

Africa's Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking Crisis

The Need for Urgent Action

A Report of the CSIS Africa Program

AUTHORS

Jennifer G. Cooke

Derek Schlickeisen



Africa's Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking Crisis

The Need for Urgent Action

Authors

Jennifer G. Cooke

Derek Schlickeisen

A Report of the CSIS Africa Program

November 2015

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC &
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

About CSIS

For over 50 years, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has worked to develop solutions to the world's greatest policy challenges. Today, CSIS scholars are providing strategic insights and bipartisan policy solutions to help decisionmakers chart a course toward a better world.

CSIS is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. The Center's 220 full-time staff and large network of affiliated scholars conduct research and analysis and develop policy initiatives that look into the future and anticipate change.

Founded at the height of the Cold War by David M. Abshire and Admiral Arleigh Burke, CSIS was dedicated to finding ways to sustain American prominence and prosperity as a force for good in the world. Since 1962, CSIS has become one of the world's preeminent international institutions focused on defense and security; regional stability; and transnational challenges ranging from energy and climate to global health and economic integration.

Former U.S. senator Sam Nunn has chaired the CSIS Board of Trustees since 1999. Former deputy secretary of defense John J. Hamre became the Center's president and chief executive officer in 2000.

CSIS does not take specific policy positions; accordingly, all views expressed herein should be understood to be solely those of the author(s).

© 2015 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. All rights reserved.

Center for Strategic & International Studies
1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-887-0200 | www.csis.org

Contents

Acknowledgments	IV
Africa's Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking Crisis: The Need for Urgent Action	1
Introduction	1
The Surge in African Wildlife Trafficking: Background to the Crisis	2
A Transnational Criminal Supply Chain	4
New Models of Engagement: Community Conservancies and Public-Private Partnerships	8
Priorities for Concerted Action	10
Appendix. Conference Agenda	14
About the Authors	16

Acknowledgments

This report is based on a day-long conference held at CSIS on July 15, 2015, “Combating Wildlife Poaching and Insecurity in Africa,” which examined the latest policy initiatives aimed at curbing wildlife crime and remedying its ill effects on states and communities. For their leadership on this critical issue, the CSIS Africa Program would like to thank the conference keynote speakers and special guests:

Representative Ed Royce, chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; Senator Jeff Flake, chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy; Professor Judi Wakhungu, cabinet secretary for Environment, Water, and Natural Resources with the government of Kenya; Governor Hussein Dado, Tana River County, Kenya; and Senator Chris Coons, member and former chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy.

For their analysis and insight CSIS would also like to thank the conference panelists and moderators: Dan Ashe, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Luis Arreaga, principal deputy assistant secretary, U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; Bryan Christy, journalist and author, National Geographic Society; James Deutsch, vice president for conservation strategy, Wildlife Conservation Society; Jackson Miller, lead wildlife and environmental crimes analyst, C4ADS; Richard Ruggiero, chief of the division of international conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Kirstin Siex, senior biodiversity policy adviser, U.S. Agency for International Development’s Bureau for Africa.

For their work, insight, and willingness to take time to travel to Washington, the CSIS Africa Program is deeply grateful to Jean Marc Froment, director of conservation with African Parks Network; Maj. Gen. (ret.) Johan Jooste, anti-poaching chief with Kruger National Park, South Africa; Enrico Pironio, Africa Wildlife and Protected Areas, European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO); and Ian Saunders, chief operating officer of Tsavo Trust in Kenya.

The Africa Program thanks colleague Juan Zarate, senior adviser to the CSIS Transnational Threats Project, former deputy assistant to the president and former deputy national security adviser for combating terrorism, for his advice and collaboration.

Derek Schlickeisen, research consultant and coauthor of this report, was instrumental in helping organize and launch the conference, and Ben Hubner, Hayley Elszasz, Justin Gradek, and Ngozi Olojede ably assisted with logistics and coordination.

Finally, the CSIS Africa Program is deeply grateful to Andrew C. Currie and to the Woodtiger Fund, whose generous support made the conference and this report possible.

Africa's Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking Crisis

The Need for Urgent Action

Jennifer G. Cooke and Derek Schlickeisen

Introduction

The illicit trade in wildlife products has undergone a dramatic escalation in the last decade, developing into a multibillion-dollar global criminal enterprise that is increasingly militarized, sophisticated, and deadly. In Africa, poaching and trafficking in ivory and rhino horn have had a devastating impact on conservation efforts: the slaughter of rhinoceros and African elephant populations across the continent could lead to the extinction of both species within one or two decades, according to conservation experts. Equally alarming is the danger that poaching and trafficking networks pose for human security and development and the growing nexus between wildlife trafficking, armed militant groups, deepening insecurity, and government corruption. Poaching and wildlife trafficking thrive where governance is weak, and in turn they generate revenues for armed transnational groups that further deepen insecurity, corrode governance, and terrorize vulnerable communities in the regions in which they operate.

