



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ENTER THE DRAGON...

#### **Born Free announces new aviation plans to reduce poaching ahead of IWT 2018**

The illegal wildlife trade is estimated to be worth as much as £15.5 billion a year with organised crime groups seeing wildlife as a low risk, high-value commodity. Now, ahead of the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Conference in October, Born Free is calling on the public to help them provide rangers with the ultimate tool to fight back against wildlife crime - a Dragon!

Allowing rangers to patrol vast areas of land in minutes rather than weeks, and to scope out seemingly inaccessible land to protect wildlife, a Dragon GBT 1170 is an autogyro light-aircraft which will help Born Free, and partners, have a major impact on poaching – transforming the reach and capacity of intelligence, using live-tracking technology, secure data/video/voice communications with rangers and control points on the ground and high-performance, conventional and infra-red optics.

Born Free is teaming up with Chimera Aviation to launch these ‘dragons of the sky’ for ranger patrols. The aircraft, first seen being flown by James Bond, since used by special military units, can take off in areas the size of a small garden, are quiet, can fly safely at low speeds - and can carry a pilot, a passenger/observer and technical equipment.

Howard Jones, CEO of Born Free, said:

“Sometimes the campaign against poaching and other illegal activity, has felt like a debilitating, endless battle. Rhino are systematically targeted by poachers for their horns. Fewer than 29,000 remain, and between 2008 and 2017, more than 7,000 were killed by poachers in South Africa alone. And, as our Born Free ‘Elephants in Crisis’ campaign earlier this year highlighted, an average of 55 African elephants are killed by poachers every day for their tusks. That’s about one every 25 minutes.

“Despite the fact that men and women around the world are putting their lives on the line to tackle the dreadful crimes of illegal wildlife trade and poaching, it just isn’t possible to deter and protect, all day, all night and every day. To cover these vast and challenging areas, to then fight through thick vegetation in time to reach poachers, or to prevent their presence in the first place, has seemed almost impossible. Deploying the Dragon will transform our capability and help turn the current balance on its head. This will allow our rangers to protect extensive areas safely, economically and efficiently, with much-enhanced surveillance capacity and flexibility, when compared to other aircraft.

“We are launching the Dragons at Shamwari Private Game Reserve in South Africa - the home of our two big cat sanctuaries, and a 250km<sup>2</sup> haven for wild animals which has some of the most advanced anti-poaching units in South Africa - and on the front-line at Garamba in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We are hoping that with public backing we can prove this method of poaching reduction is effective, and roll out the Dragon initiative in 10 other key areas of Africa, including Kenya, Ethiopia and Zambia within the next 12 months, and provide training for all local pilots and rangers.”

**To find out more or to help support Born Free’s Dragon initiative visit [www.bornfree.org.uk](http://www.bornfree.org.uk).**

**-ENDS-**

**Images:** Available from: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/aNlsv7BqPn>

**Interviews:** Interviews with Howard Jones, CEO of Born Free, are available. Please contact Gemma Hook at [gemma.hook@pmw-com.co.uk](mailto:gemma.hook@pmw-com.co.uk) / 01403 783 400 to organise.

**About Born Free:**

Born Free’s mission is to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs. Born Free opposes the exploitation of wild animals in captivity and campaigns to keep wildlife in the wild.

Born Free promotes Compassionate Conservation to enhance the survival of threatened species in the wild and protect natural habitats while respecting the needs of and safeguarding the welfare of individual animals. Born Free seeks to have a positive impact on animals in the wild and protect their ecosystems in perpetuity, for their own intrinsic value and for the critical roles they play within the natural world. For more information about Born Free please visit: [www.bornfree.org.uk](http://www.bornfree.org.uk)

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