



Accused DNA linked to poached rhino horns found in search seizure operation

A suspects DNA was linked to rhino horns found at his home. Photo: SAPS.



by [Virginia Keppler-Young](#)

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The DNA of an accused linked him to illegal rhino horn poaching. Image: AP Photo/Thomas Kienzle

A 47-year-old accused will appear in the Kabokweni Magistrate Court on Tuesday, 7 February 2023, after his DNA was linked to rhino horns found during a search and seizure operation.

SUSPECT'S DNA LINKED TO RHINO HORNS

He was arrested by members of the Wildlife Trafficking Head Office and the Mpumalanga [Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation](#) (DPCI).

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DPCI spokesperson Captain Dineo Lucy Sekgotodi says the team traced the suspect in Johannesburg on a warrant of arrest.

“His arrest followed after he was linked through DNA of rhino horns found during search and seizure operation in his house in Johannesburg. This was during the take-down Operation of Project ‘Blood Orange’ in the early hours of 2 December 2022.”

Dineo Sekgotodi

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According to the South African National Parks, 259 rhinos were poached between January and December 2022. Image: Pixabay

Sekgotodi says DNA samples collected from rhino horns were sent to the laboratory, and results linked the accused positively with the crime.

“A case docket was opened, and the warrant of arrest was also issued against him. He handed himself over to the DPCI members, and he was charged for dealing in rhino horns.”

Dineo Sekgotodi

Sekgotodi said it is alleged that the accused forms part of the syndicates in the Kruger National Park rhino poaching saga.

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According to the South African National Parks, 259 rhinos were poached between January and December 2022. About 82 of these rhinos were poached from the Kruger National Park. The Kruger National Park is home to the largest population of rhinos in the world.

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The accused conspired with members of the Maluleke and Lekhuleni families, arrested in Mpumalanga and Limpopo.

Joyce Maluleke, Stephinah Mbhombi, Oters Maluleke, Miyelani Maluleke, and Nkhesane Maluleke were also arrested for rhino horn poaching. They are family members of former Kruger National Park field ranger Chikwa David Maluleke. They are out on R5 000 bail each.

Thandi Makhuvele, Alsina Mkhonto, Ignatia Mnisi, and Given Mzimba – family of former Kruger National Park ranger Solly Ubisi – were also arrested. They are out on R3 000 bail each.

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