In Plane Sight

Wildlife Trafficking in the Air Transport Sector

Which of the following saw the largest growth in seizure numbers between 2016 and 2017?:

a) Ivory
b) Rhino horn
c) Reptiles
d) Birds
e) Pangolins
f) Marine products
g) Mammals

Which of the following counted fewer seizures in 2017 than in 2016?:

a) Ivory
b) Rhino horn
c) Reptiles
d) Birds
e) Pangolins
f) Marine products
g) Mammals

GOAL: To disrupt wildlife trafficking by reducing the use of legal transportation supply chains.

DISRUPTING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING ALONG LEGAL TRANSPORT SUPPLY CHAINS BY

Improving Data Analytics

Engaging Corporate Leaders

Training Transport Personnel

Strengthening Policies & Protocols

Increasing Client Awareness

www.routespartnership.org

C4ADS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that leverages data and cutting-edge technologies to uncover and map transnational illicit networks, and leads Objective 1 (Data & Analytics) under the ROUTES Partnership

PEOPLE

Multilingual, well-traveled, and tech-savvy analysts

- 15+ languages in-house, including Arabic, French, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, Hindi, Swahili, etc.

- Field research in 50+ countries, including conflict zones, e.g. Somalia, Ukraine, Mali, Guatemala, and South Sudan
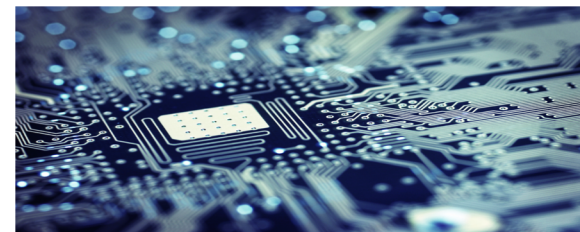
DATA

Integrated suite of "high-advantage" data for commercial investigations

- 300+ business, tax, property, shipping, and judicial registries in 120 jurisdictions, along with commercial trade, banking, and customs data

- Augmented by new data, like social media, satellite imagery, and geo-location

TECHNOLOGY

Cutting-edge, emerging technology in innovative & practical ways

- Partnerships with leading tech providers like Palantir, Windward, & Panjiva

- When we recognize a gap in currently available technology, we regularly adapt or build our own open source software to fill it

Flying Under the Radar:

- Included ivory, rhino horn, reptile, and bird seizure data
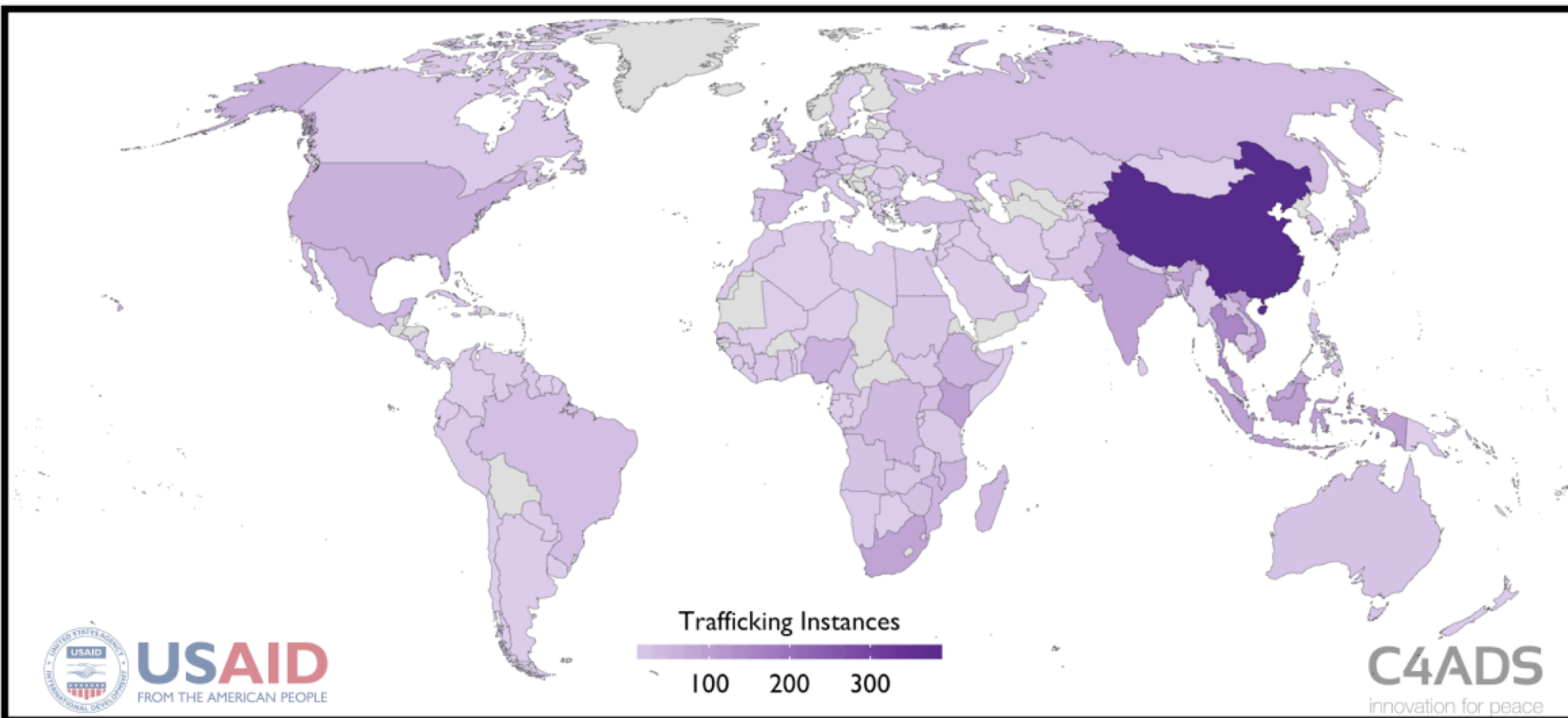- Identified trafficking hotspots, trends, and modus operandi

In Plane Sight:

- Expanded dataset includes **pangolin, marine product** (e.g. seahorses, abalone, sea cucumber), and **mammal** seizure data
- Includes analysis of seizure data from the WCO CEN (2015 – 2016) and FWS LEMIS databases (2009 – 2016)

Findings:

