

WWF paid for helicopter used to kill poachers

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A HELICOPTER for hunting poachers was supplied by the World Wide Fund for Nature in Zimbabwe in an attempt to save the black rhino from extinction, even though the fund knew the country's government operated a shoot-to-kill policy.

Between the operation starting in February 1987 and October 1988, 37 poachers were killed and 30 were captured.

The operation was "highly effective" according to the WWF and funding continued until April 1989, during which time an estimated 20 poachers were killed. The operation, during the rainy seasons when poachers had their greatest successes, was discontinued because new management of the reserves meant they could be kept in check on the ground.

The fund's involvement, disclosed in documents leaked to the Guardian, is likely to shock many of WWF's 3.7 million members. WWF, formerly the World Wildlife Fund, is the world's largest non-governmental environmental organisation with conservation projects in more than 70 countries.

Its actions will open debate on how far to go against poachers.

The decision to fund the helicopter was taken in an attempt to save the last large herd of black rhino in the wild.

It was believed that poaching would wipe the herd out in five years, Gordon Shepherd, head of information for WWF International, said. He said the fund did not itself have a shoot-to-kill policy, but went along with the laws of the country.

Staff concerned about the policy have also leaked to the Guardian details of the fund's investments in oil companies, armaments, drug and food manufacturers and logging interests — some of which it campaigns against in public.

While other environment organisations have ethical investment policies, the fund buys shares in companies sub-

ject to boycotts by Green groups.

Staff contacted the Guardian after internal arguments about some policies resulted in key personnel being transferred to other duties or leaving while the campaigns continued unchanged. They felt the number of poachers killed was unacceptable. They accept the fund's increasing desperation to prevent extinction of species like the black rhino and the elephant, but believe it may have gone too far.

In a statement, the fund said its International Board had approved the establishment of a new Conservation Policy Division and a new Programme Committee last month. It would consider ethics and would include advice on investments.

Use of the helicopter for tracking poachers in the Lower Zambezi Valley began because black rhino numbers were down to 700. Internal WWF documents say that efficient and well-armed gangs of poachers infiltrating across the river from Zambia continued to threaten the herd and urgent action was needed.

WWF decided to provide a helicopter for use by armed anti-poacher patrols and to allow tranquilliser darts to be used on the rhinos so they could be moved to safer locations.

The papers say that operations began in February 1987 and that the poachers were usually armed with AK47s and other automatic weapons. Use of the helicopter swung the battle against them. The helicopter carried two game scouts and an officer of the Zimbabwean national parks department.

"The majority of poachers have resisted arrest, and department staff have been involved in some extremely dangerous follow-up operations," the papers add. Those captured had been sentenced to between six and 11 years in jail.

The level of poaching ap-

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peared to have decreased because of the presence of the helicopter, the report says, and the "department staff have been unanimous in stating that the helicopter has made an enormous difference to staff morale and efficiency".

In other parts of Africa, particularly Tanzania where the elephant, rhino and other species have come under pressure from poachers in national parks, the fund has approved similar tactics. In 1988, it provided money for the "purchase and maintenance of vehicles, communica-

tion equipment and other anti-poaching requisites."

In the Selous Game Reserve, the fund feared the extinction of the black rhino and possibly the elephant. It said "radical" measures were required to prevent this. Funds were made available for effective anti-poaching measures "providing adequate staff, equipment, incentives and arms".

In a statement, WWF says this last statement should never have been included in the papers. "We do not and have not supplied actual guns," Mr Shepherd said. It was a genuine

dilemma as to how far to go. Poachers were highly organised and better armed than scouts trying to protect game.

The fund had provided Land Rovers, two-way radios, and in some cases a better pay structure. They knew poachers got shot but so did the wardens, Mr Shepherd added. "In Kenya more than a dozens wardens were shot by poachers in a year."

The WWF Environment Handbook, published in August says the rhino situation was desperate and drastic measures were needed.

Swiss headquarters financed through stocks and bonds of companies in rain forest logging, nuclear weapons and pesticides

Investments tarnish green image of WWF

Paul Brown reports on the shares portfolio held by the World Wide Fund for Nature, apparently contradicting conservation ethics

INVESTMENTS in multinational companies boycotted by other environmental and green groups on ethical grounds are made by the World Wide Fund for Nature to finance its headquarters in Switzerland.

