



Elephant  
Action  
League

# THE WHITE GOLD OF JAHAD

The 2010-2012  
groundbreaking  
investigation  
into al-Shabaab's  
link to ivory  
trafficking  
in Eastern  
Africa

AL-SHABAAB AND THE ILLEGAL IVORY TRADE





Elephant  
Action  
League

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**ABOUT EAL**

Founded in 2013, Elephant Action League (EAL) is a hybrid non-profit organization that merges the worlds of high-level security, intelligence and conservation in service of wildlife and the people who protect it.

EAL's Mission is to fight wildlife crime through Concrete, Innovative and Collaborative projects.

EAL is a registered nonprofit, tax-exempt charity under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

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## Qualification on Report Content

Please note that for security purposes, primarily to protect our contacts and collaborators in Kenya, we were unable to publish much of the information found in the following report before now. We are releasing further information in order to clarify a number of points and provide transcripts of some of the undercover videos taken during the investigation. The video transcripts included in this report were recorded by our investigators using an undercover audio and video device. Although most discussions were in English, some of the audio was unintelligible due to the various accents and noise surrounding the meeting locations.

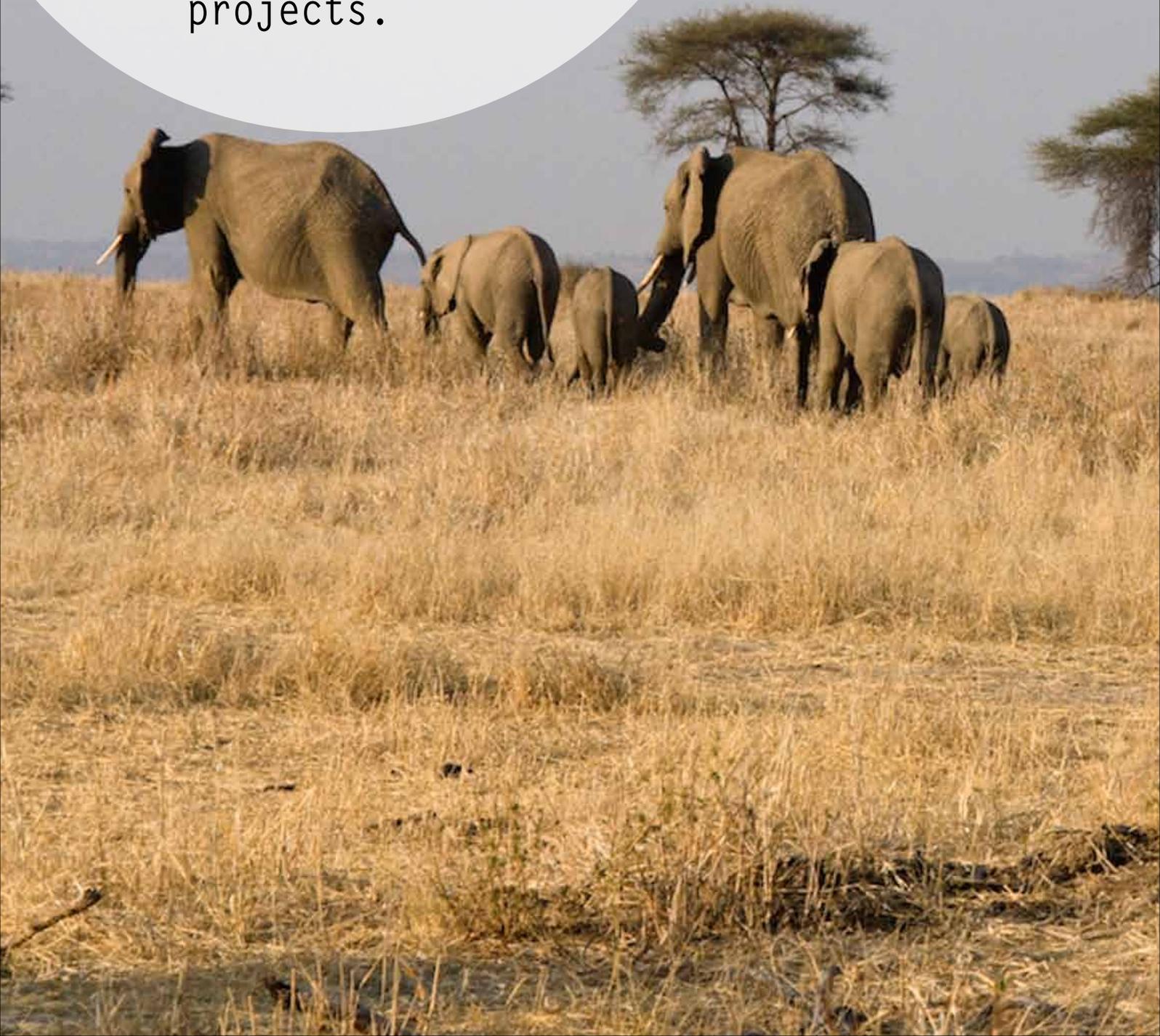
Given the expansive response to our original report on the topic of an al-Shabaab and ivory trafficking link, including the spreading of a massive amount of misinformation, we are hoping this report will put our investigation into perspective. Although we are providing more details about the investigation, certain information has been redacted or omitted in order to continue to protect our collaborators, some of whom are still active in Kenya.





## OUR MISSION

Elephant Action League  
fights wildlife crime  
through Concrete,  
Innovative and  
Collaborative  
projects.





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# Executive Summary

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In an 18-month period from 2010 into 2012, Mr. Nir Kalron and the co-founder of the **Elephant Action League** (EAL), Mr. Andrea Crosta, conducted an investigation into the use of ivory trafficking as a funding source for the Somali terrorist organization al-Shabaab. The investigation was a passion project, personally funded by Kalron and Crosta, that resulted in a now famous article released in early 2013 on the EAL website, **Africa's White Gold of Jihad: al-Shabaab and Conflict Ivory**. This original article was limited in scope due to the security of sources, but EAL is now releasing further information in this investigative report. The following report provides first-hand accounts of the involvement of al-Shabaab in the trafficking of ivory through Kenya and Somalia.



Near the town of Voi

The investigation involved meetings with Somali traders, traffickers, and other key Somali figures in Kenya from 2010 into 2012. The result was an indisputable financial trail between the illicit trade in ivory and al-Shabaab. Specifically, al-Shabaab functions as a middleman, placing orders with established African ivory brokers on behalf of end-user country agents. Based directly on the evidence gathered from this investigation, unlike other armed groups in Africa, al-Shabaab did not directly participate in the poaching of elephants. Instead, its role was that of trafficker - buying ivory from poachers or brokers, facilitating transit, and reselling it to foreign traders.

The investigators spoke with Somali traffickers based in Kenya who divulged the details of how they operate, as well as their knowledge of how al-Shabaab fits into the region's ivory supply chain. The sources confirmed that, at the time of this investigation, al-Shabaab had a single individual based in Kismayo who was responsible for placing ivory orders for the organization. This individual contacted a few primary brokers in Kenya to place regular orders. The Kenyan brokers then managed the collection of ivory from smaller, regional traffickers and poachers, and on occasion sourced ivory from other countries.

These contacts told the investigators that al-Shabaab's orders generally resulted in payment of Kenyan Shilling (KES) 3,000 per kg for the poachers (equal to approximately USD 37.50 in 2010), KES 3,500 per kg for the primary brokers, and then al-Shabaab sold the ivory for over KES 10,000 per kg to its buyers. The ivory moved across the border into Somalia at points such as Liboi in southeast Kenya, and then was escorted to the Somali ports controlled by al-Shabaab. According to the sources, up to 3 tons of ivory passed through southern Somalia ports on a monthly basis.

