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## SSN Rhino Newsletter

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Species Survival Network

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### **Soldier among group of alleged rhino poachers facing court in Zimbabwe**

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Three alleged rhino poachers appeared in court in Harare on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011, on charges of illegally hunting protected animals. Originally, six suspects had been arrested, one of them a soldier. The gang had hidden the rhino horn in a vehicle, and were intending to follow a cross-border bus to South Africa, where they planned to sell the horn for R700 000 (\$70, 000) to a South African buyer.

It was reported elsewhere that two rhino horns, weighing 8.2 kgs, were recovered from a vehicle registered to Local Government, Rural and Urban Development Deputy Minister Cecil Zvidzai.

Sources:

Rhino 'poachers' linked to murder, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012. <http://www.dailynews.co.zw/index.php/news/34-news/6440--rhino-poachers-linked-to-murder.html>

10 January 2012. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201201110097.html>

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### **Two rhino poaching bids foiled, India**

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In January 2012, officials of Kaziranga and Orang National Parks successfully foiled two separate attempts by poachers to kill rhinos in the parks. Anti-poaching operations in the two national parks have been intensified following increasing attempts by poachers to kill rhinos.

In Kaziranga, forest guards fired on three poachers who entered the Bagori forest range of the park. The poachers, equipped with a .303 rifle, escaped but no rhinos were killed.

Kaziranga is reported to have lost one rhino to poachers between December 2011 and January 2012. A senior Kaziranga park official said poachers are increasingly targeting rhinos that stray outside the park, and that in the previous two months poachers had killed three out of seven rhinos that had strayed beyond the park boundaries.

In Orang, park officials were successful in flushing out a gang of poachers who entered the park to kill a rhino on January 18.

The Mangaloi Wildlife Divisional Forest Officer reported that "a gang of poachers entered Orang through the south-western boundary of the park on January 18. They wanted to kill a rhino near a waterhole. All the camps of the park were immediately alerted through a wireless network and a combing operation was launched. Several rounds were fired, but the poachers escaped after failing to kill the rhino".

Source: Times of India, January 24, 2012. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/Two-rhino-poaching-bids-foiled/articleshow/11611137.cms>

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## Gaddafi son linked to South African rhino hunts

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Saadi Gaddafi, third son of deposed Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, is reported to have taken part in a rhino hunt in South Africa's North West province.

Records released by the North West's Department of Environment, Conservation and Tourism show that a "Saadi M Gadhafi" was issued a permit to hunt rhino in the Bojanalo district in May 2009.

The *Standard* newspaper in Nairobi reported that Saadi had visited the Masai Mara reserve in 2009 and "threw a tantrum" when the Kenya Wildlife Services refused to allow him to hunt.

Tebogo Modise, the North West Minister for economic development, environment and tourism for environmental affairs, and her departmental director, Lebo Diale, failed to respond to queries requesting details of the nationality and date of birth of the "Saadi M Gadhafi" listed in the hunting records.

Source: IOL, January 26, 2012. <http://www.iol.co.za/mercury/gaddafi-son-linked-to-sa-rhino-hunts-1.1220953>

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## Call for CITES downlisting of white rhino in South Africa

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The South African Hunters and Game Conservation Association has stated that downlisting the South African white rhino to Appendix III [not possible under CITES; see note] would be the "only effective measure" against rhino poaching in the country.

The Association fears that other species could come under attack, stating "this is particularly true of elephant, thousands of which have been slaughtered over the past decade in Africa just for ivory."

*SSN Note: There is no mechanism within CITES for downlisting a species to Appendix III, as listings on Appendix III are made at the national level. The South African population would have to be removed from the Appendices altogether by a vote of the CITES Parties, after which South Africa could unilaterally list their population on Appendix III. However, as the South African population is currently on Appendix II subject to an annotation barring commercial trade in horn, trade could be permitted by a vote amending or deleting the annotation but retaining the population on Appendix II [see story below].*

Source: The New Age, Jan 26 2012. <http://www.thenewage.co.za/41486-1009-53-Call-to-downlist-white-rhino-on-CITES-to-stop-plundering>

## **Value of rhino horn could save the species, claims Namibian organization**

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Namibia's Rhino Survival Trust in Windhoek has described rhino horn as "a renewable resource" and has compared killing rhinos to harvest it with "killing a sheep for its wool."

The Trust has devised a proposal that relies on the legalisation of rhino horn trade in Namibia so that the Government, communities and private land owners can reap the full economic benefits the species have to offer. It suggests that, if horn harvesting were permitted, it would meet the demands of the market. The horns would be held in National Banks, like gold and diamonds, and representatives of interested countries would be invited to attend regular sales where prices and amounts would not be negotiable. [see note]

Dr. Kalumbi Shangula, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism stated that he was aware of this suggestion, but that the Ministry remained cautious about the implications.

