



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

Project # 12-444

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

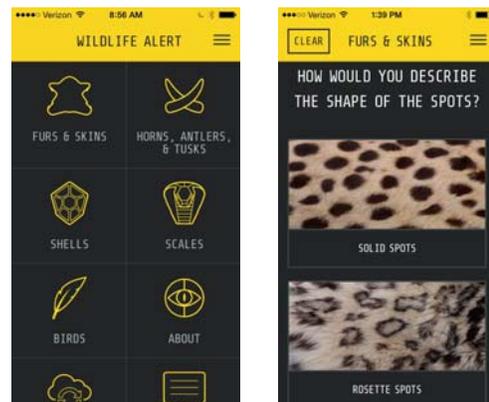
In 2007, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) staff first noticed illegal items for sale on military bases near Kabul and witnessed military personnel purchasing products. A survey of 395 soldiers at Fort Drum in 2008, revealed that more than 40% of those surveyed purchased or saw someone else in the military purchase wildlife items. 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.

WCS has partnered with the DoD to develop clear messages that resonate with military personnel about the potential concerns pertaining to the purchase of wildlife products while stationed overseas. To date, WCS has produced and distributed many training materials to U.S. military personnel in pre-deployment as well as in-theater trainings. Products include the award winning video, *Caught in the Crosshairs*, narrated by Edward Norton, a Smart Card, a training fact sheet for officers, Form 4658 with information on

wildlife trade, mobile display materials, three narrated power point presentations, training folders for distribution and a website www.wcswildlifetrade.org/military to house materials. WCS staff have directly trained more than 20,000 military personnel at Fort Drum, West Point, the Sustaining Military Readiness Conference and reached additional personnel via the distribution of materials to all military bases in the United States as well as through US Army Africa, AFRICOM, CENTCOM, SOUTHCOM and PACCOM.

Objective:

The objective of this Department of Defense Legacy Program-funded project is to conduct outreach with existing materials and expand on-going efforts by designing an interactive web-based training module to identify and stop the inadvertent trafficking of illegal wildlife trade products by military personnel. To achieve this goal WCS developed and released Wildlife Alert, a mobile app to aid in the identification of wildlife from animal parts used in wildlife trade products.



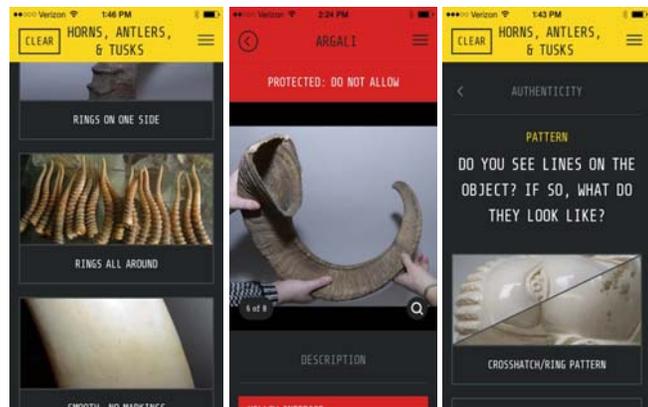
App interfaces to select the type of product in question and obtain information to find a wildlife match ©WCS

Summary of Approach:

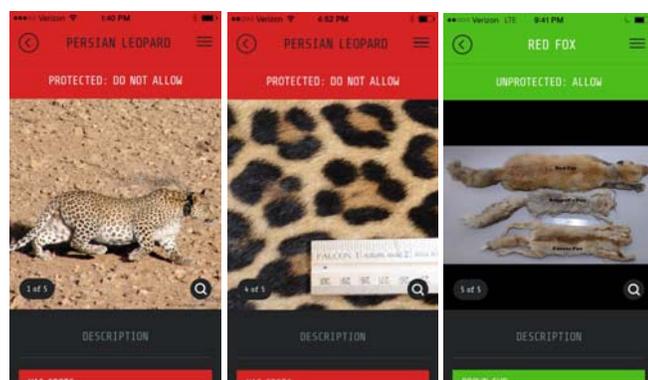
WCS subcontracted Viget Labs and collaborated with WCS staff around the globe to design a decision-tree style tool for military police to use when assessing whether a product derived from wildlife comes from an animal that is threatened or endangered. The mobile app, Wildlife Alert, gives military police the option to review products containing furs, horns, and antlers. The user then provides answers to simple questions about the product in question and the app generates a list of potential species meeting those criteria. Each species has a detailed description and numerous photos highlighting diagnostic features of the animal. The app also provides simple



diagnostic tools to distinguish between real and fake products containing furs, horns, antlers, ivory, shells, or scales. The mobile app provides information on 75 species typically traded in Afghanistan as well as some high profile species under threat of extinction due to illegal trade such as elephants, tigers, and rhinoceros.



App interfaces to identified horns, antlers, and tusks including ivory © WCS



App interfaces to select a match and read a description of the species © WCS

Benefit:

The military benefits: 1) Support the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking based on a 2012 Executive Order; 2) Reduce potential corruption due to connections between wildlife crimes and trade in other illegal substances (e.g., drugs, arms, and humans); 3) Bring U.S. military personnel into compliance with U.S. and international wildlife trade laws; 4) Raise the military conservation profile by providing resources to reduce the purchase of illegal wildlife items by military personnel; and 5) Contribute to the ‘Winning Hearts and Minds’ mission of the U.S. military 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. The conservation benefits: 1) Provide a flexible tool to identify wildlife crimes that can be expanded upon for

use in other locations where military personnel are active; 2) Raise military awareness of and the ability to recognize wildlife crimes on and off-base; 3) Design a product with applications for law enforcement and border patrols in the U.S. and elsewhere; 4) Deter purchase of products from species whose status is unknown or whose populations are near extinction by improving enforcement of existing laws.

Accomplishments:

WCS designed and launched Wildlife Alert on the iPhone Store and Google Play in November 2014. WCS presented the App to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics and Global Threats as well as U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials. WCS gave a conference presentation at the International Congress on Conservation Biology to raise the profile of how the military can be a partner with conservation groups in combating wildlife crimes. WCS subsequently authored a journal article highlighting the mobile app for a special issue of Biological Conservation. WCS continues to work with Environment Chiefs in US Army Africa and AFRICOM to promote strategies for distributing all training materials internally and updating policy documents to address wildlife crimes.



Bear coat confiscated in 2014 at Bagram’s Airbase and the App Take Action screen to direct military personnel when a suspicious item is found © MSG Dennis Spillman & WCS

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