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**MINISTRY OF POLICE**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2385**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 28-2017)**

**2385. Mr R K Purdon (DA) to ask the Minister of Police:**

1. Whether the SA Police Service (SAPS) considers rhino poaching incidents as priority crimes; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
2. (a) what was the average response rate of SAPS to incidents of rhino poaching (i) in the (aa) 2014, (bb) 2015 and (cc) 2016 calendar years and (ii) since 1 January 2017 and (b) what number of arrests have been made in each case;
3. whether there are specialised SAPS units assigned to investigate rhino poaching; if not, why not; if so, (a) in which provinces and (b) what are the further relevant details in this regard?

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**REPLY:**

1. Yes, the South African Police Service (SAPS), considers rhino poaching to be a priority crime, due to the constant escalation of rhino poaching incidents, since 2010.

Wildlife trafficking as a form of transnational organised crime, has a negative impact on the economic development of the country and job creation, including the development of the country’s bio-diverse economy, which incorporates the tourism sector.

Wildlife trafficking is hampering the government’s ability to ensure socio-economic development, as organised crime syndicates and activities have become embedded in communities, across the country.

President Zuma declared rhino poaching to be a national security threat, in 2011. This led to the threat being attended to by the National Joint Operational Intelligence Structure (NATJOINTS), which is the operational arm of the Justice Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster of Government.

The JOINTS established National and Provincial Priority Committees, in terms of the NATJOINTS Instruction, 3 of 2011. The purpose of this NATJOINTS Instruction, was to sensitise all provinces about this threat and coordinate the response, by establishing and activating National and Provincial Priority Committees to manage, implement and coordinate all joint integrated actions, as well as the efforts to curb rhino poaching and illegal hunting.

In 2012, the NATJOINTS initiated and conducted national interventions in the Kruger National Park, which was and still is affected significantly, by illegal rhino poaching. In support of provincial activities, Cabinet approved the Integrated Strategic Management Approach, to rhino poaching.

In April 2015, rhino poaching was declared a priority crime of the SAPS, by the Minister of Police. The Joint Operation Centre (JOC), was officially launched by President Zuma, in November 2015. It comprises of the following role-players: the SAPS, South African National Parks, the Department of Environmental Affairs, the South African National Defence Force, Ezemvelo, the South African Revenue Services (Customs) and the State Security Agency.

In 2014, the NATJOINTS initiated and developed the draft National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking (NISCWT), which is police-led and intelligence informed, with multi-agency support and has the following objectives:

* Improving law enforcement, supported by the whole of government and society, to effectively investigate, prosecute and adjudicate wildlife trafficking, as a form of transnational organised crime;
* Increasing the Government’s ability to detect, prevent and combat wildlife trafficking in South Africa and beyond; and
* Increasing national, regional and international law enforcement collaboration and cooperation in the combating of wildlife trafficking.

A five pillar operational plan was introduced to address the objectives, as contained in the NISCWT, which is currently implemented in the provinces most affected, through Operation Rhino, i.e. Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo. Operation Rhino is a multi-disciplinary, integrated operation, which is coordinated from the Mission Area Joint Operations Centre (MAJOC), in Skukuza, and comprises of three Tactical Joint Operations Centres (TacJOC`s), in Acornhoek, Hluhluwe and Phalaborwa, to address the five pillar operational plan.

The following is a breakdown of the five pillar operational plan:

Pillar 1: Intelligence gathering, coordination and analysis:

* + This pillar is about information collection, analysis and coordination; and
  + Intelligence structures provide intelligence for prevention, investigation and prosecution of wildlife trafficking-related crimes, within our borders, across our borders and internationally.

Pillar 2: Proactive approach:

* + This involves the maximum deployment of rangers and visible policing officers inside and outside various parks; and
  + The implementation of various community initiatives and programmes around mission areas neighbouring parks or game reserves.

