

Five suspects held after police foil attack on shopping mall

ELFAS TORERA

FIVE suspects are expected to appear on charges of illegal possession of firearms and conspiracy to commit crime in the Klerksdorp Magistrate's Court today.

The group of armed men were arrested after police acted on a tip-off that the suspects were poised to pounce on the Jouberton Tower Mall in Klerksdorp.

North West police spokesperson, Sgt Kelebogile Moleko said an unidentified number of suspected accomplices fled the scene in a silver Mercedes-Benz sedan.

"The suspects were arrested by members of the Klerksdorp crime

combating unit at the Jouberton Tower Mall," Moleko said.

"According to information received, the police got a tip-off in the early hours of Friday about a possible conspiracy to commit crime and promptly responded.

"Upon arrival police found five suspects at the mall in possession of a revolver and one special revolver with ammunition," she said.

Moleko said the police confiscated a black Audi A4 luxury vehicle which the suspects were using as a getaway car.

She said investigations were ongoing while a search for those who escaped arrest continued.

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Suspect in court for stolen property

ELFAS TORERA

A MAN, 36, will appear in the Brits Magistrate's Court today after he was arrested for possession of an unlicensed firearm and ammunition, stolen property and a stolen vehicle.

The man was arrested in Majakaneng's Skierlik section by Mooinooi police.

He was also linked to a business robbery incident that was reported in Muldersdrift.

North West police spokesperson Sgt Kelebogile Moleko said: "The police were conducting crime prevention patrols at Majakaneng and spotted a man carrying a school bag. The man was approached and his bag searched.

"Inside the bag, police found a .38 Special revolver with six bullets, a laptop, cable ties, a cellphone and roll of wire."

Moleko said police in Majakaneng requested police reinforcements and the Brits police joined them.

"Upon further investigations, police



RECOVERED: A man was arrested for possession of an unlicensed firearm and ammunition. PICTURE: PIXABAY

went to a place where other goods were hidden and two vehicles were found abandoned in the street. Inside one of the cars, household items were found," she said. Upon further investigation, police managed to link the accused to the Muldersdrift business robbery that happened at 3am on Thursday.

"During the robbery, six suspects

broke into the business of a man, 48.

The owner and two security guards who were tied up during the robbery.

"The suspects took the victim's electrical appliances and four cellphones and left the scene with the victim's four vehicles," Moleko said. "Five suspects are still at large."

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Girl rescued from brothel

ELFAS TORERAI

LAW enforcement agencies and the MEC for community safety have thrown down the gauntlet and vowed to leave no stone unturned for criminals to operate in the North West.

Safety MEC Dr Mpho Motlhabane said he was appalled by recent incidents of crime in the province, particularly against women and children. "I was appalled to learn of men preying on young girls and using them for their prostitution business."

He said law enforcement agencies needed to up their game and uproot all activities of this nature, including brothels.

"We are reeling under the yoke of women and children abuse but when you have women subjecting girls to prostitution that's a crisis.

"The police and prosecution must work hard to gather the necessary evidence to have the two convicted so that this Lichtenburg incident serves as a deterrent to those with similar motives," Motlhabane said.

His condemnation followed an incident in which a 17-year-old girl from Botswana was abducted and subjected to prostitution in Lichtenburg.

The girl had spent more than a month forced to sleep with different men on a daily basis since her abduction on April 8.

Help only reached her on May 24 when the Hawks received a tip-off and swooped on the house where she was kept captive in Lichtenburg.

Two women, aged 20 and 22, were arrested in connection with the case.

Mpho Sebati and Natasha Moncho were charged with abduction, rape, sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

They appeared in the Lichtenburg Magistrate's Court on Wednesday and were remanded in custody until June 27.

The Hawks provincial spokesperson, Capt Tlangelani Rikhotso, said: "The girl is from Botswana. It is not clear what she was doing in Lichtenburg but

she was abducted at a hitch-hiking spot by the accused who took her to the house she was eventually rescued from."

Rikhotso said the Hawks had since alerted her family in Botswana while working with the social development and home affairs departments to have her welfare sorted.

"We got a tip-off from an informer who told us about this specific girl and she was the only one we found at the said house. Investigations are ongoing, though, because we believe there could be more to this," she said.

"What we have gathered is that the teen would be given alcohol and drugs and forced to sleep with

different people while the two women pocketed the money."

The Hawks expressed shock that women could be found to be ringleaders of such a crime when it was men who usually committed deeds of this nature.

A number of girls have gone missing in areas around Mahikeng recently and it is feared that they could have fallen into similar situations.

"We can't rule out the possibility of more girls being found, as we are still busy with investigations. Also, we can't confirm whether the missing girls could be a result of the prostitution rings completely. However, it could definitely be a factor.

"Usually men are the perpetrators, the unique factor about this incident is that these were females that we arrested. This shows us that regardless of gender, people need to be vigilant around strangers," Rikhotso said.

Hawks provincial head, Maj-Gen Linda Mbana thanked the person who gave the tip-off leading to the 17-year-old girl being rescued.

"I want to urge the community not to turn a blind eye to situations such as these as reporting these kinds of crimes could potentially save a life," she said.

Mbana said society needed to rediscover itself and expose all the wrongs that have been left to go unreported that affect communities.

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Dr Mpho Motlhabane

Trans Kalahari Corridor idea pursued

ELFAS TORERAI

THE idea to improve trade between South Africa, Botswana and Namibia continues to take centre stage through the Trans Kalahari Corridor (TKC) plan the three countries are pursuing.

The three states have just held a joint law enforcement operation (JLEO) in Moatle, Botswana, focusing on some of the challenges that are experienced along the corridor.

The TKC idea started in 2003 with a memorandum of understanding. Since then, efforts have been made to improve trade efficiencies through the harmonisation of cross border transactions and customs procedures.

Measures have also been put in place to lessen the costs of goods and movement of people between and among the three states.

The TKC is a road network spanning about 1900km across the territories of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa.

At the recent JLEO, the South Afri-

can delegation led by the transport department comprised the police, Road Traffic Management Corporation, Road Traffic Infringement Agency, Cross Border Road Transport Agency, Road Accident Fund, provincial and local traffic authorities and Immigration.

The Namibian delegation was led by the ministry of works and transport and includes stakeholders from the Namibian police, road authority, customs, immigration and Motor Vehicle Accident Fund (MVA).

In his welcome address during the information sharing session, Botswana head of delegation from the department of roads, transport and safety, Bokhutlo Modukanele, thanked South Africa and Namibia for working towards implementing the objectives.

Suebel Mmono, who headed the South African delegation said there was a need to establish and implement transversal legislation governing the road transport operations especially abnormal loads including operational systems.

He said the member states' road traffic acts and regulations provide for different enforcement processes which directly impact on political and economic relations.

Mmono said one of the recommendations taken during the fifth TKC JLEO in November 2017 in Rustenburg, South Africa, was that communities living along the corridor must be engaged and given awareness of the TKC and its role in creating opportunities and the economic growth of the three countries.

Namibian head of delegation Lemmy Mutonga advocated for road safety ambassadorship, calling for the three member states to be more proactive than reactive.

Director of the Trans Kalahari Corridor Secretariat (TKCS), Leslie Mpofu, said the Southern African Development Community had recently acknowledged the good work that the TKC is undertaking and was considering using the TKC as the benchmark.

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