



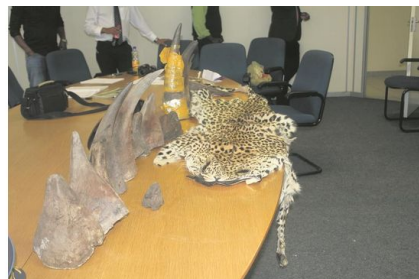
## Anti-poaching battle taken to the net

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A new front has been opened in the battle against wildlife crime - a WikiLeaks-type website where people can report poaching and other activities to seasoned experts for investigation. The website known as WildLeaks has already received up to 50 tip-offs in the last seven months from African countries such as Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Liberia, Malawi and Zambia. WildLeaks founder Andrea Crosta has 25 years experience in conservation and research projects across the world and 15 years experience in high-level security and risk management. He works together with an environmental lawyer, an investigative journalist and a security expert. Crosta told Namibian Sun that WildLeaks was developed in order to create a secure and anonymous platform, where a professional team acts as a bridge between those people providing tip-offs on wildlife crime and those taking action on it.

“The idea came from the realisation that there are many people with important information, but they do not know how, and with who, to share it,” he said. Crosta stressed they are not interested in facilitating the arrest of small time poachers or traffickers. “We are aiming at the upper layers of wildlife crime and for a better understanding of certain phenomenon and modus operandi. This kind of work takes time and we cannot risk jeopardising an investigation or field research by sharing a leak too soon with the public.” Crosta said since the launch of WildLeaks in February, they have received about 50 leaks. According to him out of these, about 30 leaks were assessed as good, reliable and potentially useful. Currently the WildLeaks team is probing many of the tip-offs and have started with three investigations into the illegal ivory trade in Africa. “We also shared a few leaks with law enforcement agencies and some others with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that might use them for their own activities.” Crosta said there are often corrupt government officials behind wildlife crimes. “In fact corruption is probably the most dangerous enemy for wildlife in Africa,” he said. Crosta said they therefore only share information with trusted law-enforcement agencies, and only when they have a direct contact with individuals they trust. He said in recent years the black market prices of some wildlife products like ivory and rhino horn have skyrocketed, mostly as a consequence of a rising demand in certain Asian countries, where there are now more people who can afford them, especially in China. Costra added that at the same time, African governments largely ignored the problem, as wildlife crimes are not considered serious crimes. According to him, in some cases wildlife crime syndicates may be linked to other illegal activities. Crosta said they have not received any leaks from Namibia as yet.

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