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By [Cheryl Kahla](#)

Deputy Online News Editor

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Three rhino poachers sentenced to 85 years imprisonment

Rhino poaching impacts negatively on the tourism industry and the economy of South Africa.

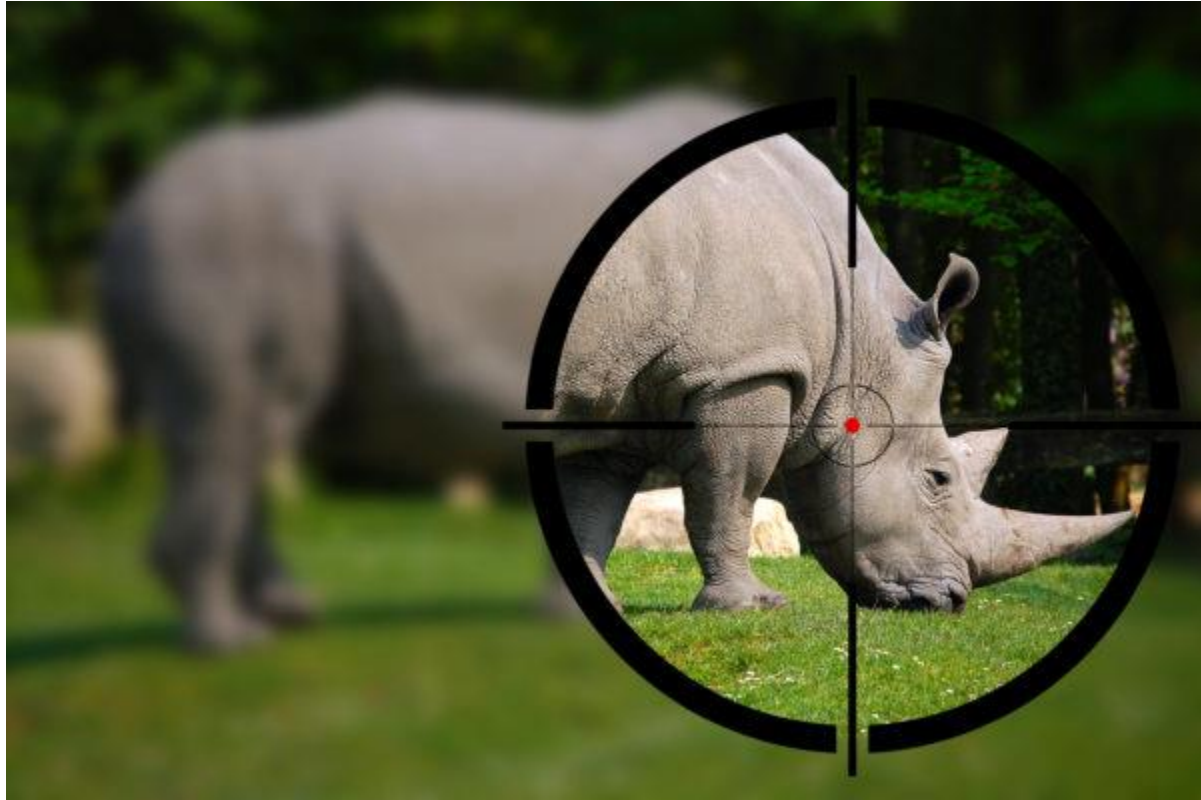


Photo: iStock

Three poachers were sentenced to a cumulative 85 years imprisonment on charges relating to a rhino poaching incident at the Pilanesberg Game Reserve in the North West.

On 2 July 2018, the trio were trying to leave the game reserve in the North West in a white Ford bakkie loaded with stolen rhino horns valued at R1.5 million.

Their bail application was denied and they remained in police custody until the completion of the trial.

Rhino poachers sentenced

Charges for Pilanesberg poaching incident

The Mogwase Regional Court handed over the hefty jail term to Arlendo Mhlanga, Adam Hlongwane and Inancio Chauke.

They had been charged with:

- Three counts of illegally killing three female rhinos,
- Possession of a prohibited firearm,

- Chopping six rhino horns from three rhino carcasses,
- Possession of ammunition,
- Intentionally and unlawfully conveying six rhino horns,
- Possession of six rhino horns,
- Theft of three rhino horns, and
- Entering the heritage site without written permission.

In addition to the above, the court also declared them unfit to possess firearms. The Ford bakkie and other items in their possession were also forfeited to the state.

Sentences to run concurrently

Spokesperson Henry Mamothame said the NPA welcomes the hefty sentence meted by the Mogwase Regional Court to the three poachers.

Mamothame said the court ordered their sentences to run concurrently, which “effectively mean the three will service a 35-year jail term”.

Mamothame adds: “We strongly believe this conviction will send a strong warning to illegal poachers whose aim is to destroy the population”.

Impact of rhino poaching

During the trial conservation, experts submitted evidence on the extinction of the rhino population in South Africa and its impact on the country.

Advocate Douw Jacobs argued “that rhino poaching impacts negatively to the tourism industry and the economy of the country as it results in job losses”, the NPA said in a statement.

While poaching is a worldwide catastrophe, the impact on South Africa’s environment, economy and society as a whole is astronomical.

South Africa hardest hit

South Africa has, by far, the largest population of rhinos in the world, but has been hit hardest by poaching criminals.

[Samuel Umoh](#) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal says: “Poaching has deeply affected Africa by changing its economy. [South Africa] is an incredibly important country for rhino conservation. From 2007-2014 the country experienced an exponential rise in rhino poaching”.

This translates to a [growth of over 9,000%](#).