

Media Statement



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TO: ALL MEDIA

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RE: ROBBERS SENTENCED TO LENTHY JAIL TERMS

Five men who were convicted of being involved in a string of robberies and kidnappings were today sentenced to lengthy jail terms by the Free State High Court sitting in Harrismith. Judge Joseph Jamela Mhlambi sentenced Fernando Filipe, Master Mashaba, Victor Zondo, Victor Nyoni and Eric Masuku after he convicted them of string of 37 charges that include robbery with aggravating circumstances, kidnapping, unlawful possession of firearm and unlawful possession of ammunition.

According to evidence presented in court, the accused operated criminal gang from March 2012 until June 2015 by robbing trucks and kidnapping the drivers. Their criminal activities started in Gauteng and later expanded to the Free State. They mainly targeted delivery trucks carrying a variety of loads.

The loads robbed were then taken to Mozambique or Swaziland. Their cellular phone records showed that before, during and after the robberies they were in contact with people in Mozambique and Swaziland. In some instances, trucks were found in Mozambique or Swaziland or en route to those countries.

Filipe and Masuku committed the first offence on 27 March 2012, when they kidnapped Johannes Tshabalala and robbed him of his truck, a trailer and a box of tools valued at R554 000. The incident happened in Delmas. They committed two more offences in Delmas on the same day when they kidnapped and robbed Robert Madhlala and Amos Shibambo of the trucks, trailers, cellular phones and cash totalling R680 000 and R400 000 respectively.

They were joined by Mashaba, Zondo and Nyoni in the commission of crime when they robbed Sithembele Mphoswa of his truck, trailer and clothing worth R6 million in Harismith on 30 July 2014. Mphoswa was driving from Durban to Polokwane when he

was stopped by a person in a full police uniform. He was requested to get out of the truck and suddenly someone in private clothes entered the truck and started it whilst he was assaulted by the person in police uniform.

The men continued with their crime spree when they robbed Xolani Nkambule of his Freightliner truck and trailer with loads of steel bars in Warden on 20 August 2014. The total value of the goods was R1.5 million. They robbed lucky Mofokeng of a Hyno Truck, trailer and load of steel bars valued at R603 000 on 22 January 2015.

They moved their illegal operation to Vrede and Villiers in 2015 when they robbed Richard Hlela, Johannes Makgoa, Abram Morite and Asma Modi. Hlela was robbed of a truck, trailer and cellular phone to the total value of R1 million. Makgoa was robbed of goods valued at R922 000. Morite and Modi lost goods worth R840 000 and R2.4 million respectively.

The accused used unlicensed firearms in the commission of these crimes. The total amount of goods robbed from the rightful owners by the accused is estimated at R15 354 000.

Filipe was sentenced to 125 years in total after he was found guilty of four counts of robbery with aggravating circumstances and three counts of kidnapping. He will effectively serve 28 years after the judge ordered the sentences to run concurrently. Mashaba was sentenced to 145 years imprisonment after he was convicted of four counts of robbery with aggravating circumstances and four counts of kidnapping. His effective sentence will be 31 years.

Zondo was sentenced to 95 years for five counts of robbery with aggravating circumstances and four counts of kidnapping and will serve 25 years effectively. Nyoni and Masuku were sentenced to 44 years and 54 years respectively for 10 counts of robbery with aggravating circumstances, 10 counts of kidnapping and two counts of illegal possession of firearm and ammunition. They will respectively spend 21 and 25 years in prison after the judge ordered the sentences to run concurrently.

A sixth accused, Oliver Xolani Mashaba is on the run and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

Kind Regards,

Phaladi Shuping

Regional Spokesperson: DPP Free State

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