



## Ndeitunga calls for stricter park controls

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Police Inspector-General Sebastian Ndeitunga has called for the establishment of a database of all trespassers in national parks and nature reserves to establish whether there are links with poachers and possible buyers of rhino horns and elephant tusks. Ndeitunga made these remarks at the Etosha National Park while addressing Heads of Criminal Investigation, Operations, Special Branch and Special Field Force Directorates as well as regional commanders from the Oshana, Oshikoto, Omusati, Kunene and Otjozondjupa regions. According to Ndeitunga, 43 rhinos have been killed in the country so far this year compared to 28 last year, while 78 elephants were poached last year and 11 this year.



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Ndeitunga said most cases of rhino poaching reported since last year are still unsolved. "Therefore, we have a mammoth task before us to address this evil. We are working towards greater cooperation with all stakeholders to introduce international biodiversity co-operation agreements with the neighbouring countries which I alluded to earlier on." Ndeitunga said Namibia should intensify and co-ordinate patrols with neighbouring countries such as Botswana, Angola and Zambia to prevent cross-border poaching. Cabinet has also passed a decision for the Namibian Defence Force members to be deployed in the areas of concern to complement the patrols carried out by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and other stakeholders. He stressed that in order to prevent further poaching in the affected areas, the regulations governing access to these areas need to be strengthened and strictly enforced. "In addition, the External Legal Affairs Division of Namibian Police Force should work closely with the legal department of the Ministry of Tourism to follow up on progress made regarding the proposed draft wildlife legislation, which will serve as a deterrent to would-be offenders." Ndeitunga also said the unprecedented rhino and elephant poaching in Namibia has prompted his office to develop a strategic plan to curb the ongoing slaughter of rhinos and elephants. The plan covers a wide range of areas of interest to the security agencies in Namibia, which will be discussed in the near future. He said the police officers involved in the anti-rhino poaching operation are facing a variety of challenges on the ground, which need to be addressed as soon as possible. These challenges include a lack of manpower to patrol Etosha, which is one of Africa's largest national parks covering 22 270 square kilometres. There is also a lack of intelligence gathering to support the operation, lack of medical facilities and shortage of communication equipment. The equipment needed includes Global Positioning System (GPS) devices and binoculars. There are insufficient ration packs for the members, a lack of 4x4 vehicles and some members are experiencing health problems. He said the main achievements in Etosha are the establishment of the Protected Resources Unit and the dehorning of 57 rhinos in November 2014 to make them less attractive to poachers. WINDHOEK ELLANIE SMIT