

## Outjo rhino horn thieves denied bail

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THE arrest of more suspects connected to the theft of 34 rhino horns from a safe in a house in Outjo might follow after two men, Hofan Amakali and Elias Mutwikange, were denied bail after their first appearance in the town's Magistrate's Court on Friday.

Inspector Maurene Mbeha, spokesperson of the Namibian Police in the Otjozondjupa Region, confirmed the arrest of Amakali and Mutwikange in the middle of last week. The accused persons face charges of amongst others charges of housebreaking and theft as well as the possession of wildlife contraband

Amakali and Mutwikange stand accused of breaking into a walk in safe in house in Outjo and stealing 34 rhino horns. Besides the rhino horns, the burglars also stole large amounts of cash in United States Dollars, Euro, South African Rand and Namibian Dollars, jewellery, firearms and ammunition. The total value of stolen rhino horns, the cash and other items were pegged at N\$100 million.

The house belongs to a game farmer who was at his farm on the boundary of the Etosha National Park during the weekend in the beginning of August when the burglary occurred.

The rhino horns, some of the jewellery and fire arms were recovered

during the arrest but it is not clear if any of the cash was found in the possession of the accused persons.

During their court appearance the state indicated that it opposes bail because of the seriousness of the offence, that the investigation is still at a very early stage and that the accused persons might interfere with the investigation because more suspects might still be identified and arrested.

Before remanding Amakali and Mutwikange in custody the presiding magistrate postponed the matter to 14 October 2019 in order to avail the police the opportunity to investigate the matter further.

The 34 horns that were stolen during the burglary belongs to the farmer and it was confirmed that he was licensed to keep the horns in a private safe. The farmer dehorned the privately owned white rhinos to protect them from being poached.



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