



Chinese with 18 rhino horns pleads guilty

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The Chinese national, who smuggled 18 rhino horns through the Hosea Kutako International Airport and was arrested at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, has pleaded guilty to all charges against him.

Ye Zhiwei, 28, appeared in the Kempton Park Magistrate's Court in South Africa this week for dealing in rhino horn under the Endangered Species Act and will appear on 10 February again for sentencing.

Ye was arrested at the airport after he departed from Windhoek on 23 November at 06:40.

He was travelling in transit from Namibia on board a South African Airways flight to Hong Kong when the Hawks received an anonymous tip-off and discovered the rhino horns hidden in his luggage.

The rhino horns were tightly wrapped in industrial cling wrap.

The rhino horns weighed 43kg and were valued at around N\$6.6 million.

Only a few days after the arrest of Ye, a full-scale investigation was launched into activities at Hosea Kutako International Airport.

The probe was ordered after it was discovered that the 18 rhino horns found in the possession of Ye had in fact been detected by scanners at the Namibian airport.

This resulted in the arrest of a police Sergeant, Pendapala Abraham litula, 42, who was stationed at the scanners on the day and time that Ye was allowed to pass through with his luggage at Hosea Kutako International Airport and board the flight to Johannesburg. litula has appeared before the Katutura Magistrate's Court on a charge of defeating and obstructing the course of justice.

He was granted bail of N\$2 000 and the case was postponed to 3 February.

Namibian police chief Sebastian Ndeitunga recently said that Zhiwei was actually invited by members of the Chinese business community to visit Namibia.



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/asset-with-18-rhino-horns-pleads-guilty2017-01-200.jpg>)

GUILTY PLEA: Ye Zhiwei, who was arrested with 18 rhino horns, has pleaded guilty. Photo: FILE

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