Disrupting trafficking networks in countries that serve as a source, transit corridor, or destination for illegal wildlife products will require a sustained and concerted international effort that must engage local, national, regional, and global institutions. It must include fast-track interventions as well as longer-term measures to improve governance, rule of law, and economic opportunity in some of the world's most fragile regions. Fortunately, global awareness of the trafficking crisis is growing, and the convergence of multiple communities of interest—from conservationists, international security and law enforcement entities, development experts, and government authorities—offers an important opportunity for greater strategic focus and coordination.

There are signs of renewed momentum in the fight against illicit wildlife trade: in the United States, the White House has released a national strategy on combating wildlife trafficking and an associated implementation plan, and members of Congress have begun to consider legislation that has bipartisan support. The European Union, the African Union, a number of African governments, and the United Nations have taken up the issue, and China, the largest ivory market in the world, has recently signaled a willingness to end commercial trade of ivory. These initiatives represent a promising

start, but key to their effectiveness will be following through—quickly—with adequate resources, coordination, high-level attention, and a sustained sense of urgency.

In July 2015, the Africa Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) convened a day-long conference at its headquarters in Washington, D.C., to broaden awareness of the conservation and security impacts of wildlife trafficking in Africa, examine evolving strategies of U.S., European, and African governments, and to highlight different approaches undertaken by organizations on the poaching frontlines—in protected areas and the communities that surround them. Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ), Representative Ed Royce (R-NJ), chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Dr. Judi Wakhungu, Kenyan Cabinet secretary for Environment, Water, and Natural Resources, gave keynote remarks. They were joined by key officials from agencies tasked with implementing the U.S. strategy; by analysts and investigators gathering data on the criminal networks that drive the trade; and by individuals working in parks and conservancies that have been among the hardest hit by poaching and the violence and economic insecurity that accompany it. (See the appendix for the full agenda.) Audio and video of the full conference are available at <http://csis.org/event/combating-wildlife-poaching-and-insecurity-africa>.

This report captures the broad themes of the conference. It provides background on the current surge in poaching and the global supply chain that underpins the trade of ivory and rhino horn; it examines nontraditional models of conservation management and community engagement; and it distills recommendations and priorities for action that emerged over the course of the event.

The Surge in African Wildlife Trafficking: Background to the Crisis

Wildlife poaching in Africa is not a new phenomenon, but recent years have seen an alarming acceleration in the pace and scale of killing. Concerted global efforts to curb demand for ivory and rhino horn have in the past yielded positive results, demonstrating the potential impact of urgent, coordinated action. But as those gains have been reversed, there is worry that the growing militarization of poaching will make it ever more difficult to eradicate, and that without renewed urgency and action, the rate of killing of African elephants and rhinos will threaten both species with extinction.

During the 1970s and 1980s, government forces and militias fighting in Africa's many conflicts poached elephants by the hundreds of thousands, selling bush-meat and high-value ivory to sustain their operations. These groups fed into international criminal networks that smuggled poached ivory into what was then a legal retail market in which some 80 percent of ivory products were nonetheless sourced from poached elephants.¹ As African elephant populations dwindled to near extinction in a

¹ World Wildlife Fund, "Threats to African Elephants," 2015, http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/endangered_species/elephants/african_elephants/afelephants_threats/.

number of countries, international trade in ivory was banned (with some exceptions²) in 1989 by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The ban was considered by most metrics a success: with ivory consumption increasingly viewed as taboo, prices plummeted and many legal suppliers exited the market.³

In recent years, however, the illicit ivory trade has reemerged in the wake of two “one-off sales” allowing certain African nations to sell their existing stockpiles: one to Japan in 1999 and another to China in 2008. While proponents at the time argued that increasing the market supply of legal ivory would depress prices and dissuade poachers, many in the conservation community believe that the one-off sales undermined the taboo against ivory in places like China, where a renewed legal trade, buoyed by rising income levels, now masks a burgeoning illicit market. A report released by CITES in 2013 pointed to China as “the single most important contemporary player in the illicit trade in ivory.”⁴

Rhino horn was also intensively poached in the 1970s through the 1990s, with the most significant consumer markets in Asia. From 1960 to 1994 Black Rhino populations declined by 97.6 percent to a low point of 2,410, while the Northern White Rhino was poached to extinction in the wild: today, only four Northern White Rhinos remain. Beginning in the late 1980s, international efforts helped shut down demand for rhino horn in a number of key consumer countries. Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Yemen were all major consumers in the 1970s and 1980s. Both Japan and Yemen effectively ended imports after ratifying the CITES treaty. South Korea and Taiwan, under international pressure and threat of U.S. sanctions under the Pelly Amendment,⁵ also shut down domestic consumption in the 1990s. China, a signatory to CITES, banned domestic trade in 1993, although the country remains a source of concern. In the decade after the CITES agreement, from 1990 to 2000, South Africa lost an average of 14 rhinos annually to poaching. That number has risen in the last decade, with 1,215 rhinos killed by poachers in 2014. Today, consumption in Vietnam is considered a primary driver of the trade. As income levels have risen, Vietnam has become the largest consumer of South African rhino horn, prized as a symbol of status and wealth and used for “medicinal” purposes.

