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Detectives help catch rhino poachers Poached cow far pregnant

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Francoise Steynberg

Three suspected rhino poachers with a firearm were arrested on Saturday with the help of farmers, trackers and the K9 anti-poaching unit after the carcass of a pregnant white rhino cow was discovered at a lodge in the Gobabis district on Friday.

According to the head of the Blue Rhino task force, Comm. Barry de Klerk, the rhino's horns were removed with which other suspects fled.

"Three suspects were arrested on Saturday by Gobabis police and a private anti-poaching unit at a roadblock outside Gobabis, but those with the horns in their possession are still at large," De Klerk told Republikein on Sunday.

He confirmed that this was the first case of rhino poaching at the lodge. For security reasons, the name of the lodge is withheld.

TWIN BROTHERS

Two identical twin brothers, Messrs. Jan and Koos Pienaar (69), were part of the team that cut tracks and helped catch the three suspects.

Both of the twin brothers were in the army and at the time received the coveted Ratel award for tracking, but they are very modest about it, as well as the fact that they walked and tracked about 15 km away on Saturday at their age.

"I was in the military from 1970 to 1990," Jan, a farmer near Aminuis who is also setting up a crime prevention forum in the area, told Republikein on Monday.

"We need to join hands with the police to help them because they have a lack of resources. Forums for crime prevention have already been set up at Witvlei, Leonardville and Dordabis," he said.

Koos, a professional hunter in the Zambezi region, and four of his trackers' expertise were also used. He was honored by the Ministry of the Environment in 1995 for his active role in nature conservation and combating poaching

in the Zambezi region to preserve Namibia's wildlife. He is also a member of the Hunters United Against Poaching Trust (HUAP).

"I do not want to reveal the identity of my trackers, because with the high price of rhino horn on the black market, I do not want to endanger their lives," he told Republican.

The rhino carcass was apparently discovered by a hunter on Friday and the lodge's manager was informed who in turn called the police and Jan for help.

Mr. Rickus Spangenberg of the K9 anti-poaching unit says he went to work in the Gobabis district especially Easter weekend to catch game thieves, because they were expected to strike.

"I, my partner and dog instructor, Mannfreid Weiss, my five dog handlers, bloodhounds and wolfhound, as well as an official from the Ministry of the Environment started working until the early hours of Friday morning," Spangenberg said.

"On Saturday around 05:00 the farmers, Marius Labuschagne and Hannes Nel, Uncle Jan and Uncle Koos and his four trackers joined us and we tracked until around 16:00 to the informal settlement in Gobabis where the suspects were picked up by vehicles. is."

"Gobabis police were alerted and they set up a roadblock outside Gobabis where the three suspects were arrested with a firearm and bloodied clothes and shoes," Spangenberg said.

He says he cannot reveal the identity of his dog handlers for security reasons.

Spangenberg says he is upset about the poaching of the pregnant rhino cow "which would probably calve in about a month, but poachers are not a dime around".

The police investigation continues. - francoise@republikein.com.na