The monthly revenue for al-Shabaab from ivory was estimated at USD 200,000, possibly more at times. Al-Shabaab maintained an army of roughly 5,000 men in 2010, each earning USD 300 per month, which required at least USD 1,500,000 each month, meaning that ivory trafficking could have provided a large part of the group's estimated monthly payroll expense, but this percentage was fully dependent on the funds Shaabaab netted after paying brokers for the ivory.



Ivory actually played a relatively small role in al-Shabaab's total finances. Foreign funding raised through the Hawala system and Islamic "charities" with a hidden agenda, and other criminal activities, including taxation of businesses and NGOs, trafficking in drugs, arms, charcoal, and humans, and involvement in counterfeit currency, provided significantly more revenue.

This investigation was very targeted and fully substantiated by interviews with connected sources in the field. The volumes of ivory referenced by these sources were reasonable to the investigators at the time of the investigation. To be clear, though, the investigators, Kalron and Crosta, never denied or intended to deny the significance of other, far more substantial, sources of income for al-Shabaab, in particular charcoal. This investigation was simply meant to expose yet another regional player participating in and profiting from ivory trafficking in Eastern Africa.

While many conservation experts have criticized the information found in EAL's 2013 article, many others, particularly media outlets, overemphasized the importance of the same content. This report highlights the following points in response to these issues.

1. UNDOC, "Transnational Organized Crime in Eastern Africa: A Threat Assessment" (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, September 2013), <https://mrkremerscience.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/trafficking-ivory-from-east-africa-to-asia.pdf>.

- It is not unreasonable to assume that al-Shabaab was in fact trafficking illicit materials throughout the territories it controlled within Somalia prior to, during, and after this investigation.
- Between 56 and 154 metric tons of ivory originated in Eastern Africa in 2011 alone.<sup>1</sup> This, coupled with the region's unstable political establishments, could very well allow the trafficking of up to 3 tons of ivory per month by al-Shabaab.
- The fact that elephants no longer populate Somalia is irrelevant given that al-Shabaab did not directly participate in poaching. The group treated ivory as a commodity, like charcoal, and functioned as a trafficker only.
- The original article released following this investigation indicated that ivory trafficking "could be supplying up to 40% of the funds needed to pay salaries to its fighters," not 40% of al-Shabaab's total revenue.
- Although media focused heavily on the nexus between ivory trafficking and terrorism, albeit most times through somewhat inaccurate reporting, it can be argued that the publicity helped to wake up the international community to the extent of the current elephant poaching crisis.

The results of this investigation ultimately facilitated the forward movement of the narrative around a growing elephant poaching crisis back in 2013. It shined a light on the ivory trafficking link to terrorism and militarized organizations in Africa. The bottom line, though, is that elephant poaching and the illegal ivory trade is considerably multifaceted, requiring action on many fronts, of which terrorist groups are but one.

# Introduction

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2. Jeffrey Gettleman, "Africa's Elephants Are Being Slaughtered in Poaching Frenzy," *New York Times*, September 3, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/04/world/africa/africas-elephants-are-being-slaughtered-in-poaching-frenzy.html>.

Between 2010 and 2012, Mr. Nir Kalron and the co-founder of the **Elephant Action League**, Mr. Andrea Crosta, conducted an 18-month investigation into the use of ivory trafficking as a funding source for the Somali terrorist organization al-Shabaab. This was the first investigation of its kind, as al-Shabaab was not previously known to be involved in ivory trafficking.

While performing consulting services in Nairobi, Kenya, Kalron and Crosta began to pick up information about large quantities of ivory being trafficked by Somalis, either through Somalia or directly from Kenya. The fact that Somalis were involved in ivory trafficking was not new, as they have been historically linked to elephant poaching. What was unique was the alleged involvement of al-Shabaab at that time (early 2010). It was not until 2011 that the al-Shabaab link was ever mentioned in print, and then in September 2012, Jeffrey Gettleman reported more explicitly on al-Shabaab's involvement in illegal ivory trafficking in an article for the *New York Times*.<sup>2</sup> (See "Others Reporting on the al-Shabaab-Ivory Trafficking Link" discussion for further information.)



**Elephant Action League (EAL) is an innovative hybrid nonprofit organization that merges the worlds of intelligence, investigation, and conservation in service of wildlife and the people who protect it. EAL investigates wildlife and forest crime, exposes the criminals, traffickers, and corrupt individuals behind it, and helps law enforcement with information and evidence.**

## Others Reporting on the al-Shabaab-Ivory Trafficking Link

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” Several Somali elders said that the Shabaab, the militant Islamist group that has pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda, recently [prior to 2012] began training fighters to infiltrate neighboring Kenya and kill elephants for ivory to raise money.

Jeffrey Gettleman,  
Elephants Dying in Epic Frenzy as Ivory Fuels Wars and Profits, 2012

3. Maryrose Frison, “The £6bn Trade in Animal Smuggling,” *The Independent*, March 6, 2011, <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/the-1636bn-trade-in-animal-smuggling-2233608.html>.

4. Alex Shoumatoff, “Agony and Ivory,” *The Hive*, accessed July 13, 2016, <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2011/08/elephants-201108>.

5. Gettleman, “Africa’s Elephants Are Being Slaughtered in Poaching Frenzy.”

Although this report describes Mr. Kalron’s and Mr. Crosta’s investigation into possible al-Shabaab involvement in ivory trafficking through Kenya and Somalia at least as far back as 2010, there were a few others that mention this possible connection prior to the release of Kalron and Crosta’s original article. Maryrose Frison quoted an anonymous wildlife expert, indicating “There is credible evidence they [Al-Shabaab] are involved in ivory poaching and rhino trafficking. They [Shabaab fighters] know how to force-march, deprive themselves of water, and when they are told to come back with a dozen ivory tusks they do it.”<sup>3</sup> This first reference to the al-Shabaab and ivory poaching link appeared in her article “The £6bn trade in animal smuggling,” appearing in *The Independent* in March 2011. Alex Shoumatoff, in the July 2011 *Vanity Fair* article “Agony and Ivory,” briefly mentions that al-Shabaab was “coming over the border [from Somalia into Kenya] and killing elephants in Arawale National Reserve.”<sup>4</sup>

It was Jeffrey Gettleman’s *New York Times* piece in September 2012 that more fully identified al-Shabaab as a true player in the illegal ivory trade in Eastern Africa. Along with identifying other militant groups using ivory trafficking to fund their armies, such as the LRA and Janjaweed, Gettleman heard from several Somali residents that al-Shabaab was training poachers and encouraging Kenyan villagers to source tusks for them. A former Shabaab “associate” indicated that the organization promised to “facilitate the marketing” of ivory across the Kenya-Somalia border and through the then Shabaab-controlled port of Kismayo.<sup>5</sup>

Due to safety concerns, Kalron and Crosta did not report their primary findings until early 2013, but the results of their investigation coordinated well with that reported by Gettleman.

Early in 2010, the investigators began picking up chatter about significant quantities of ivory being trafficked through Somalia with purported involvement of al-Shabaab. Given the novelty and unexpected nature of this information at the time, they decided to launch a personal investigation into al-Shabaab's connection to ivory trafficking through Somalia.

This 18-month investigation was a passion project personally funded by Kalron and Crosta. By using the network they had built and then going undercover in Kenya, they managed to collect first-hand accounts of al-Shabaab links within the Eastern Africa ivory trafficking supply chain. The investigation uncovered a sophisticated network of poachers, small and major brokers, and informants, all directly involved in the illegal ivory trade. The investigators worked with informants and sources across the border into neighboring Somalia and were able to confirm a direct connection between the brokers and al-Shabaab. According to these inside sources, the Shabaabs were actively, at the time of this investigation, buying and selling ivory as one source of income for their military operations.

