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## British pilot shot dead by elephant poachers



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Roger Gower was hit by an AK47 in midair

By [Nicola Harley](#)

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*Helicopter pilot Roger Gower killed by elephant poachers in Tanzania while working for a charity trying to bring them to justice*

A British helicopter pilot has been shot dead by elephant poachers in Tanzania.

Roger Gower, 37, was taking part in an anti-poaching operation with authorities in Tanzania when the criminals he was tracking fired on his aircraft.

He was hit by an AK47 in midair and managed to land his helicopter but died before rescue teams arrived.

*"Those poachers who killed Capt Roger are coward, evil, and sad people. A fine hearted individual gone too soon, and our hearts are broken.*

*Everything must done to bring them to justice."*

Lazaro Nyalandu, MP for for Singida North Constituency in Tanzania



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The incident happened while he was on a mission to help rangers find the killers of an elephant who had been killed at Maswa on Friday.

Founder of the Friedkin Conservation Fund (FCF) charity, Dan Friedkin described him as "a dear friend".

He said: "Roger was killed while piloting a helicopter during a co-ordinated effort with the Tanzanian wildlife authorities to track down and arrest active elephant poachers. In the course of this action the poachers fired upon the helicopter and Roger was fatally wounded.

"We are committed to honouring Roger and his work. We are also committed to ensuring that those responsible for this attack are found and brought to justice. We believe that Roger can best be honoured by redoubling our commitment to protect elephants and our priceless wildlife heritage.

"This tragic event again highlights the appalling risk and cost of protecting Tanzania's wildlife."

Mr Gower had given up his job as an accountant in London to retrain as a pilot working in Africa, he told one paper how he loved taking off on missions in the Kenyan Bush to the soundtrack of Africa by Toto.



The pilot was taking part in an anti-poaching operation in Tanzania

MP for Singida North Constituency in Tanzania, Lazaro Nyalandu, described his killers as "evil cowards" and said everything was being done to bring them to justice.

He said: "Capt Roger represented the very best in human spirit. He loved people and the wildlife. He died serving both.

"Those poachers who killed Capt Roger are coward, evil, and sad people. A fine hearted individual gone too soon, and our hearts are broken.

"Capt Roger's body was flown into Arusha, as those who killed him are still at large. Everything must done to bring them to justice."

He said senior government officials have flown to Maswa following the killing.

Animal charity Wildlife At Risk International said on Facebook: "We are shocked by this

unbelievably sad news and we extend our condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Capt. Roger.

"This is a devastating loss that can never be replaced. We thank him for his commitment to the fight against poachers."

The charity said a "huge manhunt" is underway to find those responsible.

It added: "A huge manhunt is underway involving several organisations assisting authorities to track down this coldblooded murderer.

"For security reasons no further details are being released for now due to the ongoing investigation."

He qualified as a pilot in 2004 after undertaking flying training in Florida.

Mr Gower initially flew for a safari company in Tanzania before joining Tropic Air in 2011 and has a children's book written about him and his aircraft called Rodge-Podge the Silver and Blue Flyer about his adventures.

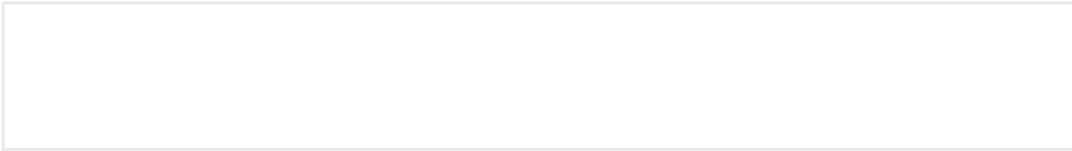
For a number of years he had been working with the British Army in clearing live firing ranges and carrying out medical evacuations.

His job was to check 100sqkm of the Kenyan bush was clear by flying low to ensure there were no large animals or people in the area to enable forces to safely use it for firing practice.

The FCF charity was established to help conserve more than 6.1 million acres of Tanzania's protected areas, including its wildlife and wilderness.

It had been working on anti-poaching operations in the area.

A Foreign Office spokesman said: "We can confirm the death of a British national in Tanzania and are providing assistance to the family at this difficult time."



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