² For example, hunting trophies are generally exempt as is ivory that was acquired prior to the CITES listing. The CITES ban only applies to international trade; local and national laws govern domestic ivory markets. See U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, “CITES and Elephants: What is the ‘global ban’ on ivory trade?,” November 2013, <https://www.fws.gov/le/pdf/CITES-and-Elephant-Conservation.pdf>.

³ Varun Vira, Thomas Ewing, and Jackson Miller, “Out of Africa: Mapping the Global Trade in Illicit Elephant Ivory,” C4ADS and Born Free USA, August 2014, 7, http://media.wix.com/ugd/e16b55_9d27f7c90250420c87c3b7d2703c3114.pdf.

⁴ Tom Milliken et al., “Monitoring of illegal trade in ivory and other elephant specimens,” Elephant Trade Information System report of TRAFFIC International, presented at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES, March 3–14, 2015, Bangkok.

⁵ The Pelly Amendment to the U.S. Fishermen’s Protective Act of 1967 empowers the president to certify any nation shown to be undermining an international conservation agreement, and, if the offending nation does not take remedial action within a specified time frame, to enact trade sanctions. See Michigan State University, Animal Legal & Historical Center, “Pelly Amendment,” 22 USC 1978, <https://www.animallaw.info/statute/us-fisheries-pelly-amendment-%C2%A7-1978>.

The recent poaching surge has had catastrophic conservation effects. Between 2011 and 2014, an average of 33,000 elephants were poached for ivory annually. In 2011 alone, an estimated 8 percent of the entire African elephant population was killed, and by 2014 fewer than 500,000 were believed to remain. Poachers have devastated elephant populations in the traditional habitats of Central Africa (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and northern Cameroon) and are pressing hard on populations to the east in Kenya and Tanzania and further southwest in the Republic of Congo, Gabon, and southern Cameroon. Only Southern Africa is experiencing elephant poaching below crisis levels, but as populations elsewhere are hunted to extinction, this region is expected to come under increasingly severe pressure as well.

In Southern Africa, rhinoceros populations are being hunted to possible extinction. South Africa, which is home to the vast majority of Africa's white rhinos and a significant portion of its black rhinos, is at the epicenter of the crisis, with 10 percent of its rhino population killed in 2013 and 2014. According to conference participant Johan Jooste, head of Kruger Park's anti-poaching unit, South Africa has a window of three to five years to save the country's most iconic species.

A Transnational Criminal Supply Chain

The principal driver of the poaching and trafficking crisis is continued high demand for ivory and rhino horn, largely centered in China, Vietnam, and other Asian countries. The United States is a larger retail market for ivory than is often acknowledged—second only to China, according to recent reports.⁶ U.S. regulations and enforcement are weak, and poached ivory can be easily passed off as antique ivory, which remains legal. High demand, combined with increasing scarcity, drives high prices: on the Asian black market, ivory fetches up to \$3,000 per kilogram; rhino horn, \$65,000 per kilogram, more than the street value of cocaine.⁷ Yet because of lax enforcement and low penalties, poaching and trafficking in these commodities offer a low-risk, high-reward opportunity, with large profits available to reinvest in expanding the scale and sophistication of the industry.

Feeding global demand is a complex, transnational supply chain, beginning with a profusion of large- and small-scale armed groups engaged in poaching that in turn are linked, through middlemen, corrupt officials, and freight and shipping companies, to powerful and well-organized transnational cartels. These criminal syndicates often combine ivory or rhino horn trafficking with other high-value commodities, from

⁶ See International Fund for Animal Welfare, "Bidding against Survival: The Elephant Poaching Crisis and the Role of Auctions in the U.S. Ivory Market," August 2014, http://www.ifaw.org/sites/default/files/IFAW-Ivory-Auctions-bidding-against-survival-aug-2014_0.pdf; see also United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) et al., "Elephants in the Dust: The African Elephant Crisis," March 2013, http://www.unep.org/pdf/RRaivory_draft7.pdf.

⁷ Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, presentation at CSIS conference.

other wildlife products and conflict resources like gold, minerals, and weapons, to narcotics and human beings.⁸

Global Crime Syndicates

Beginning in the late 2000s, a rapid increase in seizures by customs officials of large shipments indicated a growing scale and professionalization in the illicit ivory trade consistent with the increasing involvement of international organized crime.⁹

Analysis from both open-source and proprietary data suggests the vast majority of ivory leaves the continent through the legal containerized shipping supply chain, comingled with legal goods, and is transported along well-traveled sea-lanes that are managed, according to the investigative nonprofit C4ADS, by no more than 10 to 15 companies.¹⁰ Analysis by C4ADS points to 15 to 25 “chokepoint” ports that export, import, or transship the greatest share of ivory. The ports of Mombasa, Zanzibar, and Dar es Salaam are the largest points of departure, with transshipment points in the Middle East and India, and destination points in East and Southeast Asia.

