

NEWS SOUTH AFRICA GAUTENG



File picture: Thomas Mukoya/Reuters

Cop and court official nabbed for attempting to smuggle 32 rhino horns to Malaysia

By [Jonisayi Maromo](#) 9h ago

Pretoria – A 53-year-old warrant officer within the South African Police Service (SAPS) was on Friday appearing in the Palm Ridge Magistrate's Court, with a female accomplice, on charges of alleged involvement in illegal dealings of rhino horns.

“It is alleged that in May 2019, a 53-year-old warrant officer attached to the serious organised crime investigation in Gauteng and his 39-year-old female accomplice allegedly dropped off a consignment in a warehouse at Pomona declared as wine, destined for Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia,” said Gauteng Hawks spokesperson Captain Ndivhuwo Mulamu.

A Hawks’ investigation team focusing on endangered species was alerted about the suspicious wine consignment.

“Upon arrival at the warehouse, authorities searched the wooden crate containing wine and found thirty rhino horns wrapped in plastic concealed under the crate. The crate with its content was taken to forensic services for analysis,” said Mulamu.

Further investigation led the police to positively identified shipment senders, the police officer and a court interpreter.

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Warrants of arrest were issued for their apprehension.

“An intelligence operation was conducted simultaneously in Brakpan and Basonia yesterday [Thursday] where both suspects were successfully arrested. Police seized electronic gadgets and documents for investigation,” said Mulamu.

“The suspects will be facing charges of illegal dealing in rhino horns and contravention of the Customs and Excise Act. More arrests cannot be ruled out as the investigation continues.”

In July last year, an illicit consignment of rhino horn worth R115m was seized, as wildlife crime continues to pose a threat in South Africa.

The 41 pieces of rhino horn were stashed in six boxes, concealed in carbon paper and foil, wrapped in traditional material, and disguised as fine art.

The illicit consignment was detected by sniffer dogs during a customs warehouse inspection at OR Tambo International Airport, destined for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The day before, customs officials had seized a 47kg consignment of rhino horns again destined for Malaysia at OR Tambo, which was marked and declared as scaffolding equipment, valued at R3m.

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