In early 2013, the investigators published, on EAL's website, a brief summary of this investigation's findings in their now famous article, **Africa's White Gold of Jihad: al-Shabaab and Conflict Ivory**. The sensitive information gathered during the investigation was held for a year, other than certain information shared with a few trusted security agencies, primarily due to safety concerns for contacts and lack of media interest. Sadly, the media interest only came about after al-Shabaab's Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi, Kenya, on September 21, 2013.



EAL is now able to release further information about this investigation and the involvement of al-Shabaab in the trafficking of ivory through Kenya and Somalia. Now, in 2016, it is an established fact that poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking, especially ivory and rhino horn, has been a source of funding for various militias and terrorist groups including, but not limited to, al-Shabaab, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) of Joseph Kony, and Darfur's Janjaweed militia. The complex international ivory trade, primarily fuelled by Chinese demand, is also known to involve militant elements from the Congo, South Sudan, and Uganda.

#### Tsavo National Park

The following report provides an account of the investigation performed by Kalron and Crosta during an 18-month period from 2010 into 2012. The results of that investigation are applicable to that period of time only and do not imply that al-Shabaab has necessarily continued to participate in, and profit from, ivory poaching and trafficking.

Although the investigative team was able to gather compelling evidence that al-Shabaab functioned as a facilitator for the trafficking of ivory through Kenya and Somalia, the investigation was by no means complete. Due to a lack of additional manpower and, more importantly, the additional funding required for a comprehensive investigation, the investigators were not able to follow all leads. It was hoped that others would pick up the investigative threads associated with al-Shabaab's involvement in and income from ivory trafficking beyond 2012.

# Background: 2010-2012 Timeframe

## Elephant Poaching Hitting its Peak in 2011

During the time of this investigation, extraordinary levels of elephant poaching were taking place. In 2011, poaching levels were at the highest since the monitoring of trends in illegal killing of elephants began in 2001. Similarly, the seizure of large shipments of ivory hit an all-time high in 2011, indicating an increasingly active, profitable, and well-organized illegal ivory trade.

6. T. Milliken et al., "Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention Species Trade and Conservation - Elephants - Monitoring of Illegal Trade in Ivory and Other Elephant Specimens - ETIS REPORT OF TRAFFIC" (TRAFFIC International, March 2013), <https://cites.org/eng/cop/16/doc/E-CoP16-53-02-02.pdf>.

7. George Wittemyer et al., "Illegal Killing for Ivory Drives Global Decline in African Elephants," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111, no. 36 (September 9, 2014): 13117-21, doi:10.1073/pnas.1403984111.

8. Milliken et al., "Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention Species Trade and Conservation - Elephants - Monitoring of Illegal Trade in Ivory and Other Elephant Specimens - ETIS REPORT OF TRAFFIC."

9. UNEP et al., "Elephants in the Dust - The African Elephant Crisis, A Rapid Response Assessment" (UNEP, 2013), [https://cites.org/sites/default/files/common/resources/pub/Elephants\\_in\\_the\\_dust.pdf](https://cites.org/sites/default/files/common/resources/pub/Elephants_in_the_dust.pdf).

10. UNDOC, "Transnational Organized Crime in Eastern Africa: A Threat Assessment."

11. Ibid.

12. Lucy Vigne and Esmond Martin, "China Faces a Conservation Challenge: The Expanding Elephant and Mammoth Ivory Trade in Beijing and Shanghai" (Save The Elephants and The Aspinall Foundation, 2014)

The African Elephant Database maintained by the IUCN/SCC African Elephant Specialist Group estimated that elephant numbers decreased from approximately 550,000 in 2006 to 470,000 in 2013.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, 2009 through 2012 represented four of the five highest volume years for illegal ivory trafficking according to TRAFFIC's Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) data. More specifically, illegal killing rates were estimated to average approximately 6.8% between 2010 and 2012, which equates to an average of 33,630 elephants killed per year based on 2012 estimates of the total elephant population in Africa.<sup>7</sup>

In 2011, almost 40 metric tons of illegal ivory was seized worldwide, which equates to the tusks of approximately 4,000 elephants.<sup>8</sup> Based on the assumption that seized ivory generally only represents about 10% of total ivory trafficked, at least 400 metric tons of ivory was moving through the supply chain in 2011 alone.

CITES MIKE (Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants) data indicated that an average of 7% of the 140,000 strong elephant population of Eastern Africa was killed in 2011.<sup>9</sup> This would equate to approximately 9,800 elephants or 98 metric tons of ivory originating from Eastern Africa in 2011.<sup>10</sup> At an estimated market price in Asia of USD 850 per kg in 2011, and with at least two-thirds of ivory supply going to Asian markets, the value of two-thirds of 98 tons of ivory was approaching USD 55.8 million in 2011.<sup>11</sup> It is important to note, though, that Eastern Africa is one source of illicit ivory, but it is arguably equally important as a transit region.

Of late, the demand for ivory is still substantial and the market price for raw ivory in Asia is averaging USD 1,100 per kg, down from a high of USD 2,100 per kg in 2014.<sup>12</sup> For most poachers and ivory brokers, it is a simple matter of money. The desperate political and economic situations in many African countries perpetuate poaching as one of the most lucrative criminal activities available. However, this would not be the case without a still prosperous ivory market in Asia.

## Al-Shabaab and the Geo-Political State of Kenya & Somalia (2010 - 2012)

13. Christopher Harnisch, "The Terror Threat from Somalia: The Internationalization of Al Shabaab" (AEI Critical Threats, February 12, 2010), [http://www.criticalthreats.org/sites/default/files/pdf\\_upload/analysis/CTP\\_Terror\\_Threat\\_From\\_Somalia\\_Shabaab\\_Internationalization.pdf](http://www.criticalthreats.org/sites/default/files/pdf_upload/analysis/CTP_Terror_Threat_From_Somalia_Shabaab_Internationalization.pdf).

14. Ted Dagne, "CSR Report for Congress - Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace," August 31, 2011, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33911.pdf>.

15. Harnisch, "The Terror Threat from Somalia: The Internationalization of Al Shabaab."

16. Katherine Zimmerman, "Somalia Conflict Maps: Islamist and Political | Critical Threats," AEI Critical Threats, May 31, 2010, <http://www.criticalthreats.org/somalia/somalia-conflict-maps-islamist-and-political#islamist>.

The geo-political situation of Kenya and, more importantly, Somalia, was much different at the time of Kalron and Crosta's investigation than it is now. As a result, this section has been included to provide the context within which the investigation was performed.

Al-Shabaab, translating to "the youth" in Arabic, traces its roots to the militant wing of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), an Islamist political movement that rose to power in Somalia in 2006. A U.S.-backed Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in December 2006 toppled the ICU. While the ICU leaders fled, younger members, 'al-Shabaab,' remained and rapidly consolidated power as the dominant insurgent force in Somalia. By mid-2007, the leaders of al-Shabaab emerged and the ties with Al-Qaeda became apparent. The group began issuing threats against the U.S. in 2008, professing an ideology resembling that of al-Qaeda.<sup>13</sup> They pledged allegiance to bin Laden and viewed itself as part of the global jihad led by al-Qaeda. In February 2008, the U.S. designated al-Shabaab as an official Foreign Terrorist Organization.<sup>14</sup>



By 2010 and into 2011, al-Shabaab controlled much of southern and central Somalia, including the port cities of Kismayo and Merca and large portions of the capital, Mogadishu (see Figure).<sup>15</sup>

Map of Somalia as of May 31, 2010<sup>16</sup>

17. AEI Critical Threats Project, "Operation Linda Nchi | Critical Threats," December 2011, <http://www.criticalthreats.org/somalia/operation-linda-nchi>.

