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**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Indonesia Gets Tough on Tiger Poachers and Illegal Traders**

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An extensive tiger poaching and illegal trade network has been halted by anti-poaching and intelligence operations in Riau and Jambi provinces of Sumatra, Indonesia. At least 60 wild tigers are suspected of having been killed and sold through the network over the last 10 years. The recent capture of seven key suspects advances progress in the fight against poaching and illegal trading of this highly endangered species, and represents a significant victory for the Department of Forestry's Bukit Tigapuluh National Park management, local Police and the Sumatran Tiger Conservation Program (STCP). The suspects, comprising poachers, middle-men and agents, are due to be charged following official police questioning on the 19<sup>th</sup> March in Indragiri Hulu district, Riau province of Sumatra.

"Joint intelligence carried out by park staff and STCP's Tiger Protection Units during 2003 has revealed a history of intense poaching and trade of tigers originating in this region between 1970 and the present. More than 300 tigers were killed and traded over this 30 year period" reports the chief of park, M. Haryono. "This recent success includes the capture of suspects that have been active for many years in the Bukit Tigapuluh National Park area".

Waldemar Hasiholan, program manager of the Sumatran Tiger Conservation Program adds, "Although the ranger patrols and our tiger protection units have had a deterrent effect on poachers, we also recognise that we need to drive down the market demand for these illegal products by directly combating trade at its roots".

This news follows the report from TRAFFIC published this week that challenged the Government of Indonesia to crack down on the illegal trade in Sumatran Tigers.

“Let this case and other recent operations carried out by my staff be evidence that the Government of Indonesia is committed to halting poaching and illegal trade,” stated the Director General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation, Koes Saparjadi. “All the recommendations made in the TRAFFIC report have been our official policy since 2002.”

Other recent operations have culminated in record convictions of more than 3 years for tiger poachers in the Bukit Barisan National Park following their arrest in 2003 by park staff and police. In a separate incident a regional parliamentary leader was arrested whilst attempting to sell a tiger skin. A local NGO of concerned environmental activists, ProFauna, has also achieved much success recently in partnership with the regional conservation agencies in identifying tiger-trade routes and capturing suspects as far afield as the island of Java.

“Nobody is above the law, and we are forming a specialist office to tackle tiger related crimes in accordance with earlier recommendations made by the CITES Standing Committee and its Tiger Mission,” said Daniel Sinaga, the Tiger Law Enforcement project leader.

“The Sumatran Tiger is an Indonesian national icon and a powerful symbol of the country’s extraordinary biodiversity. It is heartening to see the excellent collaboration between the Indonesian Government, NGOs and Indonesia’s corporate sector result in effective law enforcement. These arrests and their high-profile prosecution are an important step towards our goal of revitalizing the population of these critically endangered animals,” added Marco Romero, Managing Director of The Tiger Foundation.

This novel strategy, led by the Department of Forestry’s Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation, with support from the Sumatran Tiger Conservation Program and ExxonMobil’s Save The Tiger Fund, involves the close collaboration between wildlife and law enforcement agencies, intelligence monitoring, a national database on tiger-related wildlife crime, providing oversight and technical expertise for legal cases wherever these may arise. The program represents a major breakthrough in bringing together both Governmental and non-governmental resources in the war against poachers and wildlife trade.

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*Fact sheet and contact info overleaf...*

## Fact sheet

- The **Sumatran tiger** (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*) is critically endangered according to the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature), with approximately 400-500 individuals surviving in the wild, and is the last surviving subspecies of tiger in Indonesia. More information at [www.5tigers.org/AllAboutTigers/Subspecies/sumatran.htm](http://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.
- The **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, 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 exclusively to the preservation of wild tigers. It is the founder and principal supporter of 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](http://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](http://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.

## **Contact Information**

Further information, an electronic version of this press release, contact details for people and organisations mentioned in this press release, and high-resolution photos can be provided by contacting any of the following:

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