**Thesis Defense**

***Title:  Transnational Organized Crime and the Illegal Wildlife Trade:  Global Ties to a Global Crime***

***Zachariah Long***

Abstract:

World biodiversity is face with many different threats in today’s globalized world. One such threat is the emergence of transnational organized crime in the illegal wildlife trade. But why would transnational organized crime which is traditionally associated with such crimes like illegal drugs, weapons, and human trafficking be interested in the illegal wildlife trade? This thesis seeks to explore why transnational organized crime as a rational business actor why it would be interest in participating in the illegal wildlife trade. By looking several different variables including supply and demand, corruption and limited resources among law enforcement organizations (LEOs), the volume of trade, and globalization to better explore this relationship. In doing so, this thesis seeks to show that from a rational business actor perspective there are sound economic reasons for transnational organized crime to operate in the illegal wildlife trade.

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**10: 00 a.m.**