



**The Role of the Military and Military Technology in Environmental Protection and Nature Conservation**  
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**Conceptual Framework**

Environmental protection and nature conservation are fundamental to human security- “The challenge facing Nations today, is no longer deciding whether conservation of biological diversity is a good idea, but rather how it can be implemented in the national interest and within the means available to each”.(World Commission on Environment and Development, WCED-1997)

**The Rationale**

“The one process ongoing in the 1990s that will take millions of years to correct, is the loss of genetic and species diversity by the destruction of natural habitats. This is the folly that our descendants are least likely to forgive us”-(EO Wilson 1992. *The Diversity of Life*, Harvard Univ Press, Cambridge, Mass)

**The Reaction**

The threat of living on a planet whose resources could no longer be sufficient for humanity’s needs, compels us to adopt a process which reflects a new ethic of conservation and stewardship of the environment. Consequently, governments, industry, development agencies, local and indigenous communities and the general public, are becoming increasingly concerned about the depletion of biological resources with the growing awareness that development depends on their maintenance. This accounts for the global, regional and national commitments to, for example, the objectives of the Convention on Biodiversity, the Programmes of Work deriving from deliberations at the Conference of Parties (COP-7) of the CBD and the UN Millennium Goals.

**What are some of the Threats to Environmental Security and Nature Conservation?**

- Habitat alteration as a consequence of e.g. natural resources exploitation, infra-structural works, agriculture and demographic shifts

**What are some of the Threats to Environmental Security and Nature Conservation?**

- Natural disasters-floods, hurricanes, volcanoes, fires

**What are some of the Threats to Environmental Security and Nature Conservation?**

- Unregulated planning and land use policy
- Introduced and Invasive species
- Persistent poverty
- Poor governance, corruption and money laundering

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### **What are some of the Threats to Environmental Security and Nature Conservation?**

- Lack of legislative, regulatory, monitoring and enforcement capacity and capability
- Poor communication, public awareness and education
- Marginalisation of local and indigenous communities and land tenure issues

### **Strategic Responses to the Threats**

- Opportunities to develop strategic collaborative responses through regional mechanisms and interdependence
- Pro-active national integrated sectoral and societal responses through networking and synergies
- Identification of resources, and building of capacities and capabilities to respond

### **Reality Check**

- Lack of resources
- Lack of political will
- Competing priorities
- Breakdown in rule of Law
- Environmental insecurity and degradation
- Increasing dependence by civil authorities on military (armed forces) involvement and interventions

### **Traditional Role and Core Competencies of the Military**

- Protection of national sovereignty
- Maritime regulatory and enforcement
- Aid to the civil authorities-internal security, counter-drug operations, homeland security
- Disaster relief operations-civil defence missions

### **Traditional Role and Core Competencies of the Military**

- Humanitarian missions-medical, poverty alleviation missions (engineering-housing, water, sanitation, drainage and irrigation)
- Search and Rescue
- Peace building, peace enforcement

### **Use of the Military in Environmental Protection and Nature Conservation Missions**

- Information and intelligence gathering on environmental crimes-illegal exploitation and trans-shipment of resources(minerals, flora and fauna)
- Augmenting sectoral capacities in environmental compliance monitoring and enforcement missions

### **Use of the Military in Environmental Protection and Nature Conservation Missions**

- Use of technology-satellite imagery/ remote sensing/aerial photography, to identify changes in the landscapes and ecosystems due to natural disturbances and anthropogenic activities-e.g. SIVAM
- Logistic air, land and water and communications support for civilian regulatory and enforcement missions

### **Use of the Military in Environmental Protection and Nature Conservation Missions**

- Networking with local and trans boundary partners in the implementation of regional strategic environmental and conservation protocols, initiatives and contingencies e.g. GSI
- Building capacity among remote local and indigenous communities for monitoring and enforcement of environmental regulations within their titled land

### **Use of the Military in Environmental Protection and Nature Conservation Missions**

- Provide a pool of talented reservists for command and control and to augment civilian resources for environmental protection and nature conservation related missions
- Develop contingency plans for environmental disaster mitigation, relief operations and conservation monitoring and enforcement, through alliances and partnerships

### **Limitations**

- Possibilities of 'Mission Creep'
  - Usurping functions of civilian agencies
  - Diversion of resources from constitutional role and priority missions
  - Accountability issues that can sully the image and public confidence in the integrity of the military
  - Compromise specialisation of functions because of multi dimensional/multi mission tasking
- Limitations
- Diversion of budgetary allocations from authorised defence/security expenditures to event oriented civilian environmental missions

### **Conclusion**

- The broad definition of security and the inter-relationships between environmental protection, nature conservation and human security have implications for the ability of nation states to cope with the multi dimensional nature of the current and evolving threats
- The paucity of resources and lack of capacity have prompted the increasingly necessary and justifiable involvement of the military in augmenting the sectoral and other institutional mechanisms that are responsible for environmental protection and nature conservation
- While a well trained, professional military should have the organisational structure, capacity and capability of adapting to missions in support of civilian environmental protection and conservation monitoring and enforcement agencies, this must not be at the expense of the primary role and constitutional responsibilities of the military
- Exposure to such missions has the advantage of creating a pool of trained reservists who can be mobilised or integrated into the national civilian environmental protection and nature conservation mechanisms

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