



Police, military officers arrested over wildlife crime

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Image used for illustrative purposes.

A NAMIBIAN Police officer and a Namibian Defence Force (NDF) soldier are among 13 suspects who were nabbed in the last week in connection with wildlife-related crimes.

This was detailed in an update on wildlife crimes provided by the Ministry of Environment, Tourism and Forestry (MEFT) on Tuesday.

The update, issued by MEFT spokesperson Romeo Muyunda, indicated that 13 people had been apprehended for wildlife crimes in Namibia between 2 and 6 June.

Among the items seized from the suspects are four elephant tusks, two rhino horns, one live pangolin, a giraffe skin and a pangolin skin.

A police officer and NDF soldier were among four suspects arrested on Sunday (6 June) after they had been found in possession of two rhino horns concealed in 10-kilogram baking flour packaging.

According to the update, the group intended to sell the rhino horns without a permit. They appeared in the Ohangwena Magistrate's

Court on Tuesday.

The ministry condemned the involvement of law enforcement officers in wildlife crime and acknowledged the efforts of officials who assist in reducing wildlife crime.

"The ministry is pleased that our law enforcement operations continue to record more successes against wildlife crime in the country.

"From the beginning of June 2021, law enforcement agencies have made significant arrests of wildlife crime perpetrators involving products of high-value species across the country," Muyunda said in the statement.

He added that while there may be unethical individuals in most systems, in Namibia it is only a small minority.

"Namibia can be proud that the tiny minority of corrupt officials are pursued, investigated and apprehended with vigour and determination," he said.

POACHING IN 2021

Figures provided by the ministry in the update detail that thus far this year, four white rhinos and one elephant have been poached in Namibia.

According to Muyunda, the four white rhinos were poached on private farms, while the elephant was poached at a conservancy in the Otjozondjupa region.

"These figures show a serious decline in poaching of rhinos and elephant. This is mainly due to the collaborative effort of stakeholders against wildlife crime," he said.

Recently, however, the ONE Namibia nature reserve group reported that a rhino calf had been found dead in the bush of the Ghaub Nature Reserve in the Otavi area.

The calf was an offspring of one of the reserve's rhino cows which had been killed by poachers in May.

"[The calf] had a gunshot wound in its left hind leg and must have died a slow death," ONE Namibia director Joachim Rust said.

Rust recounted: "We started the search for the calf on 16 May immediately after we discovered its mother, Zanna, dead and with her horns hacked off.

"The next day we found a second cow that had been shot in the stomach and must have died five kilometres away in great pain," Rust said.

He also revealed that a young bull rhino was found with a gunshot wound since the discovery of the second cow that had been killed.

ONE Namibia is offering a N\$50 000 reward for clues leading to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrators.