

Fight against rhino poaching goes aerial

A KwaZulu-Natal businessman is championing the use of helicopters to boost the provincial conservation agency's capacity in the battle against rhino poaching, *The New Age* reports.

During five months and 105 sorties of trial patrol and search flights over the iMfolozi section of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife's flagship Hluhluwe-iMfolozi park, the Sikorsky came across 28 illegal vehicles and confronted 10 armed people, all potential poachers. Notable was a zero incidence of rhino poaching in the helicopter's area of operations.

Virginia Airport based King Shaka Aviation CEO Vincent Christoforous is convinced that helicopters are a necessity, if rhino-slaughter is to be stopped -and he wants the provincial business community to support the initiative. "I look at the trial period as the groundwork for the helicopter project," Christoforous told *The New Age*. "I am looking for partners to help roll out helicopters in all KwaZulu-Natal parks and game reserves." The aerial element is seen as both a deterrent to poachers and an effective tool in chasing down those who kill rhino for their horn. "Now we need funding for another four aircraft. I see rotary-winged aircraft as being the single most significant tool in the battle against poaching," Christoforous said.

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