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Rhino Poaching: 25 Incidents, 3 Arrests, 1 Sentence, 1 Kingpin Killed in 1 Week

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The War on Rhino Poaching in South Africa Image by [Ian Lindsay](#) from [Pixabay](#)

With Lockdown restrictions eased since last year, the rhino poaching war has certainly heated up in South Africa. The last seven days have been hectic – a suspected rhino poaching kingpin gunned down just before appearing in court, three suspected poachers arrested in separate incidents (with tourists helping report them), and at least 21 poaching related incidents taking place in the Kruger National Park (KNP)... as well as one successful conviction.

RELENTLESS ONSLAUGHT WAGED BY CRIMINAL SYNDICATES

KNP Managing Executive, Gareth Coleman, congratulated all the teams involved in the arrests and conviction this week, saying “in the last seven days we have noticed 25 poaching activities, indicating the relentless onslaught that is being waged against our natural heritage by criminal syndicates.”

In three separate incidents, all in the Lower Sabie section of the Kruger National Park, three rhino poaching suspects were arrested in the past seven days, thanks in part to some alert tourists.

“We thank the tourists who assisted in one of the arrests, and encourage everyone to be vigilant and report any suspicious activities,” said Coleman.

He also said: “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.”

23 Year Sentence Given to Rhino Poacher

Today, 18 June 2021, the South African National Parks (SANParks) welcomed the 23-year-sentence handed down to a rhino poacher who had been arrested inside the Kruger in November 2016.

The man, an illegal immigrant from Mozambique, was found guilty by the recently re-opened Skukuza Regional Court, of rhino poaching and other offences. Alsony Alberto Valoyi pleaded guilty to six rhino poaching related charges.

Suspected Rhino Poaching Kingpin Mr Big gunned down

The organisation also expressed shock and disbelief at the brazen killing of suspected poaching Kingpin Petros Mabuza in Hazyview on Thursday, 17 June 2021 in broad daylight.

In a statement, SANParks expressed its shock and said “he was due to face trial soon in connection with a spate of rhino poaching cases.” Mabuza – who was also known as Mshengu, Shabalala and Mr Big – was also facing a murder charge. He had last been arrested in 2019 for suspected rhino poaching, and was out on bail.

In what some suspected to be proof of court insider corruption, Mabuza had already been arrested and granted bail in June 2018, and again arrested and granted bail in September 2018. His trial had been due to start in June 2020, but on 17 March last year, the Hawks officer, Lt Colonel Leroy Bruwer, who testified in court against him was gunned down and assassinated.

This time it was Mabuza himself who appears to have been deliberately targeted yesterday. His car was reportedly riddled with bullets.

Saving the Wild founder Jamie Joseph said yesterday on social media: “Mabuza had many magistrates and police officers on his payroll, and I have no doubt the trial would have been sabotaged. There is no political will in South Africa to save the rhino, but today justice of the street was served.”

Number of rhinos in the Kruger Park and in South Africa

Relentless poaching and drought has seen the number of rhinos in the Kruger National Park plummet **almost more than two thirds** in the last decade to around 3,800 in 2019 from 11,800 rhinos in 2008, a South African National Parks report showed.

South Africa has about 16,000 rhinos located nationwide, the environmental ministry told Reuters in May.

Increasingly, reserves are using dehorning **as one of the methods** to deter poachers.