- Wildlife trafficking through airports is truly **global** in nature
- Generally funneled through **large, international hub airports**
- Hub airports in higher risk regions with **developed infrastructure** and **little enforcement capacity** are most likely to be **exploited**
- **Loopholes** used by wildlife traffickers can also be manipulated by traffickers of narcotics and other contraband

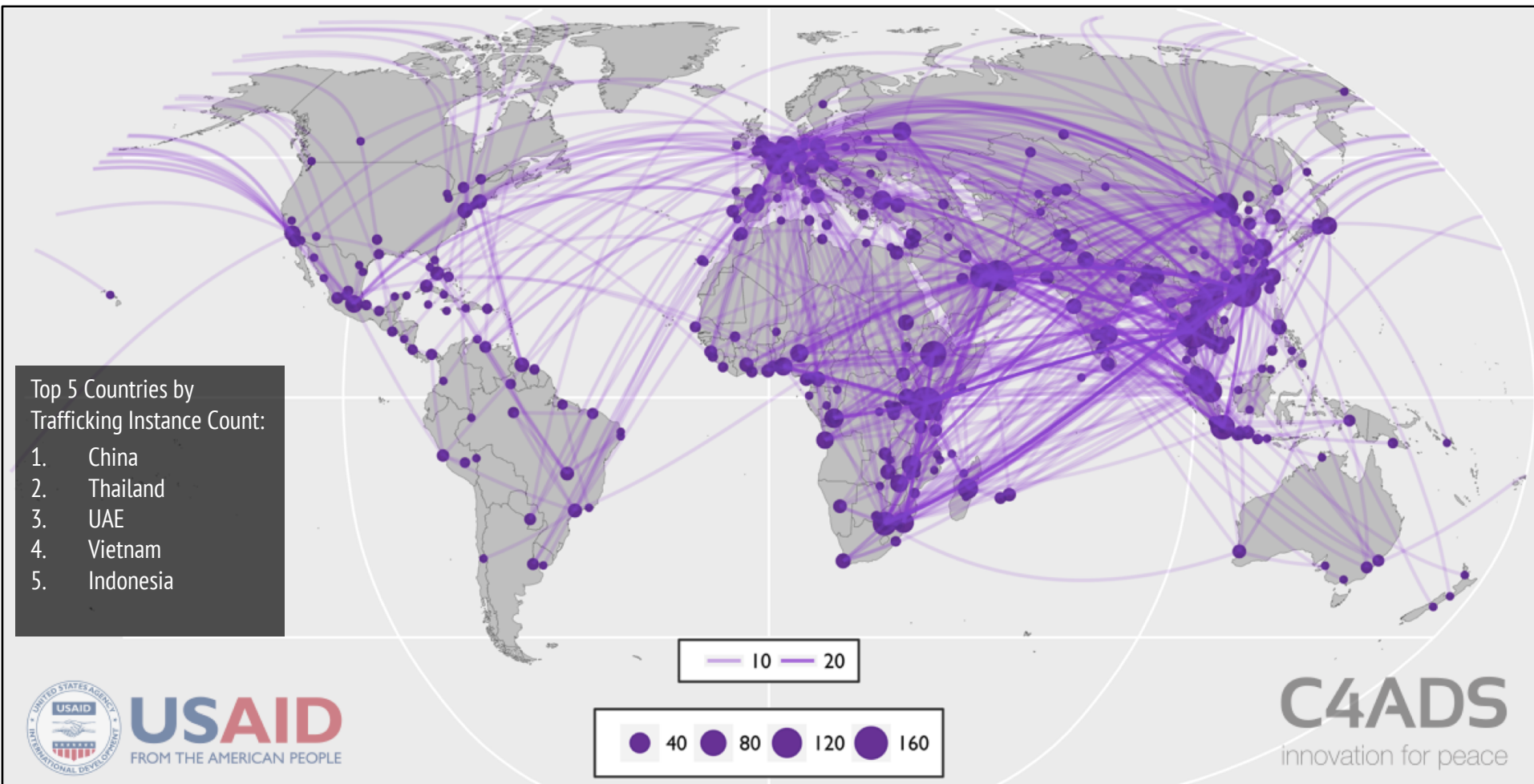# Global Wildlife Trafficking by Air

Wildlife trafficking is a truly global problem affecting not only Africa and Asia, but also the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East.

Trafficking Instances

100   200   300

Total Flight Routes

Funneled through large international hub airports, particularly those airports with frequent flights from source countries in the Southern Hemisphere to destination countries in the North.

Top 5 Countries by
Trafficking Instance Count:
1. China
2. Thailand
3. UAE
4. Vietnam
5. Indonesia