18. Harnisch, "The Terror Threat from Somalia: The Internationalization of Al Shabaab."

Al-Shabaab's presence in southern Somalia was negatively affecting Kenya's tourism industry and increases in pirate attacks in the Indian Ocean were very costly for its shipping industry.<sup>17</sup> As a result, Kenya launched an offensive operation against al-Shabaab in Somalia codenamed "Operation Linda Nchi" (Operation Protect the Nation) on October 16, 2011. By mid 2012, al-Shabaab had suffered major setbacks. On September 28, 2012, the group lost its operational and financial center, Kismayo, but the group was not defeated.<sup>18</sup> Al-Shabaab continues to have an operational reach that covers the Horn of Africa.

## The Investigation

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The investigation involved the investigators meeting with Somali traders, traffickers, and other key Somali figures in Kenya from 2010 into 2012. The result was an indisputable financial trail between the illicit trade in ivory and al-Shabaab. Specifically, al-Shabaab functions as a middleman, placing orders with established African ivory brokers on behalf of end-user country agents. Based directly on the evidence gathered from this investigation, unlike other armed groups in Africa, al-Shabaab apparently did not directly participate in the poaching of elephants. Instead, its role was that of trafficker - buying poached ivory, facilitating transit, and reselling it to foreign traders.

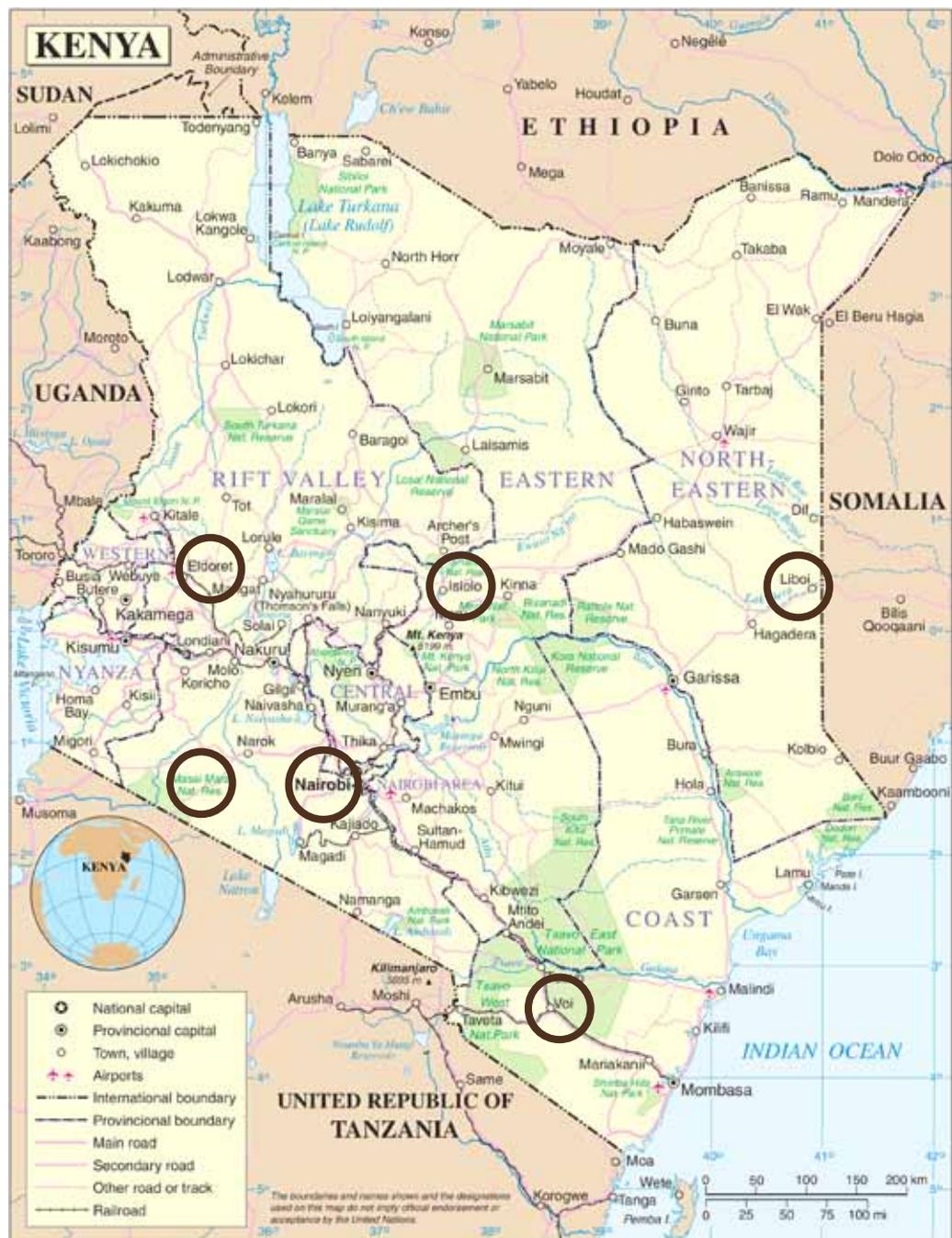


The video transcripts included in this section were recorded by Kalron and Crosta using an undercover audio and video device. Although most discussions were in English, some of the audio was unintelligible due to various accents and noise surrounding the meeting locations. Additionally, some sections of conversation have been omitted for security purposes.

According to the sources interviewed by the investigators, it usually starts with a phone call from a 'big broker' representing an end-user country in Asia or the Gulf states to al-Shabaab's designated ivory salesman. It then continues with his call to a 'big broker' in Kenya, invariably of Somali origin. An order for ivory is placed in metric tons and a price is fixed. Next, the Kenyan broker contacts regional brokers and sets a timetable for delivery. The regional brokers in turn contact poachers or venture out to kill elephants themselves. To adequately fill these orders, the brokers sometimes reached out to additional agents smuggling ivory from countries as far away as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR), where the chances of being caught were slimmer compared with Kenya.

## The How

Crosta and Kalron's first encounter with Somali traffickers was at a hotel in Kenya's capital, Nairobi. A trusted contact of the investigators reached out through his Somali network and identified a member of his own sub-clan who knew Somalis engaged in poaching in the area around Isiolo in eastern Kenya. These two Somali traffickers divulged the details of how they operate, as well as their knowledge of how al-Shabaab fits into this particular supply chain. According to these contacts, one of the primary traffickers was a Kenyan businessman, named Ali Ahmed Mohamed, from Isiolo. He functioned as a regular contact for Shabaab's emissaries, receiving and coordinating regular ivory orders.



MEETING IN NAIROBI, KENYA WITH TWO SOMALI BROKERS - Sources A & B

*Sources: The other thing...for example, they contact the broker, we want 2 tons...of ivory. Usually whenever they want they contact the broker, we want...2 tons, something like that, of ivory. And then the broker will go to different places; they know each other, to collect all the ivory. They go to [unintelligible]...*

*Investigators: Wait, give us the names*

*S: Eldoret, Samburu, Masai Mara, Voi.*

*I: And when you say they collect...al-Shabaab...the brokers collect?*

*S: Al-Shabaab will contact whenever they have a deal, they contact the brokers and tell we want that quantity. The broker [conversation with partner in Somali], the brokers there are two types, the broker within the country, in Isiolo or something like that, and there are international brokers, they have their own vehicles, they have...everything, and then they collect all the goods from different parts of the country - Sudan, Congo.*



Undercover footage:  
Mr. Crosta with two  
Somali sources

These sources confirmed that, at the time of this investigation, al-Shabaab had a single individual based in Kismayo who was responsible for placing ivory orders for the organization. This individual contacted a few primary brokers in Kenya to place regularly scheduled orders. The Kenyan brokers then managed the collection of ivory from smaller, regional traffickers and poachers. The investigators were told that ivory was a new source of income for al-Shabaab at this time. Prior to this, the Shabaab was not involved, not fully aware of the income potential of ivory trafficking, or simply did not need the income.

