



blue rhino

stop crime – protect nature

stop crime – protect nature

OPERATION BLUE RHINO

Who we are
and what we do

June 2020



the BLUE RHINO vision

eradicate wildlife crime ...

... to support the permanent protection ...

... of Namibia's diverse natural heritage

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OPERATION BLUE RHINO is a formal cooperation between the Protected Resources Division of the Namibian Police Force within the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security and the Intelligence and Investigation Unit within the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism.

Operation Blue Rhino was initiated on the 30th of July 2018 to counter the surge in wildlife crime, and particularly rhino poaching in Namibia. Motivated by its ongoing success, the operation has been repeatedly extended. An agreement has been reached to continue the operation for a five-year period, until mid 2025. Operation Blue Rhino is facilitated through active collaboration and sharing of information and resources amongst numerous partner organisations.

Effective conservation systems that enable healthy wildlife populations form the foundation of biodiversity protection in Namibia. Anti-poaching initiatives guard against criminal impacts on vulnerable wildlife. Law enforcement and prosecution thwart criminal activities to safeguard national objectives. Operation Blue Rhino works within this framework to eradicate commercial poaching and trafficking of illegal game products, thus supporting the protection of our country's biodiversity.

Operation Blue Rhino is run by a dedicated task force, the Blue Rhino Task Team. This is made up of NAMPOL investigators from different divisions and regions and members of the MEFT IIU. Operational funding is supplied by the Rooikat Trust. Dedicated vehicles are provided by the MEFT, NAMPOL and Rooikat. Blue Rhino builds on the foundations and ongoing efforts of the regional Protected Resources Sub-Divisions of NAMPOL and the regional units of the Wildlife Protection Services Division of the MEFT.

The Rooikat Trust was established in 2017 as a local NGO to enable the rapid, flexible and targeted dispersal of funds from international agencies, including the Wildcat Foundation and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, USA. Rooikat provides direct, wide-ranging support for law enforcement and logistics. This enables rapid responses to incidents of any nature in the fight against wildlife crime in Namibia.





intrinsic BLUE RHINO core values

- loyalty -
- trust -
- courage -
- credibility -
- pride -
- willingness -
- partnerships -
- relevance -
- integrity -
- accountability -
- diligence -
- discipline -
- perseverance -
- dedication -
- respect -
- adaptability -
- reliability -
- passion -
- hard work -

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primary BLUE RHINO objectives

- > thoroughly investigate all wildlife crimes¹ related to high-value species²
- > arrest all perpetrators of crimes related to high-value species
- > ensure swift prosecution and apt penalties for all perpetrators of high-value wildlife crimes²

- > support conservation systems through active law enforcement³ input
- > support anti-poaching activities⁴ through active law enforcement input

- > ensure responsible information dissemination related to high-value wildlife crimes
- > form partnerships at all levels and across boundaries

1. Wildlife crimes include the intent or attempt to poach; illegally killing wildlife, i.e. poaching; possessing or trafficking controlled wildlife products; possessing illegal firearms or ammunition; illegally entering a protected area; aiding or abetting criminals; benefiting financially or otherwise from wildlife crimes; money laundering and other transgressions related to wild animals
2. Current high-value species/crimes focus – elephant, rhinos, pangolin
3. Law enforcement investigates criminal activities in order to apprehend and prosecute perpetrators
4. Anti-poaching activities guard vulnerable wildlife populations through patrols, surveillance and related activities

