria Nueva in San Borja openly broadcasted an add in which they offered to buy 'tiger' fangs, 'preferably large and clean'.

Several Bolivian governmental agencies responsible for wildlife protection have stepped in to address the emerging threat. The Dirección General de Biodiversidad y Áreas Protegidas of the Ministerio Medio Ambiente y Agua has instigated 14 criminal proceedings against eight Chinese citizens and two Bolivians. Criminal charges were brought against a Bolivian woman who encouraged the hunting of jaguars through social media, and against two people who promoted the sale of wild animal parts on the radio) and offered money in exchange for "tiger fangs."^{xxv}



Jaguar skull and teeth shown to ELI's team © ELI

3.4 American tiger

The jaguar suffers a double threat: jaguar fangs and parts are trafficked per se, but also as substitutes to tiger canines due to their very large size. In Mandarin, Chinese refer to jaguars as "American tigers" as they don't have a specific word for jaguars.

Reduced availability of tiger parts in Asia, combined with growing demand in East and South East Asia and the increased Chinese presence in Latin America, may have come together to create a "perfect storm", resulting in the surge in jaguar trafficking to China.

This is reminiscent of the ivory and rhino horn poaching crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. Rapidly increasing demand in China inspired Asian nationals in Africa to set up sophisticated schemes to traffic ivory and rhino horn to East and South East Asia, taking advantage of weak governance, corruption, and poverty.

Within a decade of the market opening up, systematic, industrial-scale poaching decimated African elephant and rhino populations. This analogy serves as a stark warning showing the speed at which a species can be brought to the brink of extinction once a consumer market opens for their parts.

The profit margins certainly provide incentive: jaguar canines sell for around US\$ 100-200 apiece in Bolivia, while a large canine can be sold for over US\$ 1,500 in China and Vietnam, where they are used in jewellery.

3.5 Challenges in fighting jaguar trafficking

Although Bolivia has legislation in place for the protection of its wildlife and the issue of jaguar trafficking is on the radar of the key government agencies, an effective response is hindered by inadequate law enforcement capacity; a multi-layered government structure which hinders effective collaboration; corruption; and poorly controlled, porous land borders and airports through which systematic wildlife smuggling occurs.

Excerpt from meeting with Pol 8B and 18B on corruption:

Investigator (I): How to pass the custom?

Pol: You need bribe someone. We do not bribe the custom, but the police officer, with higher level (2 stars).

I: By post?

Pol: No. We Fujian people has tried.

I: Container?

Pol: Yes. Possible.

I: Have you tried?

Pol: I did not try, I just sent it to Brazil, there are more trading companies there. You can easily smuggle it to Brazil or Peru.

Also, according to Pol 18B: many Chinese companies managers and workers like to buy teeth to bring back to China and he sometimes also used jaguar parts like teeth or penis to bribe these officials to get some construction contracts."

There is conflicting data available on the extent of illegal jaguar trafficking in Bolivia. There are about 34 known cases of illegal trafficking of jaguars, both live animals and their parts, as well as cases where illegal hunting and trafficking is promoted. Of these 34, only 5 have been sentenced. Two cases are serving 3 years in prison, while the other three are serving alternative sentences^{xxvi}.

Of the 16 cases of shipments to China (see 3.1), 12 were known to authorities and reported as in the process of being assigned to the Prosecutor's Office. On further investigation, the reports of the State Prosecutor's Office claimed that as opposed to the previously reported 12 cases, there were no open criminal cases documented^{xxvii}. This conflicting data and reporting is a challenge when fighting jaguar trafficking in Bolivia.

4. CRIMINAL NETWORKS BEHIND JAGUAR TRAFFICKING IN BOLIVIA

From 2018 to 2020 ELI conducted information-gathering and investigative operations in Bolivia, targeting both the Chinese and local communities. The focus of the intelligence-led operations was to unveil the central nodes, mechanisms, and structure of the entire criminal supply chain, with a bottom-up – top down approach focusing on the illegal wildlife goods providers, the traders, the transporters, and the sellers in China. The intelligence ELI gathered so far not only offers a good overview of the major aspects of jaguar trafficking in Bolivia but also provides a solid base to develop further investigations in multiple directions.

