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## Police, poacher injured in shootout

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ONGWEDIVA – A daring raid inside Namibia’s most popular and well-protected national parks by poachers left a suspect and a police officer fighting for their lives.

The attempt by poachers was foiled by police on Thursday around 04h40 and two suspected poachers were arrested.

When the police approached, the would-be poachers opened fire on the security personnel resulting in the officers responding with more fire.

A 19-year-old suspected poacher and a 37-year-old police officer were injured during the exchange of fire.

According to police spokesperson Kauna Shikwambi, gunshots were heard by the anti-poaching operation team on Wednesday morning around 10h00, in the area of Acacia Patrol Camp, which is situated at least 8km inside Etosha National Park. This prompted the anti-poaching team to dispatch some members who pursued the poachers on foot. Later on, two helicopters were also dispatched to the scene.

The two injured individuals are both admitted at Omuthiya State Hospital.

Shikwambi further said two suspects, including one who was injured during the crossfire, and his 26-year-old alleged counterpart, were arrested.

She stressed that as the search continued, five more male suspects were found, however they got away, leaving behind four backpacks containing food stuff, live bullets, telescope and clothes.

According to Shikwambi, there is a proliferation of wildlife crime committed by poachers who shoot and kill protected game indiscriminately in national parks.

She thus urged the public to protect the wildlife species which are now vulnerable.

“We appeal to all citizens in Namibia, more especially the communities living around the Etosha National Park, Palmwag Concession and conservancy areas, Bwabwata, Mudumo, Nkhasa Rupara national parks to assist the police to fight poaching by reporting any suspected activities pertaining to wildlife crime,” she added.

According to her, poachers change their modus operandi from time to time to confuse the security forces but police are always a step ahead, hence the various successes.

The shootout comes shortly after the revelation that 11 rhino carcasses were found in the last two weeks in Etosha.

In 2021, 43 rhinos were poached as compared to 21 poached thus far in 2022, whilst eight elephants were poached in 2021 compared to two already poached in 2022.

[-fhamalwa@nepc.com.na](mailto:fhamalwa@nepc.com.na)

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