

HOW FREELAND IS USING DETEGO TECHNOLOGY TO DISMANTLE WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING NETWORKS

THE BACKGROUND

Freeland, a frontline counter-trafficking organisation, works globally to combat wildlife trafficking and human exploitation by supporting and strengthening law enforcement capabilities. Through the formation, training, and coordination of multi-agency task forces, Freeland helps authorities identify, target, and dismantle criminal networks involved in the illegal trade of wildlife and people.

As trafficking networks become increasingly sophisticated and digitally enabled, investigators are faced with growing volumes of complex digital evidence, including computers, mobile devices, loose media, drones, IoT devices, communications, and encrypted data. This has created a critical need for digital forensic capabilities that enable officers to quickly extract, analyse, and act on intelligence in frontline and operational environments.

To address this, Freeland has been delivering programmes across Southeast Asia and East Africa, equipping government agencies with the tools and techniques required to combat wildlife trafficking more effectively. A key component of these initiatives is the integration of the Detego digital forensics platform, enabling teams to identify trafficking patterns, uncover supply chains, and build court-ready cases.

THE SOLUTION

As part of its counter-trafficking programmes, Freeland has incorporated the Detego Unified Digital Forensics Platform into its operational support and field training activities. Through formal instruction and on-the-job training, personnel are equipped with the skills required to rapidly extract and analyse digital evidence on-site.

Detego technology enables officers to conduct fast, forensically sound acquisition and analysis from seized devices, including computers, drones, loose media, and mobile phones used by trafficking suspects. Its intuitive interface and automated workflows allow users with varying levels of technical expertise to conduct examinations in the field without the need for specialist laboratory environments.

By integrating Detego technology into its programmes, Freeland is enabling task forces to move beyond traditional investigative methods, using digital intelligence to map trafficking networks, identify key actors, and uncover links between regional and international operations.

THE RESULT



Freeland's use of Detego technology is already delivering tangible operational results.

During a recent intelligence analysis course in southwestern Uganda, authorities operating at the Bunagana border intercepted two individuals entering from the Democratic Republic of Congo. A search revealed three endangered tortoises concealed in their possession, leading to their immediate arrest. Mobile phones were also seized as part of the investigation.

Through on-the-job training, Ugandan authorities used Detego technology to analyse the seized devices. The examination uncovered images of elephant ivory, live pangolins, and minerals suspected to be connected to an illegal trade network operating across multiple African cities and into Asia.

These findings indicate that the suspects are not isolated offenders but part of a wider, organised trafficking network involved in the cross-border movement of endangered wildlife and natural resources.

Investigations are ongoing, with Freeland now working to connect East African authorities with their counterparts in Southeast Asia, where many trafficked species are destined. With agencies across both regions now using Detego technology, and plans underway to expand operations into Latin America, teams are better equipped to share intelligence and analysis, strengthening cross-border collaboration and accelerating efforts to disrupt and dismantle global wildlife trafficking supply chains.

Freeland's counter-trafficking work has been supported by the U.S. Department of State, which has prioritised the fight against transnational organised crime.

“Wildlife trafficking networks operate across borders and increasingly rely on digital tools to coordinate their activities. By equipping frontline investigators with cutting-edge technologies like Detego, we are enabling them to uncover hidden connections, act on intelligence faster, and disrupt these criminal networks more effectively. This is a critical step towards dismantling trafficking supply chains and protecting both wildlife and vulnerable communities.”



Steven Galster
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