Pillar 3: Combat approach:

* + This pillar includes the conducting Vehicle Control Points (VCP), road blocks, way-lays and observations at strategic points. Intelligence-driven operations, suspect tracing, airborne support and a Canine Unit search and detection capability. A document on the NISCWT was drafted and presented to the JCPS Cluster, for approval.

Pillar 4: Reactive through detection:

* + This comprises an investigative approach, which is focused on integrated crime scene management and specialised investigators, who are addressing local, national and transnational rhino-related organised crime and working with dedicated prosecutors.

Pillar 5: Communication and liaison:

* + Pillar five includes publication through the media on successes including convictions;
  + Continuous sensitising of communities, regarding the security aspects/dangers of illegal poaching;
  + Engagement with various countries, in relation to rhino DNA sampling (e.g. Mozambique, Vietnam, Czech Republic); and
  + Ongoing collaboration with Interpol with regard to operations and crime working groups, on environmental crimes.

(2)(a) The response by the SAPS, together with other role-players, was to deploy the following resources:

(2)(a)(i)(aa)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **2014** | |
| **SAPS Disciplines** | **Deployment Number** |
| Special Task Force | 40 |
| National Intervention Unit | 15 |
| Operational Support | 04 |
| Air Support | 04 |
| **TOTAL/AVERAGE DEPLOYMENT** | **63** |

(2)(a)(i)(bb)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **2015** | |
| **SAPS Disciplines** | **Deployment Number** |
| Special Task Force | 73 |
| National Intervention Unit | 202 |
| Tactical Response Team | 25 |
| Tracing Team | 21 |
| Forensic Services | 13 |
| Operational Support | 57 |
| Crime Intelligence Gatherer | 48 |
| Air Support | 12 |
| Canine Unit | 31 |
| Detectives | 26 |
| Analysts | 20 |
| **TOTAL/AVERAGE DEPLOYMENT** | **528** |

(2)(a)(i)(cc)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **2016** | |
| **SAPS Disciplines** | **Deployment Number** |
| Special Task Force | 31 |
| National Intervention Unit | 406 |
| Tactical Response Team | 183 |
| Detective Services | 119 |
| Forensic Services | 89 |
| Operational Support | 138 |
| Crime Intelligence Gatherer | 120 |
| Analysts | 78 |
| Canine Unit | 82 |
| Tracking Team | 03 |
| **TOTAL/AVERAGE DEPLOYMENT** | **1 249** |

(2)(a)(ii)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Since 1 January 2017** | |
| **SAPS Disciplines** | **Deployment Number** |
| National Intervention Unit | 160 |
| Tactical Response Team | 98 |
| Detective Services | 81 |
| Forensic Services | 47 |
| Operational Support | 64 |
| Crime Intelligence Gatherer | 62 |
| Analysts | 23 |
| Canine Unit | 67 |
| **TOTAL/AVERAGE DEPLOYMENT** | **602** |

(2)(b)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Number of arrests** | | |
| **Year** | **Cases** | **Arrests** |
| 2014 | 565 | 108 |
| 2015 | 929 | 169 |
| 2016 | 1 070 | 530 |
| 1 January to July 2017 | 465 | 249 |
| **TOTAL/AVERAGE DEPLOYMENT** | **3 029** | **1 056** |

(3) There are 90 Stock Theft and Endangered Species Units and 22 satellite units, which are responsible for the investigation of all cases, which are related to endangered species, including rhino poaching and related crimes.

(3)(a) These units are situated as follows:

| **Province** | **Number of units** | **Number of satellite units** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Eastern Cape | 22 | 8 |
| Free State | 11 | 1 |
| Gauteng | 2 | 0 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 16 | 3 |
| Limpopo | 8 | 8 |
| Mpumalanga | 11 | 1 |
| North West | 7 | 1 |
| Northern Cape | 7 | 0 |
| Western Cape | 6 | 0 |
| **TOTAL** | **90** | **22** |

(3)(b) No further relevant details, in this regard.