4.1 **Sophisticated criminal networks**

ELI's investigation found that Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) Groups are driving the procurement and trafficking of jaguar parts in Bolivia. Transnational Organized Criminal (TOC) **Groups** are self-perpetuating associations of individuals who operate by illegal means and unlawful schemes to obtain economic gains, irrespective of geographical areas of operation.

The networks ELI identified in their investigation display various indicators of such organised crime groups as identified in the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC). These include:

1. Existence of a structured group of three or more persons acting in concert for the aim of committing one or more serious crimes [...] to obtain a financial benefit^{xxviii}.
The networks identified are composed of many individuals. The individuals form groups, which appear "structured", as per UNTOC definition: the groups appear well established, non-random and members have roles attributed to them (albeit not "formally defined")^{xxix}.
2. These criminals make use of bribery and collaborative links. Some have diverse business activities including legal commodities and business operations (such as restaurants, shops, etc.)
3. The criminal activities (jaguar trafficking) are transnational as they occur in multiple locations, stretching from source sites in Bolivia to consumer markets in China, with criminal actors operating in multiple jurisdictions.

4.2 **Key findings**

A summary of the main findings is set out below. All findings are backed by evidence provided in the Confidential Intelligence Brief (CIB) produced by ELI and available for law enforcement:

Through their investigation, ELI was able to identify 25 Persons of Interest (PoI) in Bolivia and more than 50 Persons of Interest in other Latin American countries, including Peru and Suriname. Offenders are often aware of the risks associated with jaguar smuggling and of the tightening of controls over the past years. All the individuals involved stressed how caution is vital when dealing with this business. However, the demand is still high, and the profits to be made outweigh the risk.

Jaguars are poached for their meat, teeth, bones, skin, penis and testicles. In China, jaguar parts are attributed as having medicinal power and the genitals are perceived as being an aphrodisiac. Jaguar parts,

such as fangs or penises, are used by managers of Chinese companies to bribe officials and secure construction contracts.

The price of jaguar fangs in China (but sold as a tiger) is up to ten times the price paid in South America. The price for teeth encapsulated in pendants is even higher.

As well as being sold for parts, ELI uncovered evidence of two restaurants in Santa Cruz serving jaguar meat. The price of jaguar meat highly depends on the restaurant and is usually cheap.

The Chinese people involved in the sale of teeth are not the same as those dealing with the sale of meat. Therefore, it looks like there are different groups specialised in either body parts or meat.

After making initial contact the team members were invited to follow-up meetings where the sellers would show some of the merchandise. Generally, sellers do not carry a lot of goods with them, nor do they stock them in plain sight or in places of immediate access. ELI's team were shown hundreds of jaguar teeth for sale, physically as well as on phones and WeChat accounts. The fangs are often used in jewellery, pendants made from jaguar fangs are used to symbolise social status. One of the persons of interest explained that in general, bigger teeth are preferred over smaller ones, as the teeth have to be carved.

Jaguar fangs are often used as a replacement for tiger teeth, whose demand and price are very high. This was confirmed by various sources, including a PoI who sometimes talked about the jaguar calling it a 'tiger'.



Jewellery from Jaguar teeth © ELI

Local contacts all refer to Santa Cruz but also to the Beni department as an important trafficking hotspot, with specific reference to San Borja, Rurrenabaque and Riberalta

Investigative activities in other Latin American countries show that, like in Bolivia, the jaguar trade is run by Chinese residents often residing in remote regions. Santa Cruz is mentioned as the main hotspot for jaguar trafficking in Bolivia. Contacts also indicated San Borja in the Beni department, northern Bolivia.

