

Intelligent and well trained

Tracker dogs trained at Waterberg Plateau Park



US Ambassador to Namibia Lisa Johnson with Minister Pohamba Shifeta, dog and handler

The new Dog Unit for Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism was let off the leash at the Law Enforcement Training School at the Waterberg Plateau National Park on 14 September.

The inauguration of the canine anti-poaching unit was attended by the U.S Ambassador to Namibia, Ms. Lisa Johnson, and the Namibian Minister of Environment and Tourism, the Hon. Pohamba Shifeta.

New and innovative approaches to combat wildlife crime are needed, said the Minister, who added that the initiative comes at a time when the country is experiencing crime against elephants and rhinos, sparked by international trade of their products.

Dogs can track poachers, detect animal parts and help to apprehend criminals.



Ambassador Johnson commended the leadership of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and said that Namibia continues to be a model for conservation in the region.

The U.S government supports anti-poaching efforts in the country and funded the purchase and training of the dogs, as well as equipment for their handlers. The canine unit compliments other US government funded programs to combat wildlife crime, including community based work to raise awareness of the value of wildlife, training courses for those dealing with wildlife crime, and equipment for anti-poaching efforts. Current funding from the US Government to Namibia and surrounding transboundary areas amounts to more than US\$ 20 million.

Funding for the dogs was acquired from the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service and Save the Rhino International. The USAID Combatting Wildlife Crime Program through the Namibia Nature Foundation paid for an assessor/trainer over ten days, dog food and veterinary costs. The International Narcotics and Law Enforcement agency of the US State Department funded the dog handler's kits and uniforms as well as kennel supplies. The kennels were funded by WWF.



In May 2018, four dogs were procured from Holland for their superior genetics and development. The training was conducted by Invictus K9 trainers who worked day and night with the dogs and their handlers from the Ministry of Defence Special Force Unit. The dogs are trained to search buildings, vehicles, baggage and open areas for firearms, ammunition and illegal wildlife products such as rhino horns, elephant tusks, pangolin scales and bush meat. The canines will be deployed in Etosha National Park and Bwabwata National Park; and at airports, borders and other strategic points.

The Ministry emphasizes the important role communities play through traditional authorities and conservancies in combating wildlife crime. Education and community awareness programs will continue especially for those communities that live adjacent to the parks for a better understanding of the importance of wildlife.

In the words of the Minister: “Enough is enough, these illegal activities on our wildlife species must completely come to an end. Those involved must stop the illegal hunting of our rhinos, pangolin and elephants now.”



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