

# Media Statement



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**TO: ALL MEDIA**

**DATE: 18 SEPTEMBER 2018**

**RE: HEFTY SENTENCES FOR COPPER THEFT SYNDICATE**

Four men from Gauteng who operated as a syndicate stealing copper in various towns across the Free State were on Friday handed sentences ranging from 12 to 20 years after they were convicted for managing the activities of an enterprise through a pattern of racketeering, participating in the activities of an enterprise through a pattern of racketeering, destroying essential infrastructure and theft.

The Free State High Court Judge, Johann Daffue sentenced Alfred Navara Matsitela (42), Steven Langa (46), Amos Ngobeni (33) and Andries Makhumbuza (40) for offences that were committed between January 2014 and September 2016. The offences were committed in Senekal, Ficksburg, Marquad and Glen.

In September 2016, Combined Private Investigations, a security company contracted by Transnet, linked the accused to theft of copper in the Glen area and further investigations revealed similar crimes at Telkom in Ficksburg and Senekal. The crimes were committed during the night and at secluded places. The accused were linked to the various crimes scenes by their cell phone records obtained from the cell phone found in their possession at the time of the arrest.

The timeline analysis of their cell phone data shows that they travelled from their respective places of residence in Etwatwa and Germiston, to the relevant crime scenes and back to their residences after the commission of the offences. The cell phone data also revealed that there was communication amongst the accused before, during and after the commission of the offences. The accused were associated with an enterprise that was managed by Matsitela. The total value of the cable stolen is about R332 000.

Arguing in aggravation of sentence, State Prosecutor, Advocate Jacques Potgieter described the offences committed by the accused as planned, premeditated and

organised. He said the offences were not crimes of opportunity considering the way they were organised.

"What is even more aggravating is the consequences of their crimes. Companies like Telkom, Eskom and Transnet spend a lot of money on private security which shows the magnitude of these crimes. These companies suffer losses. Customers also suffer because the companies increase their prices to make for what they have lost as a result of crime. The only way the courts could show how serious they deal with these kinds of crimes is to impose hefty sentences on the accused and this will send a message to others", said Potgieter.

Judge Daffue concurred with the prosecutor that the only sentence he can impose on the accused is a direct imprisonment. He subsequently sentenced Matsilela to 18 years and Langa to 12 years in prison. Ngobeni and Makhumbuza were each sentenced to 20 years in jail.

Matsilela and Langa were already serving sentences of 12 and 20 years respectively after they were sentenced in 2017 for similar offences by the Free State High Court sitting in Kroonstad.

Kind Regards,

**Phaladi Shuping**

**Regional Spokesperson: DPP Free State**

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