



Chinese rhino story was 'concocted'

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State prosecutor Simba Nduana yesterday told one of the Chinese men standing trial in Namibia's largest rhino-horn-smuggling case that he and one of his co-accused had concocted a "cock and goose" story for the court that was filled with inconsistencies. Li Xiaoliang was cross-examined in the Windhoek Regional Court as the trial of Xiaoliang and his co-accused, Li Zinbing, Pu Xuexin and Wang Hui, continued. They were arrested in March 2014 at Hosea Kutako International Airport for allegedly trying to smuggle 14 rhino horns worth more than N\$2.3 million, and a leopard skin worth N\$500 000, out of Namibia. Nduana yesterday questioned Xiaoliang about the suitcases that contained the rhino horns and the leopard skin. Xiaoliang was shown several video clips taken at the Windhoek Country Club and Resort where the four men were staying before they were arrested at the airport. Xiaoliang testified that when he entered the hotel on the afternoon of March 23, 2014 he was carrying a bag belonging to Hui. The State maintains that Hui is the kingpin of the group. Nduana asked why Hui was not carrying any bag at all and why Xiaoliang was carrying his bag for him. Xiaoliang could not give an answer. Nduana said that Xiaoliang was carrying the bag for Hui either because he was instructed to do so or because Hui was his "boss" and Xiaoliang the subordinate and therefore did it out of respect. Nduana also questioned Xiaoliang about the fact that shortly after they had carried their luggage to their rooms he was seen leaving the room with keys in his hands. Xiaoliang then said it was Hui's car keys that he was holding and that Hui had sent him to get another bag from the car. Nduana wanted to know why the bag had been left in the car, as the four men had only minutes before come from the vehicle carrying their luggage to their rooms and they were not overburdened with luggage. Xiaoliang could not answer. Nduana pointed out that when Xiaoliang left the room to collect the last bag from the car he could be seen in the hallway having a conversation with Hui and then returning to the room. However Xiaoliang said he was not talking to Hui but responding to Li Zinbing, who was calling him from the toilet in one of the rooms. As Xiaoliang was questioned about this he said that Pu was in fact still in the room with Li Zinbing, who was using the toilet with the door open. According to Xiaoliang, Li Zinbing was still using the toilet when he entered the room and he remained standing at the door. He says Li Zinbing then asked him what he was going to do and he told him that he was going to the car to get a bag for Hui. Li Zinbing then asked him to collect another bag from one of his friends in the parking lot, he testified. Nduana asked if that was all that transpired from the conversation and Xiaoliang said it was. However, it later emerged that Li Zinbing had in fact told him that his friend had phoned him to pick up the other bag before the time and that Li Zinbing said that it would be a Chinese person meeting him in the parking lot, but never gave him a name or any description. Xiaoliang said when he got to the parking lot the person just waved him over. Nduana said the entire story was made up between Xiaoliang and Li Zinbing and was full of inconsistencies. The case was postponed until tomorrow.

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