The scale of individual shipments recently seized suggests that a relatively small number of criminal syndicates could be responsible for moving a large portion of the overall illicit trade. Data from C4ADS, for example, indicates that a single criminal syndicate was responsible for over 14 tons of seized ivory products. Based on the fairly low estimated rate at which illicit shipments are actually seized by customs officials, C4ADS further concluded that this one network may be responsible for trafficking ivory from up to 35,000 African elephants killed over a two-year period—an amount equal to nearly 70 percent of Mozambique’s remaining elephant population. Overall, it is possible that the vast majority of the global illicit ivory trade is moved through no more than 100 to 150 shipping containers annually, controlled by only a handful of criminal syndicates. The volume of financing transferred across international boundaries points to the possibility that some portion of financing is cleared through U.S. institutions, offering a powerful opportunity for U.S. policymakers and enforcement agencies seeking to choke off ivory profits and disrupt the illicit wildlife trade.

A Profusion of Poaching Groups

There is no uniform profile for the “typical” elephant or rhinoceros poacher in Africa. Rather, the nature of poaching has evolved in response to localized political and economic circumstances. In one region, poaching may be carried out primarily by local trigger men armed and paid by criminal syndicates, while in another it may be conducted by rebel forces, militia groups, and in some cases government security forces. There is considerable debate on the extent of involvement by U.S.-designated

⁸ Jackson Miller, C4ADS, presentation at CSIS conference.

⁹ Fiona M. Underwood, Robert W. Burn, and Tom Milliken, “Dissecting the Illegal Ivory Trade: An Analysis of Ivory Seizures Data,” *PLOS One*, October 18, 2013, <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0076539>.

¹⁰ Jackson Miller presentation at CSIS conference; see also Vira, “Out of Africa: Mapping the Global Trade in Illicit Elephant Ivory.”

foreign terrorist groups in African wildlife poaching. Reports of al-Shabaab's use of ivory proceeds to fund terror attacks are disputed, as are anecdotal reports of poaching by Boko Haram in Cameroon. The possibility and potential implications of linkages to these groups is a source of concern and warrants further investigation. That possibility should not, however, detract attention from the multiple groups—including the Lord's Resistance Army and the Sudanese Janjaweed, discussed below—that have fueled protracted conflict and untold human suffering and where the linkages are well-established.

What the vast majority of poaching hotspots have in common is that they are in regions mired in lawlessness and pervasive armed conflict. Indeed, five of Africa's least-stable countries—Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR), Sudan, South Sudan, and Chad—can now be described as “poaching exporters,” says investigative journalist Bryan Christy of National Geographic. Rather than simply being victims of natural resource theft in the form of criminal poaching, these five states are instead home or host to poachers who use their bases within the country to poach across borders, sometimes hundreds of miles away.

Sudan has become an important source and haven for ivory trafficking: pro-government Janjaweed militias responsible for countless atrocities in the Darfur region of Sudan are among Central Africa's most prolific poaching groups, traveling across borders and launching large-scale attacks in Cameroon, Chad, CAR, and DRC. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), notorious for child abduction, sexual violence, and the maiming and mass-slaughter of civilians, is increasingly sustaining itself through poaching. LRA leader Joseph Kony—listed as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the U.S. State Department—has issued orders for his men to hunt elephants for ivory in and around Garamba National Park in DRC and likely elsewhere.¹¹ Ivory poached by the LRA is bartered for weapons and ammunition with Sudanese military contacts, who allow the group to operate out of the Sudan-controlled disputed Kafia Kingi region without interference.¹² Sudanese-manufactured arms and ammunition have been found at poaching sites, and according to C4ADS, there is evidence that Sudanese and South Sudanese police and military forces have been directly involved in poaching attacks in DRC.

In CAR, the Seleka rebel movement, which includes thousands of armed fighters from Sudan, has enriched itself through poaching massacres in Dzanga-Ndoki National Park. In DRC, Garamba and Virunga National Parks, among others, are under siege by transnational and domestic armed groups, including the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR, which includes former perpetrators of the Rwanda genocide), PARECO (the Coalition of Congolese Patriotic Resistance), as well as the

¹¹ Varun Vira and Thomas Ewing, “Ivory's Curse: The Militarization and Professionalization of Poaching in Africa,” C4ADS and Born Free USA, April 2014, 42, <http://www.all-creatures.org/articles/ar-Ivorys-Curse-2014.pdf>.