TRANSCRIPT FROM MEETING IN NAIROBI, KENYA - Continued

*I: OK. I have a question: when you say Shabaab contacts a broker, OK?*

*S: The big broker*

*I: The big broker, I understand, but I want to understand, when you say al-Shabaab contacts the big broker, you mean al-Shabaab's leadership or ten different al-Shabaab groups and each of them works on its own?*

*S: Al-Shabaab, they have a good administration, they have their own administration, when al-Shabaab wants ivory one person is responsible for all the thing.*

*I: Ah wow. Where is this administration, in Kismayo?*

*S: The administration is in Kismayo, not Ras Kamboni, is in Somalia.*

*S: After he [individual responsible] gets the deal from the ship he contact the big broker. After he contact him the broker will arrange...That man will come and...will say tomorrow will be something.*

[Portions of conversation redacted for security purposes.]

*I: And they use an Internet café? That what you got it?*

*S: Yes, yes, in Kismayo...The man in charge of the Internet café is from [unintelligible]*

*I: He's a Shabaab man.*

*S: And then...this person, the deal, he contact the big broker, and the big broker will contact all small brokers, and then they will arrange from different parts.*

TRANSCRIPT FROM MEETING IN NAIROBI, KENYA - Continued

S: They take ivory to [Bur Hogor] Doblin, on the border with Kenya and Somalia, they meet, then there is no-man land between Kenya and Somalia, there is no-man land. Not belong to Kenya and not belong to Somalia.

I: Is where the American did the attack?

S: Yes, the attack. And then they travel back to Somalia [unintelligible] after there is a broker to other countries, there are ships, Korean, Iran, and these ships, in Somalia we have something called [unintelligible]...

I: Piracy?

S: Piracy. There are many warships who are there in that sea, but they have to come to shore...sometimes from these ships they come to town. Yes they come to town. Shabaab sells it [ivory] for double, double the money...

I: [Portion redacted due to security.] They sell it for double the money?

S: Double the money. And then they charge...first...they charge from Kenya to their place, the transport, from Kenya to Somalia... [unintelligible] for the transport of these products...

I: They charge the brokers for the road? For the transportation?

S: Transportation, security, through port...[unintelligible] ... and then... after... usually they have their own scale, to weight the ivory.

I: Who has the scale?

S: From the ships. They come with their own scale.

I: OK, so one kg of ivory, they charge how much?

S: One kg per ivory [unintelligible and brief conversation in Somali], from the border per kilo, 3000 Kenyan shillings. And then...

I: Sorry, who get this 3000? The poacher?

S: The poacher, yes. 3000 to 3500. Second will be for the brokers. The broker gets 5000. [conversation in Somali]...the third hand is al-Shabaab.

I: How much? So the brokers gets 5000. Al-Shabaab pays them 5000, takes the ivory.

*S: Al-Shabaab takes more than 10,000.*

*I: From the Chinese?*

*S: Yes.*

*I: So from the Chinese, Korean...they get more than 10,000-11,000 per kilo? So they make a profit up to 6,000 per kilo, Kenyan Shillings.*

Sources A and B also discussed the fact that poachers and/or brokers tended to stockpile ivory, indicating that poaching was a continuous task regardless of when orders were received. Stock was generally stored in the bush, in holes or huts, as more sophisticated poachers were constantly on the hunt for ivory. The ivory would be held for brokers until they received an order from Shabaab or other agents.

#### TRANSCRIPT FROM MEETING IN NAIROBI, KENYA - Continued

*I: ... the organization keeps asking ivory then sells it, or, before they ask for the ivory to the big broker, they need an order, from somebody? An ongoing buying of ivory regardless if they have an order or not, they buy, they buy and then they wait for an order, or they contact the big broker in Kenya only after they get an order?*

*S: ...usually they contact the big broker when they get...go ahead from that and that international dealer...and then they contact the broker, I have 5 tons (the deal), something like that, for example, how many of this you can [unintelligible]? And the broker will say, I can do in...a measure of time...[unintelligible]...when you get the thing. You understand me?*

*I: Yes, so, the second question was, when they say, ok, they ask for 2 tons, 5 tons, and they go around in Eldoret, Isiolo, Masai Mara, it means that every time they have to activate the poachers, new killing of elephants, it's not ivory under the...old ivory.*

*S: [conversation in Somali] These poachers, every day, every time, this is their business. Whenever they have an order or whenever he doesn't have, they usually continue killing, collect.*

*I: Oh, stockpile, regardless?*

*S: Regardless. As soon as receive an order, after that, the broker will contact the small brokers, after that, if they get the stock that they need, and load it. If there will be is some missing, that time will usually contact with different countries like Sudan, Congo...we have a shortage of...we need more. [conversation in Somali] when they transport from Sudan or Congo, they usually use oil trucks...from Mombasa to Congo or Sudan. After they come back*

*empty, they usually load the ivory in the tank.*

*I: Fuel tank?*

*S: No, they are now empty, after they coming from Sudan or Congo to Mombasa, they usually cut the tusk in small, small pieces, and then they load, they open the tank, the fuel tank.*

*I: Ah, they bring fuel to Sudan, they come back...*

*S: When they are coming back, it's coming empty and then it takes these goods...they can transport whatever and nobody ...see it.*

*I: And these are of course the brokers.*

*S: [they joke about having just given away a trade secret, they*

*hope we will not talk around about it, it will hurt their business].*



The investigators wanted to better understand how these ivory traders were able to traffic the ivory through borders, and

Undercover footage through what borders (other than Kenya), without being caught.

#### TRANSCRIPT FROM MEETING IN NAIROBI, KENYA - Continued

*I: But...I understand that...let's use Sudan as an example, also Congo, I understand in Somalia there's a sort of no-man land so for al-Shabaab it's easy to control.*

*S: They control near the border*

*I: Exactly, but what about Sudan and Congo, who are the...you know on the border?*

*S: [conversation in Somali] In Sudan it's Southern Sudan. In Southern Sudan they don't know this issue, they don't have [unintelligible] they don't have investigators who usually are after these poachers, the poachers can do whatever they want.*

*S: [conversation in Somali] Rwanda, it's very difficult from Rwanda, and Uganda, because they are very active.*

*I: Rwanda and?*

*S: Uganda*

*I: So they are good on the border*

*S: They are good on the border. Trafficking cannot be done.*

*I: So it's probably going to Burundi*

*S: [conversation in Somali] The reason why these poachers, or these brokers or these traders are using this [unintelligible] to [unintelligible] these tusks from South Sudan or Congo it's because they are afraid of Rwandan and Ugandan...*

Another group of Somali contacts provided the name of an additional large ivory trafficker with whom the investigators were able to meet. This individual, also known as Little Abdi, was also involved in the trafficking of drugs, coltan, and uranium. He indicated that he worked with embassies and specifically mentioned the Libyan and South Korean embassies, but not in relation to ivory trafficking. During the meeting with Little Abdi in Nairobi, the investigators (or for purposes of this meeting, buyers) were not only offered ivory, but also uranium with an invitation to inspect the product.

