

SOUTH AFRICA

Kruger National Park rhino poacher gets 23-year sentence

Relentless syndicates keep poaching

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The convicted poacher was found in possession of six rhino horns. Stock photo.

Image: 123RF/Stuart Porter

SA National Parks (SANParks) on Friday welcomed the 23-year prison sentence handed to a rhino poacher by the Skukuza regional court prosecuting team.

Alsony Alberto Valoyi, an illegal immigrant from Mozambique, pleaded guilty to six charges related to rhino poaching after being arrested inside the Kruger National Park (KNP) in November 2016.

He was found guilty of being an illegal immigrant, trespassing in a national park, possession of a firearm with the intention to commit a crime, possession of unlicensed ammunition, possession of a dangerous weapon, hunting and being in possession of six rhino horns.

Three rhino poaching suspects have been arrested in separate incidents in the past seven days in the Lower Sabie section of the park.

Alleged rhino poaching kingpin killed

[Alleged rhino poaching kingpin Petros Sidney Mabuza was shot dead in Hazyview, Mpumalanga, on Thursday.](#)
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KNP managing executive Gareth Coleman congratulated teams involved in the arrests and successful conviction of suspects.

Coleman said in the past seven days they had noticed 25 poaching activities, indicating the continuation of a relentless onslaught by criminal syndicates.

“We are grateful to have colleagues who are equal to the task of protecting our fauna and flora, and continue to call on our communities to match the efforts of the rangers for us to defeat these criminals. We thank the tourists who assisted in one of the arrests and encourage everyone to be vigilant and report any suspicious activities,” said Coleman.

SANParks also expressed shock and disbelief at the brazen killing of suspected poaching kingpin Petros Sidney Mabuza in Hazyview on Thursday.

Mabuza, also known as “Mr Big”, allegedly died after an apparent hit. Media reports indicated his Ford Ranger bakkie was struck by at least 17 bullets.

The organisation said he was due to face trial soon in connection with rhino poaching cases.

Mpumalanga police spokesperson Brig Leonard Hlathi said an elderly passer-by was shot on her lower body during the shooting. The woman is recuperating in hospital.

Mpumalanga police have launched a manhunt for suspects involved in the apparent hit.

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