

Operation Green Shield Strikes Huge Blow to Environmental Crime Networks Across the Amazon Basin

In a major milestone for international environmental law enforcement, Operation Green Shield has disrupted criminal networks operating across the Amazon Basin

ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, July 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a major milestone for international environmental law enforcement, Operation Green Shield has disrupted criminal networks operating across the Amazon Basin, in a joint initiative led by the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Interior through the International Initiative of Law Enforcement for Climate (I2LEC). Over two weeks, the campaign codenamed Green Shield brought together over 350 field operations, leading to 94 arrests, and the seizure of illicit assets valued at over USD \$64 million.

Building on the success of Operation Green Justice in 2024, Green Shield saw deeper collaboration and faster coordination between partner agencies in the UAE, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. The trust, joint protocols, and intelligence-sharing mechanisms forged in 2024 enabled countries to deliver even stronger outcomes this year.

Coordinated from a central command centre in Bogotá, Operation Green Shield brought together law enforcement agencies from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, with strategic oversight by the UAE Ministry of Interior, and technical support from ESRI.

More than 1,500 officers were deployed across the four participating countries, operating in key hotspots across the Amazon. Working in close coordination, teams executed simultaneous enforcement actions and shared real-time intelligence, delivering a swift and unified response across borders.

Key results include:

- Illegal mining: Over 310 tons of raw minerals and 61 tons of calcium oxide seized.
- Illegal hunting and wildlife trafficking: Over 2,100 live animals and 6,350 dead specimens (birds, lizards, mammals) recovered.
- Illegal logging: Seizure of more than 3,800 cubic meters of timber.
- Fuel smuggling: Over 39,000 gallons of fuel confiscated.
- Equipment seizures: 530 units including bulldozers, trucks, crushers, and other vehicles.

One of the most striking breakthroughs came in Peru, where police rescued 1,400 live animals

and dismantled a criminal gang known as “Los Depredadores del Oriente”, a major network involved in wildlife trafficking. In Colombia, authorities dismantled three organised crime groups and disrupted a cell tied to the Clan del Golfo, one of the country’s most powerful organised crime syndicates.

Lt. Colonel Dana Humaid, Director-General of the International Affairs Bureau at the UAE Ministry of Interior and Coordinator of I2LEC, praised the results and reaffirmed the UAE’s commitment to leading climate-focused law enforcement on the global stage. “Operation Green Shield stands as a landmark achievement in global climate-focused law enforcement. The scale and speed of the results reflect not only the strength of regional cooperation, but also the growing resolve of governments to treat environmental crime as a top-tier security issue. From rescuing thousands of animals to disrupting illegal economies worth tens of millions of dollars, the results of Operation Green Shield are a clear signal of what coordinated enforcement can achieve. I2LEC remains committed to enabling countries to take action, share intelligence, and secure real wins for our environment and future generations,” she said.

Operation Green Shield also demonstrated the critical role of technology in modern law enforcement efforts. The use of Esri’s ArcGIS Mission tool allowed for real-time geolocation of units, direct communication between teams in remote areas, and live data capture that will support further investigation and prosecution.

I2LEC played a central role in the success of the operation, coordinating the overall campaign, harmonising procedures between national forces, compiling and analysing field data, and providing essential technology and equipment to enable real-time information sharing and synchronised action. Following the success of this operation, I2LEC and its partners are analysing the intelligence collected to build long-term strategies for dismantling criminal networks and enhancing environmental governance in the region. More seizures of illicit items and arrests are expected as part of ongoing investigations and coordination between various participants of the operation.

Partner countries’ statements:

Colonel Jorge Andrés Bernal Granada, Director of Carabineers and Environmental Protection at the National Police of Colombia, reaffirmed Colombia’s leadership in environmental enforcement. He said: “we achieved real progress against illegal mining, fuel theft, and wildlife trafficking. Colombia is proud to be a part of this international front to protect the integrity of Amazonian ecosystems. This effort is part of a comprehensive strategy that not only strengthens environmental security but also promotes international cooperation in the face of shared threats. We invite allied countries, including the United Arab Emirates, to continue fostering collaborative spaces that safeguard the Amazon as a natural heritage of humanity.”

Fausto Patricio Iñiguez Sotomayor, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Ecuador’s National Police, noted that: “Ecuador’s first participation in an I2LEC-led initiative marks a critical step in the fight

against environmental crimes. With the UAE's support through I2LEC, we dismantled transnational groups profiting from environmental destruction."

General Manuel Elías Lozada Morales, Director of the Environment Division of the National Police of Peru "It is an honor for the National Police of Peru to participate for the second consecutive year in Operation Green Shield. We are deeply satisfied with the joint work carried out with the countries of the region, and we thank the United Arab Emirates for their firm commitment to the defense of the Amazon rainforest. This international cooperation shows that, united, we can effectively protect one of the most important ecosystems on the planet and ensure its preservation for future generations. This is a magnificent example of international cooperation."

Renato Madsen Arruda General Coordinator for the Protection of the Amazon, the Environment, and Historical and Cultural Heritage, Brazilian Federal Police: "This cooperation is part of Brazil's long-standing commitment to protecting our natural resources. We are proud to have disrupted criminal activities, in particular illegal gold mining, in some of the Amazon's most remote areas."

Background Information

Operation Green Shield is the latest in a series of international enforcement campaigns led by I2LEC, a platform launched by the UAE Ministry of Interior in 2023 in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). I2LEC aims to strengthen law enforcement capacity worldwide, foster international cooperation, and support climate goals by targeting the criminal economies driving environmental destruction. Since its launch, I2LEC has trained more than 2,000 officers, facilitated global operations, and served as a catalyst for uniting law enforcement agencies around a shared commitment to protecting the planet.

Esri is a company that specialises in geographic information system (GIS) software, location intelligence, and mapping. I2LEC uses their ArcGIS products for mapping, spatial analysis, and data management in the context of location information. Further information:

<https://www.esri.com/>

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