Many large donations are placed in the stocks and bonds of companies involved in logging in tropical rain forests, nuclear weapons, and pesticide sales in the Third World — activities attacked by the fund in its campaigning.

Other green groups, including Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, have strict investment policies which prevent any association with companies they might later criticise. The minutes of WWF's investment committee make no mention of ethics.

The fund, which is the world's largest and most established conservation organisation, expects an income of £25 million this year in Britain alone. It has 28 national organisations.

The investment committee, on which WWF directors sit, meets in Switzerland to discuss its latest investments with representatives of the Swiss Bank Corporation, Kleinwort Benson, and S.C. Warburg who place the organisation's funds.

The £20 million long-term portfolios run from Switzerland include the Peter Scott Wildlife Endowment Fund and the 100 Fund, the latter an investment from donations gathered from individual rich benefactors.

The Duke of Edinburgh, the WWF president, recently criticised the organisation for having too heavily a balance sheet, saying it should live more hand to mouth. WWF uses the investment income to pay its headquarters staff.

The fund's investments at the beginning of this year included Mitsubishi Heavy Industry, a Japanese conglomerate with interests in nuclear power and uranium mining. Its activities are of concern to WWF in Sarawak, Malaysia, where it is involved in the logging trade.

— Francis Sullivan, the British WWF tropical forest campaigner, said his organisation had an arm in Sarawak and was campaigning to try to save the forests by convincing the government that profits from logging can last only a few more years before the economy collapses.

The recent Mersey oil spill highlighted criticisms of its environmental care. Shell estimates it will spend \$5 billion in the 1990s cleaning up environmental problems.

Another investment is in the Nestlé company, which has been criticised for its policy towards baby milk in the Third World.

Andrew Radford, of the Baby Milk Action Coalition which organises a boycott of Nestlé products, said: "The company is contravening the World Health Organisation code on marketing breast milk substitutes."

The WWF handbook criticises chemical companies for exporting to the Third World dangerous pesticides which have been banned in Britain and Europe.

WWF said in a statement that a conservation policy division and a programme committee had been set up by the WWF international board on July 2. The mandates include providing advice on the ethical or green aspects of fund raising and financial investments.

At its next meeting the investment committee would review all the individual investments in the light of advice to be provided by this committee.

Asked about its ethical investment policy, Friends of the Earth said: "We maintain the minimum of reserves necessary to operate effectively." Most of the funds were invested in the leasehold of its headquarters building in London, and capital equipment such as computers and photocopiers.

"Any cash that is temporarily surplus to requirements is deposited in a high-interest rate bank account with immediate access."

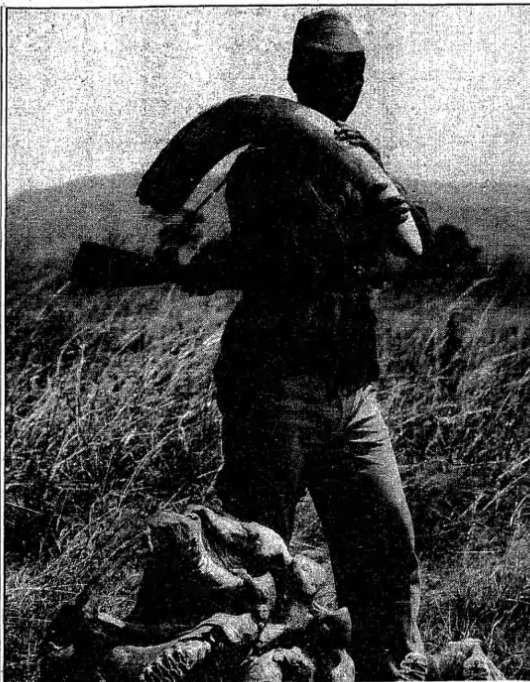
"We own shares (5000) in Procter, Ecology and Development Books Ltd, which runs Books for Change, a shop in Tottenham Court Road, London."

Poll had listed investments totalling £7,892 which had been debated and a minimum shareholding of 100 required to attend annual general meetings of other companies.

Greenpeace said it owned no stocks and shares except £2 in ICI, enabling it to attend the company's annual meeting. It put money on short-term deposit in banks when necessary. It had looked for an ethical bank, but had not found one.