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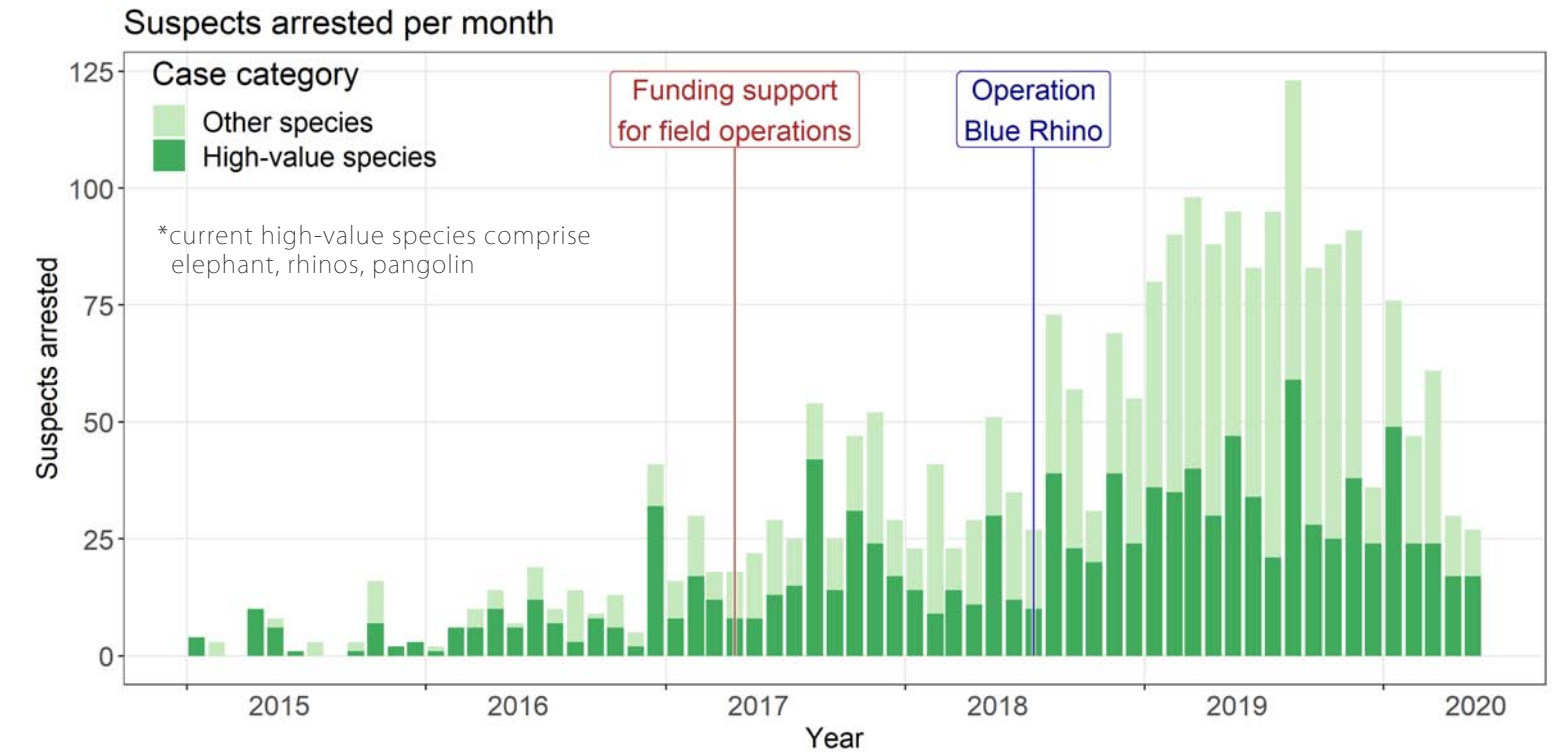
central BLUE RHINO operational principles

- > The Blue Rhino Task Team is a diverse squad with a multi-agency approach and a rich skills base
- > Active cooperation with regional NAMPOL, MEFT and NDF units forms the basis of operations
- > The task team is dynamic and can be restructured as needs dictate
- > Investigations are intelligence-led using innovative technologies and information networks
- > Decision-making is evidence based and data driven
- > Operations are adaptive and responsive to changing needs and circumstances
- > Crime prevention is prioritised through early detection of illegal activities
- > Collaboration and communication are actively promoted
- > Critical thinking and personal initiative are actively encouraged
- > Approaches are guided by experience and lessons learnt, shared amongst team members and partners
- > All contributions in the fight against wildlife crime are duly acknowledged
- > The task team works within clear institutional arrangements
- > The task team works in line with the national vision
- > The task team works to ensure justice
- > Convicted perpetrators and significantly reduced crime rates are the final indicators of success

