



LEAVE WILDLIFE IN THE WILD



Reducing demand for wildlife products by military personnel serving overseas

U.S. Military purchase wildlife products

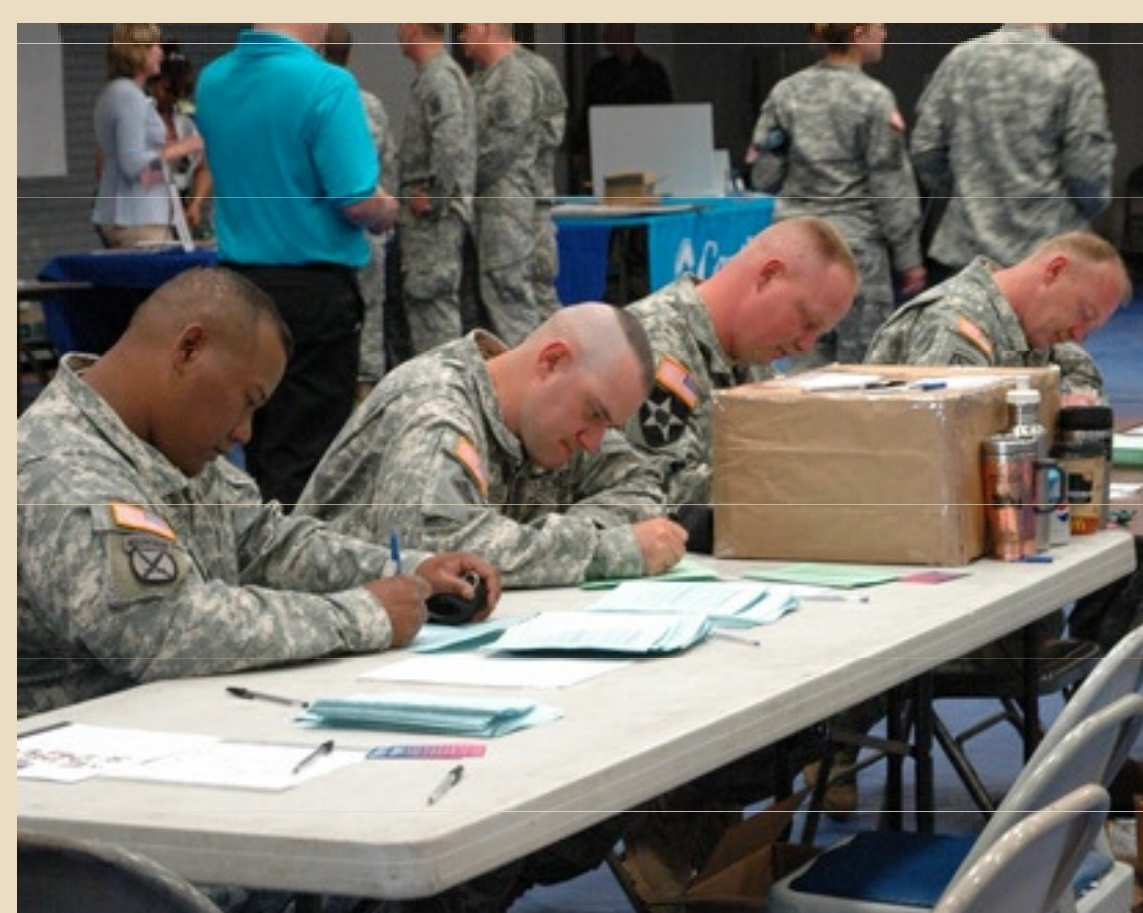
Military personnel and affiliates stationed overseas have significant buying power that influences local markets, including the ability to drive the demand for wildlife products. Demand for wildlife and wildlife products poses one of the greatest threats to populations of wild animals throughout the world by fueling unsustainable harvest and threatening already endangered species with local and regional extinction. Purchase and transport of many wildlife products violates U.S. and international laws implementing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), an international agreement between the governments of 173 countries. Evidence from Bagram Airbase and Camp Eggers in Afghanistan indicates that U.S. military personnel have purchased wildlife items from on-base vendors and transported these items to the United States. Demand and purchase of these items threatens wildlife populations and puts U.S. soldiers at risk. Stiff fines and jail time may result for those in possession of or attempting to transport illegal wildlife products. In addition, illegal trade in wildlife products is often associated with illegal trade of drugs and arms; proceeds often benefit insurgencies. Military personnel must be aware of these risks and avoid purchasing such items while serving overseas. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), a global conservation organization, is working with the U.S. Military to develop a comprehensive outreach and education program to address this issue.

Wildlife Conservation Society's approach to the problem

To date, the collaborative effort between WCS and U.S. Military has involved two projects. First, we conducted a survey of Fort Drum soldiers who had served overseas to find what wildlife items they had seen or purchased while abroad. Second, we initiated an outreach and education project using funds from the DoD Legacy Resources Management Program.