*SSN Note: Rhinoceros populations in Namibia are listed on Appendix I of CITES. In order to export Namibian rhino horn Namibia's populations would have to be transferred to Appendix II; this would require a vote by the Conference of the Parties.*

Source: Value of Rhino Horn Could Save the Species, 26 January 2012.  
<http://allafrica.com/stories/201201260598.html>

## **Chinese arms company allegedly offers weapons to Indian rebel groups in exchange for rhino horn**

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Three rhino poachers who responded to an offer of weapons in exchange for rhino horn in November 2011 have allegedly been killed by rebel groups in Assam, India.

The offer of guns for rhino horns, body parts and blood samples had allegedly been made on behalf of the Chinese arms company, the Hawk Group. The offer was made last year to two Indian rebel factions.

The company makes weapons, but also has a subsidiary called Longhui which makes traditional Chinese medicine. Longhui has reportedly published a business plan for the manufacture of rhino horn-based medication with a projected annual revenue of US\$60 million.

The rebels refused the offer, which was subsequently made to "freelance" poachers. The rebels then executed three freelance poachers. The rebels are reported to have taken this step because of a desire not to damage the tourism industry.

Source: Guns-for-horns offer from Chinese firm shot down. The Straits Times, February 25, 2012.  
[http://www.straitstimes.com/Premium/Premium\\_20120225.html](http://www.straitstimes.com/Premium/Premium_20120225.html)

## **Four more rhinos moved to India's Manas National Park**

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On February 19, 2012, wildlife biologists captured four greater one-horned rhinos (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) in India's Kaziranga National Park and transported them to Manas National Park, approximately 50 kilometres away. This operation is part of the Indian Rhino Vision 2020 program, the goal of which is to rebuild the rhino population in the state of Assam to 3,000 animals by the year 2020. At around the turn of the 20th century, the number of greater one-horned rhinos had been reduced to a few hundred animals due to habitat loss and poaching, but wild populations are now better protected and being managed to repopulate areas in which the species had previously been eradicated.

The captured rhinos were fitted with radio transmitters prior to their release so that their movements can be regularly monitored in the months ahead.

Source: Wildlife Extra, February 2012. <http://www.wildlifeextra.com/go/news/rhino-manas.html#cr>

## **U.S. raids target rhino horn trade**

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Federal wildlife investigators in California and other states have cracked an international smuggling ring that had been trafficking rhinoceros horns for years. More than 150 federal agents and other local enforcement officers raided homes, businesses and made several arrests in a dozen states in February.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service seized diamonds, Rolex watches and 20 rhino horns in the raids, along with more than \$1 million in cash and \$1 million in gold bars. The seizures were made at the business premises of Jimmy Kha, and at his bank and residence.

Kha, his girlfriend Mai Nguyen and his son each face four counts of rhino horn trafficking in violation of federal laws protecting rare and endangered species.

Investigators tracked the movements of hundreds of thousands of dollars through bank wire transfers, including to accounts in China, and travel records of suspects who flew between Los Angeles and Asia as well as between California, Texas and Missouri.

Source: Los Angeles Times, February 22, 2012. <http://www.thespec.com/news/world/article/675487--california-raids-target-rhino-horn-trade>

## **SANParks officials held for rhino poaching, South Africa**

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Four South African National Parks (SANParks) officials have been arrested in connection with rhino poaching. The four were arrested in February 2012 after two rhino were found killed in the Kruger National Park.

All four officials were stationed in the Pretoriuskop section of the park, where 11 rhino have been killed since the beginning of 2012.

"I am personally saddened to discover that some of our own would so callously abuse the confidence and faith that we have entrusted upon them," said SANParks chief executive David Mabunda.

Source: News 24, February 29 2012. <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/SANParks-officials-held-for-rhino-poaching-20120229>

## **Rhino horns missing from South African forensics laboratory**

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At the end of February 2012, a clerk from the police forensic laboratory appeared in the Pretoria District Court in connection with the theft of several rhino horns from a laboratory safe.

The clerk, Azarial Shola Matjila, has denied any wrongdoing. The horns, which were originally confiscated from suspected rhino poachers in June 2009, were handed in at the Villieria police station and were later sent to the police laboratory in Pretoria.

However, when the horns were examined in August 2009 they were found to have been replaced by fakes.

Source: Times Live, 1 March, 2012. <http://www.timeslive.co.za/scitech/2012/03/01/rhino-horns-missing-from-pretoria-evidence-lab>

## **Rhino poachers arrested, South Africa**

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Following a two-month undercover investigation, five men - including two farmers and game rangers - were arrested and several unlicensed firearms and stocks of ammunition recovered in February in an operation involving an alleged rhino poaching syndicate. The men were arrested at a private reserve.