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major BLUE RHINO successes

- > Since the inception of Operation Blue Rhino, over 100 pre-emptive arrests have been made in some 30 cases of conspiracy to poach rhino, which has saved numerous rhinos
- > A number of high-level dealers and kingpins have been arrested over the past six months, including international kingpins attempting to operate in Namibia
- > Since the inception of Blue Rhino, the number of arrests and seizures of illicit goods has increased significantly (see chart on opposite page)
- > Since the inception of Blue Rhino, about 700 suspects were arrested in cases related to high-value species
- > Follow-up investigations into old pre-Blue Rhino cases have led to numerous additional arrests
- > Active collaboration with counterparts in neighbouring countries has led to various successes
- > Active collaboration with the Environmental Crimes Unit in the Office of the Prosecutor-General has significantly strengthened the prosecution of perpetrators
- > The development of the comprehensive and inclusive Namibian Wildlife Crime Database has revolutionised data analysis and management
- > Regular reporting and active information sharing has led to a significant increase in media coverage, an improved understanding of the complexity of wildlife crime, and increased public support



Total number of wildlife crime arrest

- The above statistics represent all arrests registered anywhere in Namibia during the reporting period.
- Infringements include both actual poaching and the intent to poach; trafficking (i.e. trading) of controlled wildlife products; possession of controlled wildlife products; and other infringements such as possession of illegal firearms, and unlawfully entering a protected area.
- The incorporation of all wildlife crime statistics shows that poaching for meat is generally more prolific than poaching of high-value species.
- The inception of Operation Blue Rhino has motivated a national crack-down on wildlife crime far beyond the direct influence of the Blue Rhino Task Team.

Changes in the number of arrests from year to year

- Many factors influence the number of arrests made. These can include changes in law-enforcement effort, and changes in the number of crimes being committed.
- Suspects may be charged with a number of offenses, sometimes under separately registered cases.
- The same suspects may be re-arrested in new cases over time (having been released or acquitted).

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short term BLUE RHINO priorities

- > Further strengthen the existing collaboration with the Office of the Prosecutor-General to enable the best possible prosecution of perpetrators
- > Highlight the severity of wildlife crime and its effects on wildlife populations, local livelihoods, various economic sectors, government spending and national security to strengthen penalties and prioritise action
- > Prioritise financial investigations through ongoing collaboration with the Financial Intelligence Centre, as well as the Asset Forfeiture Unit of the Office of the Prosecutor-General to ensure all relevant charges are applied for transgressions under the Prevention of Organised Crimes Act
- > Initiate additional training for task team members to ensure the most effective use of the latest technologies and tools
- > Address technical and logistical limitations in case management
- > Strengthen counter-trafficking initiatives in northeastern Namibia to disrupt the flow of illicit wildlife products between neighbouring countries and Namibia
- > Strengthen formal links with all neighbouring countries to facilitate ongoing collaboration and enable joint operations
- > Work with relevant partners to fully integrate and continually update the Namibian Wildlife Crime Database with relevant and accurate information
- > Continually strengthen collaboration with all partners

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the BLUE RHINO partnership network

The Blue Rhino Task Team is the law-enforcement focal point of a broad network of local and international partners who work together to combat wildlife crime in Namibia.

Perpetrators find themselves within a vortex of vigilance with a high probability of being caught. They face a broad suite of criminal charges with hefty fines and lengthy prison terms.

