

Africa poaching now a war, task force warns

September 21 2017, by Gregory Walton



Africa's rhinos could be extinct within 20 years at the rate they are being poached, Wildlife Direct says

The fight against poaching must be treated as a war, Africa's leading anti-poaching coalition said Thursday, as it called for the illicit wildlife trade to be monitored like global conflicts.

Enact, an EU-funded anti-poaching analytical taskforce that includes Interpol, called for the expansion of a media tracking system to track poaching incidents similar to established conflict monitoring methods.

"We're following the model put out by conflict data programmes which have basically used media monitoring" on incidents of [conflict](#), said Ciara Aucoin, a researcher at South Africa's Institute for Security Studies.

"From that research we've been able to get a more nuanced understanding of conflicts around Africa," she said while presenting the findings of Enact's new study entitled "Guns, poison and horns".

Those methods can be applied to anti-poaching efforts to spot trends and help law enforcement tackle the trade, she said.

Enact unveiled the report at a summit of top anti-poaching experts in Pretoria just 24 hours ahead of international rhino day which highlights the toll of the global horn trade.

'As intense as any war'

Rhino horns are highly prized in Asia where they have been known to fetch up to \$60,000 (50,200 euros) per kilo—more than gold or cocaine—with most of the demand coming from China and Vietnam, where it is coveted as a traditional medicine and aphrodisiac.



Rhino horns are highly prized in Asia where they have been known to fetch up to \$60,000 per kilo—more than gold or cocaine

But expert researchers say the current black market rate in Vietnam is around \$24,000 a kilo.

Africa's rhinos could be extinct within 20 years at the rate they are being poached, according to Wildlife Direct, a non-profit conservation organisation.

Johan Jooste, head of special projects at South African National Parks, told AFP that the fight against poachers has become a war like any other.

"The rhino campaign in terms of [armed conflict](#) is as intense as any war," he said.

"I'm a veteran of our Bush War and this is more intense than what we have seen there," he said of South Africa's brutal apartheid-era campaign against insurgents in its frontier regions between the 1960s and 1980s.

Rangers as warriors

"The intensity has become high and it has become a very dangerous job. That is why in Africa we have to accept, against our will, that a ranger equals a warrior," he said.



Experts say the fight against poachers has become like a war

"That is why you have to adopt a paramilitary approach... I refer to this as the iron fist with a velvet glove."

Jooste, who spoke at the summit, said that anti-poaching patrols in the park had engaged in armed confrontation with poachers on 150 occasions.

But he ruled out a shoot-to-kill policy for armed poachers caught in the [national parks](#).

"It will not stop poaching. If you take that step, what is next?" he asked.

"We will never consider it."

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