

MEDIA RELEASE - 28 May 2003

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SANPARKS TRANSLOCATES BLACK RHINOS TO ZAMBIA

The SANParks Game Capture Team translocated five rare black rhinos to the Luagwa National Park in North East Zambia today.

After loading into crates at 03:00 Wednesday morning at the research bomas near Skukuza, the animals were transported by truck to the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport (KMIA) where the crates were loaded onto a Safair Lockheed Hercules transport aircraft.

The aircraft flew directly to an airstrip in Zambia, a flying time of around three and a half hours.

Mr Josias Chabani, the Acting Director of the Kruger National Park said:

"It is our absolute pleasure to be sending these animals to our colleagues in Zambia. We do this in the spirit of Africanism and to further the aims and objectives of NEPAD, because the presence of these rhinos in Zambia will undoubtedly increase their tourism business and hence the country's economy."

Says the chief veterinarian and head of the SANParks Game Capture Team, Dr Markus Hofmeyr, the operation had to go smoothly and as quickly as possible to minimise stress on the animals.

"Animals are tranquillised during a journey of this nature to stop them hurting themselves in transit," he explained.

Although the animals themselves have been donated to Zambia by SANParks, the translocation was made possible through generous donations from the Frankfurt Zoological Society, the SADC Rhino Project and various other private donors.

Of the rhinos themselves, two of them are males and three are females. Four were caught earlier this year in the Skukuza area of the Kruger National Park while one of the males comes from Marakele National Park. They have all been kept in the bomas near Skukuza for the last few weeks in quarantine before their journey.

The SANParks black rhino will join two others that were recently translocated from the Frankfurt Zoo, which will bring the Luagwa black rhino population to a more-credible seven.

Black rhinos (*diceros bicornis*) weigh around 850kgs and stand around 160cm. They are still rated as endangered by CITES. Kruger's black rhino population stands at around 400.

... Ends...

(Please click on photo for larger view)



Research Boma 1



Rhino Boma 2



SABC Media Conference



Rhino in crate



Loading Rhino



Rhino in crate



Loading Rhino crates on truck



Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport (KMIA)



Safair Lockheed Hercules transport aircraft



Airport: Loading rhino crates



Dr Markus Hofmeyr, Ken Maggs (SANParks) and Dr Victor from Zambia

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