



Seek, Find, Strike



**PRESENTATION TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES : RHINO
HORNS STOLEN FROM STOCKPILE IN MAHIKENG, NORTH WEST
02 August 2023**

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Presentation outline

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MANDATE OF THE DPCI

In terms of Section 17D of the South African Police Service Act, the Mandate of the DPCI is as follows:

(1) The functions of the Directorate are to **prevent, combat and investigate**—

(a) **national priority offences**, which in the opinion of the National Head of the Directorate need to be addressed by the Directorate;

(aA) offences referred to in Chapter 2 and Section 34 of the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act (PRECCA), 12 of 2004;

(2) If, during the course of an investigation by the Directorate, evidence of any other crime is detected and the National Head of the Directorate considers it in the **interests of justice, or in the public interest**, he or she may extend the investigation so as to include any offence which he or she suspects to be connected with the subject of the investigation.

Section 17A of the Police Act defines “National Priority Offence” as organised crime; crime that **requires national prevention or investigation**; crime that **requires specialised skills** as referred to in section 16(1) of the SAPS Act. The priorities are cross-cutting. One cannot occur without affecting the other(s) and because of this, the DPCI specialises in **project investigations** which draws in the investigative expertise of multiple investigators in different environments.



Introduction (1)

Wildlife trafficking is a **National Priority Crime** which is investigated by the **Environmental Protected Resources Section** under the Component **Serious Organised Crime Investigations** in the DPCI.

- “**National Priority Offences**” means organised crime, crime that requires national prevention or investigation, or crime which requires **specialised skills** in the prevention and investigation thereof, as referred to in section 16(1) and (2) of the SAPS Act, 1995 (Act no 68 of 1995);
- Prevention, combating and investigation of Wildlife Trafficking cases are in-line with the **National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking** (NISCWT) as approved by Cabinet, focus on level 3 to 5, and
- Section 24 of the Constitution provides for the **right to protect the environment** for the benefit of future generations.

Introduction (2)

Landscape of South Africa

- South Africa is considered to be one of the **most biologically diverse countries in the world**. This is largely because of its species diversity and endemism of its vegetation.
- While South Africa occupies only 2% of the world's surface area, it is home to nearly 10% of the world's plants and 7% of the world's reptiles, birds and mammals.
- Due to the abundance of our natural assets, we are unfortunately being **targeted by unscrupulous people** who illegally kill and traffic wildlife species for **financial gain**.
- Demand is high for the parts and derivatives of these animals and plants, which are used for a variety of **questionable purposes**.
- For a number of years now we have been mindful of the fact that **illicit transnational trade in wildlife** goes beyond threatening our rich biodiversity, but that it also **detrimentally impacts on the economic, social and security aspects of our society**.

Purpose of the Presentation

- An invite was received from the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Environment, Forestry and Fisheries for the DPCI to brief the committee on the progress relating to the **51 stolen rhino horn stockpiles from the North West stockpile facility** in Mahikeng in June 2023.
- Some of the offences reported include, Housebreaking & Theft, National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act (NEMBA) Act 10 of 2004 - Illegal dealing in rhino horn & conspiracy, Possession of stolen property, Illegal possession of fire-arms, money laundering, Corruption, and racketeering etc.
- New charges may be added as the investigation unfolds.

Status on investigation relating to the Rhino Horns stolen from the North West Stockpile Facility (1)

