10 Strategies to Save the Rhino:

1. Educate the end users in Asia
2. De-horn the rhino
3. Rhino horn treatment
4. Legalize the trading of rhino horn
5. Rhino trophy hunting
6. Better equipped and more anti-poaching rangers
7. Special Ops trained law enforcement
8. More effective Courts
9. High Tech and innovative systems and equipment
10. Address the poverty issue

Now let me describe each briefly. I leave out names to protect the ”innocent” and refrain from giving free publicity to the “guilty”:

Educate the end users in Asia

This is of course a must do. The consumer in Asia needs to know that they are buying a bogus product with absolutely no medicinal value at all. They need to know that it’s pure superstition and centuries of tradition laced with a tremendous amount of money to be made that drives the use of rhino horn (and other endangered species body parts.) The Chinese however claim that it is not their problem and few are getting on the education band wagon.

De-horn the rhino

At first blush this seems like a good idea. After all, no horn – no dead rhino. Wrong! Apparently a rhino horn can only safely be sawn off several inches above the rhino’s face. If you’ll notice the rhino who have been poached have the horn and its stump brutally removed because the bulk of the potency is in the root (science has shown the entire horn has no healing powers and is basically made of the same substance as our finger nails… so go chew on a finger nail!). Let’s not forget the rhino has a horn for a reason, actually several: it forages with it, uses it to lift up its new born and uses it for jousting.

Rhino horn treatment

This method is being applied successfully by some rhino owners. It is costly and requires the attendance of a veterinarian. The rhino needs to be anesthetized which would make it difficult it seems for the wild rhinos in the larger reserves to be protected this way. I’m also told that the treatment has not been around long enough to ascertain any negative side effects, though when you weigh the options; dead vs side effects… Unfortunately, it doesn’t assure the rhino’s safety 100% either in that a gang of poachers may only find out the horn has been treated after the fact.

Legalize the trading of rhino horn

To trade or not to trade is is by far the hottest issue as much money stands to be made by the rhino owners. With rhino horns worth hundreds of thousands of dollars it's a no brainer for rhino ranchers, or wanna-be game farmers. Of course, what's not taken into consideration is the ethics of this trade. It would feed directly into a myth about the medicinal properties of the horn. Some contend that it would not stop the poaching as the existing rhino ranchers could not keep up with the demand. Like with de-horning, the stump still remains, making the rhino susceptible to the poacher's gun, not forgetting nature endowed the rhino with horns for a reason, or three.

Rhino trophy hunting

The practice of offering a rhino for a canned hunt to a hunter willing to pay big money in the name of raising funds to protect other rhino is absurdity. Kill rhino A to save rhino B… huh?

Better equipped and more anti-poaching rangers

Rangers are being trained and equipped with better technology and apparatus than ever before, yet the poaching continues. However, I'm told where they do operate with good intelligence they are most effective. So rangers are undoubtedly a must to keep poachers at bay. However, rangers have no jurisdiction other than in the park or game reserve they work on so once the horn is enroute to exit the country they are no longer effective.

Special Ops trained law enforcement

My sources tell me that regular law enforcement personnel is not trained or equipped to deal with organized crime and illegal trade. Therefor training is essential for apprehending poachers and more importantly gathering the intel needed to catch the crime bosses, as well as know how to properly gather information at the poaching sites as evidence for prosecution.

More effective Courts

As the number of rhinos poached, number of arrests and especially the non-disclosed number of convictions have horrible ratios it would appear that the court system needs some help. Help to more competently address not only the poaching issue, but also the organized crime system that lies at the root of the wildlife trafficking trail from South Africa to Asia.

High Tech and innovative systems and equipment

The use of helicopters, small aircraft, sniffer dogs, infra-red and GPS systems may all play a huge role in tracking the movements of both the rhino, its horn and the bad guys. However, these high tech and innovative systems carry a high price tag. Now I would think that a country being ravaged by illegal trade would marshal all its resources to stop this bleeding. Especially, as it is

not isolated to the rhino and stands to strip South Africa of its amazing wildlife and totally impoverish the nation as corruption does.

Address the poverty issue

This final matter is not addressed by any of the above and needs attention. My source tells me that in his work he finds the desperately poor will do most anything to earn some money to support their families. So if the crime bosses could no longer recruit poachers for a dime a dozen as they can now the playing field would seemingly also change. Only when the people's basic human needs are met can they begin to consider protecting and conserving other species, namely the endangered rhino and other threatened wildlife species.

These ten strategies have not been discussed in detail, they are merely presented here because they represent the great divide and disparity amongst those many touting to save the rhino from extinction.

Let's truly identify which one, or ones, of these will work and band together and get on with the business of protecting the rhino and ending the senseless poaching.