



Intelligence Community Hosted Wildlife Trafficking Symposium

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By Brian Murphy

ODNI Public Affairs

Faced with an unprecedented rise in wildlife crimes around the globe, the Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking, co-chaired by the Departments of State, Interior and Justice, hosted a symposium at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency's William Alder Auditorium in Springfield, Virginia, June 28-29.

The purpose of the Combatting Wildlife Trafficking Symposium was to foster discussions concerning illegal wildlife trafficking and how collaborative relationships across government, civil sector, academia, international partners and non-government organizations will identify fundamental geospatial data and its implication within a human geography framework.

DNI James Clapper signs a Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking Symposium poster prior to the start of the two-day event. (photo by Brian Murphy, ODNI Public Affairs)

"Wildlife trafficking contributes billions of dollars to the illegal economy, fuels instability and undermines human security," said Robert Cardillo, NGA's director. "The 2014 National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking said it best -- this is a global challenge requiring global solutions."

Additionally, the symposium aimed to advance the goals set forth in the Combatting Wildlife Trafficking Executive Order and National Strategy Implementation Plan in cooperation with the Intelligence Community, U.S. government, international partners and non-government organizations.

"We are making wildlife trafficking a priority," said Daniel Foote, deputy assistant secretary of state, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. "That said, the Intelligence Community's involvement is critical. Your tools and technology can be applied and intelligence-led law enforcement can help thwart this illicit activity."



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Daniel Foote, deputy assistant secretary of state, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, gives a keynote address during the Combatting Wildlife Trafficking Symposium at NGA's William Allder Auditorium in Springfield, Virginia, June 28. (photo by Brian Murphy, ODNI Public Affairs)

According to Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, although relatively new to this fight, the IC remains dedicated to supporting such an important cause.

"I think we are faced with a clear moral imperative," he said. "This is not a victimless crime. Lives are at risk, both human and wildlife. It jeopardizes peace and security for the communities in and around hotspots and it fuels the degradation of critical ecosystems."

DNI James Clapper delivers opening remarks during the Combatting Wildlife Trafficking Symposium at NGA's William Allder Auditorium in Springfield, Virginia, June 28. (photo by Brian Murphy, ODNI Public Affairs)

Information provided during the symposium estimated roughly 100,000 elephants were slaughtered for their ivory in Africa during a recent three-year period. Additionally, the poaching of African rhinos has skyrocketed, with 1,175 killed in South Africa in 2015, compared with just 13 in 2007.

"We absolutely can't afford to see entire species wiped off this planet because we failed to effectively work together here at home and with our international partners," Clapper said.

One of the themes throughout the symposium was the necessity of a collaborative and proactive approach to combat this global challenge.

"The collaboration and opportunities where there is data sharing are examples of capacities playing a critical role in preserving something that is recognizable, well-known, and touches almost everyone – it has much more application to everyone's lives than they think it does," said Daniel Ashe, director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services.

Daniel Ashe, director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, addresses the crowd during the Combatting Wildlife Trafficking Symposium at NGA's William Allder Auditorium in Springfield, Virginia, June 28. (photo by Brian Murphy, ODNI Public Affairs)

The symposium also featured a series of panel discussions, on topics such as "Species



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Trafficking Case Studies,” “Convergence and Networks: Wildlife Crime and Related Transnational Crimes” and “Data and Information Sharing: Human Geography and Web Presence.”