



PRESS RELEASE

Tiger Poachers and Wildlife Traders Sentenced in Sumatra

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This week in Rengat town of Riau province, Sumatra, Indonesia, five members of an illegal wildlife trade syndicate were convicted for poaching and illegal trade in the endangered Sumatran tiger. The defendants Sudirman, Mat Hakim, Rahmad Hidayat, Herman bin Jame and Chanal were sentenced to a total of six years in prison and given fines amounting to 70 million Rupiah (US\$ 7,750). With this sentence a strong message is sent out to others involved in illegal wildlife activities across Indonesia.

According to Moh. Haryono, chief of Bukit Tigapuluh National Park in central Sumatra, the court in Rengat has delivered a just sentence considering the seriousness and organised nature of the crime. "Among the perpetrators Mr. Sudirman in particular is a repeat offender, having previously poached a tiger from the park and escaped". Haryono added that "the prosecution represents the first proper use of Conservation Law No. 5/1990 in this particular region of Sumatra."

The tiger poaching and illegal trade network was uncovered by elaborate anti-poaching and intelligence operations of the Department of Forestry and Sumatran Tiger Conservation Program, operating across Riau and Jambi provinces of Sumatra.

In January 2004 informants reported the death of two tigers in the national park. Investigations by local police, park rangers and Tiger Protection Units identified how tigers had been poisoned by local poachers and quickly sold on through a network of middle-men. Undercover work, involving informants posing as potential buyers, subsequently lead to the arrest of four more traders. Long-term intelligence suggests that at least 60 wild tigers have been sold through this network over the last 10 years.

Waldemar Hasiholan, manager of the Sumatran Tiger Conservation Program, reported, "This success signifies the prosecution of suspects that have been active for many years, and is a momentous victory for the Department of Forestry's Bukit Tigapuluh National Park management, local police, the justice department and STCP". He went on to add that, "although ranger patrols and Tiger Protection Units have had

an obvious deterrent effect on poachers, we recognise that effective intelligence and law enforcement is critical to reduce market demand by directly hitting trade at its roots. With that goal, nothing can be more effective than this kind of result”.

The prosecution occurs on the back of a 2004 report by TRAFFIC, which challenged the Government of Indonesia to crack down on illegal trade in Sumatran tigers and protect the remaining 400-500 wild individuals. “Let this result be evidence that Indonesia is committed to halting poaching and illegal trade of wildlife,” stated the Director General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation, Koes Saparjadi. “All the recommendations made in the 2004 TRAFFIC report have been our official policy for years, and we take our responsibilities seriously.”

“Nobody is above the law, and we continue to implement a specialised program to tackle tiger and wildlife crime in accordance with recommendations made by the international CITES Standing Committee and its Tiger Mission,” added Daniel Sinaga, Tiger and Wildlife Crime advisor to STCP.





This novel strategy, led by the Department of Forestry’s Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation, with support from The Tiger Foundation (Canada), Sumatran Tiger Trust (UK) and ExxonMobil’s Save The Tiger Fund, involves close collaboration between wildlife and law enforcement agencies, intelligence gathering, a national database, and technical advice and training for prosecutors and justice departments in the handling of wildlife crime. The program represents a major breakthrough in bringing together both Governmental and non-governmental resources in a collaborative war against poachers and the black-market in wildlife products.

Testament to growing conservation awareness within the legal system, chief prosecutor of Rengat town in Riau province, Pangkat Purba, stated in reference to the recent prosecution that, “the heavy sentence was delivered with regards to the extremely endangered and protected status of the tiger in Indonesia”. He elaborated, “The example of the extinction of the Bali and Javan tigers is an important lesson for us all. We are concerned that the Sumatran tiger will suffer the same fate if we don’t consistently punish those responsible for its demise.”

Meanwhile, Mr. Koh Soegiyanto, the sixth defendant and alleged final buyer of the bones and pelts in Jambi city, is still awaiting conviction following provision of additional evidence relating to his involvement in the trade in pelts of the equally endangered clouded leopard.

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Fact sheet

- The **Sumatran tiger** (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*) is critically endangered according to the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature), with only 400-500 individuals surviving in the wild. It represents the last surviving subspecies of tiger in Indonesia. More information at www.5tigers.org/AllAboutTigers/Subspecies/sumatran.htm.
- **Primary threats** to the Sumatran tiger include habitat loss, poaching for the illegal trade in skins and traditional medicines, decline in prey species due to hunting, the limited extent and high fragmentation of protected areas, and often fatal conflict with humans.
- **Bukit Tigapuluh National Park**, established in 1995, is situated in the provinces of Riau and Jambi on the Island of Sumatra and is 143,000 Ha in size. The park is an important watershed and a prime example of highly diverse lowland tropical rainforest. An estimated 40-50 Sumatran tigers survive in the park and surrounding forests, in addition to the rare Golden Cat and Clouded Leopard.
- **Sumatran Tiger Conservation Program** is a collaborative program of the Indonesian **Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation, Ministry of Forestry**, The Tiger Foundation of Canada and the Sumatran Tiger Trust of the UK. Its focus is intensive anti-poaching patrols, illegal trade investigation, remote camera monitoring of tigers and their prey, management support of priority national parks, national policy development, public awareness and on-the-ground facilitation of locally initiated tiger conservation efforts. 
- **The Tiger Foundation** is a Canadian, 100% volunteer-staffed conservation group exclusively devoted to the preservation of wild tigers. It has been supporting the Sumatran Tiger Conservation Program and predecessor project in Indonesia since 1996, and has also been active in combating tiger poaching and habitat loss in India since 2000 (www.tigers.ca). 
- The **Sumatran Tiger Trust**, British registered charity No. 1082186, has supported conservation activities in Sumatra since 1997. With 0% overhead and a volunteer staff, it seeks to maximise its resources in working with Indonesian authorities to implement creative and bold measures to conserve Sumatran tigers in the wild (www.tigertrust.info). 
- The **Save The Tiger Fund** is an ExxonMobil sponsored grant-awarding body, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (USA), providing support for tiger conservation efforts around the world. 

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