Case number	Mahikeng CAS 307/06/2023	<p><u>SYNOPSIS OF CASE:</u></p> <p>On 26 June 2023 at about 05:00 the security officer was patrolling at North West Parks Board, Cooks Lake premises when he noticed that the aluminium door was forced open. Upon close examination he noticed that the alarm system and camera system main frame box was damaged. The door handles of two offices were also broken and cameras in the passage were damaged. The Police were contacted and informed of a break-in at the premises.</p> <p>Upon investigation of the crime scene it was discovered that a small safe that had keys to the walk-in safe was stolen and the keys were used to open the safe. Fifty one (51) rhino horns to an estimate value of R9 million were stolen from the safe. A hammer, steel bar and chisel was found on the floor.</p> <p>An investigation team was established who gathered evidence and identified suspects involved in the commissioning of the offence. Four (4) suspects were arrested to date as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elias Manganda (40) arrested on 29 June 2023 at Rustenburg. • Lindani Vernon Mthombeni (32) arrested on 4 July 2023 at Brits. • Lonjezo Kanjipiti (26) arrested on 14 July 2023 at Rustenburg. • Lefa Daniel Mankgaba (46) arrested on 15 July 2023 at Rustenburg.
Offence	Housebreaking & Theft, Illegal dealing in rhino horn & conspiracy, Possession of stolen property, Illegal possession of fire-arms, money laundering, Corruption, and racketeering,	
Date Reported	26 June 2023	
Loss involved	Approximately R 9 Million	
Entity/Individual involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elias Manganda (40) • Lindani Vernon Mthombeni (32) • Lonjezo Kanjipiti (26) • Lefa Daniel Mankgaba (46) 	
Number of charges	Two (2)	
Number of statements obtained	Forty (40)	

Status on investigation relating to the Rhino Horns stolen from the North West Stockpile Facility (2)

Case number
Cont

Mahikeng CAS
307/06/2023

SYNOPSIS OF CASE: *continue*

Another identified suspect not yet arrested:

CURRENT STATUS:

The case was **postponed to 14 August 2023** for further investigation.

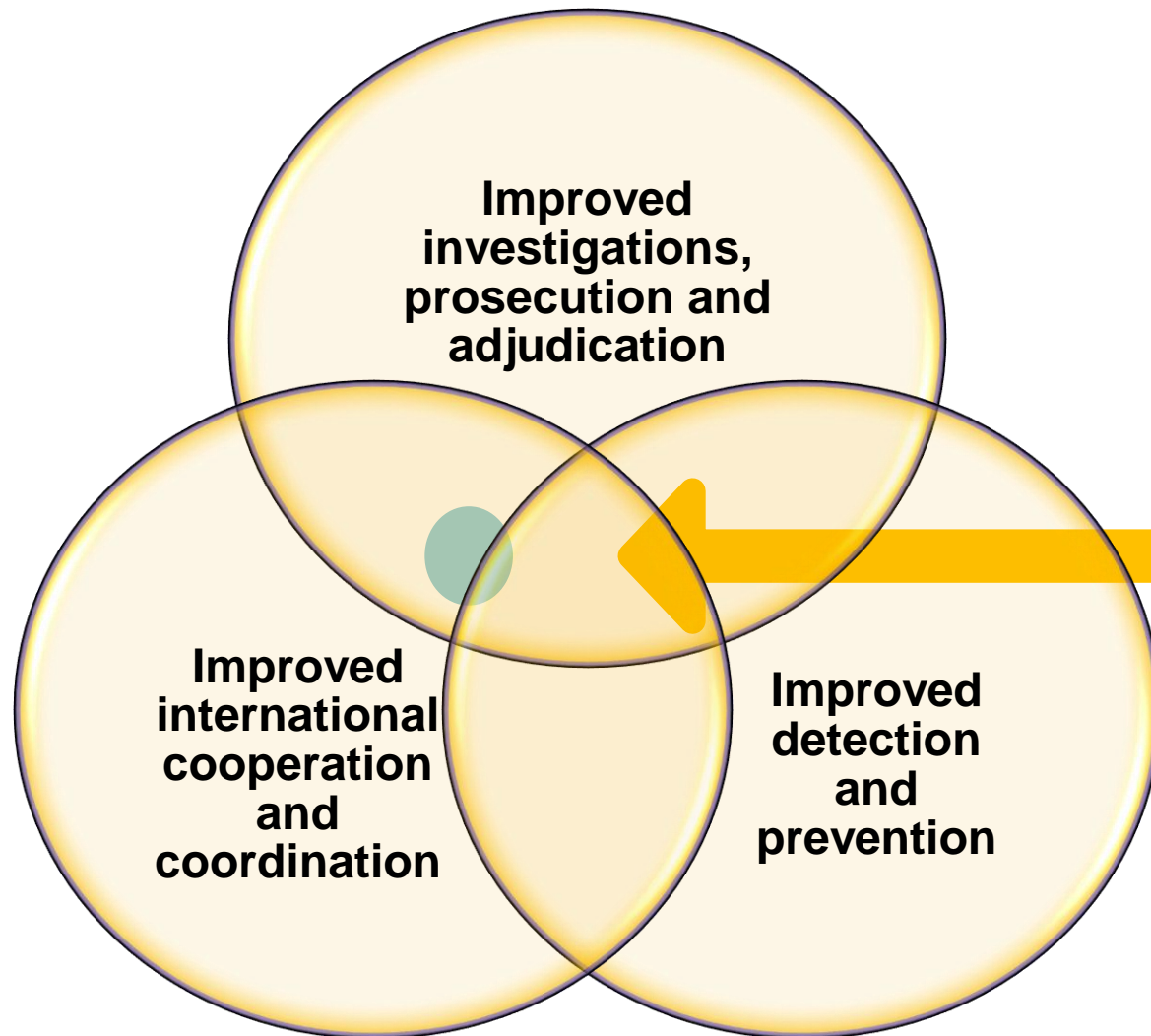
Accused Mthombeni and Mankgaba were released on bail of R 2000 and R 5000 each. The other accused are still in custody.