¹² Enough Project, The Resolve, and Invisible Children, “Kony to LRA: ‘Bring me ivory, gold, and diamonds,’” press release, November 19, 2014, <http://www.enoughproject.org/files/publications/LRA-Trafficking-Presser-Enough-TheResolve-InvisibleChildren-Nov2014.pdf>.

country's national army.¹³ In April 2012, a Ugandan military helicopter was sighted flying low over Garamba Park, shortly after 22 elephants were massacred, shot through the top of the head—evidence, said park officials, of professional marksmen firing from a helicopter. The Uganda Peoples Defense Force has denied involvement.¹⁴

In South Africa, gangs of rhino horn poachers may be recruited from local communities or sell to middlemen buyers, but the use of high-caliber rifles and helicopters, and evidence of increasingly sophisticated killing techniques, suggest the involvement of professional hunters, hunting and wildlife industry professionals, pilots, and wildlife veterinarians.¹⁵ Kruger National Park shares a 221-mile border with Mozambique, and lax enforcement on the Mozambican side has meant that Mozambican poaching gangs are responsible for a large portion (some estimate up to 90 percent¹⁶) of rhino killings in Kruger Park.

Bearing the Brunt: Civilian Populations and Rangers

For all of the attention paid to the links between terrorist organizations and ivory, the brunt of the human insecurity that results most immediately and directly from poaching is borne by the wildlife rangers and the civilian populations in and around poaching hotspots. In Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo, home to both savannah and forest elephants as well as critically endangered mountain gorillas, more than 150 rangers have been killed in the line of duty since 2004. Virunga has been affected by nearly two decades of civil war in which underequipped forces on both sides supplemented their rations with bush meat from the park and sold or bartered ivory to sustain their operations. In April 2014, the park's Belgian chief warden Emmanuel de Merode was seriously wounded in a roadside ambush.¹⁷

The fact that poaching operations thrive in some of Africa's most remote and lawless regions means that wildlife rangers often represent the only law enforcement organization that stands between poachers and both wildlife and civilian populations. Dubbed the "thin green line," park rangers in most African countries are often equipped only with aging rifles and a handful of bullets against poachers who are often in possession of superior firearms and transportation. Further, often-strict rules

¹³ Virunga National Park, "SOS: 14 Elephants Killed in Virunga National Park," Democratic Republic of the Congo, April 2008, <https://virunga.org/archives/sos-14-elephants-killed-in-virunga/>.

¹⁴ Jean Marc Froment presentation at CSIS conference; see also African Parks Network, "Garamba National Park, DRC: Achievements," http://www.africanparks.eu/Park_5_105_Achievements.html.

¹⁵ Moses Montesh, "Rhino Poaching: A New Form of Organised Crime," Report to College of Law Research and Innovation Committee of the University of South Africa, 2012, http://www.rhinosourcecenter.com/pdf_files/136/1368077595.pdf.

¹⁶ Carey Biron, "Obama Urged to Sanction Mozambique over Elephant, Rhino Poaching," Inter Press Service, July 2, 2014, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/07/obama-urged-to-sanction-mozambique-over-elephant-rhino-poaching/>.

¹⁷ Jack Kahorha, "Injury: Investigation Continues into Motives for Ambush as Warden Recovers," *National Geographic*, April 19, 2014, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/04/140418-virunga-warden-shooting-congo-gorillas-de-merode/>.

of engagement on the part of park rangers mean that poachers fire first, placing rangers at even greater risk as they respond to what amounts to guerilla warfare.¹⁸

In addition to often being out-gunned by poachers, park rangers operate in and around rural communities where in many cases poaching represents one of the few paths out of abject poverty for locals—at times setting the rangers at odds with the communities. Whole villages have been criminalized, said Johan Jooste of South Africa’s Kruger National Park, brought under the control of poaching gangs and their networks. Rangers face lethal force from poachers; they are the target of scorn and often death threats from local communities; and in many cases they face criminal investigation from government authorities if they kill a poacher, even in self-defense.¹⁹ An over-militarized approach can be counterproductive, said Jooste, but rangers must be provided with adequate psychosocial support and the equipment they need—weaponry, air mobility, surveillance and sensor technologies, and nighttime capability—to do their jobs and stay alive.

New Models of Engagement: Community Conservancies and Public-Private Partnerships

Donor governments have traditionally delivered the bulk of wildlife conservation assistance to national government agencies responsible for protected areas. In many cases, however, these governments lack the capacity, experience, or bandwidth to effectively manage protected areas. Conservationists have developed nontraditional models to deliver funding, manpower, and proper management to protected areas and wildlife-rich communities. CSIS panelists described two such models: community conservancies and public-private partnerships.

Community Conservancy Model: The Tsavo Trust

Governor Hussein Dado of Kenya’s Tana River County and Ian Saunders of the Tsavo Trust described the community conservancies being developed in the Tsavo Conservation Area in southern Kenya, which includes three national parks as well as vast tracts of land occupied by small villages and ranches, comprising both private and communal land. Community conservancies devolve a degree of administrative powers and responsibilities for communal resources from the government to the community. These formal arrangements depend on communal owners of land who choose to dedicate their property to conservation and the sustainable use of the

¹⁸ Remarks by Maj. Gen. (ret.) Johan Jooste, head of anti-poaching unit at Kruger National Park, at CSIS conference.

