



COVER halts anti-poaching activities

According to one of the founders of the private conservation group, the anti-corruption case is at a very advanced stage, and news of the finding will soon be made public.

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Private conservation group COVER (Conserving our Valuable Rhino and Elephant) has halted its anti-poaching operations, due to an ongoing legal battle against the founder of the organisation.

The court case, which is pending in the High Court, stems from an investigation by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) into the alleged misuse of funds raised for rhino protection during the so-called Black Tie event last year, which included a wine auction.

COVER founder Jofie Lamprecht and his wife Maryke opened the case at the ACC, following the alleged misuse of money raised during the fundraising event.

The event was organised by Next Generation Conservation Trust, founded by Henri Slabbert.

According to information received, around half of the money raised at the so-called Black Tie event, which included the wine auction, was allegedly spent on hiring the premises for another event, the Wine Extravaganza, which was hosted by Slabbert's brother Mynard Slabbert.

That event was held just after the wine auction.

About N\$495 100 had been raised by the wine auction, but the trust received only N\$241 449.

Lamprecht said that the anti-corruption case is at a very advanced stage, and news of the finding will soon be made public.

"My wife and I have also been sued for defamation of character in this matter that we exposed, and we are currently defending ourselves in the High Court of Namibia at our own expense. Again, the truth will soon come out for all to judge," he said.

It is understood that Mynard Slabbert is the one suing Lamprecht and his wife.

Lamprecht further confirmed to Namibian Sun that they have stopped all training of anti-poaching units, and have realigned the organisation's focus on legalising the trade in rhino horn, due to the ongoing court case.

Meanwhile, Lamprecht said that they only managed to train one batch of trainees in anti-poaching activities, before the Ministry of Environment and Tourism also asked them to stop all their activities. "The ministry asked us to support their anti-poaching efforts, rather than start our own programme."

The two-week training course by Wildlife Angel was completed last year.

During the course five people were trained in anti-poaching activities, which included fitness training, navigation, moving formation, shooting exercises and standard operation procedures, such as arrests, crime scene preservation and medical treatment.

"We have moved our focus to the legalisation of trade. We believe that this is the only hope for the wild rhino in Africa.

Sustainably utilising the horn will mean that the market can be supplied, while keeping the animals alive.

"Funds generated from both public and private sectors will be used to enhance rhino habitats, as well as fund anti-poaching programmes.

Critics that say that this will not work, have no basis or research to say this, because it has never been tried. Namibia sits on literally billions of US dollars of rhino horn, as well as elephant ivory that is not being utilised. Our Ministry of Finance is looking for more revenue streams, but it is sitting on a gold mine," said Lamprecht.

Meanwhile the Ministry of Environment and Tourism this week said that a total of eight rhinos have been poached this year.

Last year we recorded a total of 90 rhinos were poached. Of the ninety (90) six (6) were white rhinos and eighty four (84) were black rhinos.



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/asse-halts-anti-poaching-activities2016-05-230.jpg>)

BROUGHT TO A HALT: The private conservation group has stopped all anti-poaching activities for the time being. Photo: CONTRIBUTED

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