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Suspected poaching syndicate member denied bail

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by [Lugeretzia Kooper](#)



CONFISCATED ... Some of the items allegedly found in possession of Barks Sobozl. Photos: Contributed



THE man who was last week arrested by wildlife crime fighters in connection with the illegal possession of firearms was on Monday denied bail by the Katima Mulilo Magistrate's Court.

Barks Sobози (44) was arrested at Silonga after months of joint investigations by the Wildlife Protection Services (WPS) division of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, and the Namibian Defence Force.

Sobози is allegedly part of a transnational syndicate suspected of rhino poaching in the Botswana Delta.

His trial was postponed to 30 March for further investigation, with no bail conditions.

Morgan Saisai, the chief warden of the environment ministry, who heads the regional WPS division, says the team has gathered intelligence that the members of the suspected syndicate are from Zambia and are using Namibia as a passage to the Botswana Delta.

"On Thursday, our operation was unfortunately detected by four suspects believed to be from Zambia, and they fled. However, Sobози is their local sponsor who helps them pass through Namibia illegally. He is notorious for wildlife-related crimes as he was arrested in Botswana on suspicion of poaching rhinos. We did not give up, and continued monitoring his movements. Then we were lucky enough to arrest him at an illegal point of entry, waiting on his counterparts," he says.

Saisai says Sobози, along with two other suspects, was also arrested in 2018 for the illegal possession of firearms.

"He was then released on bail in the custody of a local in Botswana, but did not honour bail conditions," he says.

Two firearms, food items, inflatable mattresses, solar panels and clothes were confiscated during Sobози's arrest last week, Saisai says.

"The number of items we confiscated would have lasted them for a poaching expedition of three weeks," he says.

Saisai says the arrest is considered a success because it begins to disarm a persistent group of wildlife criminals.

"We still remember the incident in 2018 through which we lost the life of a soldier at the hands of such a transnational syndicate at Bwabwata National Park. Therefore we are pleading with these culprits to do away with such crimes. Our lives are at risk every day, but we are ready to fight back with appropriate measures," he says.

Sobози appeared before magistrate Clara Mwilima, while the state was represented by Karen Kleopas.

SUSPECTED LECHWE POACHER DENIED BAIL

Meanwhile, a 59-year-old suspect arrested for the illegal possession of five lechwe (antelope) carcasses last week was denied bail in the Katima Mulilo Magistrate's Court on Monday.

Martin Matengu was arrested at a roadblock set up by the Namibian Police's Protected Resources Unit in the Chikuzwe area of the Zambezi region.

Officials of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism intercepted Matengu, searched his vehicle, and found five fresh lechwe carcasses hidden in it.

His case was postponed to 29 April for further investigations and for him to apply for legal representation.

Matengu is facing a charge of being in possession of controlled wildlife products after a case was registered at the Katima Mulilo Police Station.