#### MEETING IN NAIROBI, KENYA WITH A SOMALI BROKER - Source C

##### Ivory and Uranium

*Sources: We trust each other, you tell me what you want, I tell you what I want...this is my work, a broker. So, I take picture... secondly, if they want I go with them, to just see, and then they take the picture, the ivory, I see the stock. They give me 200,000 dollars, and then I will do all these things with all the visitation on me. First they give me 50%. Secondly after I give all the details and they give the other 50...In that price everything is on my side, visitation, up to fly another country, some people I link up so I give other information, everything, it's like a contract, a book like this (he shows a notebook).*

*Investigators: It's like a consulting contract.*

*S: Yah, I give you the information like this, that is 200,000, you pay me 50% and I take care myself. If not, you agree on 100,000, you pay me the 50%, and the visitation on your side.*

*I: So in this case your final price will be 100?*

*S: 100, yeh.*

*I: Plus the facilitation.*

*S: The facilitation is...20,000.*

*I: And this is for the uranium...This is for the uranium or the ivory?*

*S: Both, uranium and ivory.*

*I: And if we are interested in ivory? For example? Different price? If I want to start only with ivory...*

*S: Only ivory?*

*I: Yes, maybe we want to start to have your collaboration only on ivory, to start, to begin with. Because uranium is very sensitive. Also we have to establish if we can work nice together...so let's begin with ivory. How much it will be? Because ivory is less dangerous, less...you know. So what will be the price? Only ivory, not uranium.*

*S: (conversation in Somali) In Kenya?...What you do, plus visitation, everything, 100, because that is the mostly...the one I, it's my...*

*I: Not Uranium, ivory, it's your main, it's your first business.*

*S: Yes, also that one I do.*

*S: That is not good money to me. We might even...you know I'm talking something bigger.*

*I: I understand.*

These discussions with Somali traffickers working out of Kenya show the extent to which al-Shabaab was able to, relatively quickly, build capacity within the ivory trade by utilizing this network of Somali and Kenyan, among others, ivory poachers and brokers. Al-Shabaab representatives were able to act as middlemen and facilitators without actually being directly involved in the killing of elephants. Instead, the group simply added ivory to its list of 'commodities' trafficked for profits.

*S: Like the...from (unintelligible) stone eh. And that contain certain percentage of uranium.*

*I: OK. From here they...*

*S: Congo.*

*I: Ah Congo!*

*S: Me the facilitator. That stone is mix with (unintelligible) they make mobile and computer.*

*I: Ah Coltan!*

*S: Coltan, you know? ...I license to buy it. But if doesn't have that kind of percentage of uranium you want, you not buy.*

*I: They buy the Coltan for the uranium, not the rest.*

*S: Yes. So there is many business we can do...*

## The Why

Al-Shabaab's success in holding large areas of Somalia can primarily be attributed to its ability to pay its soldiers well. Back then, a young Shabaab fighter could earn about USD 300 a month from his regional commander as a loyalty fee while also receiving food, water, khat (a local drug also known as mirrar), and weaponry supplied by Shabaab leadership. In comparison, a soldier fighting for Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG), fresh out of Kenyan or Ugandan training camps, had a hard time earning as much, forcing some to quite literally bite the radical bullet and change sides.

One source told the investigators that back then, in the provinces of Isiolo and Samburu alone, the brokers were able to collect up to 15 metric tons of ivory every 2 to 3 months (not just from Kenya, but also from Uganda and Sudan), of which approximately 60 percent was sold to al-Shabaab. The remainder went to Mombasa and Nairobi, with small quantities going to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

According to another solidly sourced Somali trader, up to 3 tons of ivory passed through southern Somalia ports on a monthly basis, a trade that potentially supplied a portion of the funds needed to pay salaries to al-Shabaab's fighters. In effect, ivory served as one lifeline for al-Shabaab's operations, supporting its grip on young soldiers, most of which were not radically motivated.



The monthly revenue for al-Shabaab from ivory was estimated at USD 200,000, possibly more. Al-Shabaab maintained an army of roughly 5,000 men in 2010, each earning USD 300 per month, which required at least USD 1,500,000 each month, meaning that its trade in ivory could have provided a large part of the group's estimated monthly payroll expense, possibly even up to 40% in the good months, but this percentage was fully dependent on the funds Shabaab netted after paying brokers for the ivory.

### KWS ranger on patrol

19. Nicolas Florquin, "Small Arms Survey 2013," 2013, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/A-Yearbook/2013/en/Small-Arms-Survey-2013-Chapter-11-EN.pdf>.

Similarly, armed assaults, such as the September 2013 terror attack on Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, are in themselves not extraordinarily expensive operations. For the period February 2011 through September 2012, the average purchase price of an AK-47 in Somalia was USD 731, with ammunition priced at USD 0.60 per unit.<sup>19</sup> Assuming there were up to fifteen attackers each carrying an AK-47 with 500 rounds of ammunition, the cost of the operation would have been about USD 15,500. At this relatively low cost, al-Shabaab attackers held the Westgate mall for 80 hours, killed 67 people, and wounded over 175 people.

It is clear, though, from these calculations and the sources, that ivory played a relatively small role in al-Shabaab's total finances. Foreign funding raised through the Hawala system and Islamic "charities" with a hidden agenda, supplemented by criminal activi-



#### Great Rift Valley from Eldoret

ties, enabled al-Shabaab to hold on to its troops and Southern Somalia, at least until Kismayo was lost in September 2012. Other criminal activities and sources of income included taxation of businesses and NGOs, trafficking in drugs, arms, charcoal, and humans, and involvement in counterfeit currency. The Taliban and Hezbollah both used similar methods, financing their costly military expenditures through criminal activities involving the production and trafficking of opiates, marijuana, diamonds, and other minerals, along with credit card scams and other illicit activities.

What becomes clear from the testimonies of these ivory poachers and brokers is that al-Shabaab did apply a degree of importance to the ivory trade and quickly incorporated it into the group's administrative processes. Shabaab's involvement in the trade may have been purely opportunistic; a result of recruiting members who previously made their living through poaching and then used their 'talents' for a new cause. The more plausible explanation, however, given al-Shabaab's organizational skill and relative military success, was that trafficking was a result of clear calculation and strategic financial planning, as well as strong contacts with international criminal syndicates and brokers.

### Response to Concerns

When the article **Africa's White Gold of Jihad: al-Shabaab and Conflict Ivory** was originally released, the investigation findings were widely circulated and generated a significant amount of interest from public and private groups, both in terms of positive feedback and cynical skepticism. One specific claim included in this article – that al-Shabaab partially funded their activities from proceeds generated by trafficking ivory – was sharply criticized by a number of individuals and organization (e.g., UNEP,

TRAFFIC, and Interpol). Unsurprisingly, subsequent investigations performed by other entities have proven this claim about al-Shabaab to be accurate, as well as the involvement of other militias and terrorist organizations in the illicit ivory trade. The results of these various investigations have become the primary rationale behind a more targeted approach to combatting this type of illicit activity by government authorities and non-governmental organizations.

Most significantly, the volume of journalists and other media that referenced the original article was extraordinary. Unfortunately, the investigation findings were misrepresented in many instances, both in scope and importance. Given that the article was relatively nuanced due to omissions for security concerns, certain findings needed to be reported within the context of the timing and purpose of the investigation. Although the confirmation of an ivory trafficking-terrorism link was relatively novel and an important facet for those combatting the ivory trade to understand, the slight frenzy created by some media outlets misrepresenting the findings tainted the outcome of the investigation to a degree.

