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Gabon makes major poaching arrests

Today 10:30 - by Staff reporter



Some of the elephant tusks that were confiscated during the bust. Source: Radio France International



Authorities in Gabon have dismantled a broad network of international ivory traffickers who smuggled ivory from Gabon to Cameroon and onto lucrative Asian markets.

The operation involved the Gabonese judicial police and government directorates of forestry and wildlife, with the support of the NGO Conservation Justice.

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In early August, police in the province of Moyen-Ogooué arrested a Gabonese man of Cameroonian origin, along with his wife.

A search of their vehicle revealed a cache of 19 tusks and four pieces of ivory, weighing a total of 120kg.

For context, 19 tusks mean at least nine elephants had been killed.

The search also led to the confiscation of several rifle cartridges used for shooting big game and nearly a million CFA francs (about Euro1 500) in cash.

Using fresh information from the suspect, the investigators were able to track down more traffickers.

A total of 10 people were arrested in separate locations, and nine of them were charged with involvement in "international ivory trafficking", according to Jean Donald Ulrich Mbadinga, a legal expert with Conservation Justice.

He said it had taken 10 days for the operation to unravel the "vast network of international ivory traffickers in Gabon".

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