¹⁹ Johan Jooste presentation at CSIS conference; see also Laurel Neme, “For Rangers on the Front Lines of Anti-Poaching Wars, Daily Trauma,” *National Geographic*, June 27 2014, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/06/140627-congo-virunga-wildlife-rangers-elephants-rhinos-poaching/>.

habitat and wildlife, such as through improved and expanded agriculture and tourism.²⁰

The Tsavo Trust community conservancy aims at “stabilization through conservation,” an approach that seeks to integrate security, conservation, community empowerment, and sustainable rural development in ways that will give communities net benefits and a stake in wildlife protection. The model envisages using rangers who are drawn from local communities, vetted and trained to create a buffer zone of law enforcement that will allow the largely pastoral economy to function in a space protected from poachers and violent extremists. The hope is that local recruitment will create buy-in for the conservation mission among the wider community and employ individuals who might otherwise be drawn by the financial allure of poaching or a salary from an extremist group.²¹ At the same time, the Tsavo Trust seeks to develop infrastructure and ecosystem management skills, strengthen mechanisms for communities to express their concerns to government representatives, and work with livestock and agricultural cooperatives to create a sustainable market economy. The trust is in its early stages but looks to more established conservancies, like the Northern Rangelands Trust, which has had considerable success in both security and provision of services.

Public-Private Partnership: The African Parks Network

Jean Marc Froment of the African Parks Network emphasized the importance of strengthening protected areas as a vital part of an effective continental conservation strategy. But where governments lack the capacity, states can delegate or share responsibilities with civil society, NGOs, or private companies. African Parks has been a pioneer in building public-private partnerships in the management of protected areas. The model entails negotiated agreements, typically of 20 years or more, between partner governments and African Parks. The government retains ownership of the park and responsibility for policy, and African Parks is entirely responsible for park management and security.

Currently African Parks manages 10 parks in seven African countries. It has some notable successes, including, for example, in Zakouma National Park in Chad, near the Sudanese border and the Darfur region. Since taking on management of Zakouma in 2010, African Parks spent two years restructuring the park’s ranger force, establishing relationships with the local military and installing a surveillance system along the park’s borders. The precipitous decline of the park’s elephant populations has been halted, and Africa Parks has been working with communities in the park’s periphery, installing radio communication links and building airstrips to facilitate transportation in the wet season. Improved security and communication links, according to Froment,

²⁰ European Commission, “Larger Than Elephants: Inputs for the design of an EU strategic approach to Wildlife Conservation in Africa,” Draft Document, 39, http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/file/26/01/2015_-_1140/vol_3_eastern_africa.pdf.

²¹ Johan Jooste, Hussein Dado, Ian Saunders et al., “Examining On-the-Ground Models for Conservation and Security, Combating Wildlife Poaching and Insecurity in Africa,” CSIS, July 2015, <http://csis.org/event/combating-wildlife-poaching-and-insecurity-africa>.

have allowed local agriculture and business to begin expanding in what was previously a deeply insecure environment.

Garamba Park in DRC has been more problematic, the target of multiple armed groups and essentially a conflict zone. Rangers have engaged in running battles with the LRA, as well as with Sudanese and Congolese militias and security forces, and building ranger capacity, creating an elite Rapid Response Unit, and expanding aerial surveillance capacity have been important priorities. At the same time, African Parks is refurbishing park infrastructure; it has built a major school and hospital, and launched small-scale community development projects.

For both community conservancies and public-private partnerships, procuring—in principle and practice—the authority and weaponry to carry out their security mission can be problematic. African Parks has the authority in Garamba, and the government assigns scouts and law enforcement agents. But getting adequate guns and munitions has been more difficult. The government may not have the available weaponry, and countries like CAR, South Sudan, and DRC have tight restrictions on import of guns. The international community, said Froment, has not to date adequately recognized parks as law enforcement institutions and has therefore hesitated in providing needed equipment. Both national government and the international donor community, said Froment, need to recognize that parks in this region are a vital part of human and regional security. Community conservancies likewise must come to an arrangement with local and national government to establish their standing as a law enforcement organization, and this is often a sensitive issue because rangers more frequently operate among civilian populations in the course of wildlife protection duties. The Tsavo Trust aims to secure status for conservancy rangers as members of the Kenya Police Reserve, although at present, with the country in the midst of political devolution, the internal security system is in flux.

Priorities for Concerted Action

There has been promising momentum in the fight against wildlife trafficking in the past year, and constituencies beyond conservationists are beginning to recognize the scale of the poaching crisis and its implications for human and international security.

In February 2015, the White House released a plan for the implementation of its National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking, calling for a robust, multiagency response that includes development assistance, law enforcement assets, diplomatic resources, and security training to tackle the trade in ivory and rhino horn. The president subsequently announced steps to create a near-total ban on domestic commercial ivory trade, and U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell traveled to Vietnam and China to seek greater cooperation on curbing demand.