The rhino horns have not been recovered.



Approach by the DPCI in dealing with Wild Life Trafficking Cases

National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking



IT WILL HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON MORE THAN CONSERVATION:

- Increased state security
- Increased border management
- Reduction of corruption
- Increased community development
- Improved international standing
- Increased wildlife sustainability, etc.

Effective wildlife trafficking law enforcement in South Africa



Reduction in wildlife trafficking in South Africa and beyond





TARGETING THE ENTIRE ILLICIT VALUE CHAIN

TRANSNATIONAL ILLICIT WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING VALUE CHAIN





Overview of some of the cases investigated and successes achieved: **Project Python: Trafficking in Rhino Horns**

Background of the Case

- The investigation focused on the trafficking of rhino horns from **Mpumalanga to Gauteng** by an **South East Asian enterprise**.
- The enterprise was managed by Mr E Huang and his associates Mr S Chen and Ms Ping Wu.
- The enterprise was infiltrated during the operation to unveil their rhino horn trafficking activities, which includes their money laundering activities.
- All three suspects was arrested and were denied bail.
- R2 232 950-00 and two vehicles: VW Tiguan and Toyota Alphard were forfeited to the State.
- **Outcome of the trial:**
 - Accused number 1: E Huang , died in custody of natural courses.
 - Accused number 2: S Chen, was given a fine R500 000-00 or 5 years imprisonment for dealing 3 times in rhino horns. 2 years imprisonment for been an illegal immigrant. (Adv Van Heerden to appeal against the sentence)
 - Accused number 3: Ping Wu, was given five (5) years imprisonment for money laundering.

Overview of some of the cases investigated and successes achieved

Project Blood Orange: Trafficking of Rhino horns

- Project Blood Orange was established as an overflow of generated information from Project Broadbill to address the trafficking of rhino horns from the Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga to Gauteng.
- One of the focus areas was to address the illicit money flows and corruption associated with rhino horn trafficking.
- During 23 April 2022 the Project team conducted their first integrated operation to address money laundering and corruption within the Kruger National Park (KNP) focusing on the corrupt activities of KNP Rangers.
- Three (3) suspects were arrested during the operation, which included two KNP field rangers from the Stolznek area in the Intense Protection Zone (IPZ). Both rangers were dismissed following their arrest.

Overview of some of the cases investigated and successes achieved

Project Blood Orange: Successes

- During 2 December 2022 the Project team conducted the final integrated operation in three provinces and execute search warrants.
- Four (4) suspects were arrested in Mpumalanga and another two (2) suspects gave themselves over to the investigation team of the Hawks.
- Five (5) suspects were arrested in Limpopo province
- A warehouse and residential address were search in Gauteng. Processing equipment to cut rhino horn and a vehicle with concealed compartment were seized. The owner of the house and vehicle latter give himself over to the Hawks.
- 13 individuals were arrested during the project.