10 — 20

40 80 120 160

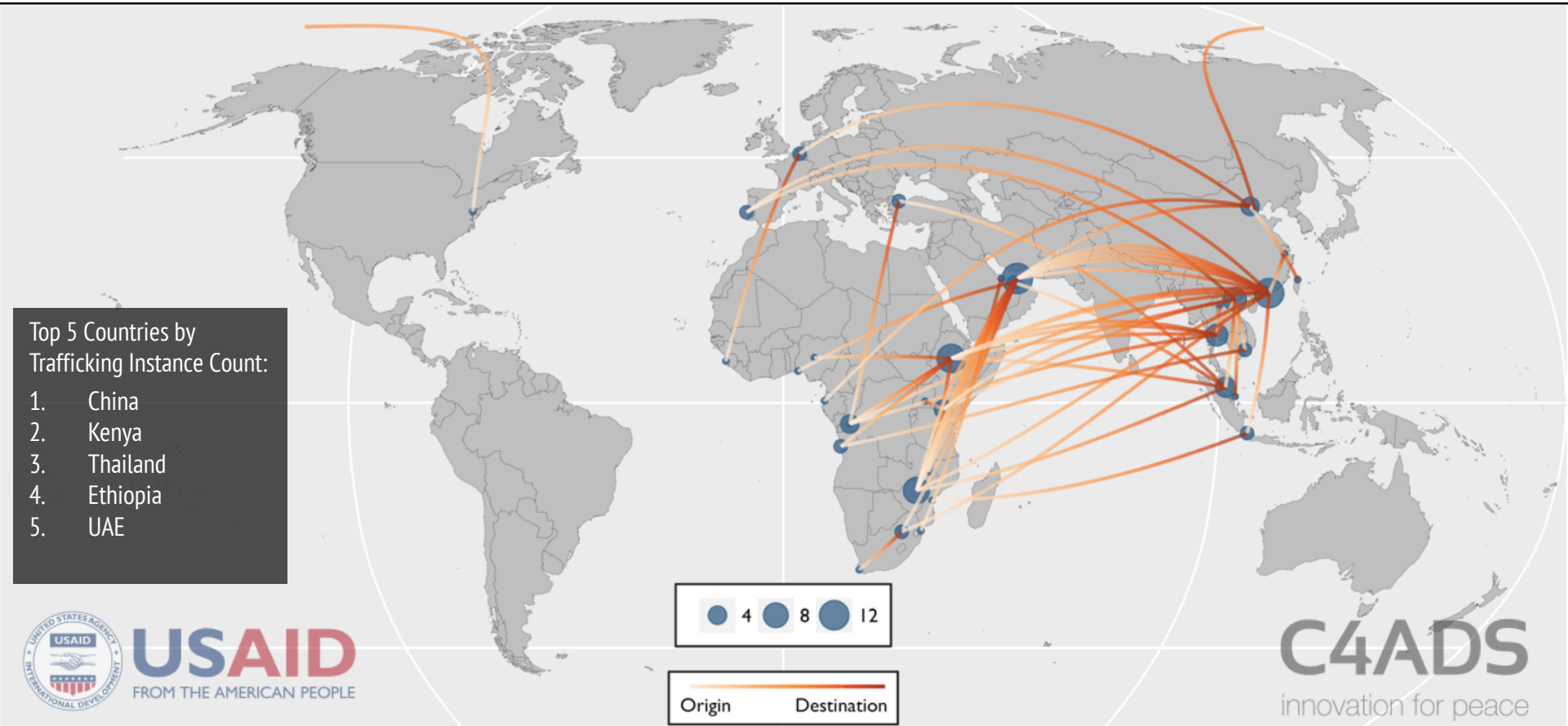Flight Routes for All Wildlife Seizures in the C4ADS' Air Seizure Database (Jan 2009 – Dec 2017)

According to FWS LEMIS data, what is the most common origin country for ivory seized on arrival in airports in the United States?:

a) The United Kingdom
b) Kenya
c) South Africa
d) Mexico

Ivory Flight Routes

Ivory and rhino horn primarily moved between Africa and Asia, often transiting through hub airports in the Middle East and Europe.

- In 2017 there was a drop in known ivory seizure numbers, continuing a decline that began in 2014.

Top 5 Countries by Trafficking Instance Count:
1. China
2. Kenya
3. Thailand
4. Ethiopia
5. UAE

4 8 12

Origin   Destination

Rhino Horn Flight Routes

Ivory and rhino horn primarily moved between Africa and Asia, often transiting through hub airports in the Middle East and Europe.

- **193% growth in rhino horn seizure numbers, primarily moving between South Africa and China (2016-2017).**

Top 5 Countries by Trafficking Instance Count:
1. China
2. South Africa
3. Vietnam
4. Mozambique
5. Qatar

Origin — Destination

Reptile Flight Routes

Reptile trafficking routes were much more diverse, some concentration in South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America.

- The majority of reptile seizures originating in Madagascar in 2017 involved either ploughshare or radiated tortoises.

Top 5 Countries by Trafficking Instance Count:
1. China
2. Thailand
3. India
4. Indonesia
5. Madagascar

● 3 ● 6 ● 9

Origin — Destination

C4ADS
innovation for peace
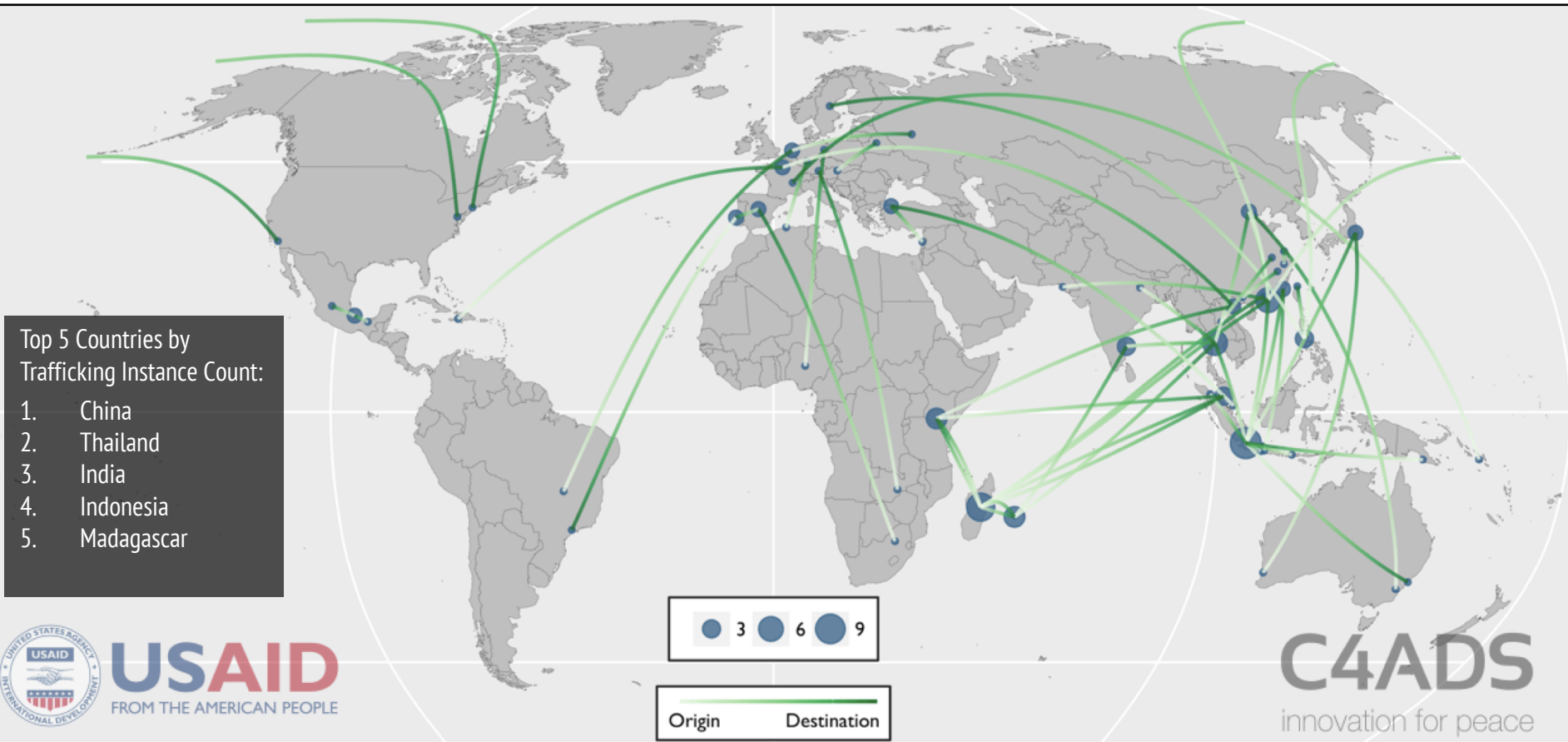
Reptile Trafficking Routes Map (2017)