In the U.S. Congress, the House of Representatives passed the “Global Anti-Poaching Act,” in November 2015, authorizing the State Department to withhold assistance from

countries that fail to uphold international agreements on threatened species and making wildlife trafficking a predicate offense under racketeering and money-laundering statutes. The 2016 Intelligence Authorization Act, passed in the House of Representatives, for the first time calls on the director of national intelligence to report on wildlife trafficking networks, identifying key actors, areas of vulnerability, and targets for disruption. In the Senate, Senator Dianne Feinstein introduced the “Wildlife Trafficking Enforcement Act,” which, like the Global Anti-Poaching Act, would make wildlife trafficking a predicate offense under racketeering and money-laundering statutes. Senator Chris Coons and Senator Jeff Flake are both preparing to introduce anti-poaching legislation. These efforts have to date enjoyed strong bipartisan support and offer an opportunity for the United States to take a strong leadership role in the fight against wildlife trafficking.

Elsewhere in the world, the European Commission in February released a major strategy document on wildlife conservation in Africa, which includes the establishment of a trust fund to provide up to €350 million annually for conservation efforts, with plans to seek matching funds from private donors. African Union heads of state in April drafted a regional strategy to address wildlife trafficking, and at the 2015 G7 summit in Bavaria, heads of state pledged greater commitment to the issue. The United Nations took an important step in April, reclassifying wildlife trafficking as a “serious crime” and thereby unlocking provisions for greater investigative leeway and international cooperation, asset seizures, and much stiffer penalties. And in July the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution calling on members to step up collective efforts to fight wildlife crime. In a widely welcome development, China in May announced plans to phase out legal domestic sale and processing of ivory products, and during Chinese president Xi Jinping’s visit to Washington in September, the United States and China agreed to halt domestic commercial trade of ivory and cooperate with other countries to combat wildlife trafficking.

In Africa, key countries are stepping up efforts and investment in investigation and enforcement. In 2014, South Africa and Mozambique signed a “hot pursuit” agreement that allows South African rangers to pursue poachers across the shared border. Kenya and Tanzania have both made high-profile arrests of ivory “kingpins” in 2015, including the arrest in Tanzania of Chinese businesswoman Yang Feng Glan, nicknamed the “Queen of Ivory,” and of Boniface Matthew Mriango, Tanzania’s most-wanted elephant poacher and trafficker, nicknamed “Shetani” (“the Devil” in Swahili).

Participants in the conference praised recent developments but cautioned that pressure for robust and swift follow-through will be required. Panelists pointed to the need for a multidimensional, multisectoral response that targets priority areas along the entire ivory and rhino horn supply chain. Wildlife poaching and the traffic that sustains it is not only a threat to conservation, development, and law enforcement. It has become a means and motive for regional conflict and helped fuel some of the world’s worst humanitarian crises, which have cost countless human lives and billions in international emergency and security assistance. The United States,

together with African partners and the international community, should invest commensurate resources and attention to:

- *Fortify the thin green line.* Protected areas and park rangers must be urgently supported with adequate weaponry, training, air mobility, and surveillance and sensor technologies. Paramilitary interventions will not solve the poaching crisis, but the solution must include strengthening paramilitary capacity to protect rangers and allow them to do their job. Such assistance must be delivered with a clear plan for reporting and accountability.
- *Give communities a stake in conservation.* Panelists repeatedly stressed the need to engage the communities that live around or within protected areas and conservancies. Targeted assistance—basic infrastructure, education and training, microcredit services, market support, for example—should aim to build sustainable rural economies and give communities a greater role and a greater stake in wildlife protection. Best practices and lessons learned—from public-private partnerships and from community conservancies—should be widely shared.
- *Support national government intelligence and enforcement capacities.* Despite some recent high-profile arrests in East Africa, most African governments lack the capacities and trained personnel to effectively investigate and disrupt poaching and trafficking networks. The United States and other partners should provide technical and financial assistance to support strengthening of legal frameworks, forensic and investigative capacity, intelligence gathering and sharing, and cross-border mechanisms of collaboration and information exchange.
- *Focus on network analysis and network disruption.* Network analysis by C4ADS and others has revealed key chokepoints and vulnerabilities in the transnational wildlife supply chain. Collaborative efforts should target these key vulnerabilities along the supply chain—logistics, transport, shipping companies, port security—which may have broader effect than episodic arrests. The United States has multiple tools developed to target drug trafficking and terror finance. The Department of Treasury, the Department of Justice, and other U.S. agencies should be granted the authorities and resources to adapt and apply these tools to track and disrupt wildlife trafficking syndicates. U.S. agencies, along with international enforcement organizations like INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization, and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, can work together more effectively to combat trafficking in all these areas
- *Elevate wildlife trafficking in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy.* Greater priority should be given to wildlife trafficking in engagement with consumer nations. China's recent pledge is promising and the opportunity for stronger U.S.-China collaboration should be seized. Vietnam should be the target of high-level and persistent engagement on demand reduction. And in its bilateral

engagement with source and transit countries in Africa, the United States can consistently press for and encourage strong government commitment to—and investment in—anti-poaching and trafficking efforts. The United States and its committed partners should ensure that wildlife trafficking remains high on the agenda of multilateral forums, including the G7 and the UN Security Council, and that countries that fail to live up to international commitments on wildlife protection are subject to escalating international pressure and sanction.

