

News story: The British Army combat the illegal trade in wildlife by partnering with African parks and the Malawian Department of National Parks and Wildlife

The illegal trade in wildlife is estimated to be worth between £7 -17 billion a year.

Such is the scale of this criminal industry that it is of international concern.

Often linked to other serious organised crime, the illegal trade in wildlife impacts on much more than the existence of many species already on the brink of extinction, undermining governance and the rule of law.

Tackling this deplorable trade is a priority for the UK government, and the reason why the UK Government is holding the illegal wildlife trade conference in London next year. Working with Rangers, the British Army's soldiers has already had an impact, reducing the number of poachers entering Liwonde National Park.

Minister for the Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster said:

The illegal trade in wildlife significantly damages the ecologies and economies of many African countries, and we are determined to help defeat this problem. British soldiers have had a real impact in helping to counter poaching. Following this, the UK Government will now look at what more can be done to support the affected countries.

The Ranger training is just one example of the UK Government's wider commitment to tackling the effects of the illegal trade in wildlife.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is funding this counter-poaching partnership project with the African Parks' Rangers in Liwonde National Park. Its aim is to reduce the number of poaching incidents by providing training in proven interception tracking tactics, which will develop the rangers' counter-poaching skills.

Defra has also announced plans to impose a ban on ivory sales to help bring an end to the poaching of elephants. The proposals will protect elephants and help combat poaching by removing opportunities for criminals to trade illegally-poached ivory.

The Environment Secretary, Michael Gove, said:

The decline in rhinos, elephants and countless other species shames our generation and the need for radical and robust action to protect these treasured species is beyond dispute.

That is why we are funding training missions of this kind around the world and we have announced plans to ban the sale of ivory, which should never be seen as a commodity for financial gain or a status symbol.

These plans will put the UK front and centre of global efforts to end poaching and the insidious trade in ivory.

The charity Tusk began this project with Defra, working alongside the conservation non-profit African Parks, which has managed Liwonde National Park in partnership with Malawi's Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) since 2015.

Charlie Mayhew, Chief Executive of Tusk said:

Poaching is one of the greatest and most immediate threats to Africa's elephant, rhino and countless other species, but at Tusk we have seen that it is possible to overcome it through a combination of well-trained rangers, information gathering and analysis, and a strong level of local community support.

The British Army's involvement will have a game-changing impact in the project areas, creating a very strong deterrent to poaching and good relations with the local communities. We've been delighted to play our role in making this engagement a success.

The project got underway this summer.

Soldiers were selected from a range of units across the British Army. They were chosen based on their natural aptitude for tracking and flair for mentoring.

As a result, the make-up of the team boasted a wide range of skills and experiences including infantry, armored vehicle driving and engineering abilities.

For one member of the team, British Army Sergeant Kachoka Kingly, who grew up in the area, the deployment had a very special significance as he returns home to Malawi.

Sergeant Kachoka Kingly said:

As a local boy, this means a lot to me and my community. This is my

home, and to be given the opportunity to come back and protect my country's natural treasures, I feel like a hero. Not only have I been able to support the team with my tracking skills, it has been beneficial to the whole team to have me on board, as a translator and cultural advisor.

The soldiers worked side by side with teams from African Parks and the Malawian Department of National Parks and Wildlife to mentor the Rangers.

The joint-training combined elements of information analysis, tracking, bushcraft and infantry skills, all aimed at the successful interception of the poacher.

This partnership allowed both parties to hone and develop their skills resulting in a much more effective, agile force capable of tracking both people and animals over a long distance. The UK soldiers have been able to learn and develop their own tracking skills, something the team do not get to practice in such terrain very often.

The UK Operational Commander of the deployment, Major Tony Viney, described the three-man tracking groups as 'ghosts in the park.' Leaving a minimal trace on the ground and being able to cover vast areas, the patrols are a strong deterrent to any poacher considering entering the park.

Comp Sargent Major Francis Condron said:

Tracking is a fascinating skill, and the rangers are so enthusiastic and happy to share their experience.

It is such a useful skill to have, and now having this knowledge I think I'll be able to use it in other situations as a useful survival skill, both with the Army and at home. I have already taught my kids the basics.

Working alongside the British soldiers the Rangers have improved their patrol techniques to better use their equipment and terrain, this includes lengthening their daily patrols and reducing the weight of their equipment by 30% so they can be more agile.

