

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**  
**COMMISSIONING OF HELICOPTER DONATED**  
**BY HOWARD G BUFFET FOUNDATION**

**Skukuza**

**19 March, 2015**

**Programme Director**

**SAPS Deputy Provincial Commissioner, Maj General Phaahla and his colleagues**

**SAPS Divisional Commissioner Detective Services, Lt Gen V Moonoo (not here)**

**SANDF Officer Commanding Joint Tactical Headquarters, Col Monwabisi Dyakopu and his colleagues**

**CEO of Peace Parks Foundation, Mr Werner Myburgh**

**CEO of Airbus Helicopters South Africa, Mr Arnaud Montalvo**

**Member of the SANParks Board and Member of Howard G Buffet Foundation Grant Steering Committee, Prof Graham Kerley**

**Members of SANParks EXCO and KNP MANCO**

**Maj General (ret) Johan Jooste, Mr Ken Maggs and the leadership of our SANParks counter-poaching team**

**Members of the Media here present**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Today we are commissioning a second helicopter donated by the Howard G Buffet Foundation to SANParks to assist in the fight against rhino poaching. By way of background, in March 2014, SANParks received grant funding of R254.8 million (\$23.66 million) from the Nature Conservation Trust (NCT), a charity organisation owned by the Howard G. Buffet Foundation, in support of SANParks anti-poaching operations in the Kruger National Park (KNP).

This magnificent gesture of support from the Foundation is enabling SANParks to take the fight against rhino poaching to new levels. We need to recognise that we are up against a formidable threat driven by organised crime and that the programme funded by the Howard G Buffet Foundation is enabling us to move our operations onto a new footing.

The KNP Programme, funded by the Howard G Buffet Foundation, is structured to have ten key projects, including the establishment of Air Mobility capability, which is a key component of the overall fight against rhino poaching. This project entailed purchasing a first Airbus AS350 B3e helicopter in September 2014, with night flying capability at a cost of R39m, while the grant also covers that helicopter's operating costs (fuel, service and pilot) for a period of two years. That helicopter has already been in operation since late last year. Furthermore, as part of this helicopter purchase, two of SANParks' helicopter pilots have undergone a two-week training course in the USA, to enable them to optimally operate the new helicopter both during the day and at night as required.

Subsequent to the initial grant funding of R254.8 million, the Howard G Buffet Foundation granted SANParks an additional R37.7 million to purchase a second Airbus AS350 B3e helicopter, with similar specifications of night flying capability, to further increase the capacity of SANParks' rhino anti-poaching flight operations in the KNP. In addition to increasing our current flight crew capability of flying at night, the helicopter is expected to improve our response time in dealing with contacts and other incidents in the Park. We have just taken delivery of this second helicopter and we are commissioning it today to go into action in the fight against rhino poaching.

Ladies and gentlemen, a multi-million Rand crime problem requires a multi-million Rand solution and with the combined efforts of all parties in the fight against poaching of our heritage, this war can and will be won.

There is a dire need for financial muscle in this fight against rhino poaching. Our rangers together with other law enforcement agencies have been working tirelessly around the clock to counter poaching. This continues to put pressure on our already stretched financial resources and we are extremely grateful for the substantial support that we are receiving.

Today as promised we are revealing some of the much needed arsenal in our counter poaching work which will assist our rangers in their work of curbing any threat entering the park. You may be aware that in recent years our ranger corps in the Kruger National Park have undergone substantial training in order to re-gear their conservation work and to be skilled as a formidable and effective anti-poaching force. Our rangers deserve all the logistical and technological support that we can give them, and the sooner we break the back of these syndicates the sooner they can go back to being rangers.

I would like to take this opportunity today to extend our appreciation to the Howard G Buffet Foundation for the incredible support they are providing to SANParks in order to assist us in containing and rolling back the onslaught of rhino poaching in the Kruger National Park.

As a second component of why we are here today, I need to indicate that SANParks is in the process of applying and evaluating various technologies which include Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV's) to support and enhance our efforts in relation to our anti-poaching work.

The current UAV programme has been initiated in consultation with, and support from, both the SANDF and South African Civil Aviation Authority to evaluate the deployment efficacy of this particular technology in the KNP. The joint evaluation programme, which has been fully funded by the Peace Parks Foundation, will run for a period of one year and will be jointly managed by SANParks and the SANDF. It will be closely monitored and evaluated with the assistance of the CSIR.

The UAV Evaluation Programme is one of several programmes in which the Peace Parks Foundation is providing funding. This programme is funded by the Dutch and Swedish Postcode Lotteries through the PPF, once again giving testimony to the fact that there is considerable international support for our country in making every effort to conserve the largest population of the world's rhino. I would like to thank the PPF for their support and we look forward to the results of this evaluation.

Members of the media will have seen a demonstration of the UAV technology yesterday evening, and will have come to realise that SANParks, in partnership with other government departments and agencies, and with NGO's, the private sector and communities is deploying every means at our disposal in order to tackle rhino poaching head on.

Without the contributions made by private individuals, foundations, businesses and organizations to conservation bodies to fight rhino poaching we would not have managed to contain the rhino poaching threat to the extent that we have.

Finally, Programme Director, I should acknowledge the productive working relationship that exists between SANParks, the SANDF, and the SAPS. Shortly after we have concluded here we will pay a short visit to the newly developed Joint Operations Centre (JOC) which provides a facility for the joint planning and management of our operations. The new JOC offers the capability to deal with multiple events and threats in a coordinated fashion. This building, which is staffed by the SANDF, SAPS and SANParks, has state of the art systems so that we can track and respond to the threat of rhino poaching in a seamless and integrated manner thus greatly enhancing our successes in our joint counter-poaching operations.

We cannot fail in our mission to roll back the threat of rhino poaching. It is not just about conserving this magnificent species. We all recognise that, as one of the Big 5, the rhino is a key component of our tourism economy and as such jobs and livelihoods are at stake.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we cannot claim to have won the war, but we are certainly making great strides in containing the escalation of this scourge. We must all echo the words of our Minister of Environmental Affairs, and say 'Not on Our Watch' - we will not allow this onslaught to continue.

Not On Our Watch!

I thank you.