- *Strengthen partnerships for coordination and concerted action.* An effective response to wildlife trafficking will require coordinated action by diverse actors across multiple disciplines, across agencies, and across borders. It must include data and intelligence sharing, transnational cooperation on law enforcement, cross-border cooperation on conservation and anti-poaching efforts, and sharing of new technologies, tactics, and best practices. In many cases, new networks of coordination must be established and old networks strengthened, with greater political commitment and investment in collaborative action. Within the United States, legislation and executive actions requiring and empowering government agencies to work together across silos will be critical. President Obama’s National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking is an important step in this direction.

Panelists returned repeatedly to two issues cited as among the most critical sources of concern and challenge. Corruption—and the collusion of local and national authorities—is an essential element and enabler of poaching and trafficking networks, and one that will be difficult to uproot, absent much stronger political will and focus within national governments in source and transit countries. The second challenge is the need to sustain a sense of urgency. The complexity of the trafficking issue will require that governments and their partners build new networks, craft new and innovative strategies, and follow through with resources and action—all in a very short time frame. In the day-long span of the CSIS conference, Johan Jooste received reports that three more rhinos were killed in Kruger Park. “The problem is big,” said Jooste, “and time is short.”

Appendix. Conference Agenda

Combating Wildlife Poaching and Insecurity in Africa
July 15, 2015

Keynote Remarks

The Honorable Ed Royce (R-CA), *Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs*

The Honorable Jeff Flake (R-AZ), *Chairman, Subcommittee on African Affairs, Senate Foreign Relations Committee*

Professor Judi Wakhungu, *Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Water, and Natural Resources, Government of Kenya*

Panel 1: Room for Growth in Current Anti-Poaching and Trafficking Policy

Dan Ashe, *Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

Luis Arreaga, *Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs*

Kirstin Siex, *Senior Biodiversity Policy Adviser of the Bureau for Africa, USAID*

Enrico Pironio, *Africa Wildlife and Protected Areas, European Commission DF DEVCO*

Moderated by: Juan Zarate, *Senior Adviser, CSIS, Former Deputy Assistant to the President, Former Deputy National Security Adviser for Combating Terrorism*

Panel 2: Environmental and Security Implications of the Current Poaching Crisis

Bryan Christy, *Journalist and Author, National Geographic Society*

Jackson Miller, *Lead Wildlife and Environmental Crimes Analyst, C4ADS*

Richard Ruggiero, *Chief, Division of International Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

Moderated by: Jennifer Cooke, *Director, CSIS Africa Program*

Panel 3: Examining On-the-Ground Models for Conservation and Security

His Excellency Hussein Dado, *Governor, Tana River County, Kenya*

Ian Saunders, *Chief Operating Officer, Tsavo Trust*

Jean Marc Froment, *Director of Conservation, African Parks Network*

Maj. Gen. (ret.) Johan Jooste, *Anti-Poaching Chief, Kruger National Park South Africa*

Moderated by: James Deutsch, *Vice President for Conservation Strategy, Wildlife Conservation Society*

About the Authors

Jennifer G. Cooke is director of the CSIS Africa Program, where she manages a range of projects on political, economic, and security dynamics in Africa, providing research and analysis to U.S. policymakers, members of Congress, and the U.S. military, as well as the broader public. She is a frequent writer and lecturer on U.S.-Africa policy, on political and economic trends across the continent, and on emergent security threats. She recently led the CSIS Nigeria Election Forum, a two-year project examining the major challenges associated with Nigeria's 2015 elections; cochaired a CSIS project on Africa's new oil and gas producers; and directed a multiyear study on the intersection of religion and politics in Africa.

Cooke has authored or coauthored numerous CSIS reports, including most recently *Rethinking Engagement in Fragile States* (June 2015); *Africa's New Energy Producers: Making the Most of Emergent Opportunities* (January 2015); *Africa at a Crossroads: Overcoming Obstacles to Sustained Growth and Economic Transformation* (May 2014), and *Launching a New Chapter in U.S.-Africa Relations: Deepening the Business Relationship* (February 2014). With J. Stephen Morrison, she is coeditor of *U.S. Africa Policy beyond the Bush Years* (CSIS, 2009) and *Africa Policy in the Clinton Years* (CSIS, 2001). She is a frequent commentator in print, on radio, and on television, and she has testified before Congress on Boko Haram in Nigeria, the political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, and the African Union. Prior to CSIS, she worked at the National Academy of Sciences in the Office of Human Rights and the Office of News and Public Information and in the U.S. Congress on the House Subcommittee on Africa. She holds an M.A. in African studies and international economics from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and a B.A. in government, magna cum laude, from Harvard University. She has lived in Côte d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic.

Derek Schlickeisen was a consultant with the CSIS Africa Program. He holds a B.A. in political science from Middlebury College and an M.A. in international economics and American foreign policy from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC &
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

1616 Rhode Island Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-887-0200 | www.csis.org

