

Rhino poacher sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment

Arrested last year inside the Karoo National Park outside Beaufort West while allegedly attempting to poach rhino, Alexandre Dias Shintlhangu was recently sentenced in the Cape Town Regional Court to five years' imprisonment.



Image source: www.pixabay.com

The incident took place on 30 August 2017 when three men from a rhino poaching syndicate in Limpopo province illegally entered the park with the intention to kill a critically endangered black rhino for its horns. They gained entry by cutting a hole in the electrified game fence and tracked rhino spoor in an attempt to shoot one of the animals for its horns.

SANParks field rangers discovered the hole in the fence and tracked the spoor of the three suspects. One of the men, Alexandre Dias Shintlhangu was arrested, while the other two suspects fled the scene despite tracking conducted by SANParks field rangers, SAPS members and private landowners. A rifle fitted with a homemade silencer, 13 live rounds, a large axe and various other poaching equipment were recovered.

A case was opened in Beaufort West with the following charges:

- (1) Conspiracy to commit a crime by attempting to kill a black rhino (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*) in Karoo National Park.
- (2) Enter, reside and perform any activity (hunt) in a national park without the written permission of the management authority.
- (3) Possession of a firearm without holding a licence, permit or authorisation.
- (4) Possession of ammunition without holding a licence, permit or authorisation.

Shintlhangu's bail application was successfully opposed and it was also discovered that at the time of his arrest in Karoo National Park he was out on bail on another case. During the investigation, a second suspect was identified and arrested in Vaalwater.

Plea and sentence agreement

On 31 May 2018, Shintlhangu entered into a plea and sentence agreement with the state in the Cape Town Regional Court. All charges against the second suspect were withdrawn pending DNA results.

Shinlthangu pled guilty to all four counts and was convicted and sentenced accordingly: Conspiracy to commit a crime by attempting to kill a black rhino (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*) in Karoo National Park - five years' imprisonment. Enter, reside and perform any activity (hunt) in a national park without the written permission of the management authority - five years' imprisonment. Possession of a firearm without holding a licence, permit or authorisation - five years' imprisonment. Possession of ammunition without holding a licence, permit or authorisation – three years' imprisonment.

All four counts will run concurrently.

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