



Operation Lock and the War on Rhino Poaching

John Hanks

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Operation Lock was born in 1987 when Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, the Founder President of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), met with British biologist and conservationist Dr John Hanks, the WWF's head in Africa, to discuss what could be done to stop the aggressive illegal trade in rhino horn, which was threatening to make rhinos extinct as a species. They agreed that the rhino horn trade should be countered with equal aggression. Hanks began discussions with Sir David Stirling, the founder of the British SAS, who now ran a private security company, KAS Enterprises, staffed by former SAS operatives. This company provided the personnel for what would become known as Operation Lock, and Prince Bernhard provided the money. Operation Lock set up its headquarters in Johannesburg, and extended its reach into neighbouring states: Namibia, Zambia, Botswana, Swaziland and Mozambique. Its operatives planned to train game rangers, to go undercover and sell rhino horn themselves in order to entrap buyers, and even to kill the kingpins who were driving the trade. It was always going to be controversial, and even more so because it was working in and with apartheid South Africa in the late 1980s. When news was finally leaked, the WWF denied any involvement, and John Hanks took the fall. In *Operation Lock and the War on Rhino Poaching*, John Hanks finally tells the story of these explosive events from 25 years ago. Hanks has the inside knowledge, and all the documents, to reveal what really happened. The book also deals with the scourge of rhino poaching in more recent years, and it gives powerful and controversial criticism of some of the current policies to curb poaching.

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