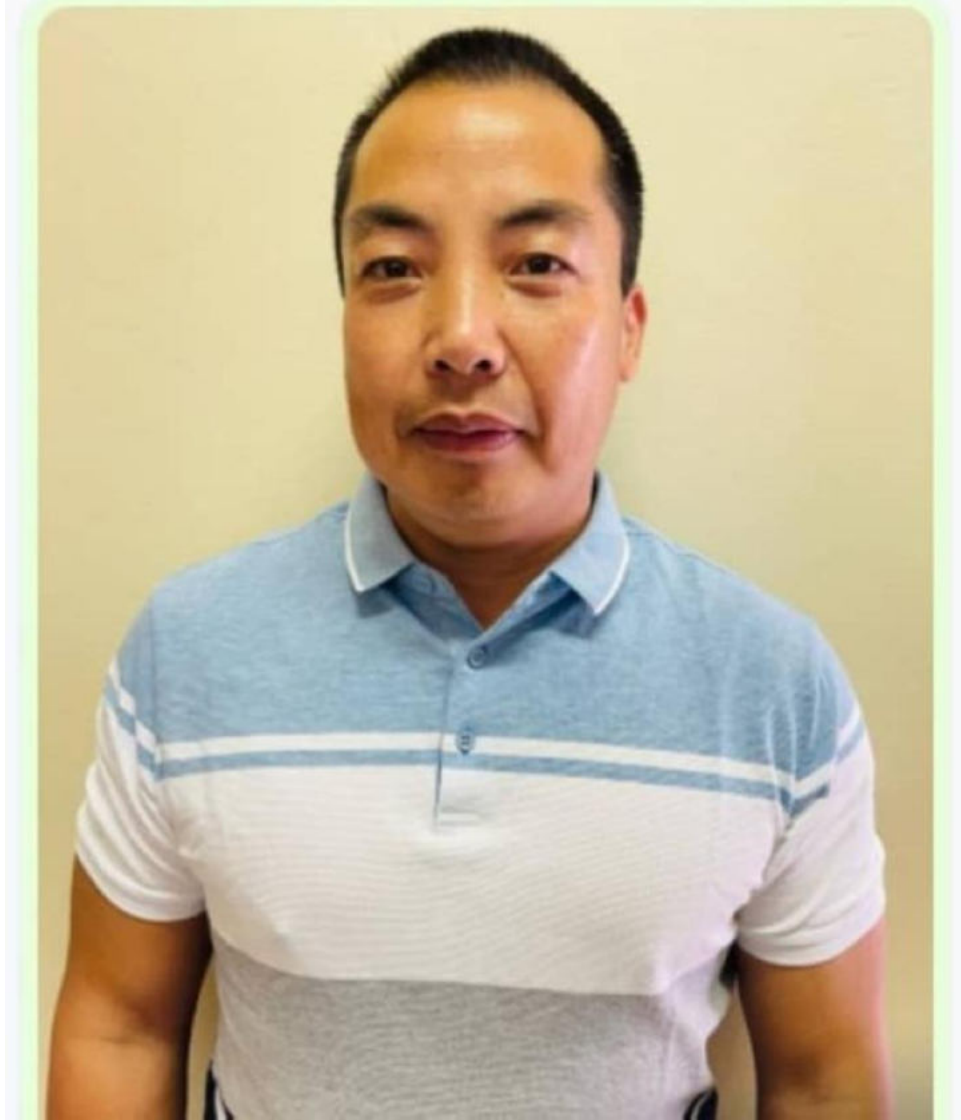


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- ## PRISON OFFICERS GUILTY AFTER SMUGGLER ESCAPES

Yandi Du Plessis

- 20 HOURS AGO - - 2023-10-09 00:20:00

Ellanie Smit - Two of the correctional officers who were suspended due to the suspicion that they had a hand in the escape of the Chinese rhino horn smuggler, Wang Hui, have been found guilty.

Deputy Commissioner General Mariana Martin of the Namibian Correctional Services (NCS) told our sister newspaper Namibian Sun that based on an investigation following Wang's escape, three officers have been suspended pending the outcome of follow-up investigations and any subsequent disciplinary processes.

"All three suspended correctional officers were eventually charged, with two to date found guilty of misconduct under the Correctional Services Act."

The two officers were found guilty of dereliction of duty.

Martin said the investigation against the third officer has not yet been completed.

The remaining officer was charged with dereliction of duty, failure to comply with any rule, standing order or administrative directive made or issued under section 5(3) of the Correctional Services Act.

Martin said that in terms of a disciplinary measure, the guilty correctional officers were each fined.

"As only fines were imposed in both settled cases, the correctional officers subsequently resumed their duties."

The other prison officer, whose case is yet to be concluded, remains suspended.

The commissioner general of the NCS, Raphael Hamunyela, said the details of the fines imposed were considered an internal matter.

"The assurance that disciplinary action has been taken against the two officers found guilty of dereliction of duty is considered sufficient for public interest."

He further said that since Wang escaped from custody on October 17 last year, no trace of him has been found.

THE ESCAPE

Wang escaped when he went to Brakwater with a warden from the Windhoek Central Prison to collect material from a supplier.

The material was for a prison workshop for a project of the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

There, Wang said he needed to use the bathroom and then took the opportunity to escape.

It was reported on social media that he was allegedly traveling to the coast in a sedan vehicle, and later it was claimed that he was being transported in a van, but nothing could be confirmed.

About the workshop, Hamunyela said it was part of the prisoners' rehabilitation process. A board decides – on the basis of various factors – whether a prisoner may start working there, he explained.

These factors include years served, good behavior and adjustment.

During these workshops, prisoners first work under very strict supervision, and if they show good behavior, they can be allowed outside, he said.

BIG KOP

Wang was found guilty in 2016 together with Li Zhibing, Pu Xuexin and Li Xiaoling for attempting to smuggle 14 rhino horns and a leopard skin from Namibia.

His three accomplices were caught on 23 March 2014 at Hosea Kutako International Airport (HKIA) with rhino horns worth N\$2.3 million as well as the leopard skin - worth about N\$50 000 - in their luggage.

Wang, who is believed to be the ringleader of the operation, was arrested in May of that year at the Windhoek Country Club Resort.

They were all sentenced to 14 years in prison.

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