

S.Africa aims to cut rhino poaching by 20 percent a year

November 26 2013



A photo taken on February 6, 2013 shows a rhinoceros resting in the Kruger National Park near Nelspruit, South Africa

South African conservation authorities on Tuesday said they aim to reduce rhino poaching by 20 percent a year, insisting their strategy is working despite record levels of poaching.

"The war against [poaching](#) is not yet won, but we can reduce the

figures... it's an ongoing process," said Major General Johan Jooste, who heads the Kruger National Park anti-poaching task team.

The number of rhino killed this year for their horns has hit a record 860 so far, despite the deployment of the army and the use of helicopters and drone patrols.

The vast two-million hectare (five-million-acre) Kruger National Park, which borders Mozambique has experienced the largest number of killings.

Jooste admitted there were still daily killings but said "with the increased intelligence operations, we aim to cut poaching numbers by 20 percent a year".

He was adamant that its multi-pronged approach is making a difference.

"It might look like we are not winning, but we are making a difference," said Jooste.

"The war against poaching can not only be won in the bush, the law needs to take its course as well when it comes to prosecuting the syndicates," he said.

Jooste said he would like to see increased cooperation between South Africa and Mozambique, adopting stricter measures to fighter poaching.

Mozambique currently has limited laws against poaching, making it a breeding ground for those who slip through the porous 360 kilometre (225 mile) border with South Africa.

A spokesman for the South African National Parks, Ike Phaahla, said that army patrols had made a significance in the park since they were

started in 2010.

"If it wasn't for the army we would have no rhino in the park by now, the rangers would have had a difficult time keeping up with the poachers' paramilitary tactics."

South Africa is home to 80 percent of the world's rhino population, estimated at around 25,000.

Rhino in the Kruger park are estimated to number between 8,500 and 9,500, according to a 2012 count.

In May, the South African authorities said they would re-erect the border fence, equipped with a special detection system in a bid to curb poaching.

Fencing in some parts of the border was pulled down to create a cross-border park with Mozambique.

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