Bird Flight Routes

Bird trafficking routes were by far the most diverse, primarily affected the Middle East, Europe, the Americas, and Southeast Asia.

- **The most common bird trafficking route was Mexico to Spain, likely driven by a large bird trafficking network operating out of Spain (2017).**

Top 5 Countries by
Trafficking Instance Count:

1. UAE
2. Brazil
3. USA
4. Indonesia
5. Spain
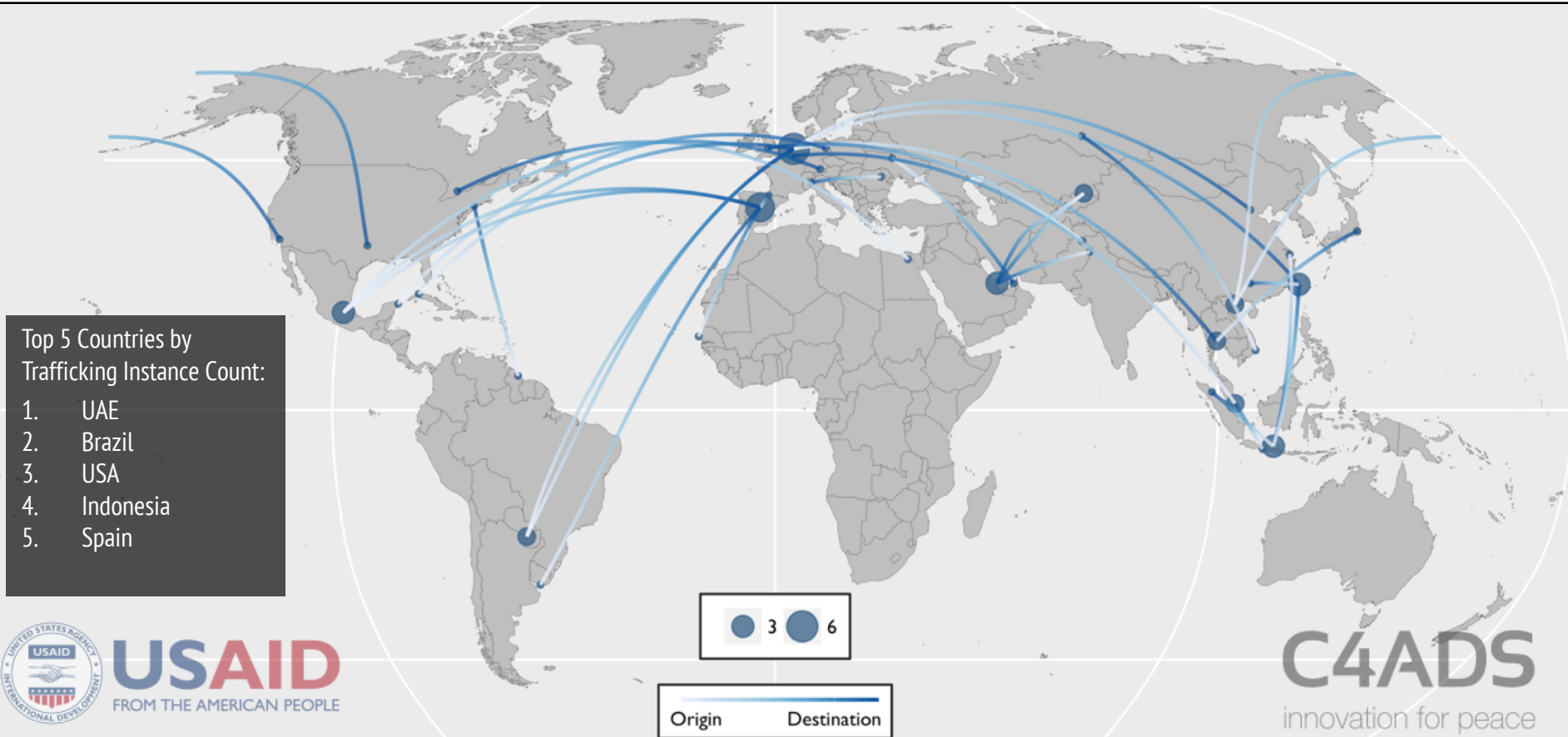
Bird Trafficking Routes Map (2017)

Pangolin Flight Routes

Pangolin trafficking routes tended to follow ivory and rhino horn trafficking routes, more concentrated in West Africa and Southeast Asia.

- Pangolin trafficking instances tend to originate in West Africa or Central or Southeast Asia (India or Indonesia).
  - Other significant regions included East Africa, Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia.

