

Reward for info leading to arrest of poachers

PRETORIA: The South African National Parks (SANParks) says it will offer a cash reward of R100 000 to anyone who can provide information that will lead to the arrest of poachers and a further R1 million for a successful conviction of a poaching syndicate mastermind.



This was announced by SANParks CEO, David Mabunda on Wednesday, 12 December 2012.

"We are also happy to announce our partnership with South Africa's Crime Line, a ground-breaking initiative that allows members of the public to make anonymous SMS tip-offs on suspected crimes at any time of the day, courtesy of LeadSA, a Primedia and Independent Newspapers initiative," said Mabunda.

He also announced that SANParks had appointed a retired decorated army Major General to oversee the overall anti-poaching operations in the Kruger National Park, as part of its tactics to fight rhino poaching.

The introduction of retired Major General, Johan Jooste, 60, would conclude the foundation phase of a multi-pronged strategy against rhino poaching. "This strategy is to leverage on existing capacities and strategic alliances, while bringing the much needed thinking and innovation on existing gaps and loopholes."

Mabunda commended the KNP ranger who, three weeks ago, alerted SANParks officials and the police regarding an offer by suspected poachers to collude with them. He instead helped to stage a set-up that led to the successful arrest of the perpetrators.

"His honesty, commitment and diligence to the cause of protecting the rhino has not gone unnoticed, the organization will reward his good deed accordingly," Mabunda said.

South Africa has lost an unprecedented number of rhinos of which in the last five years most were killed in the Kruger National Park.

"This has resulted in warranted and unwarranted sanctions both internally and internationally on South Africa's strategy of

managing the poaching of rhinos. It is therefore, our hope that the approach that we are taking at this moment, by engaging Major General Johan Jooste will in time bring the much needed invigoration in the fight against the decimation of our natural heritage."

The Major General has a vast experience in military intelligence, border and area protection and also contemporary knowledge of modern technology use and integration into capability and some knowledge in conservation.

In his response Major General Jooste said: "I am not a Messiah, but a proven leader and a team player, I will do my best to bring acceptable results. This fight against poaching is not about an individual and success depends on the collective collaboration and commitment from the men and women tasked with the responsibility of conserving our heritage."

He said the battle lines had been drawn and it was up to him and his team to forcefully push back the frontiers of poaching.

The appointment of the Major General comes after the deployment of a Seeker Seabird aircraft donated by the Ichikowits Family Foundation as well as an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Seeker 2, loaned to SANParks by arms manufacturer Denel.

The two military aircrafts will provide the much needed intelligence especially at night when most incursions and poaching incidents are taking place.

"This will give added advantage to the ground troops and will hopefully act as a deterrent," Mabunda said.

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