Overview of some of the cases investigated and successes achieved: **Project Blood Orange: Impact**

- 2022 Kruger National Parks poaching decreased by 40% compared with those killed for their horn during 2021 with a noticeable disruption in the trend of rhinos lost in the months after the first ranges were arrested.
- **Minister Barbara Creecy's press statement 6 February 2023**
 - *"The recent focus on money laundering and international co-operation with other law enforcement authorities saw the arrest of 26 rhino horn traffickers and 13 people for money laundering and bribing of rangers."*



Overview of some of the cases investigated and successes achieved

- During December 2021, the Hawks also responded to the sudden spike in rhino poaching and the trafficking of rhino horns in the Kruger National Park, Kwa Zulu Natal and Western Cape.
- Four (4) wildlife traffickers were arrested for the poaching in Ceres, Western Cape.
- The Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC): South African Anti-Money Laundering Integrated Task Force (SAMLIT): Technical Operation Group (ToG) focusing on wildlife trafficking responded by looking at their financial flows and other linkages.

Overview of some of the cases investigated and successes achieved

- On the 14 December 2021, the Hawks, FIC, SAMLIT, Customs, Airport Company, Transport Sector and Public Private partners focusing on combating rhino horn trafficking at ORTIA during the festive season.
- Two (2) boxes were seized at Fedex and thirteen(13) Rhino horns were recovered. These horns were destined for Malaysia. One(1) Rhino horn was linked back to a KZN Rhino poaching crime scene.
- On the 23 December 2021, One (1) Wildlife trafficker was arrested, and six (6) rhino horns recovered and R100 000-00 seized.- Cargo export via Qatar Airline.
- These were destined for Shandon in the People's Republic of China.
- FIC: SAMLIT: Tog responded looking at the financial flows in FNB, ABSA and Capitec.
- Cooperation and coordination between South Africa (Hawks) and People's Republic of China (Customs) is continuing.



Overview of some of the cases investigated and successes achieved

- 31 December 2021 - People's Republic of China responded and arrested three (3) Wildlife Traffickers, Five (5) Rhino horns and other elephant ivory items was recovered by the Chinese authorities.
- 31 January 2022 - One (1) Wildlife Trafficker from Malaysia arrested at ORTIA. Flight was from ORTIA via Doha Qatar to Malaysia. Eleven (11) Rhino horns seized. One (1) Rhino horn link to a KZN poaching incident. Coordination and cooperation between South Africa (Hawks) and Malaysia (Environmental Police and Customs).
- 1 February 2022 - One (1) Wildlife trafficker was arrested at Doha Qatar linked to suspect arrested at ORTIA. Twelve (12) Rhino horns seized. Excellent cooperation between South Africa (Hawks), Kuala Lumpur Malaysia and the Capital Police in Doha Qatar.
- 16 FEBRUARY 2022 - One (1) Wildlife Trafficker Arrested In Bedfordview, Johannesburg, South Africa. Twenty Nine (29) Rhino Horns Seized.

Between December 2021 and March 2022, the collaborative work done lead to 11 arrests, and the seizure of 76 rhino horns.

Conclusion

- Wildlife trafficking is not purely a conservation and environmental management problem, but constitutes a highly sophisticated form of **serious transnational organised crime** that is, among other threats, also a **threat to national security**.
- Wildlife trafficking has been declared a priority crime by the DPCI. Protecting our invaluable indigenous species is a full-time and very expensive undertaking that also entails a focused effort to combat corruption, without which, criminal syndicates would not be able to operate as effectively as they do.
- The DPCI's integrated and multi-disciplinary strategy to combat wildlife trafficking is aligned with Government's objective of securing the sustainable growth and development of the South African economy, including **combating corruption**, the **protection of strategic resources** and the combating of the **illicit economy**.
- Combating efforts can only succeed if it is addressed in an **integrated approach** through partnerships at National, Provincial and International level.
- The DPCI remains committed to the task at hand.



The DPCI shall at all times enforce the Law of the Republic without fear, favour or prejudice and, as the circumstances of any particular case may require, in accordance with the Constitution and the Law

Thank You

Seek, Find, Strike