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Informanté

Multinational poacher arrested after firefight

Staff Reporter

A MEMBER of a notorious poaching gang from Zambia that plies their trade across the borders of three countries was arrested after getting involved in a shootout with a Namibian anti-poaching unit on the banks of Linyanti River.

The shootout occurred on the Namibian side of the river last Thursday night and according to reports, one of the gang members was arrested. The suspected poacher is currently being held at the Katima Mulilo Police Station.

A Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism official shortly after the shooting incident last week, said that the notorious poaching gang has been able to evade arrest for years by using tactics associated with people that received military training.

The official said four of the poachers managed to evade arrest again by disappearing into the bushes in the darkness during the firefight.



"Our people are not trained as soldiers but it seems as if these guys had some training because they know how to perform armed combat and survive in the bush for extended periods," he said.

According to the official, some of the equipment that was confiscated during the arrest indicates that the gang was on their way to Botswana to hunt elephants and hippopotamus for ivory.

He said the arresting officers confiscated several hunting rifles, knives, and axes. Some food items and solar panels with an inverter that is used to charge mobile phones and hunting lights. The torches are used at night to hunt protected game.

"We also confiscated packets of tablets used by the poachers for extra energy. The tablets enable them to carry heavy loads over long distances. The suspects have been known to cover up to 400 kilometres on foot to hunt protected wildlife," he said.

Officials also confiscated inflatable mattresses that the poachers used for sleeping while camping in the bush. It is believed that the mattresses were also used to float wildlife contraband across rivers and swamps once their poaching expeditions came to an end.

Besides food items such as maize meal, rice, and several containers of cooking oil, packets of samp, and dried fish, officials also confiscated several strips of dried elephant meat.

Other than the dried elephant meat no other wildlife contraband was found amongst the items confiscated during the arrest.

Authorities in Botswana said the arrest of the poaching gang member comes at a time where a surge in incidents of poaching was detected in the Okavango Delta.

