

Three to appear in court over Chief Justice burglary

Three men arrested in connection with the recent burglary at the offices of the Chief Justice in Midrand will appear in court in Mamelodi today, 22 March 2017, Acting National Commissioner of the South African Police Service (SAPS), Lieutenant General Khomotso Phahlane, said on Wednesday.



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Briefing reporters on the investigation into the break-in and theft at the office of Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng in Midrand on Saturday, Phahlane said the three, who are already in custody, face charges related to other crimes they were positively linked to pending further investigation in this matter.

“As the South African Police Service, we record our confidence in the criminal justice system and in particular, the courts of this country. We believe that the seriousness of this crime and the stature of the Office of the Chief Justice will be considered in the further processing of the cases the apprehended people are linked to,” Phahlane said at a briefing in Pretoria.

In the days following the early morning burglary on Saturday, the men were arrested in Mamelodi where they were found in possession of unlicensed firearms and fake identity documents that were seized during the police operations.

“These items are considered as evidential material, which will be presented in court. We are also pleased to report that a

vehicle, which was possibly used as a getaway car for the committing of the crime, has been seized. Further interviewing of those who were arrested revealed the identity of a person with critical information required to solve the crime and the recovery of the stolen IT equipment.”

Phahlane called on the individual in question to approach the investigating officer or report to the nearest police station to assist in this matter.

Responding to a question from the media as to whether the break-in was an inside job, Phahlane said the police are not in possession of such information.

“We do not at this stage have information on whether or it was an inside job because not one of the three men arrested is a staff member... The investigation is still at a preliminary level,” he said.

The SAPS could not say much on what is stored in the 15 computers that were stolen during the burglary.

“What we know is that 15 computers were stolen. Ours is to work hard to ensure that they are recovered. We are concerned that there was a security breach at the offices of the Chief Justice,” Phahlane said, adding that a motive for the crime is yet to be uncovered.

Constitutional mandate

Meanwhile, the SAPS expressed concern at “misplaced and irresponsible” utterances and allegations that have been doing the rounds. Phahlane said these allegations, that State agents are somehow involved in the burglary, undermine the mandate of the South African Police Service provided for in the Constitution of the country to prevent, combat and investigate crime.

“These statements are demoralising to the hard working members of the South African Police Service and are not assisting in the investigation process. We call upon responsible citizens and leaders from all walks of life to take up their rightful positions and contribute positively and constructively to the fight against crime.”

Phahlane said baseless and unfounded allegations against any individual or leaders in government are not helpful.

“Casting a shadow of doubt on the capability of the South African Police Service to investigate any crime committed is not assisting. Anyone with credible information relating to this crime or any other crime must feel free to approach the investigating officers and deposit such information to enable the resolution of such crimes.”

He said the significant breakthrough in the cases of baby Siwaphiwe in KwaZulu-Natal as well as the OR Tambo International Airport heist bears testimony to the fact that the SAPS remains committed to prioritising and thoroughly investigating serious crimes.

SAPS has also sanctioned a security assessment to enhance security at the offices of the Chief Justice.

“We are extremely pleased that our members are working tirelessly to ensure that the perpetrators of this crime are brought to book. I am urging the people of South Africa to continue to work closely with our members to ensure that incidents, which seek to undermine our Constitution, do not have a place in our society,” said Phahlane.