The police confiscated four unlicensed hunting rifles, two pistols, over 2 000 rounds of live ammunition, and a deadly chemical agricultural poison which is commonly used to poison animals such as dogs. A search of the home of one of the suspects allegedly turned up 22 000 counterfeit American dollars, 19 large cannabis plants and a number of illegally-obtained cycads.

The men were caught red-handed shortly after cutting a boundary fence on the reserve. They had reportedly planned to kill seven rhinos.

Source: Rhino poachers snared. Zululand Observer 9 March 2012. <http://www.zululandobserver.co.za/Pages/f10story4.html>

## **Poachers kill rhino in Chitwan National Park, Nepal**

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After celebrating a full year without rhino poaching, Chitwan National Park has reported the killing of a female rhino at Sailimaili River in the western area of the park in April. The Park is home to 504 greater one-horned rhinos according to the latest rhino census.

Chief Conservation Officer at the Chitwan National Park, Jhamak Bahadur Karki, said the rhino was found killed with her horn removed.

The National Park has launched a manhunt for the poachers.

Source: The Himalayan Times, April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012.

<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Poachers+kill+rhino+in+Chitwan+National+Park&NewsID=326652>

## **Rhino summit held in Nairobi**

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Representatives of the conservation community from across Africa met in Nairobi from April 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> 2012 to discuss the rhino crisis. The meeting was hosted by the African Wildlife Foundation and Kenya Wildlife Service. Recommendations included:

- Assisting rhino surveillance and anti-poaching units on the ground with new strategies, tools and resources, including, but not limited to, more advanced communication technology, more vehicles and possibly helicopters.
- Strengthening law enforcement and its coordination at both a local and national level. This includes harsher penalties and fines; improved detection, such as through the use of sniffer dogs at airports, and monitoring; and tougher law enforcement.
- Curbing rhino horn demand and illegal trade through the use of public awareness campaigns on wildlife trade issues in both consumer and source states.
- Reaching out to influence policy makers, financiers, and government officials at the highest appropriate levels.

The full report of the meeting can be downloaded at [www.awf.org/rhinoactionplan](http://www.awf.org/rhinoactionplan) or [www.kws.go.ke](http://www.kws.go.ke).

Source: African Conservation Community Announces Comprehensive Response to Rhino Poaching Crisis. April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012. <http://www.awf.org/content/headline/detail/4584>

## **South African Minister's statement on rhino issues for CITES CoP16**

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Following speculation that South Africa might propose an amendment to its Appendix II listing of white rhino to allow commercial trade in rhino horn trade under the annotation to the listing, the Minister for Water and Environmental Affairs, the Hon. Edna Molewa, stated on April 4<sup>th</sup> 2012 that South Africa was "not in a position to pronounce on the matter as the internal preparatory processes are not yet finalised. I can however inform you that the process to prepare for the 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties has been initiated and interested and affected Parties were invited to register to participate in this process".

The Minister stated that, among others, the following issues needed to be addressed before the country could submit a proposal:

- All rhino horn in private and government possession must be permitted, marked, registered and verified;
- Strategic engagements must be entered into with regional and international partners;
- Trading partners must be identified and confirmed. Domestic legislation of trading partners must be amended to enable them to legally import and sell rhino horn (no legal trade permitted currently in consumer states);
- A proposed system for trade must be developed, including appropriate legislative provisions in South Africa and potential recipient countries (Similar to the ivory trade process, under which Japan and China had to provide for legislative systems to ensure control mechanisms were in place relating to ivory);

- Cabinet approval will be needed before submission of a proposal to the Conference of Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to amend the annotation to the CITES listing of the South African population of white rhino. Currently the annotation is for the exclusive purpose of allowing international trade in live animals to appropriate and acceptable destinations and hunting trophies. All other specimens are deemed to be specimens of species included in Appendix I and the trade in them shall be regulated accordingly.

Source: <http://www.info.gov.za/speech/DynamicAction?pageid=461&sid=26485&tid=63729>

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## Slaughter of rhinos at record levels

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It has been reported that, in South Africa, more rhinos are being slaughtered each week than were killed each year a decade ago. The death toll is accelerating. South African statistics show that in 2007, 13 were killed. In 2008, it was 83. A year later, 122 were poached. The 2011 figure stands at 448 and, by 19 April this year, it was 181.

Organised criminal networks are responsible for this enormous increase in poaching levels.

A summit held in Nairobi in April 2012 observed that case studies of rhino protection in certain national parks in Asia have demonstrated that "the more trained and properly equipped anti-poaching staff there are in the field, the lower the rates of poaching". It is also reported that, in Namibia, tests have been carried out using automated drones to monitor large areas for illegal incursions by poachers and that, in small areas, sonar can actually be used to monitor for incursions.

The article states that IUCN reports that only 44 Javan and 150-200 Sumatran rhinos remain.

Source: Slaughter of rhinos at record high. The Independent, UK, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2012  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/slaughter-of-rhinos-at-record-high-7687511.html>

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