The investigation was very targeted and fully substantiated by interviews with connected sources in the field. The volumes of ivory referenced by these sources were reasonable to the investigators at the time of the investigation. To be clear, though, the investigators never denied or intended to deny the significance of other, far more substantial, sources of income for al-Shabaab, in particular charcoal. This investigation was simply meant to expose yet another regional player participating in and profiting from ivory trafficking in Eastern Africa. Not only was al-Shabaab contributing to the decimation of Africa's elephant population, but the group was using the funds generated to support some of its operations and, by default, terrorist activity.

## Investigation Limited, But Results Meant to Instigate Further Exploration

While many conservation experts have criticized the information found in the 2013 article, others, including some government officials and media outlets, overemphasized the importance of the same content. This section will address a few of these concerns.

### ISSUE #1 – There have been no ivory seizures in Somalia, so how could al-Shabaab traffic 12 to 36 tons of ivory in a year through Somali ports?

20. CITES Secretariat, "Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention Species Trade and Conservation - Elephants - Elephant Conservation, Illegal Killing and Ivory Trade" (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, January 2016).

According to CITES, there are five African elephant range States that have never submitted ivory seizure records to ETIS (Elephant Trade Information System) in over 27 years, including Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Senegal, and Somalia.<sup>20</sup> It must be noted, though, that these countries, along with two non-reporting Asian States, collectively have been implicated in 289 ivory seizures in other countries.<sup>21</sup>

Somalia has been a failed state for decades, with no effective central government and dominated by local clans, militias, and Islamist militant groups. The country has been without a central government since the dictator Siad Barre fled the country in 1991. Civil war among regional warlords followed his departure and only in August 2000 did the first Transitional National Government (TNG) form, followed by new TNG in 2008. Both TNGs had little capacity to govern the whole of Somalia and each controlled only small regions. Mogadishu and the rest of Southern Somalia was essentially like the American wild west during this entire period and at the time of this investigation. This political and security scenario in Somalia resulted in a nearly nonexistent seizure rate of all types of illicit commodities.

21. Ibid.

22. UNODC, "Drug Trafficking Patterns," accessed July 13, 2016, <https://www.unodc.org/easternfrica/en/illicit-drugs/drug-trafficking-patterns.html>.

23. Ibid.

24. Andrea Crosta, "Mombasa Port: A Liability for Africa," **Elephant Action League**, May 28, 2015, <https://www.elephantleague.org/mombasa-port-a-liability-for-africa/>.

25. Karl Mathiesen, "Tanzania Elephant Population Declined by 60% in Five Years, Census Reveals," **The Guardian**, June 2, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jun/02/tanzania-epicentre-of-elephant-poaching-census-reveals>.

In comparison, reported heroin, cannabis, and cocaine seizures in Eastern Africa, including Somalia, were few and not reflective of the amount of "trafficking, availability and growing abuse in the region"<sup>22</sup> from 1995 through 2006. International drug trafficking syndicates easily exploited "non-existent or ineffective border (land, sea and air) controls, limited cross border and regional cooperation as well as serious deficiencies in the criminal justice systems."<sup>23</sup> UNODC specifically attributed these low seizure rates to a lack of governmental resources and international border controls "than a sign that no drugs are being trafficked through the region." The same can probably be said for the trafficking of ivory through the region.

Ultimately, there are no seizures of illicit commodities from warlords or Islamist militant groups like al-Shabaab. In fact, al-Shabaab was able to seize assets belonging to the United Nations in November 2011. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that al-Shabaab was in fact trafficking illicit materials by land, air, or sea throughout the territories it controlled within Somalia prior to, during, and after this investigation.

**ISSUE #2 – Related to Issue #1, the possibility of al-Shabaab trafficking 1 to 3 tons of ivory per month is not possible and must have been exaggerated.**

At the time of this investigation, African governments, international governmental organizations, and law enforcement agencies lacked capacity and were often unaware of the magnitude of the growth in elephant poaching and the large quantities of ivory trafficked through Eastern Africa. Especially prominent was the port of Mombasa, through which an estimated 188,170 kg (calculated assuming a 10% seizure rate) of ivory was smuggled between 2009 and 2015, as outlined in the EAL report **Mombasa Port: A Liability for Africa**.<sup>24</sup> Tanzania's government recently reported that between 2009 and 2014 over 85,000 elephants, 60% of its elephant population, were poached within its borders.<sup>25</sup> This is equal to roughly 200 metric tons of ivory smuggled each year out of Tanzania alone, often through Kenya, but also through other countries.

**During the May 24, 2012, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, entitled "Ivory and Insecurity: The Global Implications of Poaching in Africa," Senator John Kerry's**

opening remarks indicated that "Poaching is not just a security threat in Africa. It's also a menace to developing economies, and it thrives where governance is weakest. Poachers with heavy weapons are a danger to lightly armed rangers and civilians as well as the animals they target."

26. WWF, "WWF Statement on Senate Hearing on African Poaching Crisis," PRWeb, May 24, 2012, <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2012/5/prweb9543974.htm>.

27. UNDOC, "Transnational Organized Crime in Eastern Africa: A Threat Assessment."

Iain Douglas-Hamilton, founder of Save the Elephants, and John Scanlon, Secretary-General of CITES, testified during the hearing indicating "clear links between the surging illegal trade in high-value wildlife products, such as elephant ivory and rhino horn, and transnational criminal networks that are creating instability, breeding corruption, and helping to fund militant insurgencies, particularly in Central Africa."<sup>26</sup>

Again, CITES reported that between 4% and 11% of the elephant population of Eastern Africa was killed in 2011, which amounted to between 5,600 and 15,400 elephants, or between 56 and 154 metric tons of ivory originating in Eastern Africa in 2011 alone.<sup>27</sup> When taking into account this massive scale of elephant poaching and ivory trafficking

occurring in Eastern Africa at that time (and the several years preceding this investigation), coupled with the generally unconcerned and unstable political establishments within the region, al-Shabaab trafficking up to 3 tons of ivory each month could very well be a realistic estimate. Additionally, it was confirmed during the investigation that the Kenya-based brokers involved were able to source ivory from multiple countries, making this volume even more realistic.

**ISSUE #3 - There are no elephant populations in or near al-Shabaab-controlled territory.**

This is true. There are no elephants left in Somalia and not many, if any, in Eastern Kenya near to the Somalia border. As explained previously, al-Shabaab did not participate directly in the poaching of elephants, at least according to the sources interviewed during this investigation. The group treated ivory as another commodity, like charcoal, and functioned as a broker, facilitating the sale of the ivory to foreign traders.

The volume of Eastern African ivory potentially available was already discussed under Issue #2, so the fact that elephants no longer populate Somalia is irrelevant.

**ISSUE #4: There is no way that ivory trafficking produced 40% of al-Shabaab's total revenue.**

This statement is accurate. The investigators **never** asserted that 40 percent of al-Shabaab's total revenue was derived from ivory trafficking. In the article originally published in 2013, and still available on EAL's website, it was written that ivory trafficking "**could be supplying up to 40% of the funds needed to pay salaries to its fighters.**" 40 percent of total revenue of the organization is significantly different than 40 percent of base payroll.

