

- [Home](#)
- [News](#)

Hero policeman shot in gun battle with rhino poachers

A policeman who was tracking rhino poachers was shot and injured when the criminals opened fire on his specialised team on Tuesday night.



by [Lyse Comins](#)
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Image: Supplied

A 34-year old policeman is recovering in hospital after he was shot and injured during a shootout with rhino poachers in Vredefort in the Free State on Tuesday night.

SAPS regional spokesperson Brigadier Motantsi Makhele said the officer was shot during a gun battle with rhino poachers [after the police received a tip off about the planned illegal hunting in the region.](#)

“The official was rushed to the hospital for medical attention where he is recovering,” Makhele said.

[The incident occurred between 5pm and 8.15pm on Tuesday night.](#)

“Prior to the official’s injury, SAPs members attached to Heilbron Stock theft and endangered species Unit and Tactical Response Team (TRT) conducted an observation watch, to follow-up information that there are suspects who wanted to poach rhino’s in the Vredefort vicinity,” Makhele said.

“A motor vehicle fitting the description in the information was spotted and stopped. The two suspects aged 39 and 37 were arrested after being linked to the poaching conspiracy,” he said.

“Meanwhile, members from the units were still in the veld in Presidentskop waiting for the poachers. A shooting between the poachers and police ensued. One TRT member was shot on the leg and rushed to hospital for medical attention,” he said.

However, he said the suspects managed to flee the scene leaving behind a 375 hunting rifle, 10 rounds of live ammunition, a silencer and an axe, which the police had seized.

He said police are investigating a case of attempted murder and rhino poaching under the Bioersity Act 10 /2004 Section 57 which covers the carrying out of restricted activities involving species listed as threatened.

“The two suspects will be charged for a case Rhino Poaching and sent to Vredefort Magistrates’ Court on Thursday 23 September 2021,” he said.

Makhele said no arrests have yet been made in connection with the attempted murder case.

He said the investigating officers in both cases had requested community assistance in tracing the suspects.

Detective Warrant Officer, Henry Greeff may be contacted on 082 627 7577 regarding the rhino poaching case, while Detective Warrant Officer Jabulani Kebile can be reached on 078 322 4471 for any information regarding the attempted murder case.

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