

## Shifeta unaware of ministers who poach

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by Tuyeimo Haidula



**ENVIRONMENT minister Pohamba Shifeta says he is not aware of any ministers or former members of parliament involved in poaching.**

Meanwhile, police Inspector General Sebastian Ndeitunga says he cannot deny that ministers or members of parliament were involved in poaching, but he wanted to know who they are so he can lay his hands on them.

The minister and the police chief were reacting to reports in the Namibian Sun that NamRights executive director Phil ya Nangoloh had allegedly submitted a report to Ndeitunga in which political leaders are accused of involvement in rhino and elephant poaching.

The paper further reported that Ya Nangoloh had allegedly informed Ndeitunga of the findings of an independent investigation into poaching he carried out in June and July this year.

Although Ndeitunga denied receiving the report, Ya Nangoloh yesterday insisted that he had submitted it to the police chief.

He claimed that Ndeitunga had asked him to assist the police in providing information about the alleged involvement of high-ranking political, business and traditional leadership figures and government officials in poaching.

"I was trying to be a good citizen, but now they are trying to intimidate me. I got the information from the people who feel they are being victimised because they are acting on instructions of high officials," Ya Nangoloh said yesterday.

He maintained that he can produce MTC records of the messages he had sent to Ndeitunga as well as their phone

conversations and requested the police chief not to embark on character assassination.

Shifeta said the ministry needed something concrete to investigate the claims, otherwise it would merely become a witch-hunt.

"Can we ask every minister now and say 'are you involved in poaching'? Accusations that are not substantiated do not hold any water," Shifeta said.

He requested Ya Nangoloh to provide concrete evidence before the end of December.

Shifeta said that over the past four months seven rhinoceros carcasses were discovered in Etosha National Park, four in the Palmwag area of the Kunene region and six carcasses were found on three farms – two on each of the farms. Three people who were found with rifles have been arrested.

"People should not take chances to promote themselves and spread rumours," Ndeitunga said, adding that every Namibian has a civic obligation to assist in fighting any type of crime.

He denied that he was protecting any top officials.

He also said some of the poaching incidents are inside jobs. "Probably the culprits are inside the farms and fingers are being pointed outside."

So far 33 people have been arrested for suspected poaching in Etosha. Seven are still in custody while the rest are out on bail. In the Palmwag area, 12 were arrested and two were granted bail.

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