Top 5 Countries by Trafficking Instance Count:
1. China
2. India
3. Nigeria
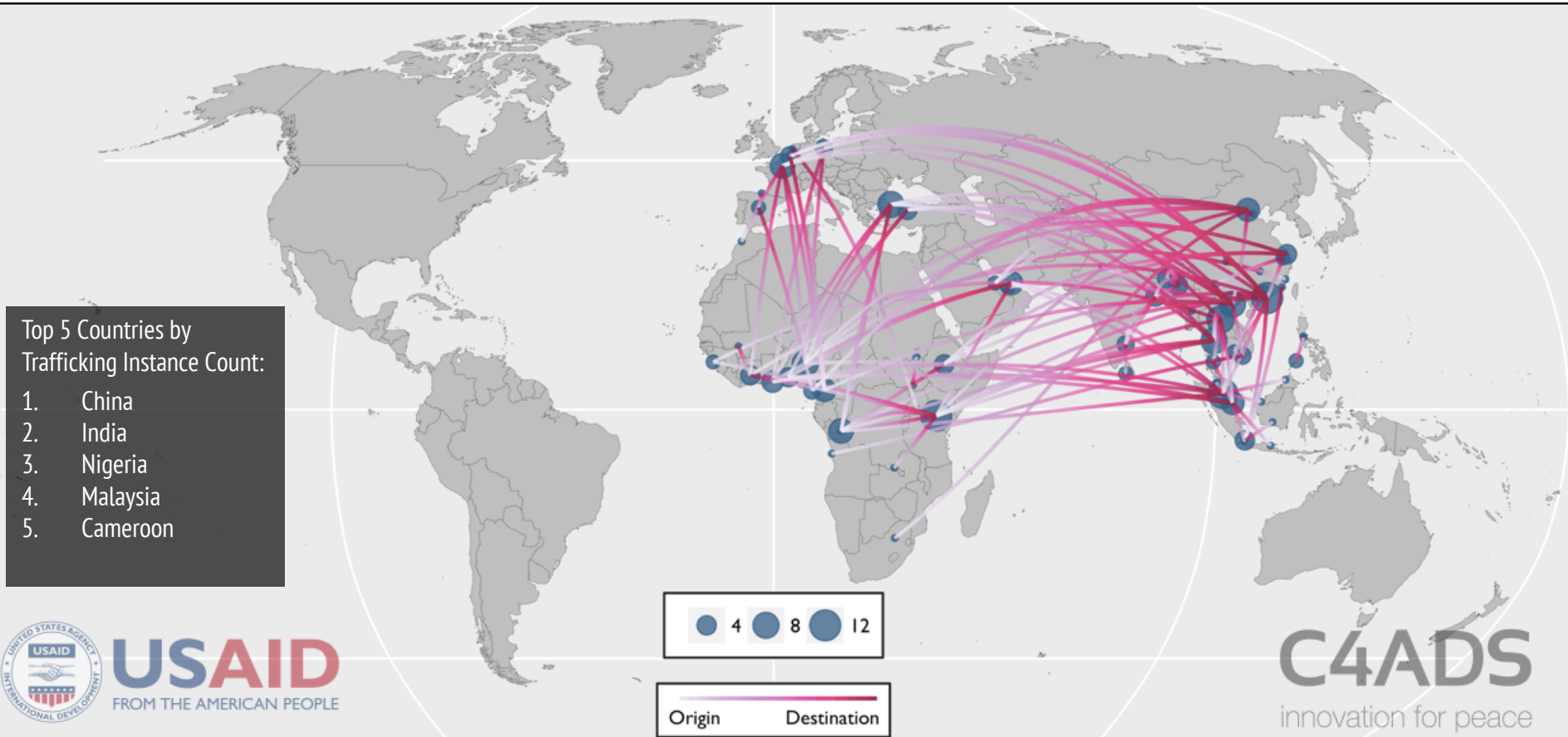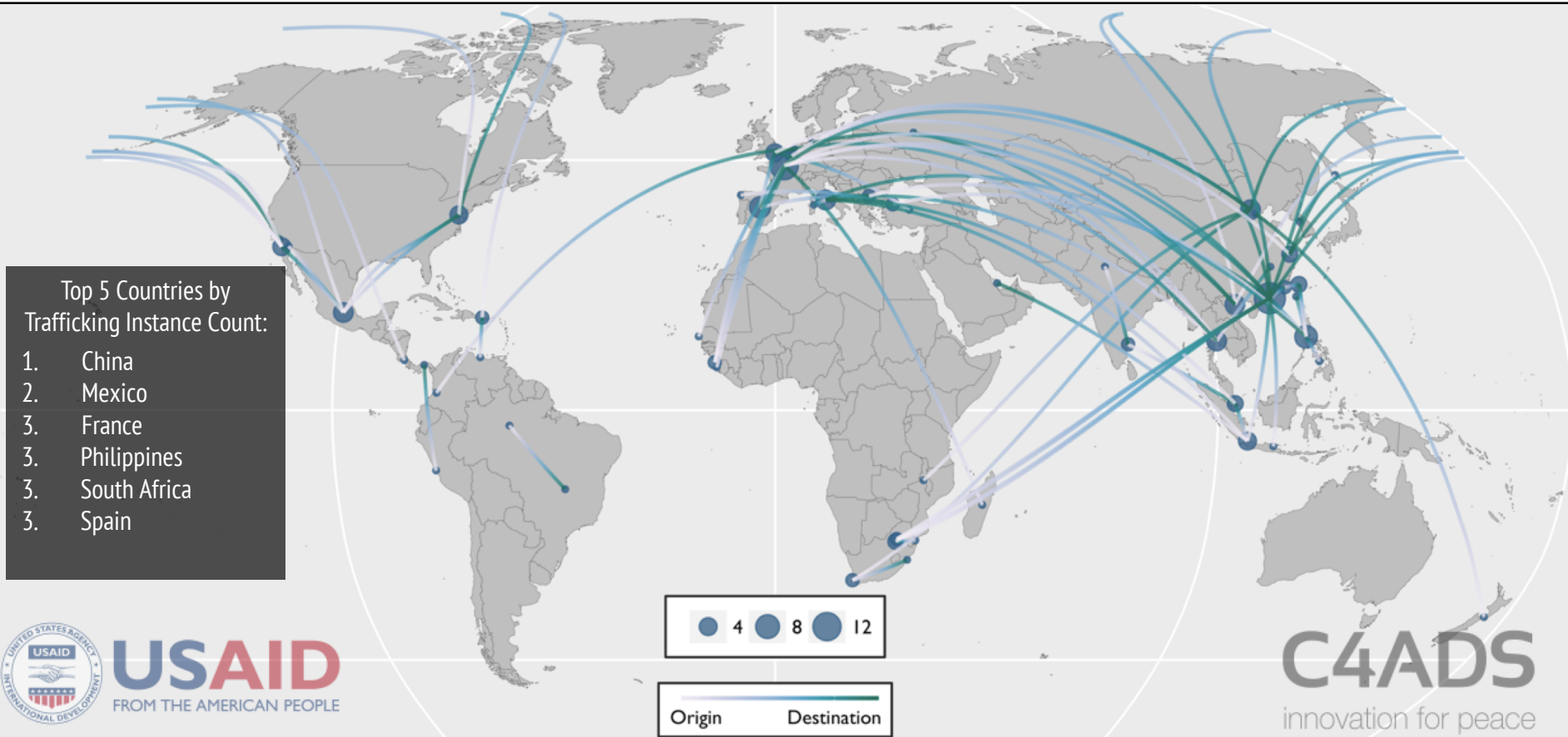4. Malaysia
5. Cameroon

