

(January 5, 2013, Pasadena, California) - The world renowned Greater Kruger area of South Africa, just north of Johannesburg, is the new ground zero in a war to protect magnificent creatures on the edge of extinction. Rhinoceroses are being hunted to death by poachers who will stop at nothing to kill them just to take their horns. The death toll is astonishing; each year, nearly 500 rhinos are killed with baby rhinos and calves separated from their mothers and left to fend on their own. The human toll too is steep. More than 100 park rangers have been killed by these poachers in the battle to halt these criminals. The situation is worsening. Park rangers and security forces are desperate for help. And now four U.S. special forces veterans have come to help fight for the rhinos...

Beginning on **Thursday, March 7, at 9 PM (ET/PT)**, Animal Planet will be embedded in **BATTLEGROUND: RHINO WARS**, a three-part miniseries that documents this intense conflict that is centered on the worldwide commercial demand for rhino horns, an exotic commodity that's more valuable than gold on the black market. The miniseries reveals the conflict between blood-thirsty poachers and one of South Africa's anti-poaching units, which has recruited armed forces to stop the illegal, lucrative trade of rhino horns. Cameras reveal a bloody war that these elite U.S. warriors find themselves fighting, in an area where both rhinos and people are being slaughtered with increasing regularity.

"**BATTLEGROUND: RHINO WARS** is the next evolution in Animal Planet's muscular conservation strand," says Marjorie Kaplan, president and general manager of Animal Planet. "The men and women protecting rhinos on the ground in South Africa are outgunned and outmanned. This is not an issue of rhinos being dangerous or competing for food or other resources. This is purely greed and profit. There is absolutely no justification for these creatures to be dying, and the people risking their lives to protect them are heroes."

Four current and former members of the U.S. Special Ops (Navy SEALs and a Green Beret) have been recruited and brought in to help the security forces. Together, they will survey the situation, train the anti-poaching corps, exchange tactical information and go on the front lines to help defeat these ruthless criminals before the rhinos are brought to total extinction. These "soldiers of extinction" are led by **Craig "Saw,"** team leader, Navy SEAL (fmr.), and includes **Jeff "Biggs,"** sniper, Navy SEAL (fmr.); **Rob,** intel, Navy SEAL (ret.); and **"Oz,"** medic, Green Beret.

With the four Americans lending their anti-insurgency and guerilla-warfare skills to the bush warfare expertise of anti-poaching unit Quemic - led by **Dap Maritz** and **Li Lotriet** -the two forces leverage their skills in the escalating battle against an ever-evolving enemy threat.

"Our experiences have made us angry and heartbroken," says Saw. "But most of all, they've left us motivated. Protecting the rhino has gone from a mission to a calling. The most dangerous soldier in any war is one who fights with his heart."

BATTLEGROUND: RHINO WARS is a production of Aquavision TV Productions and NHNZ (Natural History New Zealand) for Animal Planet. Phil Fairclough is the executive producer with NHNZ and Maria Baltazzi, Dave Keet and Peter Lamberti are the executive producers for Aquavision. For Animal Planet, Erin Wanner is the executive producer, and Hilary Tholen is the associate producer. **BATTLEGROUND: RHINO WARS** was developed by Animal Planet's Charlie Foley, Kurt Tondorf and Todd Weiser.

Animal Planet Media (APM), a multi-media business unit of Discovery Communications, is the world's only entertainment brand that immerses viewers in the full range of life in the animal kingdom with rich, deep content via multiple platforms and offers animal lovers and pet owners access to a centralized online, television and mobile community for immersive, engaging, high-quality entertainment, information and enrichment. APM consists of the Animal Planet television network, available in more than 96 million homes in the US; online assets www.animalplanet.com, the ultimate online destination for all things animal; the 24/7 broadband channel, Animal Planet Beyond; Petfinder.com, the #1 pet-related Web property globally that facilitates pet adoption; and other media platforms including a robust Video-on-Demand (VOD) service; mobile content; and merchandising extensions.

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