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75 suspects arrested in 106 rhinoceros poaching cases in Namibia during 2022: report

July 15, 2023

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WINDHOEK, July 15 – Namibia’s anti-poaching and crime prevention initiatives managed to apprehend 75 suspects in 106 cases related to rhinoceros poaching in Namibia during 2022, according to a report released Friday. 

The year 2022 saw the most rhinoceros poached in the country since 2015 when the first major poaching wave in independent Namibia peaked, the National Report on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement in Namibia revealed.

The report is based on data compiled via the Integrated Database of Wildlife Crime in Namibia, as well as related firsthand information and observations by personnel from the Blue Rhino Task Team, the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Namibian police, and the Office of the Prosecutor-General.

The report noted that the number of rhinoceros known to have been poached in Namibia during 2022 increased by 97.9 percent from 2021, reaching the highest losses since 2015.

“Anti-poaching and crime prevention initiatives form the front line for our rhino ranges,” the report noted, adding that to counter the unprecedented threat of ongoing, highly organized poaching of high-value species, the Namibian Defense Force continues to play a unique role within its mandate of defending the state and its resources against threats.

According to the report, rhinoceros are not the only resources being targeted.

“Elephant ivory and pangolin products continue to be trafficked, and we are experiencing an expansion in the criminal offenses into new sectors, such as trafficking of our rare and endemic plants. In all, 693 suspects were arrested in 430 wildlife cases in 2022. Meat poaching continues to make up around half of all registered cases,” the report said.

The report said while crime prevention is the ultimate goal, the prosecution of suspects, leading to appropriate sentences for perpetrators, is the immediate aim of law enforcement in response to crimes that have been committed.

The report also noted that the finalization of rhinoceros cases remains frustratingly low. “Only four rhino cases were finalized during the past year. To compound matters, suspects released on bail in drawn-out rhino trials have been re-arrested in new cases.”

On the positive side, the report said, the sentence passed in one prominent rhinoceros-poaching case finalized in 2022 is particularly commendable, making a loud and clear statement that wildlife crime will not be tolerated, regardless of whether it is perpetrated by influential individuals or the rural poor.

Meanwhile, in April this year, Namibian authorities arrested eight suspects in connection with rhinoceros poaching incidents in the country’s flagship Etosha National Park and surrounding areas. (Xinhua)

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