



JAMIE GAYMER

Held to ransom on Ol Jogi

The letter was handwritten and on the reverse were the names and signatures of 75% of our armed personnel. The contents demanded an immediate pay rise of 200–300% for all individuals listed, and a positive response by 2pm on the same day. Failure to satisfy the demand in full would result in the immediate resignation of all parties; notice would not be served!

Jamie Gaymer | Warden, Ol Jogi

We convened a crisis meeting with the said individuals. All reasonable avenues at our discretion were employed to resolve the situation but it was not to be. Ol Jogi was without, arguably, the most critical component of rhino security; an effective armed response team.

In a time of crisis, the Kenyan conservation community displayed tremendous unity; both government agencies and private sector conservancies provided significant support. Circumstance analysis and evaluation was thorough in order to avoid a repeat situation; in Ol Jogi or elsewhere.

The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) was co-opted to assist with a recruitment exercise. Immediately after the new team was selected, the KWS embarked on a ranger training programme. Ol Jogi management simultaneously applied for National Police Reserve (NPR) status on behalf of the candidates. Once this was received in May, the police embarked on a mandatory training course, after which the team was legally and technically ready for deployment.

A critical component to give our new team a competitive edge lay in further training, which has never been more important considering the evolving threats. 51 Degrees was contracted for a month's training course, which included weapons training, first aid, strategic patrolling, navigation, ambushing, use of dogs in security and much more. It is the edge that might make the difference between life and death for our new rangers.

We hope to maintain this level of competence through refresher courses, as well as increasing ranger capacity with further and more advanced training. The enemy is evolving, risk increasing, threat worsening and it is our responsibility to ensure that our security is prepared.

Grants

We are indebted to those that helped to make this training possible: Space for Giants, Save the Rhino International Inc. (\$6,000), Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund's Rapid Response Fund (\$5,000), Chester Zoo (£2,000) and Braeburn School (£358).

WHO OWNS KENYA'S RHINOS?

The rapid inflation in the price of rhino horn in consumer markets has put tremendous pressure on those protecting rhinos. One indirect impact of poaching is the increased capacity requirement needed to grow rhino populations. The primary capacity factor affected by the increase in demand is security.

Jamie Gaymer | Warden, Ol Jogi

It is becoming increasingly difficult and costly to maintain acceptable standards to ensure that populations maintain positive growth. Kenya currently has a significant space deficit for rhinos, exaggerated by the 150,000 acres recently lost through private sector disinvestment. The economic burden is becoming increasingly unsustainable.

In Kenya 44% of Eastern black rhinos and 72% of Southern white rhinos are currently hosted on private land; this equates to 55% of the total rhino numbers. Additionally, the Kenyan private sector currently hosts three of the last six remaining Northern white rhinos in the world. Based on these statistics, one might assume that economic motives drive private sector investment in rhino conservation. This could not be further from the truth.



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All black rhinos are owned by the state and although the private sector owns their white rhinos, policy regulations prohibit many avenues for revenue generation. Nevertheless, the private sector works very closely with the government. Cooperative support includes intelligence sharing, armed response, asset sharing, policy development and biological management.

The Kenya Rhino Management Strategy clearly outlines the need for retention and development of the private sector sanctuaries. However many rhino sanctuaries, private and public, have reached or exceeded ecological carrying capacity and this is of sincere concern.