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STAFF REPORTER

• 4 HOURS AGO - 2022-07-09 13:32:00

The environment ministry today released a statement confirming the arrest of 11 suspected poachers during the course of four law enforcement operations undertaken close to the world renowned Etosha National Park since June.

Environment ministry spokesperson Romeo Muyunda today said the arrests, and confiscation of vehicles, cash and weapons, were the result of joint law and intelligence operations, following the discovery of 11 rhino carcasses at Etosha in June. The rhinos were all killed during poaching incidents.

Among the items confiscated were two vehicles, five rifles, ammunition, axes, knives as well as close to N\$50 000 in cash.

The accused persons remain in police custody at Ondangwa, Tsumeb and Okahao, and investigations continue.

Muyunda said the outcomes of the operations are a “clear indication” that the joint law enforcement operations between ministry officials, the police, the army and intelligence investigations, through the Blue Rhino Task Force, are producing results.

He pointed out that one or more suspects have been arrested in connection with almost each of the carcasses that were discovered.

“This should serve as a caution to would-be poachers that they may be successful in killing our rhinos or other wildlife species, but our relentless law enforcement officials will definitely catch them.”

The suspects each face four different rhino poaching related charges. They are: Naeman Kangula (26); Agas Johannes Jafet (19), Risto (33), Matiti Matteus Kauzapo (32), Elago Natangwe Elago (34), Kiinge Ignatius Kamati (18), Johannes Nelongo Shikongo, Mbayenovantu Katiti (45), Tjozondunge Murumbua (23), Kazoondou Mutambo (37) and Jonas Njamba Albina (30).

Be warned

The ministry also confirmed that ballistic evidence, DNA and other technical information, have led to the combining of two rhino poaching cases for the purposes of trial, including the case involving self-proclaimed prophet Jackson Babi, who was arrested in 2020 and accused of illegally possessing rhino horns and firearms.

The public are reminded that the law has been amended to ensure stiff punishments for poachers and

anyone involved in the crime.

The joint operations also effect pre-emptive arrests of suspects before they are able to poach an animal, the ministry stated.

Recently, two suspects were apprehended with .303 rifle, 11 rounds of live ammunition, silencer, axe and knife among other things.

The suspects intended to enter Etosha National Park to poach a rhino; however, they were caught before they could enter the park and better yet before they could kill a rhino.

“We once again, assure members of the public that our law enforcement operatives are on the ground, in all our national parks and conservation areas to ensure that our wildlife are protected and that what happened in Etosha does not happen again,” Muyunda said.

COMMENTS



Namibian Sun [2022-07-09](#)