Research:

- Self-administered 2-page survey with 7 questions including:
 - Years in the military
 - Countries in which they had served.
 - If and where they had seen wildlife products for sale?
 - If and where they had purchased wildlife products?
 - If they had seen other soldiers in possession of or purchasing items?
 - If they had heard of CITES?
- Soldiers were asked to volunteer to take the survey at Fort Drum Safety Day.
- Surveyed only soldiers who had previously served overseas.



Left: Fort Drum soldiers taking the WCS survey on the Use and Demand for Wildlife Products. (Leslie Karasin, WCS, 2008)



Middle: Vendor on 'Chicken Street' in Afghanistan holding a snow leopard pelt, a CITES protected species. (WCS Afghanistan, 2007)



Right: Training U.S. Military Police at Bagram Air Base to identify prohibited wildlife products. (WCS Afghanistan, 2008)

Outreach and Education

- To date:
 - WCS hosted a booth at two Fort Drum Safety Days in 2008 and 2009.
 - WCS provided training on wildlife trade to Fort Drum soldiers headed to Iraq and Afghanistan.
 - WCS provided training to military police in Afghanistan.
 - WCS conducts regular market sweeps on Bagram Air Base and Camp Eggers.

- Planned with Funds from Legacy Program for FY 2009:
 - Power Point Presentations for pre-departure and in-theater trainings.
 - Briefings for officers and military police.
 - Pocket/information card for soldiers.



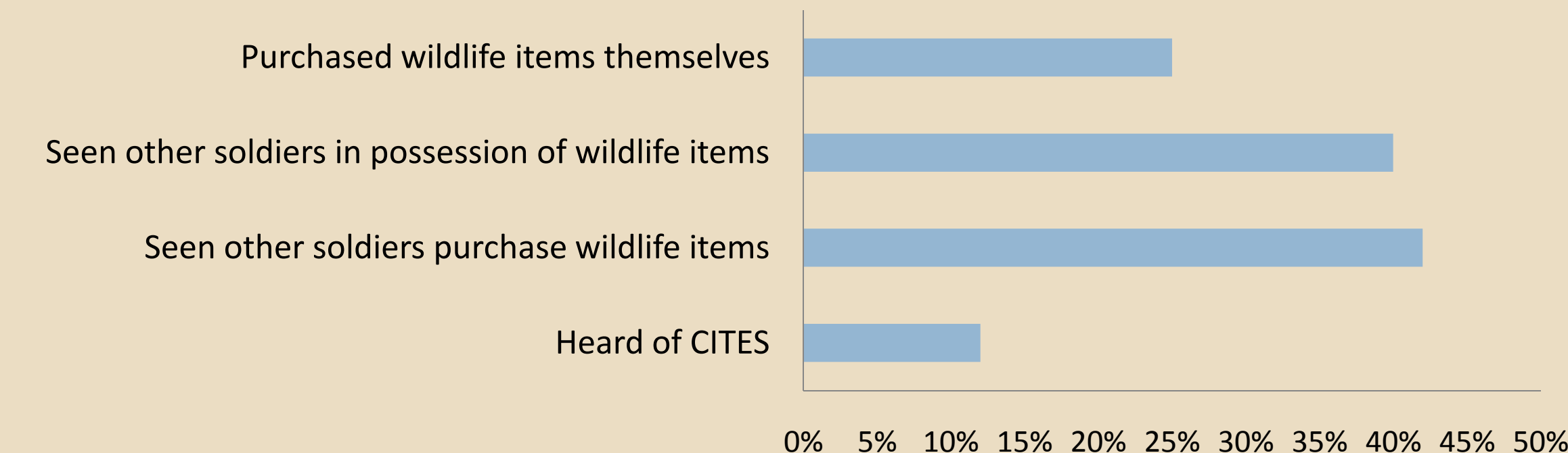
Top: Sand cat found in the deserts of Iraq and Afghanistan (Xavier Eichaker)
Above: A blanket found in an on-base market in Afghanistan made with 122+ cat pelts from 4 species of cat. All products containing cat parts are prohibited under CITES. (WCS Afghanistan, 2007)
Below: Snow leopards are found in the Himalayas, likely less than 100 left in Afghanistan. (Julie Maher, WCS)

Results of research and outreach

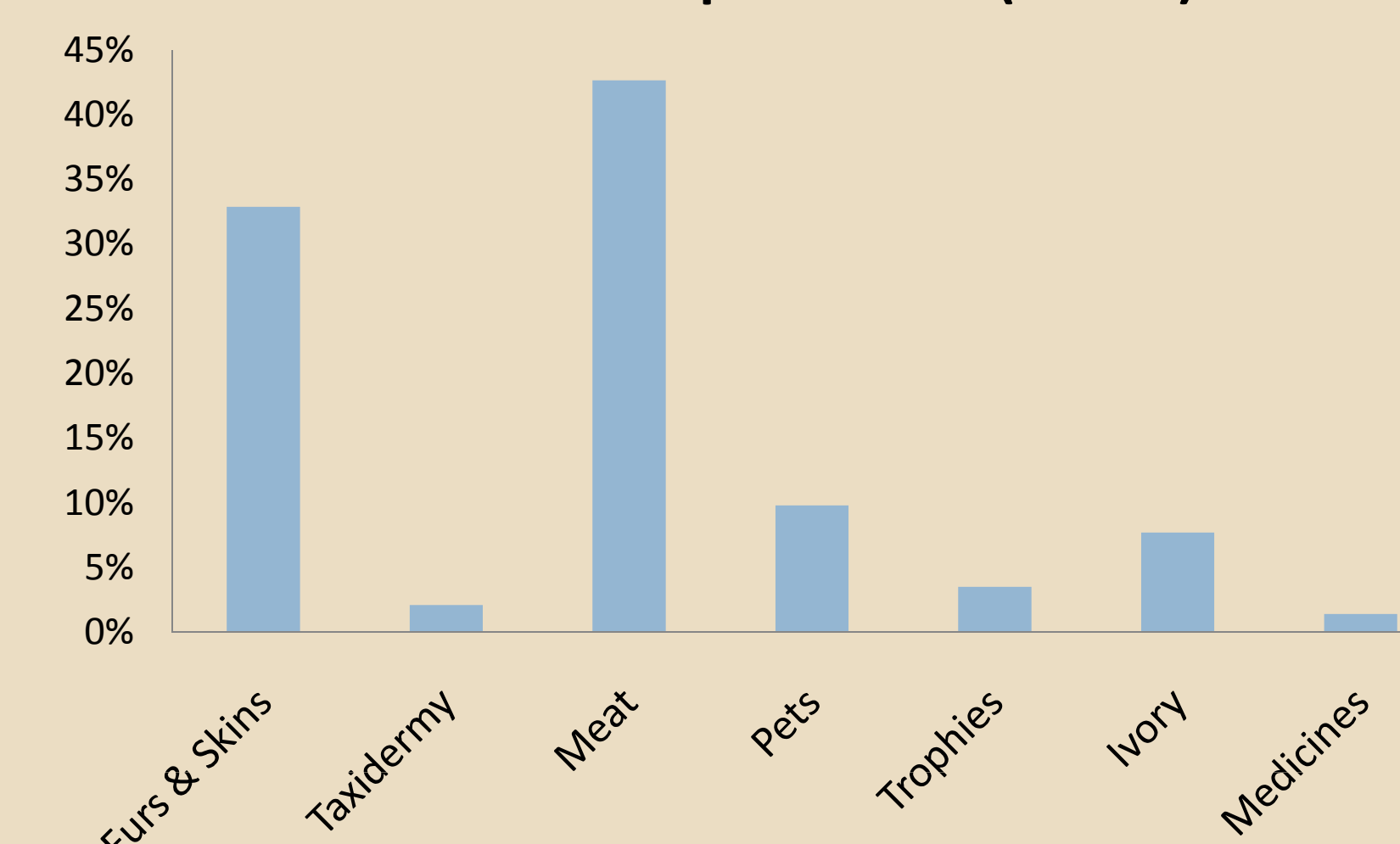
➤ Survey Results

- ~500 soldiers asked to participate, 395 administered surveys, ~20% refusal rate, 371 usable surveys,
- Respondents served in the military for, on average, 7 years ranging from 1 to 28 years, with 51.6% having served 5 years or less.
- The respondents stationed in 73 countries, mostly Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Respondents reported seeing wildlife items for sale on- and off-base in 40 countries, with the most items being seen in Afghanistan (494 items seen), Iraq (211 items seen), and Korea (157 items seen).

