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- POACHER KILLED DURING SKIRMISH WITH ANTI-POACHING UNIT



ILLEGAL: Two poachers have been arrested, and one died, after a botched attempt to poach a rhino on a farm near Windhoek. PHOTO: FILE

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POACHER KILLED DURING SKIRMISH WITH ANTI-POACHING UNIT

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A rhino poacher was killed while another was injured during a shootout between an anti-poaching unit and three rhino poachers on Saturday on a private farm about 120 km east of Windhoek.

The injured poacher was arrested, and the third accomplice, who initially fled the scene, was arrested on Monday morning.

Owner of Namibia Wildlife Protection, Salmon Vermaak, whose anti-poaching unit (APU) is stationed on the farm, said the team leader informed him about 11:30 on Saturday that they had spotted a poacher tracking a rhino cow and her calf.

Vermaak told the team that they should fire shots into the air to scare the poachers off.

Protecting valuable resources

This tactic helped, and the poachers ran away, while the APU team followed them, he said.

Vermaak added that the area has an excellent farmer protection network and alerts were immediately sent out, with farmers quickly showing up to provide help and set up road blocks.

During the chase, the poachers started shooting at the anti-poaching team, and they responded by returning fire.

One of the poachers was fatally wounded, and during the arrest, another was also injured while the third suspect fled.

The search, however, continued, and he was arrested on Monday morning. He was discovered three farms away from the scene of the incident.

Big target

Vermaak said that a bag with two fresh rhino horns was recovered on the suspects. According to him, the horns are from a rhino bull that had been poached before the poachers targeted the rhino cow. A hunting rifle, silencer, axe and two mobile phones were

also discovered.

Vermaak said there have been several previous poaching incidents on the farm, and to avoid the farm being targeted further, its name will not be made public.

The matter was attended to by the police, and the body of the poacher was transported to the Windhoek mortuary for an autopsy. According to the police, a murder case was also opened against the anti-poaching members of Namibia Wildlife Protection, which will be transferred to the prosecutor general for a decision.

Spokesperson of the environment ministry, Romeo Muyunda, confirmed the incident.

“It is unfortunate that a person lost his life. We commend the team that was involved for their work in tracking the suspects. Again, this is an indication that crime does not always pay.”

Escalation

Poachers killed 77 rhinos last year, compared to 45 in 2021.

The figure for last year is the third highest recorded since 2013, only surpassed by 97 rhinos poached in 2015 and 84 killed in 2018.

Further statistics indicate that 43 rhinos were poached in 2020, while 61 were killed in 2019, 55 in 2017, 66 in 2016, 56 in 2014, and 9 in 2013.