



Syndicates exposed in Etosha rhino poaching

07 July 2015 | Crime

The police have made significant progress in their investigation of the recently discovered mass killings of rhino in the Etosha National Park. The death toll is expected to rise, if information at the sites of buried carcasses prove to be correct. A large number of suspects have been arrested and the list includes employees within the park. The Oshana police regional commander, Commissioner Ndahangwapo Kashihakumwa, is heading a team of investigators permanently deployed in Etosha since June 1. He said his team has so far penetrated at least five poaching syndicates and detained 24 suspects who have already appeared in the Okahao Magistrate's Court. Six additional suspects are under investigation, but have not been arrested. According to Kashihakumwa, there is one foreign national among the suspects, but he could not provide the suspect's nationality. Kashihakumwa said the syndicates operated from the Uutsathima, litapa, Onamatanga and Okakoto villages in the Omusati Region, while another one operated from within the Kunene Region. Kashihakumwa confirmed that 62 rhinos have been poached by these syndicates so far but added, "This is not something new. They started poaching as far back as 2008." While some rhino carcasses have been found, the police have been informed that many more animals were buried to cover up the crime. "We know where the carcasses are buried and we will soon dig them up," he said. Kashihakumwa said his team's success was the result of co-operation by members of the public who provided valuable information. "Investigations are ongoing because we want to get to the bottom of this crime," he said. The cases of the 24 accused who appeared in the Okahao Magistrate's Court were postponed to July 30 and they were remanded in police custody. OSHAKATI PLACIDO HILUKILWA



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