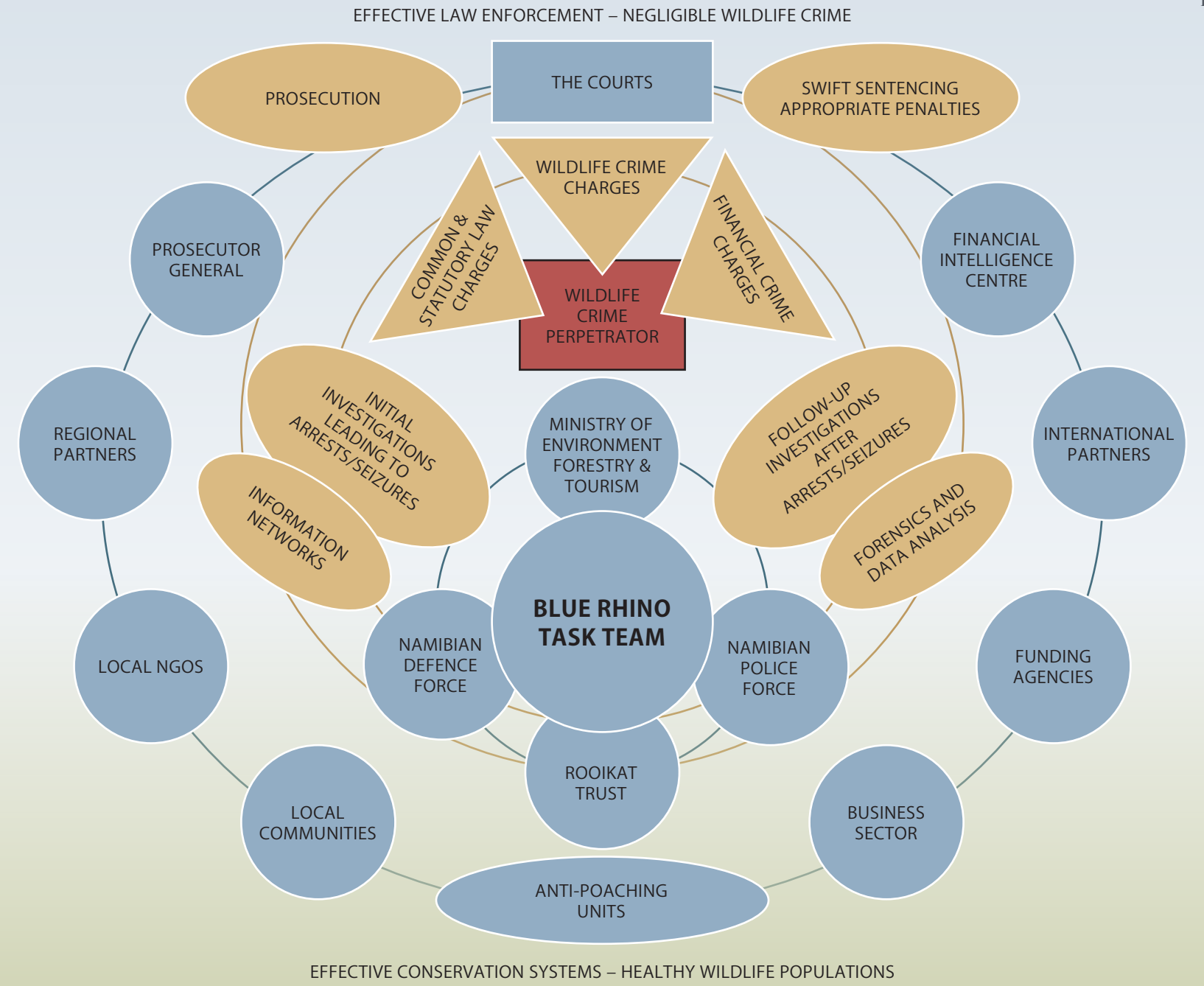
No matter who you are, wildlife crime is not worth the risk.

The Blue Rhino Task Team prioritises the investigation of high-value wildlife crimes and will not rest until perpetrators have been brought to justice. Complex investigations may take years, but will eventually lead to arrests and prosecutions.

