

The 15-minute ATM heist

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Authorities fear gang in Cape after four blasts in nine days

ESTHER LEWIS
Staff Reporter

FIFTEEN minutes was all a group of seven bombers needed to plant explosives around an ATM, wait for the blast, fill their bags with cash, and make a clean getaway.

This is how the attack in KTC near Gugulethu unfolded.

It was the first of four ATM bombings in the Western Cape in nine days. Each took place between 3.10am and 4.10am.

On Monday, January 30, surveillance footage shows seven men, each holding a bag, approaching an ATM attached to a Spar wall. The group jumps over the gate at 3.55am. The explosive device is planted and they stand back.

After a bang the seven fill their bags and leave the same way they came in by 4.10am.

Manager of Spar KTC Jeff Skosana said the robbers didn't get all the money. One of them cut themselves on the metal shards on the machine.

The next bombing took place the following day at the Kwikspar at Tyger Manor Centre in Bellville.

Store owner Paul Goncalves said the CCTV footage seems to have frozen at the time of the 4am attack.

A neighbouring shop owner noticed at 5am that the ATM had been forced open. There was still money left behind inside.

On Friday, February 3, at 3.10am, bombers struck an ATM on the corner of Milton Road and Vasco Boulevard in Goodwood. A witness said he heard the blast, rushed outside and saw three men fiddling with the ATM. When the bombers saw the man, they fled in a white car.

Yesterday morning, three men with rifles targeted an ATM attached to the outside of a bank in Goodwood Mall. Albert de Jager, centre manager, said the men chased the unarmed night security guard away from the ATM. The traumatised guard managed to call his control room and alert police. In the minutes they took to respond, the men blew up two ATMs, took the cash and fled in a blue BMW.

Experts say they believe a crime syndicate is probably behind the spate of ATM bombings.

Between January 1 and February 7 last year one incident was recorded in the province, said SA Banking Risk Information Centre (Sabric).

Police statistics show 399 ATM bombings for the 2010/11 financial

year in SA. Hardest hit were Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

Police spokesman Warrant Officer November Filander said they were concerned about the trend.

The investigation was at an early stage and it was too soon to say what type of explosives had been used, or whether the attacks were linked.

Community Safety MEC Dan Plato said the bombings were executed with "military precision".

"There's an element of sophistication and professionalism."

He said it raised the question of whether the explosives were provided by, or stolen from, the police or military, and whether the robbers had police or military training.

Johan Burger, Institute of Security Studies (ISS) crime expert, said industrial explosives were usually used in the blasts. Most of these originated from mines.

Burger was convinced the bombings were the work of a syndicate because it would not be

easy for one person.

These attacks needed good organisation, planning, access to money and industrial explosives, he said.

They would need a trained specialist who knew how to handle explosives and how much to use. The blast must be powerful enough to open the machine, but not destroy the cash, he explained.

Obtaining industrial explosives was supposed to be extremely difficult since it was governed by strict controls, said Burger.

While it was difficult to say who was behind the attacks, Burger said it was probable that a syndicate had changed focus, or one had moved from areas such as Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

JP Smith, mayoral committee member for safety and security, was also convinced a syndicate was to blame, based on the resources needed to commit the crime. "The only way to solve this is through crime intelligence," he said.

Provincial Community Police Forum spokesman Faisal Abrams said local police should implement steps taken elsewhere in SA to stem the attacks.

Kalyani Pillay, Sabric chief executive, said the organisation was working with police and other industry stakeholders.

The damage to a bombed ATM cost between R50 000 and R300 000, she said.



ON THE SCENE: Police comb the scene of an ATM blast in KTC near Gugulethu.

Welfare service boss faces drug rap

SIBUSISO NKOMO

Staff Reporter

THE MAN in charge of the province's welfare services is facing drug charges and will also face internal disciplinary charges for keeping mum about his arrest last year.

Dave McNamara, who also works on the Social Development Department's anti-drug programmes, was arrested on June 28 outside Senator Park with four tik straws, three used and one unused.

As chief director of welfare services, he is in charge of all social workers in the province.

He will appear in the Cape Town Magistrate's Court on April 13.

Social Development MEC Albert Fritz said he had learnt of McNamara's charges late yesterday.

"I called him in and he said he had 'entjies' on him because he works with homeless people as a social worker. We are going to investigate him internally.