With 548 km² of woodland and dry savannah to cover, the shift to these long-range patrols has paid off. During the three-month period, the teams removed 362 snare traps, two gin traps and more than 700 meters of illegal fishing nets the park.

There is no doubt that the joint team approach has made a positive impact on counter-poaching in Liwonde National Park. The Rangers made 11 arrests, all of which have led to convictions, and nine poacher camps have been destroyed.

Since 2015, African Parks has held six different courses in Liwonde training a total of 166 rangers from across six of the parks it manages, with a vision

to securing habitat and combatting poaching. Significant investments have been made in up-skilling Rangers, providing them with the needed equipment and motivating them. The British Military deployment is part of this broader sustained initiative.

These developments are having a major impact on poaching, not only through the delivery of justice but also by deterring poachers from committing such crimes in the first place.

[Speech: Mark Field's speech at the Asian-European Meeting, Myanmar](#)

Introduction

It is an honour to represent the UK at this ASEM Foreign Ministers' meeting. It is a particular pleasure to see a democratically-elected leader of Myanmar in the Chair.

Myanmar's path towards peace and democracy has been long and difficult. Major challenges remain. The UK is proud to have been a consistent advocate for human rights and democracy in Myanmar over many years. We continue to work with the civilian government to promote peace, sustainable development and fundamental rights for all communities in Myanmar.

We are particularly grateful to you, Madam Chair, for your willingness to address the issue of Rakhine in the margins of this meeting. We welcome your inclusive vision for Rakhine and commitment to the right of return for refugees.

I would also like to pay tribute to the generosity of Bangladesh for taking in more than 610,000 refugees over the past 3 months – a huge burden for any country. The UK has given some £47 million in humanitarian support and we stand ready, along with others here, I trust, to contribute further.

UK-Asia

The UK's links with Asia run deep. They include some of our closest commercial, political and people-to-people links. As we prepare to leave the European Union, our commitment to ASEM and to Asia will endure.

Rules-based System

ASEM brings together countries with a deep commitment to the rules-based international system. Peace and sustainable development in both our regions depend on that system. So I want to highlight two threats to the rules-based system, and four global challenges that can only be addressed through

strengthening that system.

North Korea

As many have mentioned, the first regional issue is the threat posed by North Korea's reckless nuclear and ballistic missile tests. The unanimous Security Council vote to strengthen sanctions sent the strongest possible signal of international resolve.

We all have a duty to enforce UN sanctions urgently and rigorously.

South China Sea

The second regional issue concerns the South China Sea. We are committed to a Rules-Based Maritime order. European states have a legitimate interest in peace, stability and security even as far away as the South China Sea. The UK's position remains that all states must respect international law, as reflected in UNCLOS, and seek to settle disputes peacefully, without coercion or the threat of force.

Global Challenges

Turning to the global challenges:

The UK has shown that it is possible to cut emissions while pursuing economic growth. And I hope others will be able to follow that lead. The Illegal Wildlife Trade not only harms biodiversity but also fosters corruption and undermines the rule of law. I congratulate China on its domestic ivory ban, and Vietnam for hosting the 2016 conference. London hosts the next conference on this issue in 2018. I urge ASEM to support work to combat this criminal trade.

Finally, digital connectivity can and will help enhance the links between Asia and Europe. The internet is increasingly a principal driver of our prosperity and social wellbeing. To ensure this continues, we must work together to tackle cyber-crime, protect online freedoms and abide by the norms of responsible state behaviour. Innovation, R&D will also ensure cyber security for us all.

[Press release: Help make medicines safer by reporting suspected side effects: MHRA launches campaign](#)

From 20-24 November, MHRA is running a social media campaign to promote recognition and reporting of suspected side effects from over-the-counter

medicines, as part of an EU-wide awareness week.

While medicines are safe and effective, side effects can happen, even with over-the-counter medicines. It is important the risks associated with all medicines are understood and communicated to health professionals and patients.

Potential side effects may range from a headache or sore stomach, to flu-like symptoms or just 'feeling a bit off' and reporting these can help regulators monitor medicines on the market and take action as appropriate.

Regulators such as MHRA rely on the reporting of suspected side effects to make sure medicines on the market are acceptably safe. Unfortunately, all reporting systems suffer from under reporting – this is why our campaign is important to both raise awareness and help strengthen the system.

[SCOPE ADR Campaign](#)

Mick Foy, Group Manager for MHRA's Vigilance and Risk Management of Medicines division, said

The most important part of our work is making sure the medicines you and your family take are effective and acceptably safe.

