

October 14, 2013

## **David Shear will Discuss Combating the Elephant and Rhino Poaching Crisis**

Historically, elephants have been hunted for their ivory from the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Europeans and Arabs. During the colonial period, i.e. up to 1950, elephant ivory was commonly used for billiard balls and decorative carvings by a limited number of individuals in Europe and Asia.

Over the past 30 years, the rise in income in China, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines has created a growing middle class which has seen the possession of ivory as a status symbol.

The impact has been a growing demand which is being met by a horrific increase in killing of African elephants. According to the African Wildlife Foundation, the African elephant population has declined from 1.2 million in 1980 to 420,000 in 2012. Last year alone, 35,000 have been poached for their tusks which bring up to \$1,000 a pound in China. As a result, international trade in poached ivory has continued to grow.

Three elements in the crisis need to be addressed:

-Influence and mobilize support from industrialized countries including foreign aid agencies, foundations, NGOs and the private sector.

-Create consciousness of negative impacts in order to reduce and eliminate demand in countries importing tusks and horns.

-Protect animal populations in parks and game reserves and empower and protect park rangers. A corollary is to reduce demand for bush meat.

I will also discuss a recent and increasingly dangerous aspect of the threat; the use of ivory to fund terrorist attacks in Africa.

The Al-Shaabab terrorist attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi may have been financed by the sale of just five elephant tusks.

Significant questions to be discussed will be how can the US, France, UK, Germany and African Governments use this most recent threat to further mobilize against the traffic in ivory.

### Rhino Poaching

A separate but associated case is trafficking in rhino horns. Rhino horns are composed of hair and are valued for their purported aphrodisiac qualities and for use as decorative daggers.

While there are many fewer rhinos than elephants, their decimation by poachers is proportionately higher. Rhino populations are estimated at fewer than 30,000. An estimated 1,000 will be poached this year. Last year 668 rhinos were poached in South Africa alone.

David Shear will discuss how South Africa is beginning to successfully counter poaching through utilization of satellites, drones and the participation of the army.

David Shear will also discuss the increasing killing of wild animals for commercial domestic consumption.

For example, it is estimated that 40,000 wildebeest will be killed for commercial sale in the areas adjacent to Serengeti National Park.