

## **Soldier, farm worker nabbed with pangolin, python skin**

2023-07-11 **Otniel Hembapu**



OKAHANDJA – An Otjozondjupa police intelligence-led operation caused the successful arrest of a soldier and farm worker, who were separately caught red-handed with controlled wildlife products worth a combined amount of almost N\$200 000.

At Grootfontein’s Build Together location, police shared that a 49-year-old female member of the Namibia Defence Force (NDF) was on Sunday caught with a live pangolin, worth N\$50 000. The suspect is a corporal officer in the army, stationed at the Grootfontein Military Base. “This was another intelligence-led operation, which led to the arrest of one Namibian female suspect with one live pangolin without a permit.

The suspect is detained at the Grootfontein police station and will be charged and appear in the Grootfontein Magistrate's Court this week. The pangolin was booked as an exhibit and handed over to the Grootfontein Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism office for further handling," said the police.

Meanwhile, the same operation also led to the detention of a 39-year-old farm worker, who was caught with one pangolin skin, one python skin and one leopard skin, which he wanted to sell to an undercover police official.

The suspect, who is also detained at the Grootfontein police station and works at Farm Aiban 30km to Mururani, will be charged and will appear this week in the town's magistrate court. All products have been booked in as exhibits and are valued at N\$145 000.

Demand for pangolin scales, used mainly in China and Vietnam for a variety of ailments, has grown to the point that geographic boundaries are blurring.

Vast quantities of them are now being smuggled from Africa to Asia, despite an international trade ban on all eight pangolin species that came into effect in 2017.

Recent reports indicate that this illegal trade is only growing, and that organised international criminal networks that previously dealt predominantly with African elephant ivory are increasingly turning to pangolins.

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