



Environmental Investigation Agency

Corruption in Wildlife and Forest Crime

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EIA collects, analyzes, documents and shares information

BRIEFINGS,
REPORTS
AND FILMS

DESK BASED
RESEARCH

FIELD
INVESTIGATION

HISTORICAL AND
CONTEMPORARY
INFORMATION

Intelligence on the illegal Asian big cat trade, People's Republic of China, 2012 (CONFIDENTIAL - not for public distribution)

In 2012, a team of professional investigators from the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) visited PEI China and conducted targeted covert investigations into the illegal trade in Asian big cat parts and derivatives. This builds upon similar activity during back to 2004. Since 2004, confidential briefings detailing investigation findings have been distributed to a range of authorities in India, Nepal and China, including through the CITES Secretariat and INTERPOL.

The information contained in previous and current briefings is not intended for use as evidence or submitted into any judicial process. EIA's intention is to demonstrate the kinds of information which may be generated through targeted, covert operations, which is hoped may assist the relevant authorities in planning their own separate investigations. EIA visited Lhasa in Tibet Autonomous Region, Linxia in Gansu Province and Xining in Qinghai Province. All these locations are known trading hubs and have been previously visited by EIA on a number of occasions. EIA obtained audio-visual evidence supported by corroborating information which demonstrates that the illegal trade in Asian big cats is ongoing. EIA engaged with traders encountered during previous investigations, and additionally with traders not previously encountered, who were identified through profiling methods.

Methods of intelligence gathering and investigation
Since 2007, the trade in Asian big cat parts and derivatives has become increasingly clandestine. Whilst illegal trade occurs, products are now rarely displayed openly.

About EIA
EIA is an independent, international Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) committed to investigating and campaigning against environmental destruction. Since 1988 EIA has pioneered the use of undercover techniques to gain evidence of environmental crime and abuse. Current areas of work include wildlife trafficking, illegal logging, climate change and disposal of hazardous waste. EIA has produced this confidential briefing to build upon provision of briefings in previous years.

EIA's team is comprised of experienced investigators who use open questioning techniques to engage traders and elicit information. Covert audio and video equipment is used to evidence cases of illegality. Investigators identified and prioritised premises through profiling, including through screening premises using night or thermal wildlife products and camera traps with traders. Additionally, investigators re-visited individuals and premises which had been identified as actively trading during previous investigations. Investigators adopted a flexible approach to engagement, depending on local and historical circumstances and risk. In some instances, it was impactful for investigators to engage multiple traders, given that traders can operate in close proximity or could potentially be associates.

BELOW Leopard skulls and tiger skin on sale in Western China, 2012 © EIA



Intelligence on the illegal tiger trade - briefings from 2012 11

















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