



Fourth poaching suspect nabbed

No bail for David Stephanus

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A fourth suspect implicated in last month's Gobabis rhino poaching case, in which two white rhinos were killed and two critically wounded, was denied bail yesterday.

David Stephanus (35) appeared before the Gobabis Magistrate's Court on charges of illegal hunting of specially protected game, possession of an unlicensed firearm, illegal possession of ammunition and illegal possession of game meat.

Stephanus, along with three other men, including murder, robbery and rhino-poaching accused Gerson Kandjii (51), stand accused of illegally entering a farm near Gobabis on 22 December and shooting a white rhino bull and cow, who was in the process of giving birth.

They further wounded another bull and cow who managed to flee, sustaining serious wounds but surviving the onslaught.

The men sawed off the horns of the dead rhino, which have not been retrieved to date.

A fifth suspected reportedly remains on the run.

Police said when they arrested Stephanus last week, on 17 January, four legs from an illegally hunted Damara Dik-Dik as well as a hunting rifle were found in his possession. His case has been attached to the poaching case of Kandjii, the former physiotherapist for the Brave Warriors, Erwin Tjiteere (37) and Domingo Justice Moma (32).

All have been charged under the Nature Conservation Ordinance, hunting of specially protected game, under which the accused could face a maximum jail term of 20 years, a fine of N\$200 000, or both. State prosecutor Salomon Kanyemba yesterday objected to bail and the case was postponed to 31 March, when Stephanus will join Kandjii, Moma and Tjiteere in the dock.

Stephanus yesterday indicated that he will engage the legal services of a private lawyer from the law firm Kruger, Van Vuuren & Co legal practitioners in Windhoek.

The other three accused have applied for legal aid.

In January, Kandjii was also charged with illegal possession of ammunition after the police discovered 46 cartridges for a hunting rifle in his possession. That case was postponed to 12 April.

Stephanus was linked to Kandjii in a previous case dating back to a rhino poaching investigation in 2014.

Kandjii is also linked with Moma and Tjiteere in a murder and robbery case dating back to the killing of Reinhard Schmidt on the hunting farm Hoodia in the Kalkrand District in February.

Together with three others, Stephanus and Kandjii were arrested in November 2014 for poaching critically endangered black rhinos in Etosha National Park.

They were additionally charged with possession of a firearm without licence and unlawful possession of ammunition.



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/asse-poaching-suspect-nabbed2017-01-250.jpg>)
FOURTH: David Stephanus – in blue shirt - made his first court appearance in Gobabis yesterday.
PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Police at the time reported that they had seized tens of thousands of dollars when the gang was arrested.

Both men were released on bail and failed to return to court in August 2016, following which a warrant of arrest was issued. Nevertheless the men were not rearrested.

That case has been postponed to 27 February at Okahao.

The remaining fugitive in the Gobabis poaching case is also reportedly linked to the Schmidt murder case, according to reliable sources.

All the suspects in the Schmidt case were released on N\$5 000 bail in November 2015, sparking public protest. The Kalkrand murder case will continue on 16 March.

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