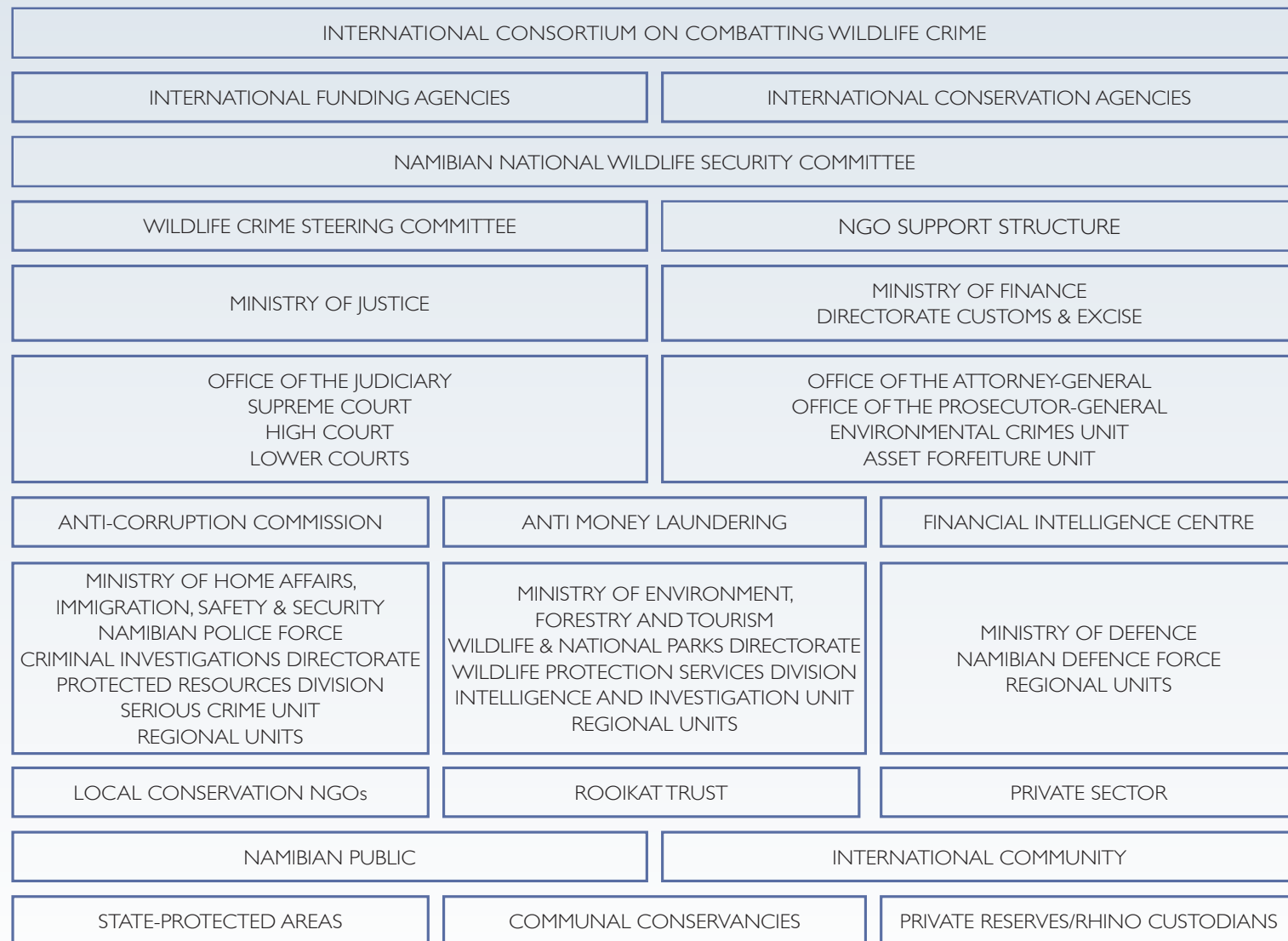
The Blue Rhino Task Team collaborates with partner agencies as needs arise. These vary from case to case. Information is actively shared with all partners, and where appropriate, with the media and the public.

Everyone can contribute to fighting wildlife crime and protecting our natural heritage.

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the BLUE RHINO operational framework



key BLUE RHINO partner organisations

GOVERNMENT

Anti-Corruption Commission
 Financial Intelligence Centre
 Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform
 Ministry of Defence
 Namibian Defence Force
 Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism
 Wildlife and National Parks Directorate
 Forestry Directorate
 Game Products Trust Fund
 Ministry of Finance
 Customs and Excise Directorate
 Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security
 Namibian Police Force
 Criminal Investigations Directorate
 Ministry of Justice
 Office of the Judiciary
 Office of the Attorney-General
 Office of the Prosecutor-General

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation
 Intelligence Support Against Poaching
 Legal Assistance Centre
 Namibia Nature Foundation
 Rooikat Trust
 Save the Rhino Trust
 WWF In Namibia

NGO UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS

Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations
 Namibian Chamber of Environment

INTERNATIONAL FUNDING AGENCIES

Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, USA
 Global Environment Facility
 Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
 United States Agency for International Development
 Wildcat Foundation
 WWF

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Communal conservancies
 Communal farmers
 Freehold conservancies
 Freehold farmers
 Black-rhino custodians
 White-rhino owners

PRIVATE INDUSTRY

General business community
 Mining industry
 Tourism and conservation-hunting industries

Support from Namibian companies and individuals is overwhelmingly positive and extremely wide-ranging. While it is impossible to mention all contributions here, each contribution is gratefully acknowledged.



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**Report wildlife crime at this number:
55 555**

[all messages and calls are strictly confidential]



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA