



Part III: Wildlife Trade and the U.S. Military Abroad: Raising awareness and reducing demand

Project # 11-444

Background:

Military personnel and affiliates posted overseas have significant buying power that influences local markets, including the ability to drive the demand for wildlife products. Purchase and transport of many wildlife products violates U.S. law and obligations to international agreements such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Endangered Species Act. Demand for wildlife and wildlife products poses one of the greatest threats to wild species, leading to local, regional and potentially global extinctions.



Training soldiers at Fort Drum ©WCS

In May 2007, staff from the Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) first noticed illegal items for sale on military bases near Kabul and witnessed military personnel purchasing the items. A survey of 395 soldiers at Fort Drum in June 2008, revealed that more than 40% of those surveyed purchased or saw someone else in the military purchase wildlife items yet less than 12% knew about CITES. Military personnel who either knowingly or unknowingly purchase, transport, or attempt to import illegal wildlife trade products risk confiscation of items and legal action including fines or imprisonment for violating U.S. law, international law, and military regulations.



Sand cat (*Felis margarita*),
one of nine protected cats
in Afghanistan
© Xavier Eichaker



On-base market selling furs ©Elisha Hubbard

Objective:

The goal of this Department of Defense Legacy Program-funded project is to raise awareness of wildlife trade and decrease the demand for wildlife products by U.S. military stationed abroad by communicating the legal and environmental concerns regarding wildlife trade to military personnel who may be deploying to or stationed in Afghanistan or Iraq.



Snow leopard, Persian leopard, and tiger pelts in
Kabul markets © WCS

Summary of Approach:

WCS has partnered with Legacy to develop outreach and education materials targeting U.S.-based military who are about to be deployed or stationed overseas with a particular focus on soldiers going to Iraq and Afghanistan. We are networking with military personnel



to develop clear messages that resonate with military personnel about the potential concerns pertaining to the purchase of wildlife products while stationed overseas. We are communicating these messages through outreach materials: an award winning video, an officer training fact sheet, a Smart Card, several power point presentations of varying lengths that can be downloaded and used by military staff to train enlisted personnel, a website to house the information and new display materials for in-person training and other exhibit opportunities.

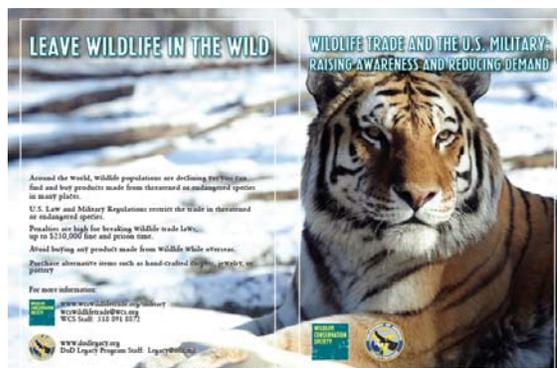


Travelling exhibit at Fort Drum © Heidi Kretser

Benefit:

The conservation benefits are 1) reducing demand for products from species whose populations are near extinction or whose status is unknown; and 2) raising awareness within the military, especially with the military police, of wildlife crimes related to trade. The military benefits are 1) bringing U.S. military personnel into compliance with U.S. and international wildlife trade laws; 2) raising the military conservation image for addressing the purchase of illegal wildlife items by military personnel; 3) contributing to the mission of the U.S. military 'Winning Hearts and Minds' by reducing demand for potentially scarce and/or culturally significant natural resources thereby avoiding local instability in rural, subsistence, or tribal communities which often depend on natural resources for survival; 4) reducing potential corruption due to connections between wildlife crimes and trade in other illegal substances (e.g., drugs, arms, and humans); and 5) Supporting the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking based on a 2012 Executive Order.

WCS Afghanistan
Country Director
trains military police
©Natalie Cash



One of three folder designs to house training materials ©WCS

Accomplishments:

To date, we have reached over 20,000 military personnel through our training programs. We have packaged all training materials into folders for distribution to all U.S. based military installations and several overseas bases. The folders include a DVD with the award winning video *Caught in the Crosshairs*, narrated by Edward Norton, as well as three narrated power point presentations of varying lengths, a Smart Card, a training fact sheet for officers, Form 4658 with information on wildlife trade, and two publications concerning this work. We have modified presentations to include a module for comparing real and fake furs and ivory tailored to personnel deploying to Asia and Africa. All materials are available online at www.wcswildlifetrade.org/military. In addition, we have incorporated training materials into a course for Joint Environmental Considerations during Deployment Operations as well as US Army Africa in-country briefings.



Caught in the Crosshairs DVD cover ©WCS

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