

Police shoot suspected poacher

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A SUSPECTED poacher was shot and wounded by police yesterday at Farm Harray near Etosha National Park, bringing the number of those injured to two since December last year.

Three others were shot dead at Bwabwata National Park last week following the invocation of the Criminal Procedure Act where police are instructed to shoot poachers in self-defence.

The suspect shot at Farm Harray was initially admitted to the Outjo State Hospital before being transferred to the Windhoek Central Hospital.

Major general James Tjivikua said in a statement yesterday that police officers and rangers were called on Tuesday to Farm Harray to assist in tracing three suspected poachers.

"The team went there, and immediately started tracking the poachers. But all attempts were in vain," he said, adding that the suspected poacher was spotted yesterday by the team in the vicinity of the farm before he disappeared into the bushes.

"The team went to check where the suspected poacher had disappeared to, and suddenly he reappeared on the road. When the team drove towards him, he ran into another farm area," Tjivikua added.

Tjivikua said the team fired warning shots to stop him, but the suspect continued running whilst carrying a panga.

"He was eventually shot and wounded," he said.

The shootings come after environment minister Pohamba Shifeta declared that the police had been ordered to shoot suspected poachers in self-defence.

"Poachers shooting at anti-poaching units will regret for having done so if he [sic] ever survived the firepower of our well-trained special units," Shifeta said in a message on his Facebook page in December.

Shifeta's message raised concern on whether the police have been authorised to adopt a "shoot to kill" policy just like what the Botswana Defence Force does.

Although Shifeta could not be reached for comment yesterday, environment ministry spokesperson Romeo Muyunda placated this concern.

"There is a difference between shoot to kill and self-defence. In Namibia, we do not shoot on sight, which is shoot to kill. Botswana shoots on sight. We normally try to arrest, but in cases where poachers begin to shoot at officers, they have to fire back to save their own lives," he explained.

Police Inspector General Sebastian Ndeitunga said police were not ordered to adopt the shoot to kill policy.

"Our shooting will be the last resort. We only use fire as a last resort or in self-defence," he said, adding that police were still investigating the latest incident.