ELI found that top traders in Bolivia supply to sellers in China, or have links with wholesalers and stockists in mainland China. Others supply to Chinese second-level sellers in South America, who then run their portion of the trade. Most of the Chinese traffickers run legitimate activities alongside the jaguar trade using restaurants or shops, which they own, they mix the illegal money with the money generated by their legitimate activities. ELI's primary source on this in Bolivia (PoI 9B) confirmed this is how he operates. Locals (Bolivian nationals) act mostly as hunters or are involved in sourcing jaguar parts. However, some of them can act as middlemen, sourcing jaguar teeth in fellow Bolivians' homes and then selling the teeth directly to Chinese first buyers or other Asian middlemen.

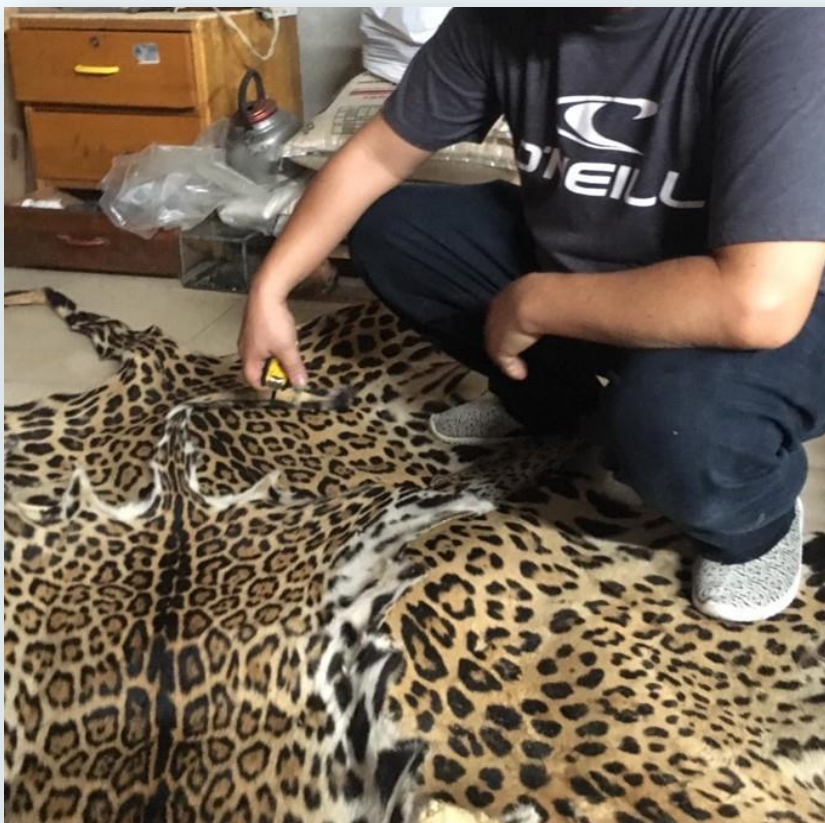
Customers are all Asian, with the majority being Chinese nationals.

The type of illegal jaguar products offered by Asian (mostly Chinese, but also one Taiwanese and one Malaysian Chinese) traders to a large extent depend on the demand from mainland China, often coming from China's business elite.

The networks ELI identified in their investigation display various indicators of transnational organised crime groups. The investigation identified at least 3 criminal groups in Bolivia that are involved in jaguar trafficking. The key PoI identified by ELI has solid fully functioning networks that allow them to smuggle jaguar parts without major issues as well as every sort of illegal goods from South-America to mainland China. The criminal groups seem to be autonomous, however, their activities might cross, or the dealers might decide to work together or help each other when possible.

A so-called “**Putian Gang**”, would have a role in controlling the trade. Most probably it also controls the cocaine business and market to the Bolivians. This would be the South-American branch of the Fujian Mafia. ELI’s PoI 8B said that *the Chinese mafia (which he calls the “Putian Gang in Bolivia”) has underground casinos, runs money laundering activities and runs the cocaine business in Bolivia.*

The preferred means of transport is by plane, with individuals carrying the jaguar parts in pieces of luggage or on their bodies whenever possible. Traffickers often bribe high-level police officers to get support in passing the borders. Illegal goods are most often smuggled via transit points to the final destination in China, in order to avoid direct routes or airports with stricter controls. Popular transit points are Brazil, Vietnam and Hong Kong. In some instances, ELI found that international shipping services were used. Payments can be done in cash OR via WeChat (if the person is in China).



