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Poachers handed effective 19-year sentence for killing two rhinos

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White-backed Vultures feeding on a poached White Rhino.

Peter Chadwick, Gallo Images

- **Two men have been sentenced to an effective 19 years behind bars for rhino poaching.**
 - **The poachers killed two rhinos in the Kruger National Park in 2019.**
 - **They were found in possession of rhino horns, as well as an unlicensed firearm.**
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Two rhino poachers have been sentenced to an effective 19 years' imprisonment for a 2019 poaching incident in the Kruger National Park.

The Regional Court in Skukuza in Mpumalanga sentenced Micheal Chauke, 57, and Americo Mathonsi, 59, on Thursday. The men were found to have killed two rhinos on 22 May 2019, said police spokesperson Colonel Donald Mdhuli.

READ | [Poachers kill 24 rhinos in just two weeks](#)

The men were caught after park rangers heard gunshots. On investigation, they found a rhino "lying motionless with a gunshot wound", but not yet dehorned, said Mdhuli.

A search was launched, and the two poachers were found hiding nearby. They had two rhino horns in their possession. A second rhino carcass was later found near Satara, said Mdhuli.

During their investigation, police found that the men were Mozambican. Police also established through forensic evidence that a .375 rifle was used for killing the two rhinos.

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The soldiers who fight against this poaching in national parks and game reserves around South Africa and Africa as a whole, are not traditional army men and women. They are the rangers, vets and conservationists.

The men were convicted in October 2021. They were each handed three years' imprisonment for trespassing, one year for contravening the Immigration Act, 10 years for

killing the rhinos, six years for possession of an unlicensed firearm and one year for the possession of unlicensed ammunition, added Mdhuli.

"The court instructed that the count of trespassing run concurrently with the count of contravention of the Immigration Act, while the count of possession of a firearm will run concurrently with that of being in possession of ammunition. The two accused will effectively be incarcerated for 19 years," said Mdhuli.