



## TRAGIC LOSS OF LIFE AT ZAKOUMA NATIONAL PARK

11 September 2012

Dear Friends

We regret to inform you that five Zakouma game scouts were brutally killed last week following an ambush in a suspected reprisal attack by poachers. The game scouts, comprising a patrol team of seven men, were stationed at the Hebane patrol post 100km north east of the park close to the Fodjo swamp which is a major wet season habitat for Zakouma's elephant herds.

The seven men were attacked before dawn on Monday 3 September just before setting off on patrol - the heavily armed attackers opening fire as the scouts were engaged in morning prayers. Five of the guards were killed instantly whilst two of the men managed to escape. The five deceased game guards are Zakaria Ibrahim, Brahim Khamis, Daoud Aldjouma, Djibrine Adoum Goudja and Idriss Adoum.

A sixth game scout who managed to escape, Hassan Djibrine, has not yet been located despite ongoing searches of the area. The camp cook, despite sustaining a gunshot wound, managed to escape into the bush and reached the remote village of Fodjo on foot two days later, where he raised the alarm. It took us several days to confirm the details of the incident, as park management and local authorities considered it too dangerous to fly into the Hebane airstrip. All of us at African Parks are shocked at the brutality of this incident and sincerely regret this tragic loss of life.

This was the first year that an anti-poaching presence had been established around Hebane to protect the elephant herds of up to 200 animals that migrate here during the wet season. A temporary post with VHF radio communication had been recently established and an airstrip built close by to service the post. We believe that this slaying was a revenge attack for an incident on 12 August when our anti-poaching teams raided a poacher's camp after gunshots were heard and the carcasses of two elephants discovered. Two elephant tusks, telecommunications equipment and over 1000 rounds of ammunition were confiscated during the raid, however the poachers managed to escape.

Based on reports from local communities, we believe that four men were involved in this attack – the most brutal on our personnel since the Lord's Resistance Army attack on Garamba headquarters in January 2009. We have offered a major reward for information leading to arrests and we are grateful for the assistance being given to us by concerned members of the local community. We are also working closely with Interpol to track down the perpetrators.

This tragic incident reflects the growing pressure faced by our park staff in seeking to protect central Africa's diminishing populations of elephants. We salute the bravery of all our game guards who dedicate their days to protecting elephants in the face of poachers bent on obtaining ivory at any cost. We do not expect this protection to come at a cost to human life, however we are undeterred in our conservation mission.

Yours sincerely

Peter Fearnhead  
CEO, African Parks