Seller showing pelt © ELI

4.3 Recommendations

Based on the investigations, our on-going work in Bolivia in the context of Operation Jaguar as well the findings from our 2019^{xxx} study, we recommend the following actions be taken to tackle jaguar poaching and trafficking in Bolivia.

We recommend that the central and departmental governments of Bolivia:

- Enhance the detection and interdiction of poaching and trafficking of jaguars and other wildlife by allocating sufficient financial – and human resources to relevant law enforcement agencies, ensuring they receive adequate training and providing the necessary tools and infrastructure to strengthen their capacity to control and monitor information and collaborate on wildlife crime;
- Enhance the prosecution and sentencing of jaguar trafficking and other wildlife crimes by allocating sufficient resources to prosecutors’ offices and courts in order to sensitise prosecutors and judges. This could include setting up specialised environmental crime branches in the prosecutors’ offices and courts;
- Promote information sharing and collaboration with neighbouring countries as well as with China in order to reduce cross-border smuggling and disrupt criminal networks operating transnationally;
- Seek collaboration with the Chinese embassy in La Paz and enlist their support in engaging the Chinese communities and - companies in Bolivia with the aim of disincentivizing participation of Chinese individuals in the purchase and trafficking of jaguar and other wildlife parts and products. This can be done through social media campaigns targeting social media such as WeChat;
- Promote a study to estimate the jaguar population and identify key corridors and key sites for conservation outside protected areas;
- Support the conservation of jaguars and other threatened wildlife species in Bolivia by protecting key habitats from encroachment, mining and infrastructure projects that impact on the integrity of and connectivity between nature conservation areas;
- Implementation of the Jaguar Action Plan (see text box page 9).

We recommend that international organisations, including INTERPOL, UNODC and WCO:

- Provide technical support to the government of Bolivia (including through the training of law enforcement agencies and sensitisation of prosecution and judiciary services) in order to enhance Bolivia’s criminal justice response to poaching and trafficking of jaguars and other wildlife.

We recommend that civil society organisations in and outside Bolivia:

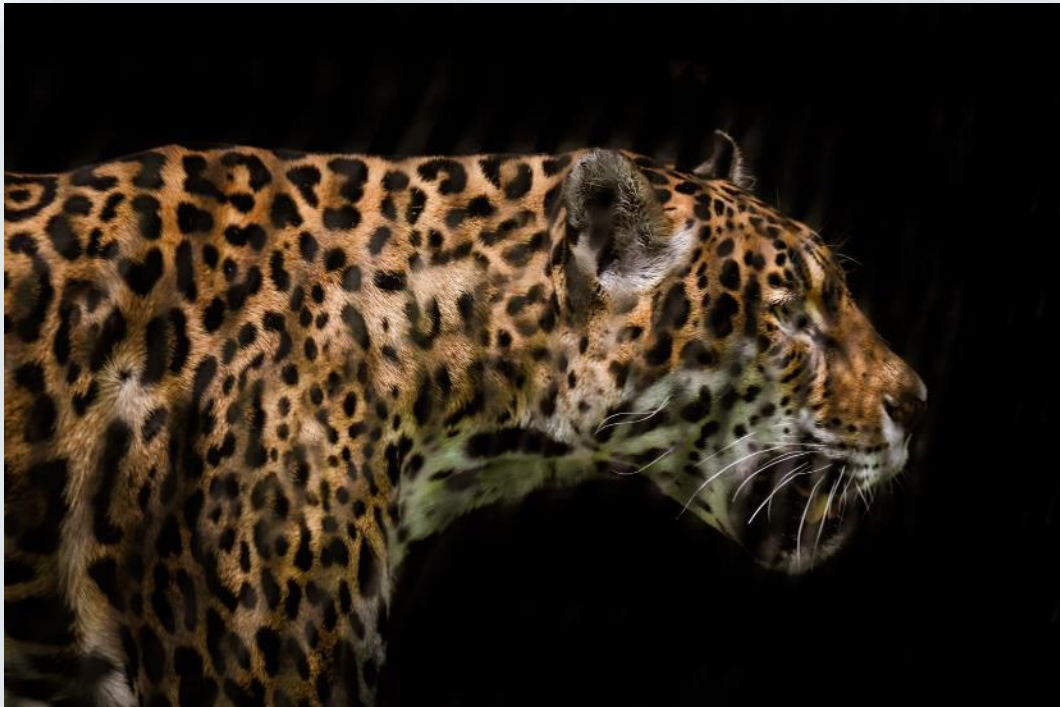
- Provide technical support to the government of Bolivia in order to enhance Bolivia’s criminal justice response to poaching and trafficking of jaguars and other wildlife;
- Providing training as well as pertinent information about wildlife crimes in Bolivia obtained through research and investigations, can help accomplish this;
- Help to reduce human-wildlife conflicts and increase tolerance for, and co-existence with, wild jaguars by engaging local communities raising awareness, improving livelihoods and giving