"But I would like the court process to be completed."

The ANC's provincial spokesman, Cobus Grobler, called for McNamara to be suspended with immediate effect.

"The ANC is shocked that a chief director of the Department of Social Development, responsible for the anti-drug problems, was caught with some drugs in his possession."

Meanwhile, despite a court order allowing the Senator Park body corporate to repair the building, renovations do not seem to have started.

Tenants were evicted in September after the flat owners applied to the court for their removal under a section of the Sectional Titles Act.

The owners of the 168 flats will have to foot most of the R10 million bill.

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Help identify woman and two children hit by train in Eerste River

POLICE have appealed to the public to help identify the woman who died with her two young children after being hit by a train in Eerste River in an apparent murder-suicide yesterday morning.

The three were hit by a Strand-bound train just after 5.30am after the young woman had stepped on the tracks near the Eerste River station, reported Lindelo Matya, Metrorail regional manager.

Paramedics estimated the children to have been a year and two weeks old.

Provincial police spokesman Warrant Officer November Filander said

police were requesting the assistance of the public to identify the three.

"If anyone has information to trace family or have information about the victims, we ask them to come forward," he said.

Melany Kühn, spokeswoman for Social Development MEC Albert Fritz, said as soon as their identities were known, social welfare services would be offered to their next of kin.

"We will offer all the support and counselling they need, but now the most important thing is trying to identify them and then trace the family," said Kühn. – Staff Reporter

Attorney fights on to keep office premises

Court to assess dismissal of appeal

FATIMA SCHROEDER
High Court Writer

WELL-KNOWN Cape Town attorney William Booth is embroiled in a Western Cape High Court battle with the City of Cape Town over the location of his Kenilworth law firm.

The city wants Booth to cease operating from the premises in Kenilworth Road because the area is zoned as residential.

Booth has been operating from the premises, owned by his family trust, since 1996 and has been battling with the local authorities since then to have the property rezoned from general residential to special business.

In August 2004, Booth succeeded in obtaining a temporary departure from the zoning scheme. This lapsed in December 2007. In August 2009 the city's Protea sub-council refused a further rezoning application he had lodged, and a later appeal to the planning and general appeals committee was dismissed in July 2010.

Two months later, Booth took the matter on appeal to the



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Western Cape MEC for local government, environmental affairs and development planning. The MEC dismissed the appeal in October last year, and a few days later, Booth requested that the MEC furnish him with reasons, and instructed his legal representatives to prepare a high-court application to review and set aside the MEC's decision.

But before the MEC provided his reasons, the city gave Booth notice of an application for an urgent interdict to stop him from operating his business from the Kenilworth premises.

In court yesterday, Booth applied to have the interdict application postponed, partly because the review application was still pending.

However, the city opposed the postponement application.

Giving his ruling, Judge Robert Henney said it seemed that the city had lodged the

interdict application a month after the MEC had made his decision.

At the time, the MEC had not yet provided reasons for the decision.

Judge Henney said Booth had a legal right to take the matter further by approaching the court to review the MEC's decision, and could do so only once the MEC had provided his reasons. These were provided a week ago.

If the MEC had given his reasons months ago and Booth did not timeously apply to have his decision reviewed and set aside, the city would have been within its right to bring the interdict application.

However, in the case before him, the city did not give Booth an adequate opportunity to exercise his rights to take the matter on review, Judge Henney said. He found that the request for a postponement was not an unreasonable one and said it would be in the interests of justice to grant it.

He ordered that costs stand over for later determination. A date was not formally set.

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All matric markers to be tested, says department

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Education Writer

THE DEPARTMENT of Basic Education is planning to introduce competency tests for all matric markers.

The matter was raised yesterday when department officials briefed the National Assembly's basic education committee on the 2011 matric exams.

Last year the SA Democratic Teachers' Union (Sadtu) in the Western Cape was up in arms when the provincial Education Department introduced competency tests for teachers who wanted to serve as markers in the National Senior Certificate exams.

Sadtu said it would call on all teachers not to write the tests or take part in the matric marking process.

At the time, the provincial Education Department said the competency tests were a pilot and markers were tested only in the seven key subject areas.

Yesterday, the committee also heard that Umalusi's findings after last year's exams included that the English first additional language question papers were of a poor standard.

Dr Rufus Poliah, who led the department's presentation, said it had appointed an independent panel to investigate.

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