Unfortunately, a huge number of critics, journalists, and other media commented on the article or referenced the article, without fully understanding the nuances associated with the content of the article or contacting the investigators to gather further information. Various Shabaab and terrorism financing experts fixated on the "40% of revenue" number. They tried to put a dollar value on 40 percent of total Shabaab annual revenue based on known taxation rates and the movement of both legal and illegal goods through al-Shabaab-controlled Somalia at the time of this investigation. They then tried to compare this value with the volume of ivory known or assumed to be moving from Kenya and Tanzania into Somalia. This approach to confirming Kalron and Crosta's figures was problematic for the following three reasons:

1. The "40 percent" value referenced in the article represented a percentage of estimated payroll costs for Shabaab fighters.
2. Since literally no ivory seizure data coming from Somalia, or even estimates from Kenya or Tanzania regarding ivory crossing their borders into Somalia, how can anyone dismiss out of hand that no ivory was moving through Somalia.

There was no accounting for the possibility of ivory stockpiling in various source countries that may have been sold off when the price points for ivory per kg started to increase dramatically around 2009.

28. Tom Maguire and Cathy Haenlein, "An Illusion of Complicity: Terrorism and the Illegal Ivory Trade in East Africa," September 2015, [https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201509\\_an\\_illusion\\_of\\_complicity\\_0.pdf](https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201509_an_illusion_of_complicity_0.pdf).

29. C. Nellemann et al., "The Environmental Crime Crisis – Threats to Sustainable Development from Illegal Exploitation and Trade in Wildlife and Forest Resources - Reported by UNEP and INTERPOL," A UNEP and INTERPOL Rapid Response Report (Nairobi and Arendal: United Nations Environment Programme and GRID-Arendal, 2014), <http://www.unep.org/unea1/docs/RRAcimecrisis.pdf>.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., 48.

### **ISSUE #5 - The possible exaggerated emphasis on al-Shabaab's ivory connection may have skewed international organizations, governments, and law enforcement responses away from higher priorities surrounding the illegal ivory trade.<sup>28</sup>**

This issue in particular was raised in a paper released by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in September 2015. Although much of the content in the sections criticizing the investigator's original article could be refuted, RUSI was somewhat correct in that the media created a certain amount of chaos and spread misinformation about the investigation. This issue may have had an effect on the course of some organizational or governmental policies relating to elephant conservation, although the effect may or may not have been negative.

It is evident that organized criminal networks taking advantage of governmental instability, corruption, and weak legislation and law enforcement, throughout the ivory supply chain, actually drive the illegal ivory trade. The investigator's believed that it was important to follow the lead that al-Shabaab was participating in the ivory trade in Eastern Africa regardless. Before this investigation, the notion of terrorist organizations and other militarized groups profiting from the ivory trade was not necessarily on the international radar. The results of this limited investigation were meant to expand the narrative around the growing elephant poaching crisis and the expanded range of actors involved in the trade.

Although the ivory-terrorism link is important to understand, it should not, and arguably does not, eclipse the efforts required to disable the various professional, organized criminal networks controlling the majority of the ivory supply chain.

### **More Clarification on al-Shabaab's Income Sources**

In general, most of al-Shabaab's income comes from illicit taxing and extortion, illegal trade in various contraband, as well as ex-pat financing. Much revenue comes from the illicit charcoal trade and the unofficial taxation of movement through checkpoints and ports.<sup>29</sup>

According to a UNEP and INTERPOL report, at one particular roadblock Shabaab has been able to make up to USD 8–18 million per year taxing passing charcoal traffic.<sup>30</sup> Al-Shabaab retains about one-third of the income from charcoal exports from the Kismayo and Baraawe Ports in Somalia, "which alone constitutes about USD 38-56 million per year."<sup>31</sup>

### **Terrorism and Wildlife Crime Today**

Throughout a number of African and Asian regions, armed groups capitalize on wildlife and forest crime to fuel a variety of armed movements.

- The Sudanese Janjaweed and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) poach elephants throughout Central Africa and neighboring countries.<sup>32</sup>
- Dozens of militia groups kill elephants and hippopotamuses, harvest timber, and



Ivory burn in Nairobi,  
2016

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

produce or tax charcoal, all to finance conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in neighboring countries.<sup>33</sup>

- The Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) has been accused of poaching elephants and rhinos to fund their resurgent insurgency.<sup>34</sup>
- Al Qaeda affiliated local Bangladeshi separatists and other tribal militias in India have been reported to be implicated in the illegal trade in ivory, tiger pelts, and rhino horns in Southeast Asia.<sup>35</sup>
- Al Qaeda and the Haqqani network have been accused of raising funds through timber exploitation and trade.<sup>36</sup>

“**Warlords of Ivory**,” aired on the series *Explorer* in August 2015, by National Geographic reporter Bryan Christy, shows the results of a yearlong investigation into the movement of ivory through a particular armed group. Christy designed, had made, and then passed a fake elephant tusk with a hidden GPS tracker into the hands of unknowing traffickers based in the Central African Republic. The fake ivory tusk was then tracked north to the headquarters of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony. From there, the ‘ivory’ moved north to Sudan and was “passed on to soldiers of the Sudanese army in exchange for money or weapons.” The investigation did demonstrate that ivory trafficking at least partially funds the activities of some terrorist groups in Africa.

## Concluding Statements

The investigation performed by Mr. Kalron and Mr. Crosta into a link between al-Shabaab and ivory trafficking began by being in the right place at the right time, and with a few key, trusted contacts. The results of the investigation, ending in 2012, ultimately helped to expand the narrative around the growing elephant poaching crisis, and indirectly the wildlife trade in general, and its link to terrorism and militarized organizations in Africa.

Terrorist organizations like al-Shabaab did not drive elephant poaching or the international ivory trade during the period of 2010 through 2012, but it did participate in and benefit from the trade. International political, conservation, and investigative organizations are finding that these groups continue to benefit from the ivory trade today.

The magnitude of al-Shabaab's involvement in the illegal ivory trade now, in 2016, is unknown. Occasionally, though, through the investigator's on-going field activities in Eastern Africa, information has been received about the continuation of ivory smuggling through Somalia by various entities.

It is true that some in the media and the political establishment have used the poaching-terrorism nexus as a means to motivate public and governmental concern and spur action. Hillary Clinton, addressing attendees at a Clinton Global Initiative annual meeting in September 2013, stated:

37. Rachel Steitfeld,  
"Hillary Clinton  
on Link between  
Elephants, Terrorism,"  
September 26, 2013,  
<http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2013/09/26/hillary-clinton-on-link-between-elephants-terrorism/>.

"There is growing evidence that the terrorist groups stalking Africa, including al-Shabaab with its horrific attack on the mall in Nairobi, fund their terrorist activities to a great extent from ivory trafficking ... I can't even grasp what a great disaster this is ... I hope we can act out of concern for elephants but also out of concern for the security challenges that poachers are causing for our friends in Africa and beyond."<sup>37</sup>

It is the opinion of Elephant Action League that the resulting spotlight on this type of wildlife crime was a positive outcome. Elephant poaching and the illegal ivory trade is considerably multi-faceted and requires action on many fronts – it is unlikely that the various stakeholders involved in this fight to end the ivory trade have been wrongly steered by acknowledging the involvement of terrorist organizations, in particular al-Shabaab, in the ivory trade. Ultimately, the activity of these organizations is simply one more front to be considered in the battle to save elephants.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Elephant Action League (EAL) and the authors of the investigation would like to thank the many sources in Kenya, who willingly shared contacts and information, without whom this investigation would not have been possible.

**RELEASING OF THE UNDERCOVER FOOTAGE**

EAL is not able to release undercover footage to the public due to security concerns for the lives of the sources who aided Kalron and Crosta in this investigation. Footage was shared previously with select individuals.

**CITATION**

Crosta, A., Sutherland, K., (July 2016). "White Gold of Jihad: The 2010-2012 groundbreaking investigation into al-Shabaab's link to ivory trafficking in Eastern Africa" Los Angeles, CA: Elephant Action League (EAL).

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