

South Africa says over 1,000 rhinos poached in 2013

January 17 2014



Two white rhinos are pictured at Johannesburg Zoo on July 25, 2013

More than 1,000 rhinos were poached in South Africa last year, a 50 percent increase from 2012, fuelled by the black-market demand for their horns, the government said Friday.

"The total number of rhino poached in South Africa during 2013 increased to 1,004," the environment ministry announced in a statement.

Asian demand for rhino horn—prized as a status symbol and wrongly thought to possess medicinal properties—has fuelled an ever more intense onslaught on the animals.

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

In 2007 only 13 rhinoceroses were reported hunted illegally in South Africa, but since then the numbers have increased exponentially every year.

Despite drone and foot patrols, poachers appear to stay ahead of the security forces.

Already a total of 37 rhino have been poached in the first two-and-half weeks of this year.

The famous Kruger National Park bordering Mozambique has taken the brunt of the poaching scourge.

Sophisticated transnational criminal organisations illegally hunt the animals and hack off their horns which are then smuggled out of the country to Asia.

A total of 343 arrests were made in the past year for poaching.

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