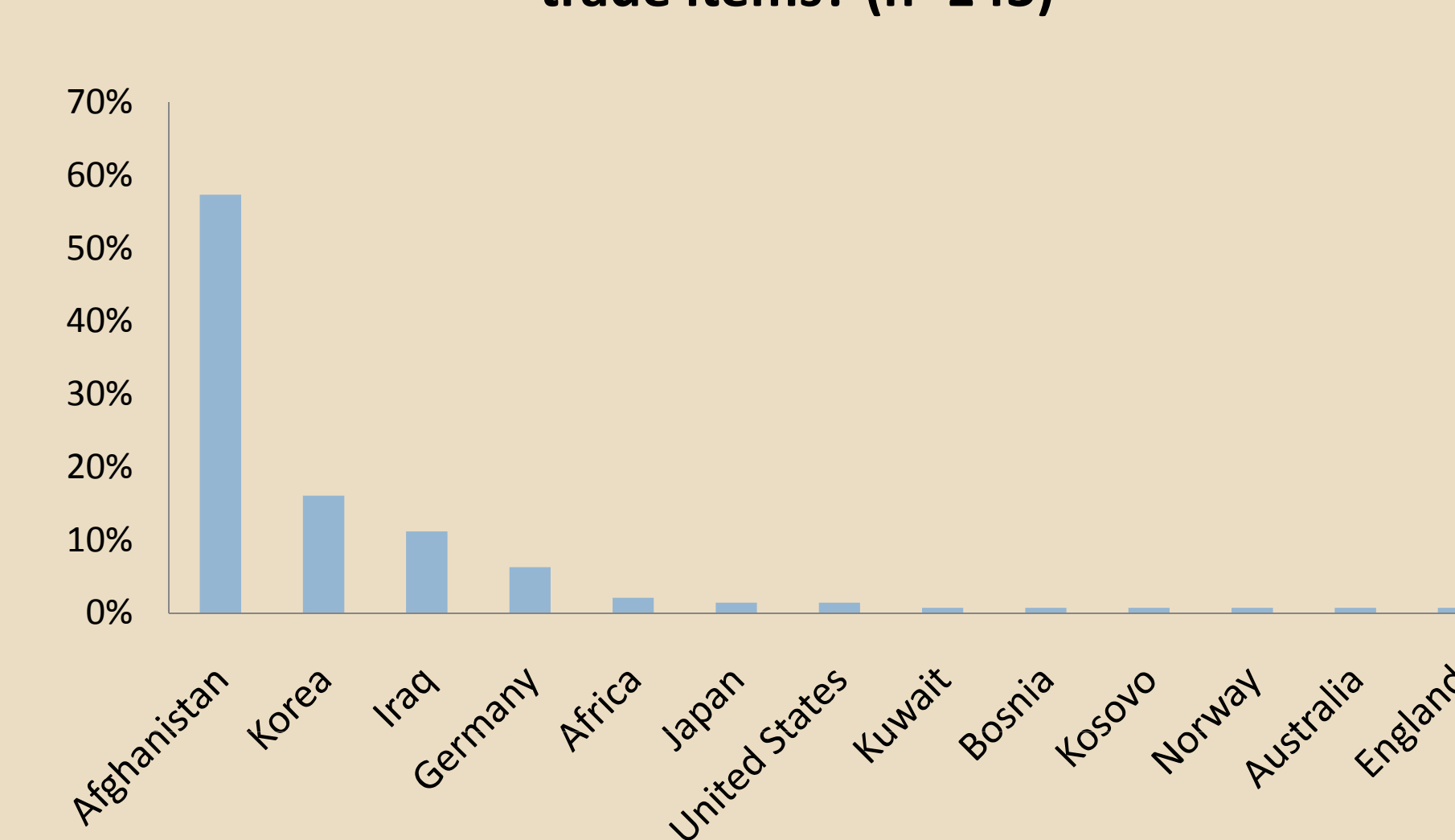
What soldiers reported about wildlife products (n=371)



What types of wildlife products did Fort Drum soldiers purchase? (n=143)



Where did Fort Drum soldiers purchase wildlife trade items? (n=143)



➤ Trainings and Outreach

- Reached 4000-5000 soldiers at Fort Drum Safety Day, and 300 soldiers through pre-departure trainings.
- Conducted trainings to teach Military Police how to identify prohibited wildlife items.
- Confiscated 350 prohibited wildlife items from Camp Eggers, Bagram Air Base and Camp Phoenix.
- Deterred on-base vendors from selling by conducting regular market sweeps with Military Police.
- Observed increase in on-base wildlife products when new Military Police rotations arrived.
- Soldiers reportedly continue to buy items at off-base markets and send to the United States via APO.

Future directions

Initial training and research on Wildlife Trade in the U.S. Military indicates that use and demand of wildlife products may be more wide-spread than initially assumed. A comprehensive approach to addressing this issue is critically important for protecting soldiers, local communities, and the diverse wildlife found in the countries where the U.S. military serves.

WCS proposes to continue this project in the following ways:

- Design playing cards to serve as passive reminders about the problem.
- Conduct a military-wide web based survey to determine the extent of the demand for wildlife products by service and region.
- Tailor future outreach materials to specific regions.

Future work will also explore the possibility for:

- Building a website with region specific information on wildlife, local rules overseeing wildlife products, and suggestions for alternative items.
- Designing an on-line course available for soldiers.



Above: Alternative souvenirs include hand-woven carpets, jewelry and other non-wildlife items (M.Johnson, WCS, 2007)

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