Origin — Destination

Pangolin Trafficking Routes Map (2009 - 2017)

Marine Product Flight Routes

Marine product trafficking routes were extremely diverse, affecting the Americas, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

- **Hong Kong Airport was the most prominent destination airport in the world for marine products.**
  - **Asia and Europe together accounted for 72% of marine products seizures.**

Top 5 Countries by Trafficking Instance Count:
1. China
2. Mexico
3. France
3. Philippines
3. South Africa
3. Spain

● 4 ● 8 ● 12

Origin   Destination

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Mammal Flight Routes

Mammal trafficking routes mirrored wildlife product and live animal trafficking routes, affecting the Americas, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

- **African countries were almost exclusively origin points for mammal trafficking instances.**

Top 5 Countries by Trafficking Instance Count:
1. China
2. Thailand
3. India
4. Indonesia
5. South Africa

Origin — Destination

Mammal Trafficking Routes Map (2009 - 2017)

Most traffickers use a combination of common trafficking methods to evade detection in airports.
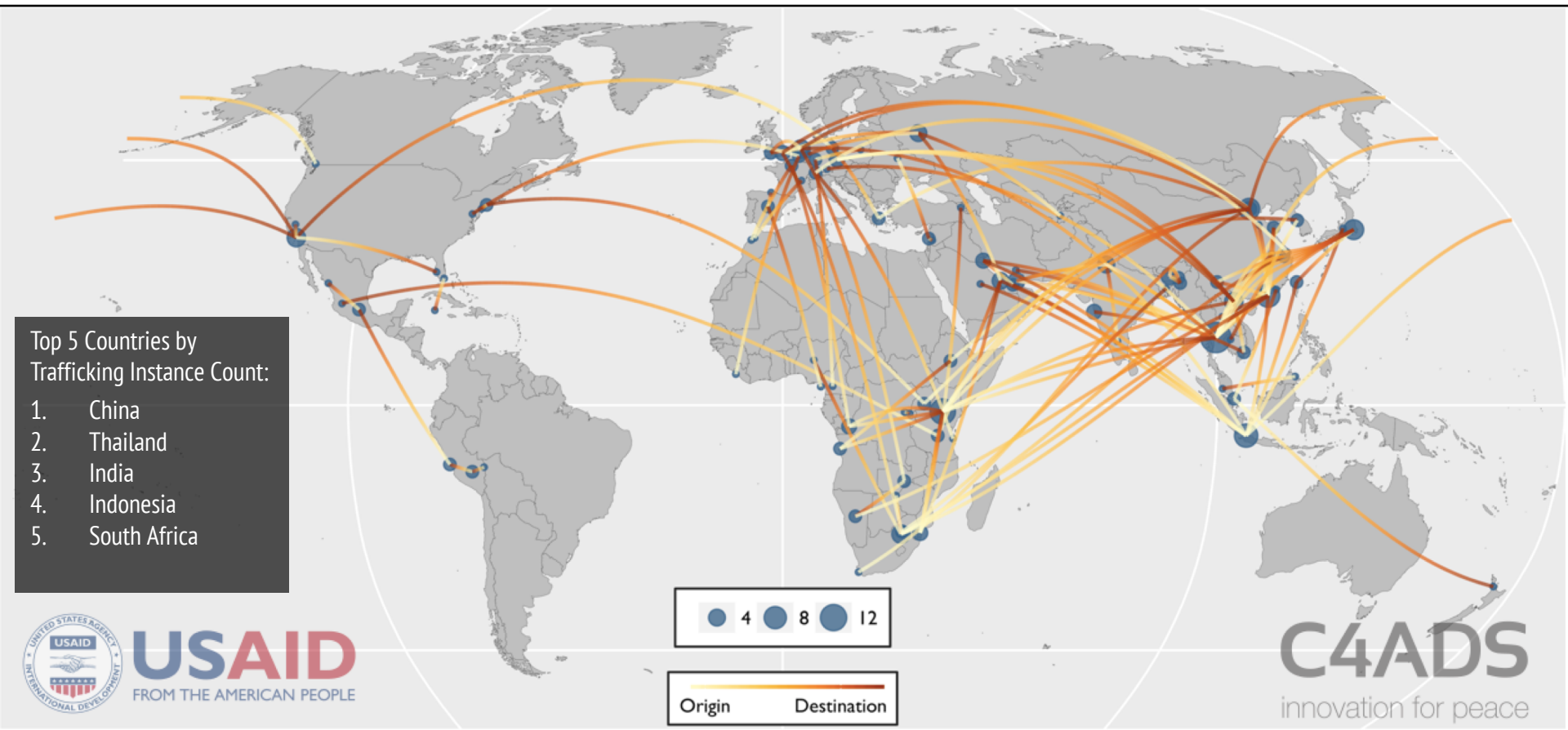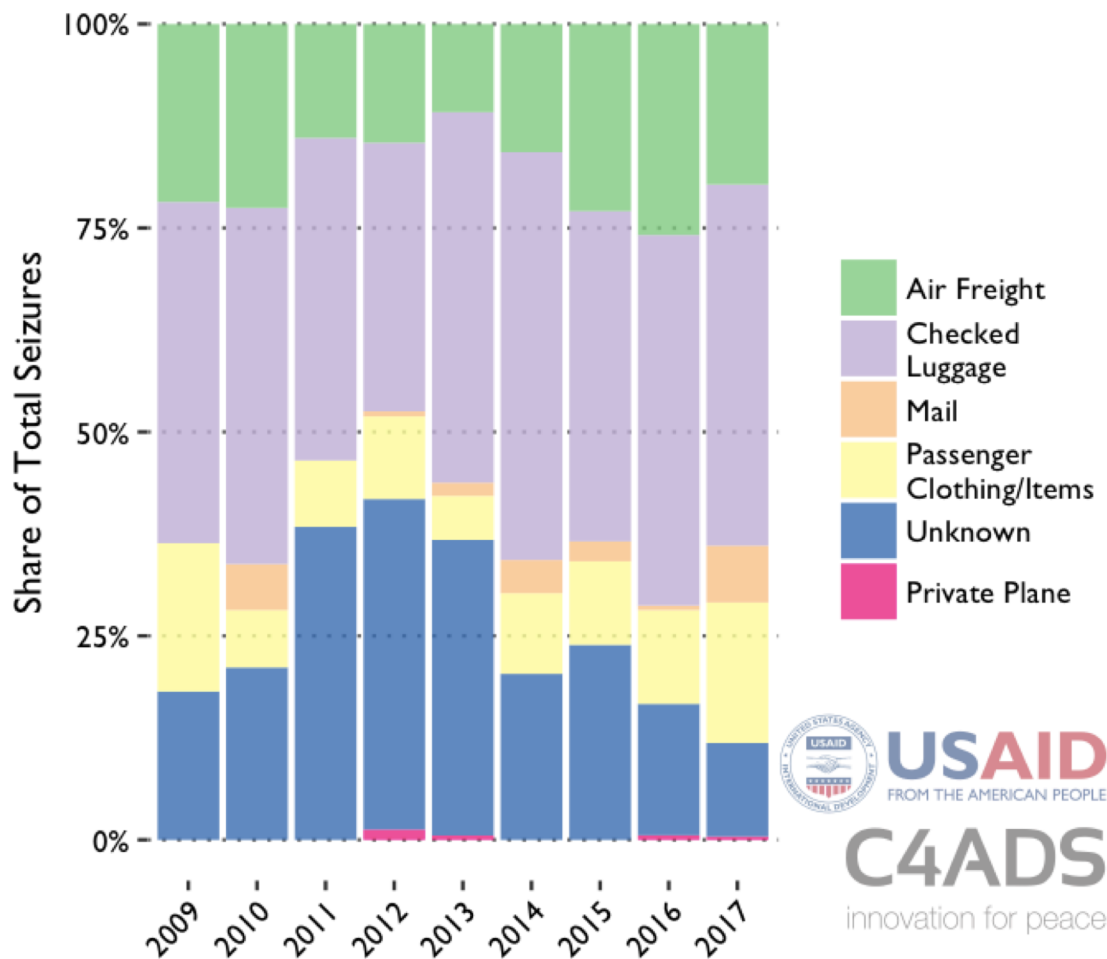
Transport Method Breakdown (Jan 2009 – Dec 2017)

