

# Uganda suspends officials after ton of ivory stolen from vault

November 18 2014

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Uganda's wildlife authority has suspended five top officials after a ton of seized ivory worth over a million dollars vanished from government strongrooms, its chief said Tuesday.

Interpol has been called in to aid in investigating the incident, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) chief Raymond Engena told AFP, following

calls from the president to catch the culprits.

"We have suspended five [officials](#) to allow investigations into how the [ivory](#) went missing," Engena said.

They include the government-run UWA's chief ranger, those who had access to the strong room, as well as intelligence officers in the agency.

"We are cooperating with the police to establish the people behind this crime, and we have also involved Interpol in the investigations," Engena said. "The people behind this will be found and dealt with decisively."

The UWA said a routine check had found that 1,335 kilogrammes (2,943 pounds) of ivory had vanished from supposedly secure stockpiles, which officials estimated to be valued at some 1.1 million dollars (880,000 euros).

Staff are feared to have been working with the very traffickers they are meant to stop to steal and sell on the confiscated tusks.

Some corrupt officials are believed to have taken the ivory claiming to use it to ensnare potential traffickers, but then later selling it themselves.

Poaching has risen sharply across Africa in recent years fuelled by rising demand in Asia for ivory and rhino horn, coveted as a traditional medicine and a status symbol.

Uganda is a key transit country for the [illegal trade](#).

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