Our campaign will help the public, patients and healthcare professionals report potential side effects and have confidence that their reports are making a difference.

You can help make medicines safer by reporting any suspected side effects easily and quickly online through the [Yellow Card Scheme](#).

The campaign is part of the Strengthening Collaboration for Operating Pharmacovigilance in Europe (SCOPE) Joint Action project. One of its main aims is to raise awareness of national reporting systems for suspected side effects in medicines.

Notes to Editor

1. National reporting systems for the collection of suspected adverse drug reactions (commonly known as side effects) have acted as early warning systems to help identify numerous important safety issues, many of which were not recognised as being related to a particular medicine until reports were received by medicines regulators.
2. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is responsible for protecting and improving the health of millions of people every day through the effective regulation of medicines and medical devices, underpinned by science and research. The agency consists of three centres: CPRD, NIBSC and MHRA.

3. The public is advised that they should take prescription-only medicines after an appropriate consultation with their GP. Only healthcare professionals can take into account risks and benefits associated with every medicine.
4. To report a counterfeit medicine or device contact MHRA's dedicated 24-hour hotline on 020 3080 6701, or email counterfeit@mhra.gov.uk, or write to: Counterfeits, The Intelligence Unit, MHRA, 151 Buckingham Palace Road, Victoria, London, SW1W 9SZ.
5. To report a suspected side effect from an unlicensed medicine visit the [Yellow Card Scheme](#)
6. The SCOPE Joint Action project (scopejointaction.eu) social media campaign is being taken forward through the Heads of Medicines Agencies Working Group for Communications Professionals.

[News story: Changes to patents fees come into force on 6 April 2018.](#)

The [legislation](#) making these changes was laid in Parliament on 16 November 2017.

These changes follow on from our [consultation](#), which received comments from 23 respondents.

As explained in the [government's response document](#), we have adjusted the proposals in light of the comments we received. The legislation makes the changes set out in the response document.

We will publish detailed guidance on how these fee changes will operate in practice, in due course.

[News story: New licensing system for administration of radioactive](#)

substances

Upcoming reforms to medical radiation exposure regulations will greatly change how the Administration of Radioactive Substances Advisory Committee (ARSAC) issues approvals.

The Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations 2018 (IR(ME)R) will come into force in England, Scotland and Wales on 6 February 2018. A separate set of regulations applying the same licensing process will be introduced in Northern Ireland.

The new regulations will replace the current certification process for the administration of radioactive substances under [The Medicines Administration Radioactive Substances 1978 Regulations](#), and lead to changes in the way ARSAC handles applications.

There will be a double licensing system for practitioners and employers under IR(ME)R. The new system aims to make clear the responsibilities of the employer and practitioner in administration of radioactive substances.

The deadlines for receiving applications for certification are:

- 20 December 2017 for new and additional diagnostic or therapeutic applications
- 16 January 2018 for renewal diagnostic or therapeutic applications
- 16 January 2018 for new and extensions of research site certificates

Louise Fraser, Scientific Adviser to ARSAC, said:

It's really important that you think about what these changes could mean to you and your employer and consider what, if anything, you need to do ahead of the changes. We will be preparing further guidance and will, as ever, be on hand to assist with any queries anyone may have about the interim and new arrangements.

For more information on next steps and regular updates on deadlines please [subscribe to the ARSAC email bulletin](#).

Under the new regulations:

- employers must hold a licence at each medical radiological installation, such as a hospital or mobile imaging service, where radioactive substances will be administered for diagnosis, treatment or research – this licence will define the range of service that can be delivered at that location
- practitioners, such as nuclear medicine physicians, must hold a licence to clinically justify exposures involving the administration of radioactive substances for diagnosis, treatment or research; a practitioner's licence is valid anywhere they are allowed under IR(ME)R

2018 to act as a practitioner

- a practitioner will only require one licence, regardless of how many employers they work for; the scope of the licence will reflect the individual's training and experience for procedures
- any radiation exposure involving the administration of radioactive substances at a medical radiological installation must be justified by a licensed practitioner whose employer holds an appropriate licence for that exposure, at that installation
- entitled operators can continue allowing exposures in line with justification guidelines issued by a licensed practitioner entitled at that medical radiological installation
- any current ARSAC certificates due to expire after the new regulations come into force will be considered as equal to a licence for both the practitioner and the employer until the expiry date