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Trio slapped with three-year jail sentences for rhino horn theft

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16 July 2021 - 17:22



Three men have been sentenced to jail for the theft of rhino horn worth about R500,000.

Image: Hawks

Three rhino horn thieves have been sentenced to three years in jail after their arrest in Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape in February.

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They were bust with about R500,000 worth of rhino horn. The regional court in Gqeberha sentenced Jonathan Jeremy Perring, 37, Keanon Terblanche, 28, and Christo Shaun Swartz, 30, on Thursday.

Hawks spokesperson Capt Yolisa Mgolodela said the directorate's serious organised crime investigation unit in the city "conducted an operation after information was received that two people were looking for buyers for a rhino horn with a street value of R500,000.

"The operation led to the arrest of Perring and Terblanche from Gelvandale in Gqeberha on the same day. One rhino horn and two vehicles were seized during the operation.

"The duo made their first court appearance at Gqeberha New Law Court and were released on R10,000 bail each," said Mgolodela.

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"The third suspect, Swartz, was arrested on March 11 through further investigation which showed the rhino horn was stolen from his employer and he sold it to the duo. Swartz was also released on R10,000 bail."

The matter was transferred to the regional court.

"The trio made a series of court appearances before their conviction and sentencing on July 15. They were each sentenced to three years' imprisonment suspended for a period of five years, fined R150,000 or 30 months' imprisonment, of which R75,000 or 15 months is suspended for a period of five years," said Mgolodela.

"The implication is that each accused will either pay R75,000 or undergo 15 months' imprisonment."

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