

Kenya: Two arrested, one escapes as detectives seize elephant tusks worth Sh11 million in Namanga sting operation

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By **Lucy Mumbi** – The Eastleigh Voice

Two people have been arrested for suspected wildlife trafficking following a multi-agency operation that led to the seizure of elephant tusks valued at about Sh11 million in Namanga.

According to the Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DCI), the suspects, Imani Manasi Msumbwa and Justin Mwalima, both Tanzanian nationals, in the company of a Kenyan suspect, Alton Jilaoneka, were caught off guard at a hotel where they were reportedly negotiating a sale.

Acting on intelligence, a joint team from the National Police Service (NPS) and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) moved in on Mufassa Hotel, where the suspects were reportedly preparing to finalise a covert deal with a prospective buyer.

DCI said at the hotel, the trio was found “lounging as if they were kings on their throne, completely unaware their reign was about to come to an end.”

However, one of the suspects, Justin Mwalima, escaped, slipping away undetected, while the remaining two were immediately arrested.

During interrogation, DCI said the suspects led officers to their parked vehicles, paving the way for further recovery of contraband.

“A search of a Toyota Mark X, registration number T476 DHS, turned up 20 pieces of elephant tusks weighing a total of 110 kilograms stashed in the boot, while a further inspection of a Nissan Fairland, registration number T305 EFM, uncovered a weighing machine, underpinning the traffickers’ meticulous operations,” the detectives said.

The suspects, along with the seized vehicles and exhibits, were taken to Namanga Police Station for processing ahead of arraignment.

Authorities said the operation demonstrates the Government's commitment to combating wildlife trafficking through intelligence-driven, multi-agency collaboration, aimed at safeguarding endangered species and protecting Kenya's natural resources.

Elsewhere, police officers have pursued armed Pokot rustlers in Loosuk, Samburu Central Sub-County, recovering seven cows and 14 goats following an attack on a herder.

The Kenya Police Service said the suspects were overpowered after a fierce gun battle with responding officers, who acted swiftly to protect the local community and prevent further losses.