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n 2003, six white rhinos were released into the Makuya Game Reserve. But today, disturbing reports indicate that the reserve has no rhinos left.

According to intelligence sources, there have been no reports of rhinos illegally killed in the reserve, which is situated on the western boundary of the Makulel region of Kruger National Park.

However, the latest ground surveys have found no living rhinos in the reserve – and no carcasses, either.

It was also reported that the reserve's rhino "middens" (dung piles that rhinos use to communicate with each other) have not been used for at least two years.

> At this time there are no rhino left on the reserve. Middens are dead and have been so for the last couple of years.

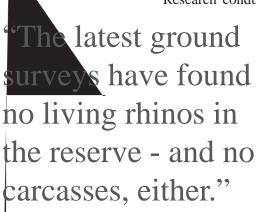
There are concerns that another "Letaba situation" could be developing, in which 1° (initially thought to be 17) rhino carcasses were found durind near Tzaneen.¹

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Sources close to the situ proverbial tip of the icel and more questions sadly

Ill val rhino horn trade in South Africa

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Neighboring Zimbabwe is now down to its last 700 rhinos.²

Illegal rhino horn is in highly sought after for use in traditional medicines in China³ and Vietnam⁴, despite the fact rhino horn has been extensively analyzed⁵ and contains no medicinal properties.

Research conducted by the wild ife trade monitoring net

work TRAFFIC found that most rhino horns leaving Southern Africa are being smuggled to China and Vietnam.⁶

It has also been noted that the spreading Chinese footprint in Southern Africa has placed the demand for rhino horn perilously close to the supply⁷, and counter poaching repob have linked the increase in rhino and elephant killings to a food of Chinese weapo- M M ⁸ M

There are further concerns that a state-funded 2008 rhino horn research propo; Mfro MChina served as one of-the cata lysts for the surge in rhino killings acro; MSouthern Africa by encouraging the use of rhino horn, and that the researchers are attempting to circumvent CITES research provisio- Mby farming rhinos.⁹

One of the mo ; Mnefario \hat{A} M developments in the escalatin illegal rhino horn trade is the proliferation of apparent business alliances between members of the South African rhino conservation community and offshore crime syndicates.

In September, eleven alleged members of a rhino horn syndicate were granted bail by the Musina magistrate's court and are scheduled to appear in court again on April 11th, 2011.¹⁰

The suspects included a well-known safari operator and game farmer, along with two veterinarians, and a professional hunter.¹¹

Investigators later unearthed a mass grave of at least 20 rhino carcasses on the property of one of the suspects.¹²

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Mass graves, missing rhinos,

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The following month, a rhino horn syndicate case¹³ involving two safari operators and a professional hunter was thrown out by the North Gauteng High Court (the State's star witness was apparently intimidated into not testifying).¹⁴

In both syndicate cases, multiple charges had been brought against the suspects, including racketeering, money laundering, various counts of theft, malicious damage to property, illeg b ammunition contraventions of the vari ous provinci b Environment b Act, and the AviationMAct.

Another factor which has stimulated the appetite for rhino horn the intention b age of private rhino hornM stockpiles from South Africa into the illeg b

There have b were dehorned under the guise of protection in fact horns were removed in order to be sold to those de b g b ¹⁶ Onc dehorning and de b suspectMapparentk committed suicideMwhileM

Fin b the increased discussionMfavoring leg b rhino horn tradeMemanating from certain fac tions within South Africa and China. Such

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horn via new tradeM



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NOTES

Article adaptation: "Game Reserve in Limpopo Found Emptied of All Rhinos", *Rhino Horn is Not Medicine*, November 22, 2010. See http://www.rhinoconservation.org/2010/11/22/game-reserve-in-limpopo-found-emptied-of-all-rhinos/

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