



No bail for accused rhino horn smuggler

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The Chinese national who was arrested last month at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg after being caught with 18 rhino horns in his luggage has been denied bail.

Ye Zhiwei, 28, appeared in the Kempton Park Magistrate's Court in South Africa on Tuesday on a charge of dealing in rhino horn under the Endangered Spices Act.

South African Hawks spokesperson Captain Ndivhuwo Mulamu confirmed to Namibian Sun that Ye was denied bail and that his case was postponed to 17 January for disclosure of evidence and for further investigation.

Ye was arrested at OR Tambo International Airport after he had departed from Hosea Kutako International Airport on 23 November at 06:40.

He was travelling in transit from Namibia on board a South African Airways flight to Hong Kong when the Hawks received an anonymous tip-off and discovered the rhino horns hidden in his luggage. The rhino horns were tightly wrapped in industrial cling wrap.

It is still unclear whether the rhino horns are from Namibia and DNA tests will first have to be conducted to determine the country of origin.

The rhino horns weighed 43 kilograms and were valued at around N\$6.6 million.

Only a few days after Ye's arrest a full-scale investigation was launched into activities at Hosea Kutako International Airport.

The probe was ordered after it was discovered that the 18 rhino horns found in Ye's possession had in fact been detected by scanners at Hosea Kutako.

This resulted in the arrest of a Namibian police sergeant, Pendapala Abraham litula, 42, who was stationed at the scanners on the day and time that Ye was allowed to board the flight to Johannesburg.

litula has appeared before the Katutura Magistrate's Court on a charge of defeating and obstructing the course of justice.

He was granted bail of N\$2 000 and the case was postponed to 3 February next year.

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(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/asse/bail-for-accused-rhino-horn-smuggler2016-12-150.jpg>)

IN CUSTODY: Ye Zhiwei, who was arrested with 18 rhino horns in South Africa, has been denied bail. Photo: CONTRIBUTED