

Media Statement



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TO: ALL MEDIA

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RE: POACHERS SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS IMPRISONMENT EACH

The Lephalale Regional Court sentenced Sam Mnone (35) and Mtheto Kenny Sibiya (34) to an effective 15 years imprisonment for the unlawful possession of firearm, unlawful possession of ammunition, illegal hunting of protected animals, trespassing and theft.

The court heard that at Zonderwater Rhinoland in the Lephalale area, the game rangers were patrolling. They then discovered three sets of footprints, which they followed successfully leading them to a dead rhinoceros that appeared to have been shot. Its horns and tail were missing. The police were called and a more concerted search was conducted in the area and around neighbouring farms. The accused were found on the adjacent farm in possession of the following items; three firearms, rounds of ammunition, knife, two overall tops, hack saw, an axe, two rhino horns and a tail.

All three accused were convicted. They were connected to the offence through DNA evidence, foot prints of their takkies and recent possession of horns and the tail. However, accused three, Butini Ndlovu died before the trial can be finalised.

In aggravation of sentence, the State Prosecutor Liezzel del Frate said the crime of poaching particularly for rhino horn is highly prevalent in the area. She argued that the crime is made more serious by the fact that it is committed by well organised groups and asked the court to impose the prescribed minimum sentence and to disqualify both accused from obtaining permits or authorizations in terms of LEMA and to possess firearm.

The court agreed with the states' submission and sentenced both accused to an effective term of 15 years imprisonment.

The sentence on the count of the Possession of a firearm without a licence was 10 years which the court ordered to run concurrently with the sentence on the count of Illegal

Hunting. The court further barred both accused from obtaining permits or authorizations in terms of LEMA and were also declared unfit to possess firearm.

The DPP in Limpopo, Advocate Ivy Thenga applauds the SAPS Tactical Response, Stock Theft Unit and the prosecutor for the good work.

Kind Regards,

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