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Government official to appear in court for rhino horn trade

Rhino horn suspects including a public official and the owner of a security company were arrested in connection with the illegal trade.

by [Gcina Ntsaluba](#)
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Rhino horn trade suspects to appear in court on Monday 11 October. Photo: Unsplash

An official from the North West Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism will appear in the Mmabatho Magistrate's Court on Monday 11 October after he was arrested in connection with illegal rhino horn trade.

The official and the owner of a security company were arrested on Thursday afternoon in relation to alleged contraventions of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, the Rhino Norms and Standards, and contravention of permit conditions.

SUSPECTS ARRESTED BY MULTI-DEPARTMENTAL TEAM

“The suspects are alleged to have conveyed 17 individual detached rhino horns from the Northern Cape to North West in contravention of permit conditions issued by both provinces,” said the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment.

The men were arrested and a vehicle seized by a multi-departmental team comprising members of the Department's Green Scorpions, working in collaboration with the Hawks, the Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism, and the Northern Cape Department of Environment and Nature Conservation (DENC).

The men are also alleged to have been involved in the trade-in rhino horns using permits to cover up their illegal activities.

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According to reports, rhino populations in the wild continue to decline due to poaching and trafficking.

Between July 2020 and September 2021 South African authorities seized 393 kilograms of rhino horns. Southeast Asia remains the primary destination for the horns where they are commonly used in traditional medicines.

READ: [Rhino Poaching: SANParks welcomes sentencing of four accused](#)

MAJORITY OF RHINO POACHING OCCURS IN NATIONAL PARKS

A vast majority of rhino poaching occurs in state-owned game parks. From January to the end of June 2021, it is reported that 249 rhinos were poached for their horn in South Africa.

While this is higher than the number of rhino killed for their horns in the same period last year, at 166, it is less than the 318 rhino that were poached in the first six months of 2019.

Some 125 people have been arrested for rhino poaching and rhino horn trafficking across the country in the past six months.