



**U.S. Department of Justice**

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Eastern District of New York*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**TAMBA KABA SENTENCED TO 33 MONTHS IN PRISON AND \$25,000 FINE FOR  
SMUGGLING AFRICAN ELEPHANT IVORY INTO THE UNITED STATES  
THROUGH JFK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

***Ivory Hidden Inside Wooden and Metal Handicrafts to Avoid Detection***

Loretta E. Lynch, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, announced that Tamba Kaba was sentenced today to 33 months in prison and a \$25,000 fine for smuggling elephant ivory into the United States. The sentencing proceeding was held before United States Senior District Judge Sterling Johnson, Jr., at the U.S. Courthouse in Brooklyn, New York, and followed Kaba's conviction after a jury trial in June 2010. Kaba was arrested on November 23, 2009, after a joint investigation by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service, Northeast Region and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), New York.

The evidence at trial established that Kaba imported into the United States two air cargo shipments containing 71 concealed elephant ivory carvings, one shipment from Nigeria and one from Uganda. The carvings were hidden inside the hollow cavities of wooden and metal handicrafts. Kaba received both shipments, paid for their shipping costs, and ultimately sold at least one ivory carving to an art collector in Texas. In total, the carvings had an approximate market value of \$73,300.

"We will continue to prosecute vigorously defendants who illegally engage in trade involving endangered or threatened species," said United States Attorney Lynch. "I commend the agents and inspectors of the Fish and Wildlife Service and ICE for their outstanding efforts in leading the investigation and thank the Customs and Border Protection for its assistance."

"Great efforts are undertaken in Africa and in the United States to conserve African elephants for future generations. The illegal ivory trade undermines the conservation community's efforts in the name of profit and greed," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Special Agent in Charge Sal Amato. "We hope today's significant sentence sends a strong message and offers further deterrence to those who seek illegally to profit by plundering protected wildlife."

“This sentence sends a clear message to poachers and ivory smugglers that we and our federal law enforcement partners are focused on putting them out of business,” said ICE Homeland Security Investigations Special Agent in Charge James T. Hayes. “We will continue using all our resources to identify and apprehend those who exploit threatened species for lucrative profits in total disregard of our laws.”

Importation of ivory into the United States has been criminalized since 1975 when the United States became a party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (“CITES”), an international treaty regulating trade in endangered species. The African elephant is listed as a threatened species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, which implements CITES in the United States. The global demand for elephant ivory led to devastating declines in the number of these giant animals, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. Despite international efforts to control the ivory trade and stop the decline of elephant populations, prices and demand remain high, thus causing continued elephant poaching and illegal ivory finding its way into international and domestic markets.

The government’s case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Vamshi Reddy and Kathleen Nandan.

**The Defendant:**

TAMBA KABA  
Age: 52

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