

## Rhino deal suspects replace lawyers

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**THE trial of two men accused of selling a rhino horn to an undercover police informer has been interrupted after both of them got new defence lawyers to represent them.**

Arvo Johannes Mufeti and Andreas Panduleni Naholo both pleaded not guilty to a charge of possession of or dealing in rhino horn at the start of their trial in the Windhoek Regional Court in July last year.

Their trial was postponed after two witnesses had given evidence for the prosecution, and was supposed to continue before Magistrate Dinnah Usiku on Friday last week.

However, the magistrate was told that the lawyers who previously defended the two men have both moved on to different employment, with the result that new defence lawyers would be taking their place.

The record of the proceedings in the trial so far would now have to be transcribed to enable the new defence lawyers to prepare for the rest of the trial, Public Prosecutor Carol-Ann Esterhuizen informed the magistrate.

Mufeti will now be represented by Mbushandje Ntinda, while Mbanga Siyomunji will be representing Naholo.

The two men are accused of having dealt in or possessed a rhino horn, valued at about N\$125 000, in Windhoek on May 27 2009.

So far during their trial the court has heard testimony that the police's Protected Resources Unit had received information about two people who were in possession of unpolished diamonds and rhino horns, and who were looking for buyers for the illegal items.

The court has been told that the police then set up an operation in which a police informer acted as a potential buyer for the goods.

He met the sellers in the parking area of a shop in Katutura, the court heard.

According to the testimony, Mufeti got into the informer's car, while Naholo remained sitting in another car nearby.

Mufeti had a bag with him, and when police officers approached him and searched the bag, they found a rhino horn inside, the court has been told.

It was also claimed that Mufeti remarked that there was a rhino horn in the bag before it had been opened.

The two accused were granted bail in an amount of N\$7 000 each about a week after their arrest.

They did not disclose the basis of their defence when they pleaded not guilty at the start of their trial.