

Media Advisory
Embassy of the United States
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United States Supports South African Anti-Wildlife Trafficking Efforts

In fulfillment of the pledge made by President Obama during his 2013 Africa trip, we are pleased to announce our commitment of \$3 million to fund anti-wildlife trafficking efforts in South Africa. This funding comes through the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), and clearly demonstrates the increased U.S. focus on combatting the scourge of wildlife trafficking, as laid out in the 2014 National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking.

\$2.25 million will specifically fund efforts in South Africa to:

- assist law enforcement in conducting intelligence-driven investigations;
- build expertise that will help analyze and map the illicit wildlife trade to support proactive targeting of illicit networks;
- improve communications between counterparts in the wildlife and criminal justice communities; and
- assist the Government in building strong partnerships with neighboring African countries and consumer countries in Asia to ensure more regular coordination and the sharing of information related to wildlife trafficking.

The recipient organizations are:

- The South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, which will systemically analyze the law enforcement chain with a specific focus on identifying areas for improvement;
- The Endangered Wildlife Trust, which - in collaboration with the African Wildlife Foundation and International Fund for Animal Welfare - will help improve transnational wildlife crime investigations and prosecutions within South Africa and the region, while increasing the number and severity of sentences for perpetrators;
- **George Mason University's Terrorism, Transnational Crime, and Corruption Center (TraCCC), which will support South African authorities and law enforcement efforts globally in tracking and disrupting transnational horn smuggling networks;**

- The World Wide Fund for Nature South Africa (WWF-SA), which will provide wildlife and criminal justice sector stakeholders both within South Africa and internationally a forum to increase networking and communication. This project will also develop mechanisms to increase cooperation and the sharing of information to harness collective efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of State is proud to donate to South African park rangers at the national and provincial levels \$750,000 worth of survival, surveillance, and investigative equipment to support their efforts to combat poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking. As part of this funding, tomorrow we will donate two 4x4 trailers to park officials in Free State and Kwa-Zulu Natal provinces. These trailers will carry forensic equipment to crime scenes, ensuring rangers and environmental management inspectors have the tools they need to properly collect evidence -- the first step in the successful investigation and prosecution of criminals.

On Friday, November 14 at 2:30 pm at the U.S. Embassy Pretoria, there will be a hand-over of the equipment mentioned. Media is invited to this event. We ask the media to arrive by **2:00pm** so that they may gain access into the Embassy with their equipment.

Like other forms of illicit trade, wildlife trafficking undermines security across nations. Well-armed, well-equipped, and well-organized networks of criminals, insurgent elements, and corrupt officials exploit porous borders and under-resourced institutions to profit from trading in poached wildlife.

Record high demand for illegally traded wildlife products, coupled with inadequate preventative measures and weak institutions, has resulted in an explosion of illicit trade in wildlife in recent years.

As South African Minister of Environmental Affairs Edna Molewa has said, "It is now widely recognized that the consequences of environmental crimes stretch far beyond ecological impacts and have socio-economic and health effects that disrupt entire economies and ecosystems. Environmental crimes also undermine legal and environmentally sustainable activities and reduce future options for the use of natural resources."

We applaud the efforts of the South African government in fighting these crimes and we look forward to continuing to cooperate with it to disrupt the criminal networks involved.

For additional information on United States Government efforts to stop wildlife trafficking world-wide, go to:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/04/fact-sheet-us-support-combating-wildlife-trafficking>

<http://www.state.gov/e/oes/ecw/wlt/index.htm>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/07/01/executive-order-combating-wildlife-trafficking>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/11/fact-sheet-national-strategy-combating-wildlife-trafficking-commercial-b>

<http://www.state.gov/j/inl/tocrewards/c60273.htm>