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BIOSEC

BIODIVERSITY AND SECURITY
Conservation is changing
Partners in...

Partnering with PMCs, UNPKOs, private defence contractors (Northrop Grumman, Paramount)

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Wildlife crime as serious crime

• UN Resolution 2015, Production of the idea of wildlife crime as global threat
The everyday

• Not always the spectacular, or armed
• Use of tech, eg drones, robotic sniffers, Realtime Platform
What is the effect?

• Re emergence of more violent and forceful approaches
• Two way trialling and learning for conservation and for warfare
What are the problems with militarisation of conservation?
Defining militarised conservation

1. More forceful or armed forms of conservation

2. The development and application of military style approaches such as the development of informant networks, and counterinsurgency-like strategies

3. The use and applications of technologies originally developed by the military
Misunderstanding poaching and its drivers

- Colonial histories of defining poaching
- Failure to understand structural context of poaching
- Militarisation treats symptoms not causes
Experiences of local communities

• Mirror and recreate past injustices
• Documented incidences of torture, rapes, abductions and extra judicial killings
• But communities can also welcome enhanced security from conservation if it protects them from militias
Addressing ranger experiences

- Ranger as hero can trap rangers – doesn’t map well onto their experiences
- Effect of surveillance tech on ‘working day/working practices’
- Rising rates of workplace stress and PTSD
Conservation in conflict zones

- Partnering with military actors can deepen conflict dynamics
- Claims about ivory/IWT funding terrorism poorly evidenced but drive calls for militarised responses
- Working with UNPKOS, national armies and PMCs carires risk – taking sides, cannot assume they have a clean record in human rights and environmental protection
Political Economy of militarisation

• Militarisation not necessarily driven by conservation needs, but by seeking greater profits and new markets

• Intelligence-led approaches taken up by NGOs – risks to investigators and informants because they are not properly trained in handling sensitive data
Researching Anti-Poaching in Mozambique & South Africa

“currently the most critical piece of land on the planet for rhino conservation. It is all that stands between the world’s highest concentrations of rhino and the world’s highest concentration of rhino poaching syndicates” (IAPF).
Militarization as Compromising Conservation’s Social and Ecological Integrity
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To protect rhino (species), or to neutralise poachers?

Taking a Friend or Enemy Approach

- Community anti-poaching & conservation gone awry
- Can’t do CBNRM and Militarization at same time in same place
- Conservation funding & priorities sidelined – ecological impacts
Community Anti-Poaching & CBNRM gone awry?
Right-hand militarized orientation, left-hand community orientation - doesn’t work

“The militaristic approach is eroding years of work in trying to build more positive relations between the reserve and the communities and to get people on the side of conservation”

(Conservation Manager, Mozambique, 2016).
Conservation Funding, Priorities & Compromising Ecological Integrity

• Focus on specific species, counter-poaching at the expense of broad conservation mandates
  – Shift in resources, attention, training

• Rangers trained in counter-insurgency, paramilitary technique, not ecology, biology, monitoring, conservation

• In Kruger, 90% of rangers’ time dedicate specifically to anti-poaching

• Whither the conservation ranger?
Conservation Funding, Priorities & Compromising Ecological Integrity

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Alternatives

• Enforcement Side
  – Invest in rangers
  – Invest in capacity to investigate and prosecute
    • Formal law enforcement, not militarization

• Strengthen social integrity of conservation & protected areas
  – Actual ownership of and decision-making over wildlife and conservation
  – Not handouts to stay away
  – Hold those who use violence accountable

An urgency to think carefully and seriously about what militarized conservation can achieve and what it means for the social and ecological integrity of protected areas, conservation landscapes and related long-term sustainability.
Conclusion
Finally….

• It is vitally important to reflect on militarised actions and interventions.

• Failure to do so, especially in urgent situations, may lead to a greatly enhanced willingness to use violence, with counter productive outcomes for people and for wildlife.