

to collect such information. His task is to be invisible in the field. Infiltration and exfiltration goes undetected and the poacher is now being observed and studied from a position of strength. The Clandestine Operator guides aircraft, ground cover units and the operation that unfolds from a position where the poacher cannot escape. The training includes ground to air control, small team tactics and tactical communications that allow the Clandestine Operator to be effective once the track is found. With secrecy shrouding the deployment phases internal collusion with poachers is nullified and corrupt elements are exposed. The operational successes achieved through the application of Clandestine Operators are numerous and the impact their deployments have had immediate.

Additional Training

The training of a Field Ranger does not stop at the Clandestine Operator course. There are several training interventions which are applied so as to make the Field Ranger safer during operations. The courses include First Aid, at the advanced level, handgun training, tracking training as well as legal training including the EMI (Environmental Management Inspector) training. All Field Rangers belonging to Provincial and Governmental organizations are qualified as EMI's so as to expand their legal powers on the ground. This serves to bolster the Field Ranger's confidence as a Law Enforcement officer and allows the Field Ranger to act in the situations which arise in the field. The legal powers of Field Rangers are numerous in the Protected Area and more cases going to court are successful in the prosecution of poachers.



Conclusion

The Field Ranger has been advanced and professionalized through effective training and development. The threat is constantly monitored and acted upon where training is concerned. The need for dedicated individuals has never been higher and the training never more applicable as now. The ability of Field Ranger Trainers to adapt will ensure the survival of the Field Ranger in combat situations during operations. These adaptations must be aligned with the operational need and the available specialized equipment. Field Rangers are the front line and they deserve the best in terms of development and support.

Note: The Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC) is a long-standing CIC member

Poaching in Africa: Facts, Causes and Solutions

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The poaching of elephants and rhinos has turned into a major international topic. Tens of thousands of elephants have already been killed. The crisis has even made its way into politics: The UN Security Council, Barack Obama, the Clintons and the Windsors addressed poaching and illegal wildlife trade. Elephant summits were convened in Gaborone, London and Tokyo. Bilateral and international aid organizations are developing projects. In lockstep the United Nations, the African

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Development Bank, and Interpol are crafting action plans. The usual suspects from Hollywood and glamour have also jumped the train, because of the obvious publicity. Successes are not yet in sight.

The previous cycle of commercial trophy poaching in Africa ran from the late 70s to late 80s. Effective reforms of wildlife management and protection, international agreements and aid projects improved the situation. Thereafter, national efforts in Africa fell dormant again. At the same time the demand for ivory and rhino horn from China and Vietnam increased enormously. All regions of Africa that still are home to game animals are affected. The manifestations of the current crisis are manifold. The poachers are looking for meat, ivory, rhinoceros horn and animal parts for medicinal purposes.

The poachers come from many sectors of society. There are villagers who put out snares, or head out meat hunting with an inherited antique muzzleloader. This vision is often romanticized in the Europe. However, in reality even this kind of hunting is nowadays purely commercial. Commercial poaching applies in any case to the slaughter of elephants and rhinos. Here, too, the poachers themselves often come from local villages. The intermediate trade and export is run by organized crime. In countries with desolate government administration the military and police also poach regularly. Even the rangers themselves are often involved, especially if the discipline is lost. In civil war zones poaching takes place on all sides. In Central Africa, the horsemen bands from the Sudan-Somalia region are a big problem. Poaching can also be interwoven with other forms of crime, such as cattle theft, robbery, drugs, or even trade in human body parts.

The causes are also complex. Poaching provides income, and given the widespread poverty and unemployment it is easy to find sufficient manpower for this industry. The theory that increasing wealth reduces poaching has not been empirically confirmed. Higher purchasing power often only increases the demand. Bad Governance is nearly everywhere a decisive factor.