communities an interest in protecting jaguars and other wildlife, by establishing ecotourism projects for example;

- Conduct awareness raising campaigns about the ecological - and cultural relevance of jaguars for relevant target audiences, including the general public, rural communities, hunters and Chinese communities in Bolivia;
- Support and/or conduct further research into the dynamics of poaching and trafficking of jaguars and other wildlife (including to identify drivers, hotspots and impacts) and the role of human-wildlife conflicts in the illegal trade to implement targeted responses to these crimes;
- Support and promote joint approaches and collaboration between relevant stakeholders in Bolivian society, including government agencies, local community associations, youth groups, scientists, civil society organisations and media to address the various drivers of wildlife crime.

We recommend that public and private donors:

- Provide financial support to the government of Bolivia and international organisations in order to enhance Bolivia's criminal justice response to poaching and trafficking of jaguars and other wildlife;
- Provide financial support to efforts by civil society organisations to address jaguar and other wildlife poaching and trafficking as recommended above;
- Engage with cattle farmers and together with governments, explore possible compensation mechanisms for affected cattle farmers.



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5. ABOUT

5.1 About Earth League International (ELI)

Earth League International (ELI) is an innovative non-profit Los Angeles-based organization that merges the worlds of intelligence, investigation, research and conservation in service of wildlife, forests and oceans, and the people who protect it. ELI's team and network of collaborators include professionals who have been working in the intelligence and investigation fields for decades, mostly for top governmental agencies, including the FBI and the CIA, crime analysts, cyber experts, and Asian undercover investigators

ELI applies an intelligence-led approach in running operations, including in the cyberspace, manages dozens of sources around the world, and undertakes the collection and analysis of information on illegal wildlife supply chains, including the modus operandi of businesses and criminal networks that are perpetrating and profiting from environmental crime. ELI also produces public reports and Confidential Intelligence Briefs (CIBs) that are shared with selected and trusted agencies and organizations that are in a position to either prevent environmental crime or disrupt the criminal networks. It supplies its extensive skills and combined experience to a variety of crime-related environmental emergencies and has been operating in Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the last 5 years. ELI also manages the world's first wildlife crime whistleblowing initiative, WildLeaks.

5.2 About IUCN NL

IUCN NL is the Dutch national committee of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the world's largest and most diverse environmental network. IUCN harnesses the experience, resources, and reaches of its 1,300 member organisations, uniquely composed of governments, civil society organisations and business, and the input of some 10,000 experts.

Within the international IUCN umbrella organisation, IUCN NL helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges such as biodiversity loss, climate change and poverty. Nature is fundamental to addressing these problems. Natural capital is the foundation of our economy and our wellbeing. It provides us with food, clean water, fresh air, energy, medicine and a roof over our head. That is why the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems is at the heart of IUCN's mission.

IUCN currently has 38 Netherlands-based member organisations. In striving towards a sustainable future we work closely with these members and our network of companies, governments, southern NGOs and scientists, sharing knowledge and expertise, executing concrete projects and influencing the political agenda. We focus on four themes: nature conservation; climate, water & food; environmental justice and green economy.



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