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3 rhino poachers caught in Kruger National Park jailed after pleading guilty

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Three rhino poachers in Mpumalanga were sentenced to jail time in the Skukuza Regional Court after pleading guilty.

PHOTO: Michele D'ottavio, EyeEm, Getty Images

- **Three Mpumalanga rhino poachers were given lengthy sentences.**
- **They were sentenced before forensic results were in.**
- **The men decided to plead guilty.**

The SAPS provincial commissioner in Mpumalanga, Lieutenant General Semakaleng Daphney Manamela, has welcomed the decision to sentence three poachers, even before forensic results were available.

Sibusiso Mahlaule, 29; George Manyise, 30; and Rodrigues Ngobeni, 34, were sentenced on Friday in the Skukuza Regional Court for poaching.

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According to police spokesperson, Brigadier Selvy Mohlala, the men were brought to court while the probe was ongoing and detectives were still waiting for the forensic results.

"They decided to plead guilty. The court accepted their plea, however, they were not exempted from punishment," said Mohlala.

They were each sentenced to two years' imprisonment for trespassing, and five years for conspiracy to commit a crime

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Meanwhile, Ngobeni was handed an additional eight years for contravention of the Immigration Act.

Their sentences emanate from an incident in which they were caught by field rangers at the Kruger National Park, on 18 April 2021.

The rangers, working at Pretoriuskop Section (inside the Kruger National Park), discovered something sinister that raised their suspicions.

Mohlala:

The rangers then began to be on the lookout and followed some tracks with the assistance of tracker dogs, as well as a helicopter belonging to SANParks.

The field rangers spotted the three men, and cornered and apprehended them.

A .375 H&H bolt action rifle with a fitted silencer, as well as three .375 H&H cartridges, were found in their possession.

Police in Skukuza were notified and all three suspects were arrested and charged.

"A charge of contravention of the Immigration Act was added upon Rodrigues Ngobeni after police established that he was from the country of Mozambique and was in South Africa illegally. The case was then handed to the experts in the field of the Stock Theft Unit of SAPS at Skukuza," added Mohlala.