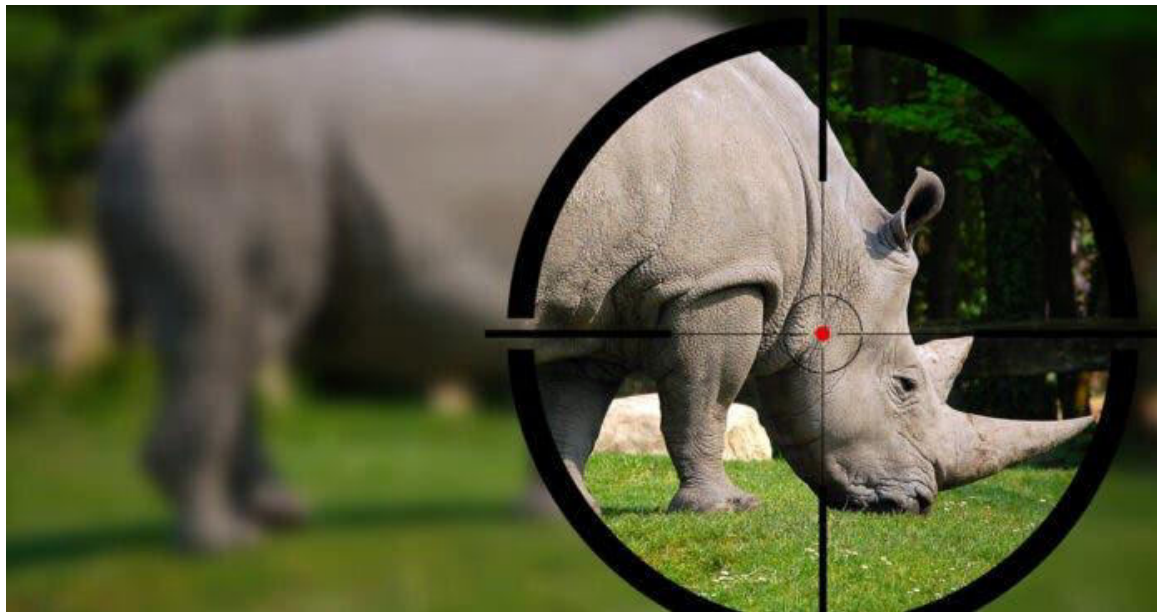


Poachers from Mozambique Handed 22 Year Jail Sentences

By
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Rhino Poaching. Photo: iStockPhoto / Alberto Masnovi

South African National Parks today welcomed the sentences handed down by the Skukuza Regional

Court, to two Mozambican nationals convicted for rhino poaching in the Kruger National Park (KNP), after they had killed a rhino and were found in possession of its fresh horns four months ago.

Lucky Shihlangu (33) and Sergio Mathebula (32) were found guilty, and sentenced to a total of 22 years but will serve 18 years effectively. They faced six charges related to the case and were found guilty on all six charges.

Field Rangers in the Malelane Section of the Kruger arrested the two on 21 September 2022. Rangers had begun searching for poachers after shots were heard and a fresh rhino carcass was discovered nearby. The pursuit of the suspects resulted in the two convicted poachers being discovered. They were found in possession of a heavy calibre hunting rifle, live ammunition and two fresh rhino horns.

The state presented evidence that linked the rifle and the horns to the carcass which was discovered nearby.

The Kruger's Managing Executive, Oscar Mthimkhulu congratulated all who contributed to the arrest and conviction saying:

"We are glad to have removed a pair of criminals and poaching equipment from the system. We know there are big role players who still need to come to trial and hope they too will face the might of the law like their ground troops. The collaboration between all law enforcement agencies is important for us to get on top of the situation. The recent arrests, convictions and sentences should serve as a warning to criminals that we are

serious about protecting our natural heritage and will continue in memory of our colleagues who paid the ultimate price in their work.”

The Skukuza regional Court has had a 100 percent conviction rate since the beginning of the year, and has vowed to continue to convict anyone who hunts illegally in a National Park.

Both Accused were found guilty on the charges listed below:

- Trespassing in a National Park; 2 years
- Immigration Act: 1 year
- Illegal possession of firearm: 6 Years
- Illegal possession of ammunition; 2 years
- Killing of a rhino: 10 years
- Possession of an axe; 1 year.