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Woman rhino poacher jailed for 16 years



Thembi Juliegirl Mangane, aged 37, has been sentenced to 16 years behind bars for several crimes relating to rhino poaching. Photo: SAPS

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Pretoria - A woman involved in rhino poaching in the Kruger National Park was on Friday jailed for 16 years by the Skukuza Regional Court.

Thembi Juliegirl Mangane's two accomplices pleaded guilty and were sentenced almost two years ago, according to Mpumalanga police spokesperson Brigadier Selvy Mohlala.

While her accomplices pleaded guilty and were sentenced, Mohlala said Mangane, 37, opted to go on trial and was found guilty.

"The accused's sentence emanates from a rhino poaching incident which took place on 18 April 2019. It is said on that day, rhino poachers entered the Kruger National Park through the Crocodile Bridge section where they killed a rhino and removed its horns," Mohlala said.



Thembi Juliegirl Mangane (37)

Thembi Juliegirl Mangane, aged 37, has been sentenced to 16 years behind bars for several crimes relating to rhino poaching. Photo: SAPS

“Possibly two suspects managed to flee without being caught. However, after members of the police were alerted about the incident, a lookout for the suspects

immediately commenced.

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“It did not take long for the members to identify their suspects, thanks to the stock theft unit through information provided by the intelligence structure of the police in the province.”

Mohlala said police officers discovered that Mangane was part of an orchestrated plan to collect and transport the poaching suspects as they came out of the Kruger National Park after the illegal mission.

“The woman (Mangane) was the driver and the car that was used by the poachers was identified and eventually stopped. A search was conducted whereby a rifle as well as the two rhino horns, a saw and other items were found inside the vehicle that she was driving,” he said.

“The three suspects were arrested in relation to this incident as well as charged accordingly. They then appeared in court where two, identified as Matsinye Joao Sithole and Vasco Tibane, deemed it necessary for themselves to plead guilty.”

Sithole and Tibane were sentenced on June 24, 2021, to an effective 22 years' imprisonment.

Due to the fact that Mangane did not plead guilty, Mohlala said her matter was postponed but after the trial, she was sentenced as follows:

On count one, of restricted activity involving a threatened or protected species, a white rhinoceros, Mangane was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

On count two, a charge of possession of a prohibited firearm, Mangane was sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

On count three - possession of unlicensed ammunition - Mangane was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

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On count four, possession of a dangerous weapon, Mangane was sentenced to one year's imprisonment. On count five, which was conspiracy to commit a crime, Mangane was sentenced to four years' imprisonment.

“The court ordered that the sentence on count five to run concurrently with the sentence in count one. The sentence on count three and four will run concurrently with the sentence on count two. The effective sentence for the accused will therefore be 16 years' imprisonment,” said Mohlala.

Mangane was declared unfit to possess a firearm.

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