

Media Statement



Tel: +27 12 845 6000

Email:
media@npa.gov.za

Victoria & Griffiths
Mxenge Building
123 Westlake Avenue
Weavind Park
Silverton
Pretoria

www.npa.gov.za

TO: ALL MEDIA

DATE: 23 MAY 2018

RE: GANG MEMBER SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT FOR EXECUTION OF POLICE OFFICER

The NPA welcomes the life imprisonment sentence handed to a member of the Dixie Boys gang who executed a Metro Police Officer in full uniform, in the line of duty, in front of his son and in front of his house.

Today, 23 May 2018, Judge Daniel Thulare of the Western Cape High Court sentenced Christopher Jantjies to life imprisonment for the murder of Ben Johannes Koopman, a Metro Police Officer with the City of Cape Town. He further sentenced him to 15 years direct imprisonment for robbery with aggravating circumstances, 15 years direct imprisonment for possession of an illegal firearm and 5 years direct imprisonment for the illegal possession of ammunition.

Judge Thulare ordered that the sentences for robbery with aggravating circumstances, illegal possession of a firearm and illegal possession for ammunition must run concurrently with the life imprisonment sentence for murder. That means the accused was effectively sentenced to life imprisonment.

During the trial, the court heard that on 15 February 2016, the deceased arrived at his house in Eerste River, around lunchtime dressed in full uniform and driving a marked Metro Police vehicle. He parked the vehicle in front of his yard near his front gate and went inside the house. After some time he came out of his house followed by his 18 year-old son, Quilen, who had earlier arrived from school. As he said goodbye to his father, and the deceased walking out of the gate and behind the police vehicle, Quilen saw the accused with another unidentified man walking towards his father. He did not pay too much attention to them. He told the court that his father greeted the two men as they walked past him. As he was opening the door of the police vehicle, the accused and the unidentified man turned around and grabbed the deceased. Jantjies took out a

firearm and shot the deceased in the chest. The accused struggled to take out his service pistol and got assistance from the unidentified man. The deceased fell on his back after being shot and as he lay there, Jantjies kicked him in the face and stomach. The accused then ran away with the deceased's service pistol and two-way radio. He got into a get-away vehicle that parked nearby.

Quilen was not the only person who saw Jantjies and the unidentified man. A member of the 26s gang, Danwill de Klerk, who knew Jantjies as he had spent time with him in prison, also saw the two men on their way to commit the murder. Jantjies greeted De Klerk, 'salute' – a greeting used by 26s gang members. He greeted him back. Later on, De Klerk saw the accused running back with a firearm and a two-way radio on his hand. After hearing children shouting "hulle het geskiet", he walked towards where the crowd was gathering. He saw a police officer lying on the road and recognised him as "Oom Ben".

Video footage collected from CCTV at Boots Tavern also shows the two men attacking the deceased. Despite all this, Jantjies pleaded not guilty to all the charges. Advocate Christiaan De Jongh called the wife of the deceased to testify in aggravation of sentence, the accused stood up and told his legal representative to tell the wife that he never shot and killed her husband.

Advocate De Jongh and Advocate Ronelle Stone argued that there should be strong compelling reasons to justify why the court was deviating from the prescribed minimum sentences. "They are not there. This was a pre-meditated murder. They waited for him to arrive for lunch. They executed him at point-blank. It was cold - blooded, vicious and callous. He was still on duty in a law enforcement car and in execution of his duties. In addition, the fact that he was robbed of his service pistol is an aggravating circumstance. Most police are killed and robbed of their service pistols and many are used in further commission of other crimes. We do not know what happened to this one. The accused did not take the stand. He did not explain to the court what happened, take the court into his confidence and show remorse. A person who does not show remorse poses a danger to society, as he does not see any wrongful doing. It doesn't look like he will be rehabilitated as he doesn't see anything wrong he has done," Advocate De Jongh argued.

The accused has previous convictions with suspended sentences. Despite that, he continued to commit crimes including the murder of the police officer.

"He has no respect for law and order. He has no conscience. If the court poses sentences that are lenient, the interest of justice will fall into disrepute and communities may be forced to take the law into their own hands," Judge Thulare agreed. He was sentenced as follows: life imprisonment for murder; 15 years for robbery with aggravating circumstances; 15 years for illegal possession of a firearm and 8 to 10 years for illegal possession of ammunition.

The NPA welcomes the sentence and hope that it sends a clear message that the killing of police officers is attack on the state and those involved will be dealt with harshly. Koopman was not only a police officer but also a state witness on crimes committed by the Dixie Boys gang.

Kind Regards,

Eric Ntabazalila
National Prosecuting Authority
Regional Communications Manager
Western Cape