



By: TA | AP Brief

Amazon countries arrest hundreds in major crackdown on environmental crime



Police from five Amazon countries have arrested hundreds of people and seized timber, minerals and thousands of livestock in one of the largest coordinated crackdowns on **environmental crime** ever carried out in the world's largest rainforest.

Authorities from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru said Tuesday that Operation Green Shield 2026, which ran from July 15-31, deployed more than 3,600 officers targeting **illegal mining**, logging, wildlife trafficking, fuel smuggling and land grabbing – the illegal seizure or occupation of land, often followed by forest clearing – across the Amazon Basin.

The operation resulted in 839 arrests during 1,045 field actions and the seizure of more than 280,000 cubic meters (9.9 million cubic feet) of illegally harvested timber – enough to fill roughly 110 Olympic-sized swimming pools – along with 195 metric tons of minerals and equipment used in illegal mining like gold, carbon, iron and copper, according to officials.

Authorities also rescued more than 3,000 live animals and recovered at least 430 dead animals linked to wildlife trafficking, including snakes, birds, lizards and fish.

Environmental crime has become one of the Amazon's most profitable illicit industries, fueled by global demand for gold, timber and wildlife.

Investigators say the same criminal organizations often combine illegal mining, logging and wildlife trafficking, using shared trafficking routes and financial networks that span national borders.

Officials say that has made cross-border cooperation increasingly important, as criminal groups frequently move people and goods across neighboring countries to evade law enforcement.

The operation was coordinated from Colombian capital, Bogotá, by the International Initiative of Law Enforcement for Climate, or I2LEC, a United Arab Emirates-backed initiative launched in partnership with the

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2023 to strengthen international cooperation against environmental crime.

Protecting natural resources requires a shared response

The crackdown follows a similar **multinational operation** in 2025 that brought together more than 1,500 officers from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

That operation marked one of the first large-scale attempts to coordinate intelligence sharing and simultaneous enforcement across borders against environmental crime, reflecting growing concern that criminal groups involved in illegal mining, logging and wildlife trafficking increasingly operate across national boundaries.

This year's operation expanded to include Bolivia and involved synchronized deployments in remote border and river regions, authorities said.

"The UAE leadership firmly believes that collaboration is essential to combating transnational crime," Col. Dana Humaid, director general of the International Affairs Bureau at the UAE Ministry of Interior, said in a statement. "By working together, law enforcement agencies can achieve stronger results."

Officials said the combined value of the goods seized during the operation exceeded \$280 million.

Colombian National Police Director Gen. William Oswaldo Rincón Zambrano said the operation showed how intelligence sharing could be translated into coordinated enforcement.

"Protecting our natural resources requires a shared response," he said.

Peruvian police environmental chief Gen. J. Manuel Cruz Chamba said environmental

crimes “do not respect borders” and therefore require international cooperation.