The chronic under funding of game management and protection in Africa is a major reason for the misery. Wildlife Agencies and National Parks have high financial requirements that are not even remotely met by the state. Ninety percent of all protected areas are not able to finance themselves. Because of the lack in government funding they often become "paper parks", i.e. protected areas that exist only on paper. In an irresponsible manner some conservation organizations continue to create national parks that can only run financial deficits. At the same time they force out sustainable and lucrative hunting tourism for purely ideological reasons. Unable to learn from the unsuccessful example set by Kenya, Botswana has recently prohibited hunting. Animal rights activists and the media have praised it. The losers are the local people, who are denied a source of income and thus an incentive to protect wildlife. Hunting bans have proven to be counterproductive. Ultimately the wildlife pays the bill.

Basically, there are two opposing ideologies. One relies solely on protection. In a policy of "fines and fences" wild animals and the corresponding natural areas are "defended" against illegal use (and often against legal use), similar to the way forts were once used to protect against attacking foes. The appropriate term "fortress conservation" was coined for this. The wildlife of Africa is considered a heritage of humanity and should therefore be subsidized and preserved. It is believed that the local population can be prevented from utilizing game and poaching through education. Experience shows that this approach has essentially failed. The other position wants to conserve the wildlife by a mix of protection sustainable use and underlines that this in accordance with the "Convention on Biological Diversity".

Wild game is considered a "public good" almost everywhere and therefore subject to the "tragedy of the commons": Everyone tries to consume the free resource, because otherwise others will do it. The result is overuse, lack of sustainability and finally extinction.

The solutions to poaching are just as complex as the causes. Anyone who promises a standard formula for success is either a simpleton or a liar. By sending in emergency "green helmets" it is perhaps possible to stop or reduce poaching for a few months. That may even be useful if all else fails. However, the structures of conservation must be improved simultaneously: management and infrastructure of protected areas, finance, leadership, accountability of administrations etc. This all takes time.

Lasting solutions are therefore only attainable in the long term. They require simultaneous action on both sides of the chain of supply and demand. The issue must be addressed both internationally and nationally, in Africa as well as in the consumer countries, and in the wealthy countries that can afford to help. Completely stopping all illegal hunting can never be achieved. It can only be reduced to the extent that game stocks grow faster than they are being decimated.

Only international cooperation can combat illegal trade on a global level. Transnational police cooperation in Africa is very important. The Washington Convention (CITES) plays an important role in the regulation of international trade in endangered species, but should not be abused for meaningless, purely ideologically justified prohibitions on use.

On the national level appropriate legislation and effective law enforcement are essential, as well as functioning authorities. Without effective rangers in wildlife areas (boots on the ground) there can be no success in combating illegal use. They must be trained, equipped and well guided. Widespread corruption promotes poaching decisively. Reducing corruption is particularly difficult, but indispensable. Deregulating game as state property and transferring ownership and/or use to the private sector and civil society can help.

Without adequate funding one can write off the national parks, wildlife conservation, and poaching prevention in Africa. It is illusory to believe that long term funding can come from external sources such as government subsidies, private donations, or international aid. Sustainable financing must come from the resources themselves, at least partly. The principle of protection through use (Use it or Lose it) is essential. Practical experience shows that this is the only way to finance wildlife conservation in Africa in the long run. Particularly, hunting tourism generates high yields and is sustainable if it is properly regulated. Trophy hunting therefore can reduce poaching.

Successful wildlife conservation requires the involvement of the local population. The local people must at least be involved in the decision making process. Above all, however, they should receive material advantages from the game. Well-intentioned conservation can be counterproductive if it prohibits sustainable wildlife utilization by the local inhabitants. CITES must therefore consider the impact of regulations on the lives of local people in the future. Pure animal protection concepts are often nothing more than modern forms of neo-colonialism, as they seek to impose ideological concepts from the rich nations on local rural people. It is an illusion to believe that excluding the local people from wildlife and conducting vigorous law enforcement simultaneously will save the game.

Poaching will be with us as long as there are wild animals in Africa. However, there are strategies that have been proven successful in preventing poaching. The question is whether the political will exists to implement them.