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# Kruger National Park incorporates tech in fight against poaching

Cameras and vehicle recognition devices assist in picking up vehicle movement and how many vehicles are circulating in a specific area of the park.

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Reitumetse Mahope 2 minutes read



Samuel Madalane from the K9 KNP Unit.

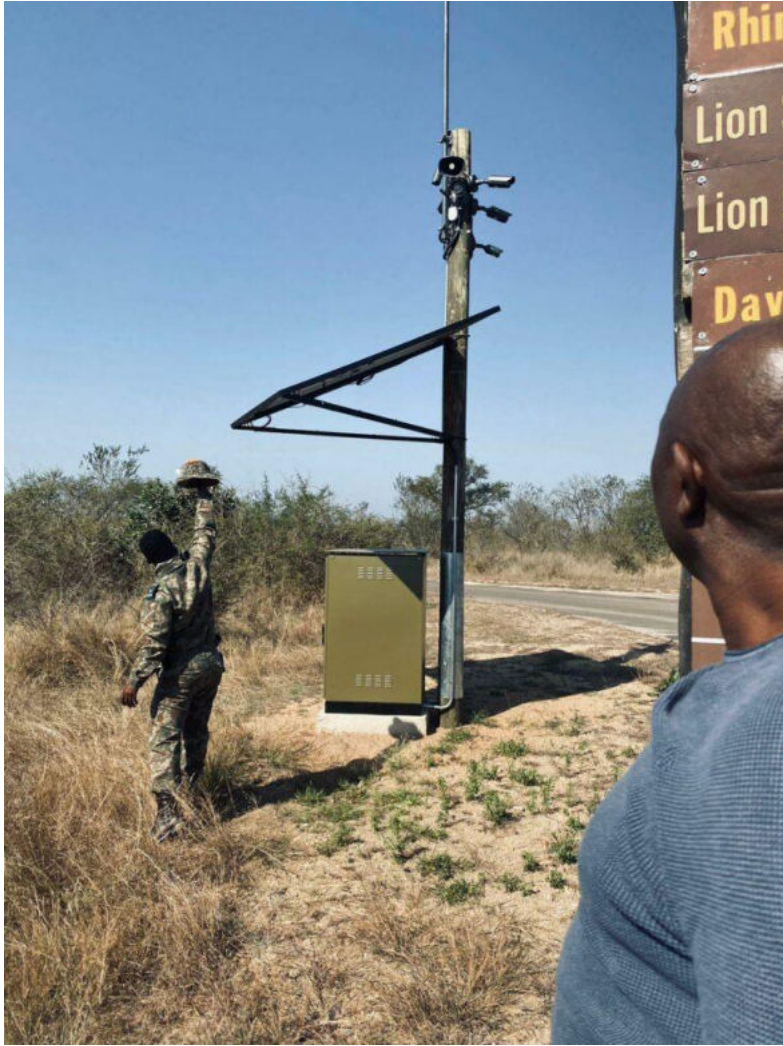
Solar powered hubs, cameras and alarm speakers are just some of the few modern technologies erected in the [Kruger national park's \(KNP\) Skukuza campsites](#) to bolster the fight against theft, poaching and other crimes.

KNP has incorporated modern technology into its vast terrain ravaged with smugglers and poachers.

The relentless rhino poaching for a span of more than 10 years had caused the rhino population in the KNP to decline from about 10 000 animals in 2008 to about 2 800 animals in 2021.

The KNP reported that in the 2020 calendar year, it lost 245 rhino and 329 in 2019 to poaching.

SANParks launched the process of dehorning in March 2021 as a bid to disrupt poaching activities, however, the exercise has proven costly at amounts between R10 000 and R15 000 per animal according to its 2020/21 report.



Samuel Madalane, a K9 operator at KNP, says anti-poaching remote surveillance and other tools including helicopters are crucial in the fight against poaching.

The bulk of the rhino poaching occurred in the southern KNP which has been facing severe pressure because of it.

Cameras, vehicle recognition devices and other tools have recently been strategically set up near intensive protection zones (IPZ) which cover nine types of landscapes in the southern KNP. The area also suffers the greatest human incursion and poaching rates due to the rhino densities and intense human settlement.

The KNP has since installed three cameras, with 12 in total planned for installation, to fight poaching and vehicle smuggling as well as dogs to drive up the arrest of poachers.

Sandra Sterling, at the mission area joint operations centre, says these measures yields success and KNP security is now better equipped to protect the park.



Sandra Sterling in the mission area joint operations centre.

“We communicate with rangers to ensure successful operations, while also now being better equipped to deal with tourists who are lost without deploying helicopters.

"The cameras allow for us to narrow down points of wanted and unwanted movements."

Samuel Madalane, who is a K9 operator at KNP, says anti-poaching remote surveillance, along with other tools including helicopters, were instrumental in driving down poaching.

"The camera systems planted in the park assist in detecting vehicle movements and how many vehicles circulate an area, while maintaining updates of occupants in transit."

Madalane says the pack dogs which freely roams during operations are tracked by a helicopter.

"They are often safe as the two helicopters chase game away from their path."

Prosecutor Lot Mgiba says on June 20, a conviction in a 2016 case was successfully attained.

"The [three] convicts were found in possession of six rhino horns and matched to three rhino carcasses."

He says two had been granted bail, while one remained in custody throughout trial.

"The two out on bail absconded, however one was rearrested, and he plead not guilty. The evidence linked their firearm to the bullet found in the carcass."

He says the convict was sentenced to 32 years imprisonment.