Trafficking Methods & Red Flags

Common trafficking methods include *(newly added trafficking methods are in bold):*

Obfuscation Methods

- Tin or aluminum foil
- Paper
- Blankets
- **Hidden under or declared as bulk goods (e.g. scrap plastic)**
- Declared as agricultural products (beans, avocados, garlic, etc.)
- **Hidden under strong-smelling materials (e.g. fish)**
- **Curlers or toilet paper rolls for live birds**

Luggage

- Abandoned or exchanged luggage
- Use of multiple suitcases (e.g. eight suitcases for three people)
- **Separate compartments, cages, or boxes within suitcases**

Documentation

- Incorrect or incomplete customs documentation (i.e. fake addresses, defunct or shell companies)
- Falsification of CITES e-permits

Unusual Flight Routes

- Circuitous flight route (e.g. EBB-ADD-NBO-DXB-HCM-Beijing)
- Very quick turnaround after a long flight

Other

- Custom-made clothing
- Use of ketamine and other drugs to sedate live animals
- Taxidermy
- **Repeat offenders**
- **Use of shell companies**

Convergence

Traffickers of all types tend to utilize the same trafficking methods to evade detection in airports. Some networks overlap, and may move other illicit products in addition to wildlife.

Totoaba:

- Traffickers have ties to organized crime, particularly within Mexico.

- Bladders have been found alongside drugs, weapons, and ammunition.

- Smuggling techniques appear very similar to drug trafficking methods.

- Bladders are generally dried and then smuggled to airports in checked luggage on the way to China.

Land

Source: Excelsior

Source: Contraseña

Air

Source: PROFEPA

Sample Seizures

Seizure Dates: Oct 9 and 19, 2016; Aug 25, 2017;
Sep 9, 2017 (Hong Kong, China)

Contraband: 145kg ivory (40 kg; 60 kg; 23 kg; 22kg)

Flights: Unknown

Route: HRE – DXB – HKG

Method: **Passenger**

The handmade vest network operating out of Zimbabwe continued to move ivory in vests from Harare, through Dubai, and into Hong Kong. In 2017, Hong Kong Customs stopped a female trafficker associated with the network for the first time.

Seizure Dates: March 10, 2017 (Bangkok, Thailand)

Contraband: 49.4kg rhino horn (21 pieces)

Flights: Unknown and KQ886

Route: ADD – JKI – BKK

Method: **Checked Luggage**

Rhino horn was being transported by two women who had come from Vietnam and Cambodia. They were escorted through Customs screening by two police officers, suggesting the women had influence with a high-ranking government official.

Sample Seizures

Seizure Dates: March 25, 2017 (Los Angeles, USA)

Contraband: 12 reptiles (three king cobras)

Flights: Unknown

Route: HKG - LAX

Method: **Mail**

Three live king cobra snakes hidden inside potato chip canisters (king cobras' neurotoxin venom can kill humans). The owner of the shipment admitted to purchasing 20 king cobras previously, all of which died in transit.

Seizure Dates: Aug 26, 2010 (Bangkok, Thailand)

Contraband: 1 tiger cub

Flights: Mahan Air

Route: BKK - Iran

Method: **Checked Luggage**

Trafficker had trouble checking an over-sized bag at check-in. X-ray images appeared to show a real cat. Upon inspection, airport staff discovered the cub hidden amongst stuffed tiger toys. The cub had been sedated.

Involvement of the Air Industry

The air industry benefits from working to proactively address wildlife trafficking.

SHOW YOUR COMMITMENT

- Internal staff announcement
- External public announcement
- Sign the Buckingham Palace Declaration

INFORM YOUR STAFF

- Print and display posters and banners in busy staff areas
- Share videos that reinforce training
- Display interactive learning installations
- Use internal communications platforms to promote your company's efforts to combat wildlife trafficking
- Ensure relevant staff are aware of and abide by wildlife trade and transport regulations such as CITES and IATA's Live Animals Regulations

TRAIN YOUR STAFF

- Identify staff that may encounter wildlife trafficking
- Include anti-wildlife trafficking info in new hire training
- Conduct role-specific anti-wildlife trafficking training
- Use presentations and e-modules or create your own
- Train in-house trainers to conduct anti-wildlife trafficking workshops
- Host training workshops and toolbox talks for relevant staff
- Invite outside businesses to attend your workshops

STRENGTHEN YOUR POLICY

- Commit to a zero-tolerance policy on wildlife trafficking
- Adopt a whistleblower policy that protects staff who report suspected wildlife trafficking
- Adapt relevant policies to include anti-wildlife trafficking language
- Create a standard process for reporting suspected wildlife trafficking internally and to law enforcement

INFLUENCE YOUR PEERS

- Act as an advocate and speak on the topic of wildlife trafficking at industry events
- Encourage other companies to implement anti-wildlife trafficking actions
- Write opinion pieces or produce videos against wildlife trafficking
- Encourage your vendors and clients to initiate anti-wildlife trafficking measures through communications and procurement procedures

EDUCATE YOUR CUSTOMERS

- Build your position on combating wildlife trafficking into your marketing plans across all customer touch points
- Share anti-wildlife trafficking information in company materials: magazines, cups, in-flight entertainment, boarding passes, receipts, etc.
- Display temporary or permanent learning installations
- Share anti-wildlife trafficking related content on social media

Excerpt from "How the Aviation Industry Can Help Fight Wildlife Trafficking: How to Take Action"

Recommendations

Data-based recommendations to reduce wildlife trafficking in the air transport sector for industry and enforcement *(new recommendations are in bold)*

Awareness

- Increase awareness among air passengers, aviation staff, freight forwarders, shippers, and enforcement officials.

- Adopt or create a pamphlet or tool tailored to each country to help identify restricted species.

- **Ensure public reporting mechanisms are in place and well-known so passengers can report suspected wildlife trafficking.**

Training

- Provide training on red flag indicators associated with wildlife traffickers and shipments (many of these will be similar or the same as indicators for other types of trafficking).

- **Incorporate training on wildlife protocols into existing programs. Create and provide "forensic protection protocols" training to preserve evidence for trial.**

Seizure Reporting

- Store collected seizure information in one centralized database.

- Develop a procedure to publicly report seizure information. Update seizure press releases with prosecution results.

Detection

- Pursue shift towards electronic paperwork for air freight and updated technology for screening. Expand advanced cargo and passenger information systems to include red flags for the illegal wildlife trade. Incorporate CITES e-permits in e-documentation systems.

Policy

- **National laws should enforce CITES regulations and regulate the domestic trade in non-native species. Penalties for wildlife trafficking should be raised until they are sufficiently deterrent.**

Recommendations

Enforcement

- Develop clear escalation procedures upon discovery of potential illegal activity.

- **Engage with the private sector to ensure aviation personnel are aware of information needed to follow up on reports of wildlife trafficking.**

- Develop post-seizure procedures to safely and securely store wildlife products or ensure the proper care of live animals. **Develop procedures to track seized animals and products.**

- Dedicate additional resources to flights to and from known trafficking hubs (a wildlife trafficking hub is likely to be a hub for other illicit goods as well).

- Develop or enhance customs screening procedures for transit flights.

- **Customs and enforcement should be aware of flight routes opening through high-risk areas.**

- Develop and maintain a comprehensive internal database of entities previously involved in wildlife seizures.

- Develop a system to test wildlife seizure protocols.

- **Improve wildlife customs screening requirements for postal mail shipments.**

- **Increase cooperation with other customs and enforcement agencies along high-risk supply chains.**

Recommendation Summary	Customs & Enforcement	Private Sector	Inter-Gov't Orgs	NGOs
Increase awareness	X	X	X	X
Help each country to identify restricted species.	X	X	X	X
Ensure public reporting mechanisms are in place	X	X		
Provide training on red flag indicators	X	X	X	X
Incorporate training on wildlife protocols into existing programs.	X	X	X	
Store collected seizure information in one centralized database.	X			
Develop a procedure to publicly report seizure information.	X			
Pursue shift towards electronic paperwork for air freight and updated technology for screening.	X	X	X	
National laws should enforce CITES regulations and regulate the domestic trade in non-native species.	X			
Develop clear escalation procedures upon discovery of potential illegal activity.	X	X		
Engage with the private sector to ensure aviation personnel are aware of information needed to follow up on reports of wildlife trafficking.	X	X		
Develop procedures to safely and securely store and **track seized animals and products**	X		X	
Dedicate additional resources to flights to and from known trafficking hubs	X	X		X
Develop or enhance customs screening procedures for transit flights.	X	X		
Be aware of flight routes opening through high-risk areas.	X			
Develop and maintain a comprehensive internal database of entities previously involved in wildlife seizures.	X			
Develop a system to test wildlife seizure protocols.	X			
Improve wildlife customs screening requirements for postal mail shipments	X	X		
Increase cooperation with other customs and enforcement agencies along high-risk supply chains.	X			

ROUTES

Reducing Oportunities
for Unlawful Transport of
Endangered Species
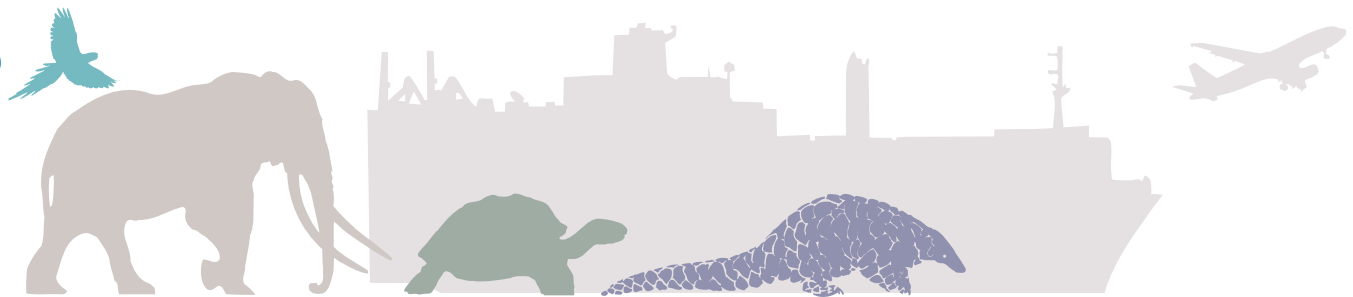
For resources referenced in this document or for more information visit:
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