Down in black and white: the WWF's panda logo



Gun law rules in battle to save rhinos and elephants

A GAME warden in Mikumi National Park in Tanzania (left), where 50 per cent of the elephant herds have been wiped out in the past 10 years and a number of park staff have been shot and killed in their confrontations with poachers.

A WWF consultant recommended a number of measures to combat the poachers, including two-way radios, Land Rovers and automatic weapons for patrol.

According to documents seen by the Guardian, these recommendations were accepted. But WWF said there was a mistake in the document — equipment provided stopped short of guns. The fund never provided arms as a matter of policy.

A report sent by Dr Hugh Lamprey and Ed Wilson from the East and Central Africa office to WWF headquarters in Geneva said 11,400 dead elephants had been counted. Black rhinos — shot for their horns to be ground down for use as an aphrodisiac — had declined by 80 per cent.

"Radical measures are needed to prevent the rhino from becoming extinct and to keep the elephant population from dwindling to insignificant numbers," the report said.

A WWF statement said preventive policies were decided by the local authorities concerned. In some countries they included a shoot to kill policy against poachers, which the WWF had never recommended.

Gordon Shepherd, the WWF spokesman in Geneva, said: "We don't run the law in these countries, but we are aware that these guards are at great risk. In many countries the equipment they operate with is well below the standard of that used by the poachers."

"Without the valiant efforts of these game wardens none of these animals would survive."

called a market mechanism — the one mechanism ministers insist on ignoring.

Blood and the rhino

HOW DO you save the black rhino and elephant from extinction? The question divides conservationists. Are protected wildlife areas the answer? Or, more controversially, publicly owned safari ranches providing controlled shooting? At the heart of the debate lies the problem of poachers. Two decades ago there were 65,000 black rhino in Africa. One decade ago there were only 15,000. Four years ago there were a mere 4,500. Supporters of the safari ranches argue that poaching can only be stopped if local people support the project and help carry out the policing. Safari ranches can help achieve this by ensuring that local people receive the meat that is legally shot — and the hides. But what nobody can justify is the present Zimbabwe government's shoot-to-kill strategy against poachers: some 57 poachers were killed.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has now been caught in this crossfire. The helicopter which has allowed the anti-poaching units to achieve these "kills" was supplied to the Zimbabwe government by a WWF fully aware of the shoot-to-kill policy. Reluctantly the Fund has embraced this strategy, dividing its own organisation into two camps. One camp believes that saving the rhino is so important that the WWF had no choice. Zimbabwe's lower Zambezi valley contains the largest number of black rhinos in the world, but organised, well-armed raiding parties from across the river in Zambia have reduced the herd to 700. The arrival of the helicopter and anti-poacher patrols resulted in the

infiltration declining. Other people in WWF, appalled by the thrust of some Fund policies, including investment, have been transferred to different duties so that the campaigns can continue unchanged.

Belatedly, the WWF has announced a new policy division which, along with a new programme committee, will be able to examine such ethical issues. The principle in Zimbabwe seems clear enough: killing rhinos is wrong, but so is killing poachers. If a two-and-a-half ton rhino can be stunned and immobilised by darts shot from a gun, then this same tactic could be adopted as a last resort against poachers who are insisting on resisting arrest.

But there is a second urgent ethical issue the WWF needs to examine. Unlike most environmental organisations, the Fund continues to invest in companies which it publicly criticises in its wildlife campaigns: logging, oil, armaments and drug manufacturers. Yet the days when charities could take investment decisions in a moral and social vacuum are long gone. There is a widening choice of investments open to ethical and green investors. Socially responsible investment has been growing faster than the rest of the market. Investment in the best of these funds is not an act of charity. They are as good as — and frequently better — than standard funds. WWF should not have waited this long before taking the plunge.

In fact, alas, the Fund has had a bad year. A biting internal review of its management and achievements was leaked to the media earlier this summer. Even the Duke of Edinburgh, the WWF President, was unable to stop a critical television documentary last month. The charity, which has 3.7 million members in 28 national organisations, was already bracing itself for a big drop in British donations this year. Today's revelations can only exacerbate the problem. The solution is not to cover up the warts: it is to get rid of them as promptly as possible.