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# GAUTENG POACHER GETS 24 YEARS FOR KILLING NINE RHINOS (SOUTH AFRICA)

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A rhino poacher was sentenced to an effective 24 years imprisonment after he was convicted of 10 counts of rhino poaching, five counts of theft, two counts of illegal possession of ammunition, illegal possession of firearm, possession of a prohibited firearm, cruelty to animals and money laundering by Free State High Court sitting in Virginia.

Judge Phillip Loubser sentenced Jimmy Mashopane (37) for the offences he committed between July and December 2018.

Mashopane killed nine rhinos and stole 14 rhino horns at Sandveld Nature Reserve in the district of Hoopstad in the Free State. He was arrested in January 2019.

According to evidence presented in court, Mashopane travelled from Wintervelt in Gauteng to commit these offences. Field rangers found nine carcasses between 29 July 2018 and 15 December 2019 when they started to intensify their patrols.





Original photo as published by BizNews

On the day of the arrest, 22 January 2019, the police received information of two alleged poachers entering the Sandveld Nature Reserve. They followed the tracks until about 800 metres outside the Reserve where they found Mashopane under a tree. He tried to run but he was apprehended. Cellular phone data obtained from his phone placed him in the vicinity of the Reserve during the period the crimes were committed.

In court, state prosecutor, Advocate Antoinette Ferreira, argued that the crimes were premeditated because Mashopane travelled from Gauteng to Hoopstad just to kill the rhinos and take their horns.

“The accused travelled from Winterveld to Hoopstad just to kill the rhinos and take their horns. His criminal activities were motivated by greed. A sentence of direct imprisonment is the only option as it will deter other poachers from committing these crimes,” said Ferreira.

Judge Loubser took one count of rhino poaching, cruelty to animals and money laundering together for purpose of sentencing and handed down a sentence of a six-year jail term. He further took the other nine counts of rhino poaching, five counts of theft, two counts of possession of ammunition, one count of possession of firearm and possession of prohibited firearm and sentenced Mashopane to 18 years, making his sentence an effective 24 years in prison.

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